

**HISTORICAL DISCOURSE
COMMEMORATIVE OF THE
CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF
THE CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, PLYMOUTH, N. H.**

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Historical discourse commemorative of the centennial anniversary of the Congregational church, Plymouth, N. H. by Henry A. Hazen

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HENRY A. HAZEN

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COMMEMORATIVE OF THE

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, PLYMOUTH, N. H.

PREACHED DEC. 24TH AND 31ST, 1865,

By HENRY A. ^{Hazen}HAZEN, PASTOR.

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES RELATING TO THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE TOWN.

BOSTON:

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W. H. G.

Pres. Andrew

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

IN 1865, the writer, then pastor of the Congregational Church in Plymouth, N. H., prepared and preached, on the last two Sabbaths of the year, an historical discourse, commemorating the centennial of its organization. It has since lain quietly in his desk. But friends, whose opinion he could not undervalue, have urged that it should be published; and, as centennial contributions are now in order, it is here recast and offered to them, in the hope that it may not be without some interest and future value. In revising, I have not sought to preserve any minute consistency between the dates, 1865 and 1875. And I have omitted the introductory and concluding reflections, to make room for more valuable notes of the early history of the town. These I have felt at liberty to expand rather freely, and some corrections of current errors will be found. The history of the town ought to be carefully written, and I shall be glad if its future compiler finds some assistance here.

My special thanks are due to Rev. GEORGE PUNCHARD for the use of manuscript sermons, and other materials, from which I have freely drawn; also, for many suggestions, and for proof-reading. The Index does not include all proper names, but is believed to be sufficiently full for easy reference to every important topic.

H. A. H.

BILLERICA, MASS., May, 1875.



DISCOURSE.

WE must go back one hundred and fifty-three years, for the first recorded appearance of Englishmen in the vicinity of Plymouth. The Indian roamed here, and hunted on his excursions; although no tribes were located nearer than New York and Canada. But in the summer they encamped, and planted corn on the rich meadows of the Coos, and possibly here on the Pemigewasset; and they caught the trout, and chased the deer, amid the wildest recesses of the White Mountains.

The story of the earliest coming of white men to this part of New Hampshire, has special and romantic interest to Plymouth, for it is connected with a bloody encounter in this very village,—its one and sufficient taste of war,—and has left its permanent memorial in the name of Baker's River.

In the spring of 1712, Captain Thomas Baker (Note A) left Northampton, Massachusetts, with a scouting party of thirty-four men, passed up the Connecticut River, to Haverhill, and there turning east, ascended the Oliverian, and came down the Asquamchaukee, as the Indians called the stream which here enters the Pemigewasset. Guided by a friendly Indian, he discovered and completely surprised the savages, at the mouth of the river, on its north bank. The sachem's name was Walturnummus and the story runs, that he and Baker levelled their guns at each other at the same instant. The Indian's bullet grazed Baker's left eyebrow, doing him no harm; but Baker's ball entering the breast, the sachem leaped in the air, and fell dead. Many of the savages were killed, and the survivors fled, giving Baker's party opportunity to rifle their tents, and carry away as many beaver-skins as they could. But the Indians rallied, pursued, and, coming up with Baker's party in Bridgewater, just south of Walter Webster's tavern, another smart skirmish followed. The Indians were repulsed, however, and Baker escaped with his rich booty, and, on May 12, applied to the Massachusetts legislature

for the bounty promised for Indian scalps, receiving pay for a larger number than they could recover, as the enemy admitted a larger loss.

The next forty years saw many Indian parties passing up and down this valley on the war-path, and some unfortunate prisoners returning with them to the St. Francis, from Rochester, Exeter or Hopkinton. These were the years of Lovewell's expeditions and disaster, and of the capture of Louisburg,—a brave exploit, in which New Hampshire men bore an honorable part. The attractions of the fertile Coos meadows were discovered by hunting parties and Indian prisoners, and their importance, as a strategical point against French and Indian invasions, could not be overlooked. A project was formed to establish a strong and semi-military colony, with a grant of four townships, in the Connecticut Valley, at Haverhill and Newbury, and in 1751 and 1752, became a leading feature in the policy of the government (Note B). The secretary of the Province, Atkinson, in a letter written 1752, November 19, says, "*We are now upon a Project (which I believe will take effect), of settling a Tract of the finest Land on the Continent, call'd by ye Indians, Co-os, which Lyes upon Connecticut River, about 90 miles northerly from the Province Line. We have already enlisted about four hundred Proper men. They are to cut a road to that Place, build two Garrisons, with sufficient accommodations for the 400 or 500 men,*" etc., "*& all their land under tillage be in sight of and defended by the Garrisons; tis a great undertaking, and a good one; for I really believe if we do not settle it the French will; for tis the main passage made use of by the Indians from Canada to this country.*"

An exploring party had visited Coos the previous spring, and about the time this letter was written, a committee were appointed by the Governor and Assembly, with power to lay out and cut a road. They reported in April, 1753, that they "have been upon the spot, and have searched out a convenient way where a road might be cut & Bridged, without any uncommon charge or Difficulty, commencing at the Crotch of Merrimack river, where the rivers of Penfidgwasset & Winnipiseocce meet, & Ending about Ten miles below the head of the s^d Tract of land, called Co:os." This party had the services, as guide, of a young man who had been taken prisoner while hunting in Rumney, the spring before, and learned the route from his Indian captors. He was from Derryfield, now Manchester, and his name was John Stark, the future hero of

Bunker Hill and Bennington. The road, however, was not opened; but in 1754, Captain Peter Powers, of Hollis, set out, June 15, from Rumford, with another party, for more extended investigation. He went as far as Lancaster, and his journal is preserved (Note C).

Governor Wentworth, in his message (1753) repeated and enforced the arguments for this settlement. He says: "Your resolve in this momentous Concern, you may be assured, will not only recommend you to his Majesty's especial favor, but must finally be your great security, as it will cut off all communication the Indians can have between our frontiers and the French Fort at Crown Point, make their incursions from St. Francis more difficult, and, in case of another war, be of great advantage to an army invading Canada."

But the French and their Indian allies were as fully alive to the value of the Coos. Captain Stevens, of "No 4," Charlestown, reported a visit from the Indians in 1753. "They manifested great uneasiness at our Peoples going to take a view of Cowass Meadows last spring"; and, on leaving, told him, with great deliberation, "for the English to settle Cowass was what they could not agree to, and they must think the English had a mind for war if they should go there." These threats of their foes, and the expense and difficulty of the enterprise, delayed it until the French and Indian war, which soon came. And the Coos was not settled till Wolfe had stormed the Heights of Quebec, Montreal had capitulated, and the French were finally driven from Canada, more than 200 years after Cartier's first attempt to plant a French colony and mission there.

A picture must have suitable background to bring out the proper effect of its colors and shades, and the scenes thus briefly suggested are the background on which we must project the Plymouth settlement, if we would understand the motives that inspired it, or the training of the early settlers for their work. Doubtless they had been awaiting their opportunity for ten years, and passed through the anxieties and the hardships of the French war with this among the plans which cheered them. And in that war, several of the Plymouth men bore active part. David Hobart, Josiah Brown, Joseph Blanchard, Samuel Cummings, David and Abel Webster, John Willoughby, and perhaps others, were in the service, and took part in the battles around Ticonderoga, and in Canada.

Peace brought the opportunity, which was promptly improved, to push the new settlements. The first, in Grafton County, was made