

**HISTORY OF
WHITINGHAM FROM ITS
ORGANIZATION TO
THE PRESENT TIME**

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History of Whitingham from Its Organization to the Present Time by Leonard Brown

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BY
LEONARD BROWN, Esq.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

WE have long cherished the idea that the publication of a brief history of the early settlement and progress of Whitingham, as a town, would be a valuable contribution for the benefit of future generations. The longer it is delayed, the more difficult to give an account of those hardy pioneers, that braved the perils, and endured the hardships, incident to all first settlers in a lone wilderness town. The memory of those pioneer settlers, that laid the foundation of organized society, and established the germs of Christian civilization in this almost unbroken forest, should be revered by their descendants and successors.

A large majority of those venerable fathers and mothers, that guided the destinies of this inchoate town for the first decade of organized existence, have passed away, and left no trace of any descendants within our reach. Thence the only clue to their history and characteristics, is what we can glean from the records. Like the first settlers in other towns in the Green Mountain State, they boldly asserted their inherent right to form their own institutions of government, and prepare this isolated wilderness home, where they could be free to form their own social habits and institutions, to the oppressions their fathers had endured in the different colonies of this new world. Knowing as they did, that the territory they inhabited was claimed by two separate and conflicting governments, or provinces of the Crown of England, they acknowledged no allegiance to either, but were in full sympathy with the settlers in other towns in this part of the

State, for establishing an independent government of their own.

We deem it more important in this work to give an outline sketch of the acts and doings of the town, and the men that guided its progress in the early days of its organization, and for the first half of the present century, than for the last thirty years. Most of those living in town now, are familiar with the principal events in its history for that time past. We have endeavored to collect the material facts and incidents important to a true history of the town of Whitingham, and present them in as concise a form as possible without going into details of the prominent founders of our social and literary institutions, who guarded the interests, and guided the destinies of the town in its most prosperous and progressive days.

We shall give a brief sketch of those families that contributed most to progress of Whitingham, in the first half of the present century, and to establish the social, literary, and religious institutions, forming the basis of organized society, and an elevated standard of civilization.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION.

WHITINGHAM is situated in the southwest corner of Windham County, is six miles square, and bounded north by Wilmington, east by Halifax, south by Massachusetts line, and west by Readsboro. The surface, like most of the mountain towns, is uneven and rocky, with many steep and precipitous cliffs and abruptly rising ledges in different localities, that form a most picturesque scenery. The soil is naturally fertile, but in most parts stony, with many large bowlders lying on the surface, on the hills and in the valleys. And according to Professor Hitchcock's geology, the largest bowlder in New England lies in this town. This bowlder lies on a high hill in the southwest part of the town, on the farm known as the "Jonathan Dix farm," and the publisher of the report of the geology of Vermont, Albert D. Hagar, says of this bowlder: "From the character of the rock, corresponding to that of the Green Mountain, (a highly micaceous neiss) we feel sure that this was transported across the valley. Yet its height is 32 feet, its length 40 feet, its horizontal circumference is 125 feet, its cubic contents 40,000 feet, its weight 3400 tons."

The Valley across which this bowlder must have been transported is more than 500 feet deep, between that hill and the summit of the Green Mountain, a few miles west of the Deerfield River. The publisher of this geology further says, "Think of the power requisite in the first place to tear off from the ledge such a gigantic mass, and then to lift it up, and carry across a deep mountain valley, and then plant it

near the highest part of a rocky ridge. It does not seem to have been much rounded, and cannot, therefore, have been subject to mere mechanical or aqueous attrition. Hence we suppose it to have been lifted up bodily and transported—not rolled—along with other fragments, by a *vis a tergo*."

There are many other very large boulders lying on the surface in different places about the town. One very large, on a high hill, and on a solid ledge of rock, on the farm known as the "Dill Wheeler farm," this, although probably of more than 1500 tons weight, lies on a rounded side in such a manner that it can be moved or rocked with levers. And there are many others, weighing hundreds of tons, lying about in different localities, completely on the surface.

How these huge boulders were scattered about this mountainous region on the hills and in the valleys, is a question of profound interest to the geological student. Their being found indiscriminately on the hills and in the valleys, would favor the theory, that at some remote period, when this section of the earth was covered by water, they were floated from the mountainous regions of a higher latitude, in vast bodies of ice, and dropped wherever the ice dissolved sufficient to liberate them.

A high elevation extends across the town from north to south near its center; although interspersed with undulations and valleys, it forms in the main, a continuous ridge, with a gradual, but uneven sloping to the valley of the Deerfield on the west, and North River on the east. On the slopes from the center eastward, most of the surface forms a good territory for farming, and with efficient cultivation would be equally as productive as any land in southern Vermont. The western slope is more uneven, and broken by steep hills, but a large proportion of the land is equally as good for farming, as on the eastern slope. The highest point on the centre ridge is about one and one half miles south of the centre of the town, and known as the "Streeter Hill." This hill affords a fine prospect of the surrounding country. The long stretch of lofty peaks on the Green Mountains presents a scenery that would well pay the student of nature for a visit to this eminence. While the Green Mountains