

**FACTS RELATING TO THE EARLY
HISTORY OF CHESTER, N.H., FROM THE
SETTLEMENT IN
IN 1720 UNTIL THE FORMATION OF THE
STATE CONSTITUTION IN THE YEAR 1784,
MDCCCLI**

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CHARLES BELL

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3rd Edition

HISTORY OF CHESTER.

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COLLECTED BY CHARLES BELL.

MDCCLLI.

CONCORD:
PUBLISHED FOR THE N. H. HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BY G. PARKER LYON.
1863.

NOTE—BY THE EDITOR.

Dr. CHARLES BELL, the author of the following History of Chester,—his native Town—died in Concord, N. H., of pulmonary consumption, February 29, 1856, aged 22½ years. On the Sabbath after his decease, the Rev. Dr. Bouton, in a funeral discourse, thus spake of him :

“Dr. CHARLES BELL, son of the late Hon. SAMUEL BELL, of Chester, dying at the early age of 22½ years, possessed qualities of mind and heart which rendered him a fit model for young men just entering on the stage of social and public life. Naturally of a serene, amiable and obliging temper, he sought to promote the happiness of all who were about him. His mind, of a high order, was improved by study from early childhood. His acquisitions in general knowledge, in literature and science, and more especially in the studies of his profession, distinguished him among the young men of his age, and gave large promise of usefulness, and success in the professional career which he had auspiciously begun.

Though of genial social qualities, gifted in conversation, he yet wasted no time in amusements and festivities which could neither improve his mind nor his heart ; rather he looked on such things as unworthy of a being pressed with responsibilities and acting for immortality. Doct. Bell possessed a large religious reverence—respect for all things sacred—for the word of God, the worship of his house, the Sabbath and institutions of religion : on these subjects no levity ever marked his conversation or deportment. At an early age, while a member of Brown University, in Providence, R. I., he was personally the subject of these spiritual influences and exercises that are usual antecedents of a new life ; and ever after he seemed to live in the fear and love of God, and to be governed by the principles and precepts of Christianity.

But 'death loves a shining mark!' and it early marked him for its victim! 'The days of his youth were shortened.' That pale, serene, thoughtful, intelligent face we shall see no more! Our hopes of his rising and permanent distinction are blasted! yet he lived not in vain. Subject to pulmonary disease, his death was sudden. His mortal remains were conveyed to his native Town, to be interred among his honored kindred and friends. His spirit, we trust, is associated with 'the spirits of the just made perfect;' while his example lives—worthy of the imitation of all the youth who knew him, or to whom his name and virtues shall become known."

It is a striking proof of the mental activity, capacity and good judgment of the author, that the materials for this History were collected, arranged and composed by him, when he was only eighteen years of age. Yet the history will be found accurate and reliable. It has been submitted to the mature judgment and received the approval of the Hon. SAMUEL D. BELL, of Manchester, N. H., by whose liberality the work is now published.

This History, first published in the 7th Volume of Collections of the N. H. Historical Society, is now published in its present form for more general distribution.

N. BOUTON, *Editor.*

Concord, June, 1863.

FACTS RELATING TO CHESTER.

1719. In the summer of the year 1719, a Society was formed, principally by inhabitants of Hampton, Haverhill, Newbury and Portsmouth, "for settling the Chestnut Country," of which the first meeting recorded, and probably the first holden, was in the open forest, within the limits of the present town of Chester, and most likely on Walnut Hill. This meeting was on the 15th of October of the same year.

A petition had already been preferred to the government (Sept. 24th,) by Clement Hughes, praying for the grant of a township, and stating that "sundry persons from the Province of Massachusetts Bay" were about to petition for the same land. Mr. Hughes and his company demanded the preference, "having been at a vast expense of blood and treasure to maintain the same against the enemy." This was the usual reason given why preference should be shown to any particular company. It is very unlikely that any "blood" or "treasure" was expended, at that time, on account of the tract. This petition was not granted, as it did not include the Governor and his Council among the Proprietors. At this meeting it was decided that the Society should not exceed ninety individuals, and this number being then incomplete, such persons were to be admitted as should be thought proper by a committee of seven, chosen each year to assume the management of all the Society's affairs, to call meetings as often as should be thought necessary, and "to act in all other matters that they should think proper for the good of the whole Society."

Ichabod Robie, Jacob Stanyan, Caleb Towle, Joseph Tilton and Michael Whidden, all of Hampton, were chosen to lay out the home lots of 20 acres each, in which all privileges of streams were reserved for the use of the Society. Thomas Leavitt and two others, whose names are unknown, were placed on the land to maintain possession whilst a grant could be obtained.

The second meeting of the Society was holden at Hampton, Dec. 20th.

The difficulties which preceded Lovewell's war had just begun, and at the above meeting it was provided that, in case of a war, before the three years, to which time they proposed to limit the settlement, should expire, the same length of time should be allowed after the conclusion of a peace. The home-lots having been laid out, the Proprietors, to the number of eighty eight, drew their lots respectively, and not long after, the number having been increased, contrary to their first intention, to 127, the remainder drew.

1720. In the following March the Society voted to withdraw the first petition, then pending, and "when there should be a convenient season," to prefer another. This second petition was also drawn up by Clement Hughes, and presented the 24th of May following; it was kept suspended until Aug. 26th, when a grant was made "provided that they did not infringe on, or interfere with, any former grant, possessions, or properties," and a committee of Proprietors appointed to procure the land laid out. This grant conveyed a tract of country comprising 100 sq. miles to the Society.

In return for this favor they voted to present his Excellency, the Governor, with a farm of 500 acres, which was laid out "as near the centre of the town as possible without incommoding their own house lots." Gov. Shute's farm began, at its southern limit, near the house of Elijah Hall, and extended on that road, then known as "Penacook path," as far as where Jacob Chase lives, then it spread towards the Northeast nearly as far as Raymond line.

- It does not appear with certainty whether any Indian title was ever possessed by the Society, but it is probable that there was not, or some record would remain of the purchase; among the accounts, however, presented by Mr. Hughes, who acted in the capacity of their Secretary, is charged five shillings "for a copy of an Indian deed."

As a fence had been built, in the first instance, round the Southern part of the tract, but little difficulty was experienced from trespassers; there were, however, certain "Haverhill people"