

**THE EARLY HISTORY OF
MANCHESTER: AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED IN MUSIC HALL,
MANCHESTER, VT., ON MONDAY
EVENING, DECEMBER 27, 1875**

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The early history of Manchester: an address delivered in Music Hall, Manchester, Vt, on Monday evening, December 27, 1875 by Loveland Munson

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LOVELAND MUNSON

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BY

LOVELAND MUNSON,
OF MANCHESTER.

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INTRODUCTORY.

In response to an invitation of many citizens of Manchester, the following address was delivered before the inhabitants of the town. After its delivery, a resolution was adopted requesting its publication. That request is now complied with; in the hope that the address may, in a published form, more fully subserve its immediate purpose, and perhaps aid some future laborer in the rich field of our local history. This review of early times, compressed within the limits of an evening's entertainment, and published substantially as delivered, is of course but an incomplete account of the period to which it relates, and can in no sense supply the want of a town history. But, although the scope of the work is very limited, every effort has been made to secure historical accuracy — with what success future examination and criticism can best determine. None but those who have tried the task can fully understand the difficulty of a work of this kind, undertaken at so late a day, and after so long a period of general apathy on the subject. I had fortunately preserved some memoranda of conversations had with the late Judge Pettibone not long before his death; and a few manuscript pages concerning the early history of the town, evidently prepared in the later years of his life, were

kindly furnished me by his family. The account of Manchester written by Henry E. Miner, Esq., fifteen years ago, and published in the *Vermont Quarterly Gazetteer*, has preserved some traditions which might otherwise have been lost. I am under obligations to the Hon. E. P. Walton, of Montpelier, for many valuable suggestions. I am also indebted for assistance to Ex-Gov. Hall, Hon. R. S. Taft, H. A. Huse, Esq., State Librarian, James S. Peck, Adjutant and Inspector General, and Chauncey Smith, Esq., of the Post Office Department at Washington.

ADDRESS.

The inhabitants of Manchester have suffered the hundredth anniversary of its organization to pass without notice. Its second centennial, no one now present can hope to see. The last survivor of those whose memory reached back to the early days of the township, has already passed away. A few decades more, and there will be no one living who ever heard a tale of the olden times from the lips of actor or witness. If the matters of local interest, now resting in tradition, are to be given a permanent and reliable form, the work must be done by this generation. Should these traditions be left to pass into uncertainty and oblivion, those who come after us will know little of the early history of their town, beyond what can be gathered from the public records and the general history of the state. Of that more interesting portion of a local history which is seldom written by contemporary pen, we have already lost too much; and unless something is done to gather and preserve the fragments that remain, it will soon be impossible to present anything like a vivid picture of the Manchester of our fathers. That task I do not undertake to-night. I shall be content if, in the use of such material as is convenient to my reach, I can perform the humbler service of awakening new interest in the history of our town, to the end that some other and

better historian may be encouraged by your sympathy to do full justice to the theme.

In August, 1761, two months after the settlement of Bennington, Governor Wentworth, of New Hampshire, granted a tract of land six miles square, within the supposed limits of that province, and incorporated it into a township by the name of Manchester. The original proprietors, residents of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, obtained their grant for purposes of speculation, and awaited the application of any who might desire to settle in the township. Their acquisition remained in their hands without improvement, and probably without inspection, until some two years after the date of their charter, when an incident occurred which led to the purchase of their rights and the speedy settlement of the town.

A party of explorers from Amenia, in Dutchess county, New York, while visiting the present locality of Salem in that state, were attracted by the high land to the east, and turned their steps in that direction to obtain a better view of the surrounding country. They pursued their course from summit to summit until they stood upon the top of a lofty mountain between whose base and the range beyond was a broad and apparently level valley. Descending the mountain side, they gave the valley a closer examination to ascertain its advantages as a place of settlement. They returned home with impressions sufficiently favorable to lead to an inquiry after the owners of the land; and a few months later we find nearly all the rights of the original proprietors of Manchester held by residents of Amenia and vicinity.

The first recorded meeting of the proprietors of the

township was held at Amenia in February, 1764. Samuel Rose, the pioneer of our settlement, was chosen moderator, and Jonathan Ormsby, proprietors' clerk. Other meetings were held soon after, at which there seems to have been considerable difficulty in securing the prompt attendance of the proprietors. On one occasion, it was voted that any proprietor not present at the hour named for the next meeting should pay a bowl of punch. It may perhaps be conjectured that many of the proprietors were behind the hour, and that too much punch was paid for the good of the proprietors' clerk; for he has given us no account whatever of the proceedings of that meeting. The space which was left to receive the record is a blank to this day.

Early in May, 1764, a committee of the proprietors visited Manchester to lay out the first division of lots. There was at that time no settlement on the west side of the mountain north of Arlington. Having ascertained the boundaries of their township, the committee proceeded to lay out sixty-eight lots of one hundred acres each, which were afterwards assigned by lot to the different rights. The section thus divided extended nearly from the northern to the southern line, and embraced more than one-third the width of the town. The present villages of Manchester and Factory Point are located on that division.

The first settlement in Manchester was made in the summer or fall of 1764, in that part of the town now known as the Purdy district. The first house was built by Samuel Rose, on the premises long occupied by John S. Pettibone. It is believed the houses built in 1764, were permanently occupied the same year; but possibly the settlers, after completing their buildings, returned to Amenia for the winter, and first brought their families to the township