

**THE HISTORY OF
HAVERHILL,
MASSACHUSETTS**

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The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts by B. L. Mirick

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There was a time when red men climbed these hills,
And wandered by these glades, these plains, and rills;
Or rowed the light canoe along yon river,—
Or rushed to conflict, armed with bow and quiver,—
Or 'neath the forest leaves that o'er them hung,
They council held, or loud their war-notes sung.

MS. Poem.



HAVERHILL:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY A. W. THAYER.
1832.

INTRODUCTION.



In the early history of almost every town, there is a great variety of incidents which are well worth preserving. However trifling some of them may appear to strangers, still they carry a deep and abiding interest to a native. No one can heedlessly listen to a narrative of the customs and manners of his fathers—to a recital of the deeds they accomplished, and the dangers they surmounted. Every valley and hill has its history—the ancient tree that stretches its long branches to the breeze—the flowers that spring up and blossom in our pathway—and the glassy stream that bursts from the green hillside, rippling in the shade of the thick forest, or winding slowly among the open and cultivated fields;—and it cannot but interest those who are now seeking pleasure or profit among them, when they reflect that, on the same places, their fathers reared their thatched cottages, defended themselves against the attacks of prowling beasts, and grappled with the fierce savages.

The depredations of the Indians form a prominent feature in the following pages. Haverhill was a frontier town for more than seventy years, and about thirty years it suffered all the horrors which accompanied savage warfare. The history of the dangers and hardships endured by some of the inhabitants, in the latter period, appears, in many instances, like some fabulous story; and, perhaps, we should so consider it, were it not derived from respectable and authentic sources. Scarcely

a year passed, but more or less of them were slain, or captivated by their treacherous enemy,—an enemy, who spared not the old man, nor the infant, neither the strong man, nor feeble and helpless woman—all were alike the objects of their hatred and revenge. Many writers have ascribed to this revengeful race, pure and lofty virtue, high and delicate principles of honor, and firm and devoted friendship to those who have granted them favors. To these assertions I am not prepared to subscribe. If valor be a virtue, then some of them surely possessed it; but even these were few, for the courage of a great majority only prompted them to murder women and children, and attack men unawares, or while asleep. We have discovered none of their devoted friendships, nor their high principles of honor, in their intercourse, either in peace or in war, with the early inhabitants of this town. Nothing can justify their treacherous conduct—no plea can be urged in their behalf sufficient to palliate their diabolical cruelties.

The advancement of the American Colonies in population, riches and power, is unparalleled in the annals of history. The mammoth nations that have long since been swept from the field of existence, whose armies encircled mountains, and covered vallies; whose armaments triumphantly rode the great deep, and made the rock-built cities of warlike nations tremble at their appearance—these can boast, at no period, of a progress so elevated, so rapid as our own. Their early strength was like the infant's; as that will extend its arms to surrounding objects for support, so they leaned on contiguous nations for protection, until prosperity began to flow through their internal channels, till their limbs were indued with vigor, and they could gird on the sword, handle the spear, and go forth alone and fearlessly to conquer. Century after century

came and passed; revolutions, attended with terrific gloom, horror, conflagration and bloodshed, were effected; and kingdoms tottered, crumbled and fell, before they attained the zenith of their power.

But it was not so with the Colonies. A few years only elapsed, when flourishing villages sprung up, as if by magic, from the gloomy wilderness, teeming with a hardy and fearless population. Scarcely a century and a half had revolved, when they arose in their strength, and shook the chains of monarchy from their limbs. The spirit of Liberty was an early and beloved inmate of the bosoms of our Fathers. It was a native of the soil on which they trod. It roamed upon the mountain that lifts its bleak brow to the clouds, as wild, as proud, and free, as the grey bird that builds her eyry on its loftiest cliff; sometimes it rested in its sunny places, or in the shadow of its tall trees; sometimes it basked on its sky-peaked rocks, or travelled with the winds over its wild recesses. It descended into the vallies and sate beneath the green chestnut, the sycamore, or cedar; or slept in the night-time among their sweetest flowers. At noon-day it drank from the cool fountains that burst from the silent caverns of the hills, and gently flowed through the shady woods. It was in every hill, glen, tree and stream, and readily infused itself into the bosoms of our fathers, where it was a welcome and cherished guest. At last, when it was chafed with the iron hand of oppression, it broke from its retreat, and defied the veteran armies and the multiplied armaments of the mightiest nation of Europe. Its voice was then like the sound of a terrible earthquake, or the roll of midnight thunders; and it rang, not only among our own White and Apalachian hills, but among the snow-clad cliffs of the Dozrafield, and through the land of palms and cypresses.

That spirit of liberty,—that earnest longing for independence which animates the breast of man, is not to be spoken of—it is not to be written, analyzed nor criticised; but to be mused upon—to be felt—and to be acted in the field, or in the hall of legislation. It may be crushed, but never destroyed; it may nearly wither beneath the hot breath of monarchy, but it will never die. We might as well think of handling the lightning, or of changing the course of the thunder-bolt, as to destroy it. It is unfathomable—indescribable—unknown, but to him who feels it. The roar of conflicting armies, the crackling of a conflagration, the clanking of chains, the horrors of a dungeon—nothing will appal the heart which it animates.

In the long and arduous struggle of the Colonies for independence, Haverhill bore its share of the losses, both in men and treasure; perhaps none, of the same wealth and population, did more. Most of the inhabitants were ready, at any period, to sacrifice their fortunes, and even their lives, to support the government of their choice. Their taxes were frequently enormous, but they were cheerfully borne. Though darkness and gloom often hung like a pall over the struggling nation, still they were not dispirited, but clung to hope, like men who had determined to die, rather than see their beloved country groaning in slavery.

But few of these revolutionary worthies are now living. The most of them have been gathered to the harvest of death, and the venerable remnant that now remains, will quickly pass away. Their voices will be silent—their hoary heads will be no longer among us—they will be crumbling in the earth with their fathers. But the story of their achievement shall not be forgotten. Their swords and their sheaths shall be hung up in the halls of their children, as silent but intelligible witnesses of their deeds. Their glory shall never pass

from their names; but, in whatever land the banner of freedom is unfurled, there will their memories be cherished, and their praises sung.

Though the interest created by a history of this kind is principally local, still no pains or expense has been spared to make it what it should be. When I began to collect my materials, the names of the first settlers were not known, and even the year in which the town was said to be settled, was, by many disputed. Many accounts have been published of the heroic deed of Mrs. Hannah Dustin; but the most of them which I have examined are very imperfect, and some of them inconsistent. To this, and the memorable attack by the French and Indians on the 29th August, 1708, I have paid particular attention; and believe that I have collected all the attending circumstances worthy of being preserved; many of which have not hitherto been generally known. I have collected the names of many persons who lived here at an early period; the names of those who were slain by the Indians, the day on which they fell, and in many cases the incidents connected with them. The reader will also find short biographical sketches of some of the prominent men who were an honor to the town.

In my researches I found many ancient manuscripts in private families, some of which were written nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, but were laid aside with waste papers, and considered of no value. I have likewise discovered many almanacks, more than a century old, on which the owners kept a journal of remarkable events. The late Hon. Bailey Bartlett, just before his decease, copied from his almanacks, a journal kept by himself and his father, from 1732 to 1830. From this I have extracted many interesting facts. The Town Records are another source from which I have derived information. The first regular meeting held by the town

was in 1643; and the book in which were recorded the doings of that and a few succeeding years, is in a very tattered condition. Some of its pages can scarcely be decyphered. It seems that the Indians, in one of their attacks, obtained possession of it; but it was found soon after in the westerly part of the town, now Methuen, in a very damaged state. I have inserted some things which were handed down by tradition; but have, in most cases, given them as such, and have admitted none but those which seemed probable, or were derived from respectable sources.

These are a few of the numerous authorities from which I have drawn my information. It cannot be expected, in such a variety of facts and dates, as is contained in the following pages, that all will be perfectly correct; though great pains have been taken to have them so. To those persons who have assisted me in collecting materials, and have taken an interest in the publication of this work, I offer the fervent expressions of my gratitude; and I am particularly indebted to Charles White, Esq. and Charles Minot, Esq. of Haverhill; Mr. Benjamin Greenleaf, Preceptor of Bradford Academy; John Farmer, Esq., of Concord, N.H.; William Gibbs, Esq., of Salem; and Mr. Joshua Coffin, of Newbury, whose manuscript history of his native town, will, I understand, soon be presented to the public.