

**A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF
DUNSTABLE, MASSACHUSETTS,
FROM ITS EARLIEST SETTLEMENT
TO THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1873**

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A History of the Town of Dunstable, Massachusetts, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Year of Our Lord 1873 by Elias Nason

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Amos Kendall

A HISTORY
OF THE
TOWN OF DUNSTABLE,
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BY
THE REV. ELIAS NASON, M. A.,
AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF HENRY WILSON," THE "LIFE OF CHARLES SUMNER," THE
"GAZETTEER OF MASSACHUSETTS," AND OTHER WORKS.

"It is wise for us to recur to the history of our ancestors. Those who do not look upon themselves as a link connecting the Past with the Future, do not perform their duty to the world."—DANIEL WEBSTER.

"And shall we not proclaim
That blood of honest fame
Which no tyranny could tame
By its chain?"

WASHINGTON ALLSTON.

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1877.

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PREFACE.

IN writing this history of the town of Dunstable, Mass., I have preferred to arrange it in the form of annals, because the intimate connection between the civil, ecclesiastical, military, and educational affairs seemed to demand that they should be presented in the order of time rather than apart in groupings by themselves. By recurring to the index, any particular name, event, or subject may be readily found. As the space was limited, I have endeavored to avoid, as much as possible, theories, comments, and deductions, and to compress as many facts as appeared to be of interest into the number of pages fixed upon for the work. For the same reason the genealogies of the families have been omitted, although I have introduced, as far as practicable, the dates of births, deaths, and marriages, together with other points of importance to those engaged in tracing back the lineage of the sons and daughters of Dunstable.

The materials for this work have been drawn mainly from the town, parish, church, and State records, and the places whence citations have been made in general indicated. In pursuing my investigations I have been most kindly assisted by the Committee of Publication, consisting of Messrs. Benjamin French, Josiah Cummings Proctor, John Adams Parkhurst, and Dexter Butterfield, by Messrs. John Ward Dean and William B. Trask, of Boston, as well as by several others, to all of whom I would here tender my very sincere acknowledgments.

ELIAS NASON.

NORTH BILLERICA, MASS., April 21, 1877.

HISTORY OF DUNSTABLE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY SETTLEMENTS IN MASSACHUSETTS. — SURVEYS OF DUNSTABLE. — ORIGINAL GRANTS OF THE LAND. — WILLIAM BRENTON'S GRANT. — OTHER GRANTS. — THOMAS BEATTLE'S GRANT. — DIVISION OF THIS GRANT. — PETITION OF THE PROPRIETORS FOR INCORPORATION. — THEIR NAMES. — ACT OF INCORPORATION. — JONATHAN DANFORTH'S SURVEY OF THE TOWN. — EXTENT OF THE TOWN. — CHARACTER OF THE PROPRIETORS. — NAME OF THE TOWN. — DUNSTABLE, ENGLAND.

"In the fathers of New England we behold a body of men who, for the liberty of faith alone, resolutely and deliberately exchanged the delights home and the comforts of civilized life for toil and danger, for an ungenial climate and a rugged soil."
GULIAN C. VERPLANCK.

"We have no title-deed to house or lands ;
Owners and occupants of earlier date
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates."
H. W. LONGFELLOW.

THE early English settlements, commenced along the shore of Massachusetts Bay,— as that of Plymouth, 1620 ; of Salem, 1626 ; of Boston, 1630 ; and of Newbury, 1633,— were gradually extended into the wilderness, then infested with wild beasts, and tribes of wandering savages who justly held themselves to be the rightful owners of the soil.

Sir Henry Rosewell and others obtained, on the 4th of March, 1629, a royal charter of a grant of land in New England included by a line running three miles south of the Charles River, and another line running three miles north of the Merrimack River, from the Atlantic to the South Sea, or Pacific Ocean. The corporation was entitled "The Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England," and under its favorable auspices the tide of immigration set in rapidly to this unex-

plored and inhospitable region. As many as seventeen ships, bringing about 1,500 passengers, arrived during the year 1630.

In the selection of their farms, it was natural for the settlers to follow the course of the larger streams, since along their margins extended the rich alluvial lands, which, in some instances, the Indians had reduced to tillage, while the waters afforded, not only an abundant supply of fish, but also a ready means of intercommunication between the settlements.

Haverhill, then called Pentucket, was settled as early as 1640; the Indian deed — for it was customary to remunerate the natives for their lands — bears the date of Nov. 15, 1642. Groton, Billerica, — then including Tewksbury, — and Chelmsford, including Westford, were all incorporated in 1655. Beyond these towns an unbroken tract of wilderness extended as far as Canada.

Attracted by the fertility of the soil and the heavy growth of timber in the valleys of the Merrimack, Nashua, and Souhegan Rivers, enterprising men from Boston, Salem, Woburn, and other towns began, as early as 1660, to obtain grants of tracts of land of three hundred acres and upwards, lying along these rivers, to erect garrison houses of logs, and to clear away the timber, which could be readily floated down the streams and shipped for market.

A survey of the valley of the Merrimack River was made by Captains Simon Willard and Edward Johnson in 1652, and the colony of Massachusetts Bay then claimed all the land three miles north and east of this river, to a large rock in the Winnepesaukee River, and thence due west as far as New York. The county of Middlesex, organized May 10, 1643, held jurisdiction over this vast unsettled region, and within it was embraced all that extensive territory which a few years later became the town of Dunstable.

Four years subsequent to the above-mentioned survey, William Brenton, who afterwards became governor of Rhode Island, obtained a grant of a large tract of land lying on both sides of the Merrimack River, and which at a later day formed almost all of the township of Litchfield. It extended on the west side of the Merrimack River, from a little stream called Naticook Brook, just above Thornton's Ferry, down to about

a mile south of Pennichuck Brook, and was long known as "Brenton's Farm." No attempts, however, were made to settle on this land anterior to 1720. About the year 1660 tracts of land of five hundred acres each, on the Souhegan River, were granted to Captains William Davis, of Boston, and Isaac Johnson, of Roxbury, the latter of whom was killed in the Naragansett fight, Dec. 19, 1675. The town of Charlestown obtained a grant of one thousand acres, lying at or near Dram Cup Hill, now in Milford, N. H., for a school farm, and in 1662 the town of Billerica secured a grant of five hundred acres for the same purpose. It subsequently obtained a much larger grant.

It was the policy of the General Court to extend the settlements. The value set upon the land was very low, and hence extensive tracts of this wild waste were readily secured. Mrs. Anna Cole obtained a grant of five hundred acres; Mr. Phineas Pratt and others, a grant of three hundred acres, "for straight and hardships endured by them in planting at Plymouth." Other grants were successively made, among which was one of four hundred acres to Gov. John Endecott, six miles north of Pawtucket Falls and one mile west of Beaver Brook; another to Henry Kimball, long known as "Kimball's Farm," and now in the towns of Hudson and Pelham, N. H.; while certain tracts on the southerly side of Salmon Brook were granted to Samuel Scarlett, Capt. Joseph Wheeler, and to his son, Lieut. Joseph Wheeler. Edward Cowell had a grant of two hundred and fifty acres lying on the north of Massapoag Pond, and Capt. Thomas Brattle, a noted citizen of Boston and a public benefactor, had a grant of 1,650 acres, extending north-easterly from Mr. Cowell's land, and embracing what is now the village of Dunstable. It was known for almost a century as "Brattle's Farm," and the settlement made upon it bore the name of "Brattle End." Capt. Brattle bought this land July 14, 1671, of Kanapatune and Patatucke,* Indians, and it is described as being 2,000 acres, "in the wilderness on the west side of the Merramack, between the river and Mashapopog Pond, on the line of Chelmsford." The land was formerly

* He was of Wamesit, and one of the owners of the territory of Groton. He was called by the English, Jacob Patatucke.