

**THE HISTORY OF THE
TOWN OF PUTNEY,
PP. 218-272**

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The Street (so called) passes from the village in a northerly direction, west of the meadow, for the distance of two miles and is lined with comfortable residences the whole distance. The traveler going north is delighted with the abundant verdure of the meadow and with Bare Hill crowned with pines and other evergreens, on the right; and he is no less pleased with the majestic swells of land and flourishing and productive fields, on the left.

Leaving the street, and taking a westerly course on what was formerly called the "County Road," leading to Newfane and Townshend, the traveler passes over West Hill, easy of ascent, presenting a varied aspect of beauty and fertility. The writer has ever considered the soil in this part of the town of a superior quality, and the advantages to the agriculturist of the first order. Yet for some reason, there has for forty years past, been a gradual decrease in the number of inhabitants; and many of the farms have been appropriated to grazing purposes. Cattle and sheep now occupy those fields which were once cultivated by the hand of man.

But the physical aspect at West Hill, and the magnificent prospect there presented still remain. As the traveler passes on to the summit, he is struck with wonder and delight. Beckley in his history of Vermont thus graphically describes the scene:

BECKLEY'S DESCRIPTION.

"The view from this eminence is rich and majestic. Few places are more enchanting. As you face the south, you have on your right the narrow and deep valley of West River; and on your left the somewhat broader one of the Connecticut, some two thousand feet below you. Then the whole compass of the horizon to a great extent opens to your view, excepting a few degrees

on the north being intercepted by a clump of trees. A large portion of the south west of New Hampshire, the northwestern of Massachusetts, and the southern section of Vermont is before you. From the Connecticut valley, your eye goes over hill and dale, clearings and wood lands, villages, hamlets and cottages, till it reaches the summit of the Monadnock, and thence north on the blue highlands towards the White Hills. The silvery surface of the Connecticut below Brattleboro, distant 10 or 15 miles, and the irregular and broken ridges of Southern Vermont and Franklin County in Massachusetts, come in sight; and the summit of the Green Mountains far to the north with their endless variety of shapes, with the Haystack, and Saddle-back, and Stratton cliffs, limits your view on the right, but fixes your attention in silent admiration.

The original growth of forest trees, consisted of beech, birch, oak, maple, butternut and elm. The Great Meadow abounded with yellow pine; while the higher flats or plains were covered with white pines of majestic growth. In the valley through which Sackett's brook flows was one of the noblest groves of pines anywhere to be found. They lifted their heads to a vast height, the boughs closing over the traveler, rendering it dark, even at mid-day.

THE ROCK FORMATIONS

on the east side of Sackett's brook, are mostly mica slate, abounding with garnets and staurolite. Through the centre of the town run the extensive strata of argillite or roof slate. West of this range comes the mica slate again, interspersed with a hard, black lime-stone. In the east part of the town is found a very rare mineral, known by the name of fluato of lime, or fluor-spar, of a beautiful, emerald green. Specimens of this have been sent to the most distinguished mineralogists in this country and in Europe.

CIVIL HISTORY.

This town was early inhabited by the aborigines of our country, as appears from the discovery of arrows, spears, hoes, and broken pots. In several places on the intervals, when the settlements of the whites began, they found heaps of stones, evidently brought by hand from the high lands, bearing the marks of fire, and supposed to have constituted the fire-places of the Indian wigwams. But, what were the names or the number of the natives who occupied these grounds, or whether they had a permanent, or only an occasional residence, is not known. Previous to the

FIRST FRENCH WAR.

or the Cape Breton War, 1744, a settlement by whites was commenced on the Great Meadows, and a fort was built near the centre, called Fort Hill. The first attack made on the Fort by the Indians was on July 5, 1745. The sad fate of one of these settlers is worthy to be recorded; it is that of

WILLIAM PHIPPS.

He was captured by the Indians, while hoeing corn, near the south west corner of the meadow; was carried into the woods, and left in the care of one of the Indians, while the other was absent. Phipps watched his opportunity, and with characteristic intrepidity, with his hoe struck down the Indian in whose keeping he was; and seizing the gun of his fallen enemy, he gave the other who was returning, a fatal shot. He then attempted to seek refuge in the fort; but before reaching it, he was met by three other Indians who took his life. In the October following, the enemy again appeared at the Great Meadow and made an attack upon the garrison. An effectual resistance was made, one Indian killed, and the fort remained uninjured.

SEHEMIAH HOWE.

cutting wood one fourth of a mile from the fort, was captured. At this juncture, two men David Rugg and Robert Baker, were descending the river in a canoe; when perceived by the Indians, they were fired upon; Rugg was killed, while Baker gained the opposite shore and escaped. Howe was carried to Canada, where he died. During this war, which began in 1744, and ended with the treaty of Aix la Chapelle, in Oct. 1747, the settlement was broken up, the fort destroyed and the people fled to places of greater safety.

THE FIRST SETTLERS.

In February 1755, a family by the name of Averill removed from Westminster to the Great Meadow. This family originally came from Shirley, Mass. to Charlestown, N. H., or No. 4, as it was then called. This was in 1744. The Cape Breton war coming on they fled to Northfield, Mass. After the close of the war, in 1751, they removed to Westminster, and from Westminster they came to Putney as above stated. Here, they found Philip Alexander and John Perry with their families; also Michael Gilson, unmarried, with his mother and two sisters. These were from Massachusetts and were the first permanent settlers in town, and were the only white persons known within its limits.

Early in 1755, hostilities again commenced, and for their safety, the few inhabitants built another fort, in the south east part of the Meadow. In this enterprize they were joined by a considerable number from Westmoreland; among whom was Mr. Aldrich, the father of General Aldrich, Daniel Howe, Thomas Chamberlain, Joshua Warner, Daniel Warner, Harradon

Wheeler, and Samuel Minott. At the close of the war, they all returned to Westmoreland, except Samuel Minott, who became a permanent citizen. Dr. Joseph Lord and William Willard joined the garrison during the French war.

The fort was of an oblong form, 120 feet in length, by 80 in width, and 17 feet high. It was constructed of hewn pine timber 6 inches thick. Some 16 houses were built within this fort; the back walls of the houses being formed by the wall of the fort, each with a single roof slanting up to the top of the wall. The houses fronted the hollow square in the centre. A great gate opened towards the east, and a small one towards the south. Here was a garrison of 12 men during the summer. A guard was kept while the men were at work, and they usually carried their arms into the field with them. No open attack was made upon the fort; though the Indians occasionally came shouting around it, rendering the night hideous.

The Meadow was now mostly in a rude state, being covered with yellow pine; with here and there a white pine and white oak, stretching their lofty boughs towards the heavens. Col. Willard, who owned the land, it is said, gave the use of it as a consideration for building the fort and defending it during the war.

LIEUT. JOSHUA HYDE.

In the summer of 1762, Lieut Joshua Hyde made a purchase of a large tract of land in the east part of the town, and in the same year, he removed his family to a house near the river, about 50 rods south of the old Westmoreland bridge. Previous to this, there were but two families in town, except those in the Great Meadow, viz: the family of John Perry and that of Philip Alexander. Their residences were about a

mile south of the Meadow. Both had been inhabitants of the Fort. There were now no mills and the people were subjected to the inconvenience of carrying their grain for grinding to Northfield, Mass and Chesterfield, N. H.

In 1764, Benjamin Hutchins and Samuel Skinner settled in the east part of the town near the great bridge. The same year

JOSHUA PARKER

came from Canterbury, Ct., and purchased a farm on Sackett's brook, at the north end of the street. During the year, he was engaged in making preparations to remove his family, and was the first man who drove a team through the street. In the Spring of 1765, he commenced keeping house in the place where he afterwards died. By this time, Henry Walton, James Cummings, and Moses Johnson had taken up residences on the street. In the year 1768,

HON. NOAH SARIN

of Rehoboth, Mass., removed his family to town. His residence was near that of Joshua Parker. There was now, in addition to those already named, on the street, the families of William Wyman, and Charles Kathan. West of the street were the families of John Butler, Andrew Graham, Michael Law, and Dennis Lochlin. East of the mouth of Sackett's Brook were the families of Jonas Moore, Leonard Spaulding, Fairbank Moore, and Samuel Allen. By this time, mills were erected, roads to some extent constructed, and conveniences for living multiplied; the diversity of scenery and soil was inviting, and the population rapidly increased.

THE FIRST CHARTER

of the town was from the State of New Hampshire, and bears date, Dec. 26, 1763. It was given to Josiah Willard

and others, whose names are not known. After New York claimed the territory, a charter was obtained from that state bearing date, Nov. 6, 1766.

Grantees under the Charter from New York are the following: Josiah Willard Joshua Hide, Daniel Hubbard, Josiah Willard, Junior, Lois Butler, Thomas Frink, Jeremiah Hall, Joseph Hammond, Thomas Hill, Eunice Willard, Elijah Alexander, Sampson Willard, John Ellis, Henry Foster, Thomas Lee, Micah Lawrence, John Gould, James Scott, and Nehemiah Houghton.

The town was organized, and the first town officers chosen, May 8, 1770.

The record of this date is as follows:

"At a meeting of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Putney on the second Tuesday of May, According to Charter, Capt. William Perce was Chosen Moderator for said Meeting, and the following persons was chosen to serve the Town in their respective Offices for the Ensuing year, [viz.] Supervisor, Noah Sabin; Town Clerk, Noah Sabin; Assessors, Capt. Abijah Moor and Samuel Minott; Treasurer, Sept. Joshua Hide; Surveyors of the Highways, Benjamin Wilson and John Warner; Overseers of the Poor, Joshua Parker and Samuel Minott; Collector, James Cummings; Constables, Amos Haile, Jonathan Houghton, and John Perry—and the said meeting was adjourned to the Second Tuesday of July at the house of Ensign Comings in said Putney at One of the Clock on said day."

By subsequent records, it seems that other necessary officers of the town were chosen from time to time, such as selectmen, listers, grand and petit jurors, leather sealers, tithing-men, hayward, branders of horses, sealers of horses, sealers of weights and measures, pound-keepers, fence viewers. These officers all had their appropriate duties to perform, at once suggested to the minds

of those in advanced years, however strangely the names of some of them may sound in the ears of the young.

At a regular town meeting held Mar. 15, 1784, it was voted to.

"Choose a committee of seven to divide the town into districts for the benefit of schooling."

At another meeting it was voted to "except of the report of the committee for dividing the town into school districts." It was also voted to "Choose one or more meet persons in each school districts as trustees of school affairs as the law directs." Accordingly twelve "meet persons," whose names are given, were chosen for the above purpose; from which it may be inferred, that the town was originally divided into 12 school districts.

A change, however, was afterwards made. Originally, a part of what is now Brookline belonged to Putney, embracing the somewhat abrupt descent on the west side of the Hill, as far as "Grassy brook. The vote of the town, passed Oct. 6, 1794, in reference to the excision was as follows:

"Voted to set off the westerly part of this town to join the south part of Athens, or some other town, as the General Assembly of this State may think fit: the bounds of said west part be as follows: (viz) 'Beginning on Westminster line at the north east corner of lot No. 1, in the 13th range, and running southerly to the south west corner of lot No. 8, in the 14th range; from thence to the north west corner of Samuel Bennet, Jr's. lot; then on the west line of said Bennet's lot, and the west line of Capt. Ezekiel Wilson's lot to Dummerston line.

According to the charter from New York, 19360 acres of land were originally comprised within the limits of Putney. By this action, some 3569 acres

were cut off; leaving 15791, as reported by assessor Washburn in 1814.

In consequence of this action, a new arrangement in regard to school districts became necessary. At a meeting called Oct. 15, 1795, to act on the subject, a committee previously appointed made report that the town be divided into 8 school districts; which report was adopted, and the dividing lines were particularly described. Other changes were afterwards made, and the number of school districts at the present time is 10.

From the organization of the town in 1770, the population continued to increase by immigration and otherwise, so that, according to Thompson, in 1791, the number of inhabitants was 1848. Subsequently, the population began to decrease, and in 1860, it was only 1163. Emigration has had its influence. But other causes have had their effects. Once it was common to find large families, consisting, in many cases, of eight, ten, twelve, and more children. There are those now living who distinctly remember three families dwelling near each other in which were 42 children; in one there were 13, in another, 14, and in another, 15. Now, as we pass from house to house, we find one, two, three, and sometimes more children; but quite commonly none at all. And in school districts, where once there were 40 or 50 scholars, we now find but 15 or 20. And in two localities, where formerly there were schools of a respectable number of scholars, no schools are now supported. These changes are common to our rural towns, and they afford matter for reflection to thinking minds.

The early inhabitants were social in their habits, kind and genial in their intercourse with each other and sympathetic in seasons of sickness and

bereavement. A record is now in existence showing the action, of the town 70 years ago in reference to the conducting of funerals, which is highly creditable to their moral sense and Christian sympathy.

THE OLD LIBRARY.

They were a reading people. A large social library was for many years in existence, consisting of the standing authors of that period; and although the advantages for an early education were limited, yet the people generally were well informed. The writer was intimately acquainted with one far advanced in life, 50 years ago who, in her youth, had enjoyed but three weeks' schooling; yet, in point of general intelligence, it would be difficult to find her superior. With civil and ecclesiastical history, the biographies of distinguished individuals, and religious treatises then extant, she was familiar, and her conversation on these subjects could not fail of being edifying to any one.

In general, those who succeeded the early inhabitants have been intelligent, moral, and industrious. As a consequence, the common comforts of life have not been wanting. The vices that have existed are such as may be found elsewhere; and there has always been a conservative influence operating which has held in check those disposed to do wrong. Outbreaking crimes have been very few.

BUSINESS.

AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS

have engaged attention generally, and in these the people have been successful. Few towns afford greater facilities for the farmer. The soil is rich and productive. The "Great Meadow" has ever been proverbial for its heavy crops of grain. The farms back from the

river are excellent for grazing purposes, and the herds of cattle and sheep have yielded profitable returns to their owners. The reports of the annual County and State fairs have borne testimony to the superior quality of the horses, cattle and sheep which the town has produced.

For a number of years past A. M. Winslow and sons have been extensively engaged in the raising and sale of the short horn Durhams. As a specimen of the size and weight of these animals,

“ THE DUKE OF PUTNEY ”

may be named, less than two years old, weighing 1600 pounds. These cattle are sold in various parts of New England at very high prices.

Considerable attention is also paid to manufacturing and mechanical operations. On Sackett's brook which, in the distance of 80 rods, falls 180 feet, is a woolen-mill, owned by the

PUTNEY WOOLEN COMPANY,

George S. Coffin, Agent, doing a very considerable business in the manufacture of mixed flannels. The factory is 80 feet long by 32 wide, and 4 stories high. Adjoining this is a weaving-room 100 feet long, by 25 feet wide. A very commodious boarding-house belongs to the company.

[Since the foregoing account of the Woolen Mill was written the whole establishment has been sold. The large building is taken down and the materials removed. The boarding-house is owned by Mr. Lewis, and is fitted up in beautiful style for the accommodation of boarders for a longer or shorter period.]

PAPER MILL.

Next is a paper mill owned by John Robertson, in which \$7000 is invested aside from the real estate. Stock from 150 to 200 tons is annually worked up,

yielding from \$30,000 to \$40,000 worth of paper. Another paper-mill is owned by William Robertson, doing a business of some \$29,000, annually.

There are also, a saw and grist-mill, a furniture-shop, a chair-shop, a blacksmith-shop, and a harness-shop, and Clark Roberts is largely engaged in the business of carriage-making. Messrs. George L. Pierce and Herbert L. Wheat are the two Merchants. Mr. Wheat is Postmaster.

THE VILLAGE OF PUTNEY

is pleasantly situated in the valley of Sackett's brook, containing within its limits, besides the buildings already referred to, 75 dwelling-houses, two churches, 1 hotel, 2 school-houses, a beautifully constructed Masonic hall, and a very commodious Town House. The latter was built in the summer of 1871, at an expense of some \$11,000.

It contains a spacious Town Hall, a large room for a High School, and four smaller rooms, for various useful purposes.

Since the opening of the Vermont Rail Road, a Post Office has been established in East Putney, named by the Post Office Department,

CORNTON :

A lively business is here carried on, in the lumber trade and the manufacture of horse-rakes, by Franklin L. Pierce and Warren Parker.

In addition to the residences previously standing, several new ones of taste and beauty have recently been erected, rendering this section of the town inviting.

TOWN CLERKS.

Noah Sabin, Sen., Amos Haile, Matthew, Cushing, Daniel Sabin, John Talbut, William Stephenson, to 1796 :

1797 — 98 : Noah Sabin, Jr.
 1790 — 99 : Daniel Sabin.
 1800 — 03 : Medad Combs.
 1804 — 27 : Noah Sabin, Jr.
 1828 — 29 : Asa Houghton.
 1830 — 34 : James Lowe.
 1835 — 43 : William Houghton.
 1844 : William Wilder.
 1845 — 67 : William Houghton.
 1868 — : A. B. Hewett.

EDUCATION.

The primary schools have compared favorably with the same order of schools in other towns. Well qualified teachers have generally been employed; and it could be said of nearly all our youth, that they possessed a good common education. Besides the schools just named, "select schools" were for many years sustained, in which the higher English branches, and the languages preparatory to admission to college, were taught. Instructors of superior qualifications were employed, and many youth were enabled to make those attainments in useful knowledge, by which they were prepared for the stations in life which they were called to fill. Others have been sent abroad to enjoy advantages still greater than any that could be found at home.

COLLEGE GRADUATES.

Luke Bowen, Luther Jewett, Samuel B. Goodhue, Reuben Washburn, Asa Keyes, Henry Crawford, Samuel Fletcher, John H. Noyes, Horatio Noyes, William White, George Ash, Jerome Allen, Henry D. Foster, and Wilder Harding.

NATIVE MINISTERS.

Those who have entered the ministry from Putney are the following: Luke Bowen, Luther Jewett, Samuel Fletcher

George Ash, Jerome Allen, Congregationalists:

Nathaniel Cudworth, and Forris Moore, Baptists:

Charles Harding and Samuel A. Cushing, Methodist.

PHYSICIANS.

Elisha Rood, Josiah Goodhue, John Campbell, 1st. Luther Jewett, Alexander Campbell, Nathaniel Chamberlain, John Campbell, 2d. David Allen, S. N. Bemis, Gustavus H., Loomis, E. W. Morse, H. D. Holton, D. P. Webster, G. S. Foster, E. S. Munger.

LAWYERS.

John Griffin, Phineas White, (see Biographical Sketch).

ASA KEYES.

born in Putney May 30, 1787, graduated at Dartmouth college in 1810, after teaching 2 years in Chesterfield, N. H., studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1814. He immediately commenced practice in Putney and continued it till 1833. Since which he has resided in Brattleboro, pursuing his profession to the present time, (1869.) He has held the office of judge of probate and justice of the peace; has been a member of the house of Representatives for 3 years, a member of the Senate 2 years, and a Trustee of the Vermont Asylum for the Insane for about 20 years.

[Judge Keyes has since deceased. See History of Brattleboro, this volume for a biographical sketch. Ed.]

NATHANIEL GOODHUE

commenced the practice of law in Putney, where he remained a few years, and then removed to Ohio.

JOSHUA LEAVITT

after a short practice of the legal profession, entered the ministry. For many years past, he has been connected with