

**A BI-CENTENNIAL ORATION MADE IN
WEST BROOKFIELD, JULY 4, 1860. AT
THE
CELEBRATION OF THE TWO HUNDREDTH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE SETTLEMENT OF
THE TOWN OF BROOKFIELD**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649410408

A Bi-centennial Oration Made in West Brookfield, July 4, 1860. At the Celebration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Town of Brookfield by Lyman Whiting

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LYMAN WHITING

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Cover

1680.

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1860.



BI-CENTENNIAL ORATION

MADE IN

WEST BROOKFIELD, JULY 4, 1860.

AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE

TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE SETTLEMENT OF THE

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD.

BY LYMAN WHITING, D.D.

A NATIVE OF NORTH BROOKFIELD.

WEST BROOKFIELD:

PRINTED BY THOMAS MORRY.

1869.

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TO THE
INHABITANTS NOW LIVING
AND WHO MAY HEREAFTER DWELL IN THE PRECINCTS OF THE ANCIENT
QUABOAG, "ALIJAS BROOKEFEILD,"
HIS OWN LOVED BIRTH-PLACE,
THE AUTHOR
DEDICATES THIS LABORIOUS BUT LOVED TASK.

LYMAN WHITING.

ORATION.

This is a day for salutations. A family, scattered through a nation have come home. Faces and names are recalled, and by-gone scenes connected with them spring up in irrepresible, glad surprises. Half-forgotten acquaintances of youth, like vines after gleaning, hiding here and there a cluster overlooked, but ripened to peculiar sweetness, are found by each one of us. The ancient hills, the old rocks and trees smile their recognitions. The bright brooks chatter their greetings from grassy banks, and *old* homesteads, a few,— and *new* ones, many,— offer winning welcomes from opened gate and door. A glad accost beams alike from the face of nature and of all the dwellers in this endeared town-home.

“Welcome home!” *you* say. “Glad to come home!” *we* reply, for

“Joyfully dear is the homeward track,
If we are but sure of a welcome back.”

The Third Jubilee, since English hands and hearts made these fields, hills, and valleys the scenes of love's great care and toil, has come. We, the heirs of the costly estate, assemble to

cherish and rejoice in it. It is fitting that we exchange hearty salutations.

This done, the serious heed of history must be assumed, and reverently we take up the tasks of the hour. Beginning, like curious children, at the mother's knee, we ask first, *How this came to be a town?* What led our fathers here? What fixed their choice for this as their abode? *Why was Brookfield settled?*

These questions will find replies in part further back than record or tradition reaches. In that Infinite Counsel which turns the hearts of men as rivers of water are turned, is a cause underlying all others; and though grand visible laws may disclose the methods, and men may seem to be the only actors, we really do little in stating the truth of any history, though of just a single town like this, until we discern a higher power and wisdom, and plans shaped by both than any man or class of men have devised. God *is* in history, — in that of a township as distinctly as in that of an empire.

The great and terrible forces impelling our forefathers to the New World, you all well know. The impulses which scattered the children of the first emigrants, and the new-come emigrations after the earliest, from the first homes along the sea-coast, — are not as familiar. We, looking at their case, a slender chain of settlements clinging to the sea-side, as if needing land and sea both, to supply daily food; or as if, tarrying on the threshold of the continent, so they could more readily flee back, if they could not stay here, — naturally ask, Why do not those coming after, in equal prudence, stay with this line of plantations, where certain sustenance, and all the comforts — scanty and poor, indeed — which the new world had, were gathered? Instead of this, from all the sea-side settlements, the impulse for a westward and inland migration carried nearly

all of the second generation from the half-furnished and half-protected homes of their fathers, into the deep wilderness. It is a constant question in perusing the story of that generation, what shaped these paths of most daring, and seemingly needless removals? No doubt the marked Saxon love of land, the craving for soil, in which traditional aristocracy, dignity, and weight of character united; and the common pride of possession and sense of independence, pushed the young men of those times into the wild lands where occupancy almost gave possession. Large estates were princely. House lots, in the maritime settlements, were not broad enough for youth with the blood and birth of *Puritan* Pilgrim stirring them. The choice of Quaboag by the inhabitants of Ipswich, who then, as we should think, had ten times more land than they could take care of, well shows this.

The first selection was of lands along the sea-board, as before mentioned, where united the advantages of production and transport, and the twofold resources for sustenance,—land and sea. The broad river, and its rich alluvial basin, with meadows so friendly to tillage; the stream serving as an highway, and the adjacent highlands offering fuel, pasturage and building material was the second choice. The third selection, was the regions of hills and ponds with connecting rivers bordered by facile meadows, lying between. Many of the advantages of sea-shore and river valleys united in these. The historical law of the early settlement was formed essentially of these conditions. Up and down the New England borders, the rugged sea-coast first wins the strangers from the parent land; *their* sons, by a daring plunge, reach the fair Connecticut, and speedily the prosperous settlements adorn the queenly valley; and then, between

these extremities in locality,—if not in qualities of character, others settled upon the midway summits, nestling among these matchless hills and valleys, lying like a basket of pomegranates, in an area of about fifty miles, a family of fruitful hills, exquisitely rounded, and gemmed with clusters of ponds, as fair in beauty as the hills are noble in form.

I wonder not that the river valley first won the companies of land-fanciers, and those searching for pleasing homes. The Queen of that valley was, as now, fair to look upon. Her waving vestments of meadow verdures, her stately coronets of hills and mountains, were enough to captivate her Saxon suitors at a glance. Nor need we deny that among them were many of the choicest spirits who then awaited the call of fields unexplored and of lands unmeasured. But that some, on their journeys thither, discerned the less showy and less winning charms of Quaboag—the land of hills and lakes—sturdier in aspect, and so summoning higher valor in the settler, need not surprise us.

Tidings of this very marked region doubtless found their way to the sea-side settlements through the explorers and leaders of the emigrations to the "River," as its region was then termed; and when the first wave had spent itself at Hartford, Windsor, Springfield and Hadley, the next one paused among the singularly charming swells and meadows of Brookfield.

For fifteen years the rugged path between Dorchester and Cambridge, and the settlements made from them on the River, had been kept open by the infrequent journeyings between these extremes of colonial settlement. But the land-hunger craved fresh spaces. On the 31st of May 1660, in the second year of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, is found the heading in the margin, "Ipsuich new plantacon."