

EARLY GRANTS AND INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF WARE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649340682

Early Grants and Incorporation of the Town of Ware by Edward H. Gilbert

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EDWARD H. GILBERT

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BY
EDWARD H. GILBERT



NEW-YORK
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR
FORDS, HOWARD & HULBERT

1891

(132)

PREFACE.

The author does not apologize for any mistakes in the following pages, trusting that such as there are will be leniently dealt with by the reader. To avoid as many such as possible he has endeavored to confine his statements to purely documentary evidence, and has relied little or nothing upon tradition, which in such matters as this almost invariably proves to be misleading.

Nor has he hesitated to make use of or quote from any and all authorities whose writings and researches have borne in any way upon the matter in hand ; and he would herewith thank such, and all others to whose courtesy and kindness he is indebted for much information and many useful hints in his search.

Especially does he wish to mention here the "Historical Address," by Wm. Hyde, Esq., delivered at the Dedication of the Town Hall in Ware, March 31st, 1847, to which frequent reference is made.

The multitudinous documents and maps in the State Archives were in 1847 almost wholly without index, and could be found only by the most patient and laborious process ; moreover, no correct traditions existed touching the settlement of Ware, but on the contrary wholly misleading clues were all that Mr. Hyde had to start with. It is therefore matter of wonder not only

that he was able to make such accurate statements as he did, but that he succeeded in finding nearly every one of the important documents, that are to-day so carefully indexed.

The author feels that this little pamphlet is but an enlargement, as it were, of that part of the "Address" of Mr. Hyde, which related to the Early Grants and Incorporation of the Town, and would therefore respectfully inscribe these pages to the memory of him, Our First Historian.

EDW. H. GILBERT.

Ware, Mass., Sept. 2nd, 1888.

THE TOWN OF WARE.

I. EARLY GRANTS.

THE Town of Ware, State of Massachusetts, as originally organized, consisted of a corporate union of previously granted tracts of land, some attached and some unattached to previously constituted precincts or parishes. These separate tracts were as follows: (1) The Read Manor, consisting of the whole Western half of the present Town and containing about ten thousand acres; (2) the Hollingsworth Grant, lying East of the Read Manor and somewhat South of the centre of the Township, and containing five hundred acres; (3) the Marsh Grant, of fourteen hundred and forty-three acres, occupying the whole North East corner of the present Town; (4) a somewhat problematical Grant to Jeremiah Olmstead, lying East of the Hollingsworth Grant and containing about one hundred acres; and lastly (5) a State Grant to those who had settled upon the remainder, which gave validity to their title to lands originally granted to the same persons by "The Proprietors of the Elbows," a company claiming to own and hold jurisdiction over this tract, to which the General Court had declared they had no right. This

last tract, or remainder as I have termed it, which contained twenty-nine hundred and fifty-nine acres, will be referred to in the course of this article as the Elbows Tract, although it included by no means all the territory known under that name.

The history of these separate grants and the documents relating to their subsequent coalescence into a precinct or parish are herewith given in detail.

THE READ MANOR.

THE earliest located and largest of these, The Read Ten Thousand Acre Tract, took in the whole Western half of the present Town, and was bounded on the North, West and nearly all of the South by the present Town lines. Its East line lay West of "Muddy Brook," and ran about North by East.

The early traditions of the origin of this grant are curiously erroneous, but the origin of the error is probably correctly suggested by Mr. Hyde.¹

¹ "Historical Address," p. 4, note at bottom. Mr. Hyde says: "I find a deed on record at Springfield, Sept. 10th, 1740, from John Read to Thomas Read, of 'one full half right or share in a township lately granted by the Great and General Court of the Province to the officers and soldiers which was formerly in the Fight with ye Indian Enemy at the falls on Connecticut River commonly called the Falls Fight, which township lyeth near or adjoining to Deerfield in ye County of Hampshire, of which Fight my honored Father, Thomas Read, deceased was then and there one of the soldiers.' The township here referred to is Bernardston, and the fight, the battle at Turner's Falls, during Phillip's War, in 1676. It may have been founded with the tract in Ware, owned by Mr. Read, who was a lawyer of some eminence in Boston, and owned other large tracts of land. There is a deed on record at Springfield, of 23,040 acres on the southerly side of Deerfield, made by agents of the town of Boston to him."

The tradition seems to have been as follows, quoting from Barber:—"Ware remained unsettled for many years after the adjoining towns were settled, the soil being so hard and rough that it was considered unfit for cultivation. At an early period nearly the whole territory now comprised in the town was granted by the general court to a military company from Narragansett, as a reward for expelling the Indians from that vicinity. So little value was placed upon it by the company, that they shortly after sold it to John Reed, Esq., of Boston, for two coppers per acre"; [*Historical Collections—Massachusetts*, by JOHN WARNER BARBER, page 342.] This quotation from Barber is itself a quotation and seems to have been taken from an Historical Address delivered upon Thanksgiving Day, 1830, by the Reverend Augustus B. Reed, pastor of the First Congregational church of Ware.

The true history of the Read tract is as follows [See Mr. Hyde's *Address*, page 4]: "Shortly after a settlement was made at Springfield in 1636 that town began to push out settlers beyond its limits and soon had flourishing branches started over the Connecticut border. This was a serious bone of contention between the two colonies for more than seventy years. At length, after many surveys, in 1713 Massachusetts agreed to give to Connecticut 105,793¹ acres in unimproved lands, in return for which Massachusetts was to continue to hold juris-

¹ TRUMBULL says 107,793 acres, but that is incorrect.

"diction over a like amount settled by her within the "Connecticut border."¹ The lands thus deeded by Massachusetts were called the Equivalent Lands,² and they included Belchertown, Pelham, part of Enfield and even ran up as high as New Hampshire.³ These 105,793 acres (of equivalent lands) were bid off for £683 by W^m. Pitkin in behalf of several persons mostly residents of Massachusetts at a vendue holden at Hartford April 24 and 25 1716.

The deed is recorded in "Colonial Record of Deeds, Patents etc. [manuscripts] III, 194-199" (State of Connecticut)⁴.

The towns in Connecticut and number of acres in each that Massachusetts continued to hold jurisdiction over are as follows:⁵ Woodstock, 30,419 acres; Enfield, 36,180 acres; Part of Springfield East of Connecticut River, 640 acres; Part of same West of said river, 287 acres; Suffield, 22,172 acres; Westfield, 5549 acres; Gov. Dudley's lands, 1500 acres; Hon. W^m. Stoughton's lands, 818 acres; Rob't. Thompson's lands, 2000 acres; Col. W^m. Dudley's lands, 2000 acres; Col. W^m. Whiting's lands, 1000 acres; Half of Sir Richard Saltonstall's tract in Enfield, 1000 acres; other small lots, 2228⁵ acres; Total 105,793 acres.

The proceeds of this sale were voted to Yale Col-

¹ TRUMBULL, "History of Connecticut," Vol. I page 447.

² The part in Ware was afterwards called the "Manor of Peace" as being a peace offering to Connecticut.

³ C. W. BOWEN, "Boundary Disputes of Connecticut," page 58.

⁴ See *Colonial Records of Connecticut*, Edited by CHAS. J. HOADLY.

⁵ C. W. BOWEN—*Boundary Disputes of Conn.* p. p. 58-59 except the item; "other small lots 2,228 acres" which is given in BOWEN as 4,228