

CHAPTER VIII.

INCORPORATION OF MILFORD – ACTION OF THE SOUTHWEST PARISH, OF THE TOWN OF AMHERST, OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE – ORGANIZATION OF THE TOWN – LIST OF TAXPAYERS IN TOWN IN 1794 – MILFORD CLASSED WITH BROOKLINE FOR PURPOSES OF REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATURE – THE COUNTY BRIDGE – SHEPHERD’S BRIDGE – THE POUND – HORSE-SHEDS – MAIL ROUTE – LINES OF PUBLIC TRAVEL, ETC.

“August 17, 1793. At a parish meeting held this day, it was voted to petition the General Court to be set off as a separate town, and Augustus Blanchard, William Peabody, Thomas Burns, Joshua Burnham, and Benjamin Hutchinson were appointed a committee to treat with the committee from the Mile Slip and others respecting being set off.”

Oct 17, 1793, it was voted to “petition the General Court, in connection with the Mile Slip, Duxbury, and a part of Hollis, to be set off from the old town as a separate town;” and William Peabody, Augustus Blanchard, and Solomon Hopkins were appointed a committee, with full power to petition the General Court to be incorporated into a body politic, also “to do everything to fully complete the same, their proceedings to be ratified by the parish, which is to pay the expense of the same.”

At the same meeting it was voted to “make application to the town of Amherst for their consent that we be set off as a separate town.”

ACTION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERST.

An application asking the consent of the town that the Southwest parish, Duxbury, the Mile Slip, and a part of Hollis should be incorporated as a town having been made, the selectmen called a meeting, which was held October 28, 1793, at which the town voted that the “prayer of the petitioners be granted, so far as this town is concerned, on condition that the petitioners pay their part and proportion of any debts now due from the town, and continue to pay their proportion of maintaining any poor to whose maintenance the town of Amherst is now subject.”

The consent of the town of Amherst having been obtained, an act was passed by the General Court on the eleventh day of January, 1794, incorporation the town of Milford, including in the new town the southwest part of Amherst, the Mile Slip, Duxbury school farm, and a part of Hollis.

The act of the legislature incorporating the town was approved by the governor, January 11, 1794. The organization of the town was perfected March 4, of the same year, and the following business transacted: Augustus Blanchard, Jacob Flynn, and Benjamin Hutchinson were elected selectmen; Augustus Blanchard, town clerk, and William Crosby, town treasurer. John T. Gilman received the entire vote of the town (25) cast for governor.

At an adjourned meeting held March 31, it was voted to rebuild the bridge across the river in the village, which had been carried away in a freshet. The new structure to be eighteen feet wide, and to be supported in the middle of the stream by a pier. The committee to see the work properly done was named as follows: Joshua Burnham, Solomon Hopkins, Benjamin Conant, Thomas Burns, and Jotham Shepherd.

RESIDENT TAXPAYERS IN MILFORD, APRIL 1, 1794.

Isaac Abbot,
Isaac Abbot, Jr.,
Samuel Abbot,
Jacob Adams,
Ebenezer Averill,
Elijah Averill,
James Badger,
Reuel Baldwin,

Joel Barker,
Nehemiah Barker,
Isaac Bartlett,
Augustus Blanchard,
Isaac Blanchard,
John Blanchard,
Simon Blanchard,
Stephen Blanchard,
Widow Lucy Blanchard,
Oliver Bowers,
John Boynton,
Richard Boynton,
Richard Boynton, Jr.,
Andrew Bradford,
John Bradford,
Caleb Brown,
Andrew Burnham,
Joshua Burnham,
Daniel Burns,
George Burns,
James Burns,
John Burns,
John Burns, Jr.,
Moses Burns,
Thomas Burns,
Simeon Burns,
Jonathan Buxton,
Robert Campbell,
Ballard Chandler,
Daniel Chandler,
Daniel Chandler, 2d,
Richard Clark,
Benjamin Conant,
John Crosby,
Josiah Crosby,
Samson Crosby,
Stephen Crosby,
William Crosby,
Robert Darrah,
David Duncklee,
David Duncklee, Jr.,
Jacob Duncklee,
Jacob Flynn,
Edward Foster,
Moses Foster,
Benjamin French,
Asa Gilmore,
Abel Gilson,
Asa Goodall,
Daniel Goodwin,
Jonas Green,
John Gutterson,
Samuel Gutterson,
Samuel Gutterson, 2d,
Simeon Gutterson,
Jonathan Hale,

Jonathan Hale, 2d,
Samuel Hartshorn,
Isaac How,
Stephen How,
Joseph Hoar,
Joseph Hoar, Jr.,
Joseph Hood,
Joseph Hood, Jr.,
Benjamin Hopkins,
Daniel Hopkins,
John Hopkins,
Peter Hopkins,
Solomon Hopkins,
William Hopkins,
Nehemiah Howard,
Jeremiah Hubbard,
Abner Hutchinson,
Bartholomew Hutchinson,
Benjamin Hutchinson,
Elisha Hutchinson,
Nathan Hutchinson, Jr.,
Timothy Hutchinson,
Daniel Johnson,
Caleb Jones,
Jonathan Jones,
Joshua Jones,
Joseph Knowlton,
Benjamin Lewis,
Jonathan Lovejoy,
Porter Lummus,
Jotham Lund,
Isaac Marshall,
John Marvell,
Joseph Melendy,
Nathan Merrill,
Joshua Mooar,
Stearns Needham,
Benjamin Nevins,
Josiah Osgood,
Aaron Peabody,
William Peabody,
Joseph Perry,
Daniel Person,
Ebenezer Person,
Jonathan Phelps,
William Powers,
Aaron Priest,
Nathaniel Rayment,
Jacob Richardson,
Ebenezer Sargent,
Nathaniel Seavey,
Simon Shed,
Daniel Shepherd,
John Shepherd,
Jotham Shepherd,
Daniel Smith,

John smith,
Isaac Southwick,
John Stearns,
Edward Taylor,
Widow Taylor,
Widow Temple,
Bartholomew Towne,
Jonathan Towne,
Moses Towne,
Rebecca Upton,
James Wallace,
John Wallace,
Joseph Wallace,
Widow Mary Wallace,
John Willard,
Benjamin Wright.

At a meeting held in August, of the same year, Jonathan Moore, Nehemiah Howard, Daniel Burns, John Wallace, Stearns Needham, Augustus Blanchard, Jacob Flynn, Benjamin Hutchinson, Nehemiah Barker, were appointed a committee to properly divide the town into school-districts, and soon after a committee was chosen to enclose with a good board fence the burying-ground. This lot of one acre, together with the common, had before that time (1788) been given to the parish by William Crosby.

At a meeting held in November of the first year of the town's existence, it was voted that "all soldiers that may enlist and equip themselves to be ready to march at a minute's warning into actual service, shall receive eight dollars per month, including continental pay."

This action was had on account of an act of congress, passed in April, 1794, providing for the raising of a regiment of artillery and for detaching 80,000 men from the militia of the states in case their services were needed for the defence of the country. Congress took this action in view of the unsettled state of affairs at home and abroad.

It does not appear from the records how many men, if any, volunteered. It is certain that none went into actual service.

At the first town meeting James Wallace was licensed to sell intoxicating liquors, and January 6, 1795, Captain Joshua Burnham was authorized to sell, by retail or otherwise, American distilled spirits in the town of Milford. Captain Burnham had a store in the L of the large house he had built on the Lyndeborough road, known afterwards as the Jesse Hutchinson house. With the assistance of a few interested parties he had constructed a bridge across the river south of his house, to accommodate his customers on the opposite side of the river. An attractive sign upon his store read "Rum sold Here." This bridge, although not a very substantial affair, was much used, while it stood and Captain Burnham continued to dispense new rum.

At the annual town meeting in March, 1795, the town having been classed with Brookline for the choice of a representative to the General Court, and Brookline voters attending the joint meeting at Milford, William Peabody, the son of the original settler, was chosen to represent both towns in the legislature.

At the annual meeting in March, 1796, one of the then burning questions came up for discussion under an article in the warrant, "To see if the town will exempt those persons who are unwilling to pay any ministerial tax in said town on pretension of their being of a different persuasion from being taxed in future."

The matter was debated at length, and the town, by a large majority, voted "not to excuse them." It does not fully appear whether these persons were compelled to pay because our fathers were determined that all should contribute, or because they were believed to be pretenders. Probably the former was the true reason.

At the same meeting the town chose grand jurors to attend the court in Amherst. For some time after the Revolution grand jurors were chosen in open meeting, with the same formality used in the choice of town officers.

At the annual meeting in March, 1797, Augustus Blanchard was elected representative from the classed towns of Milford and Brookline. He represented the town in 1799, the first year the town was allowed to send a member to the legislature on its own account. The same day the town voted to rebuild the county bridge, so called from the fact that in 1779, the county had built a bridge across the Souhegan river in the Mile Slip, it being then ungranted land, and the people living in that territory being unable to bear the expense of erecting a bridge of the character needed. In 1802, the bridge at Shepherd's mills was rebuilt. This was the third bridge at that place erected by the parish or town. The first stood eleven years; the second, eight years.

In the earlier years of the town's corporate history no matters of unusual interest seem to have come before the people. The two bridges across the fitful Souhegan, Shepherd's bridge in the village, and the county bridge in the westerly part of the town often were in need of repair, and the records show many votes in connection with propositions to repair and rebuild. Among the early acts of the town was the setting apart of land enough west of Shepherd's bridge for the location of a school-house.

The town, of course, had a pound, which at first (1798) was located near the present site of the stone blacksmith shop and near the old burying-ground, and later near the Osgood pond, not far from the geographical center of the town.

In 1804, leave was given "William Peabody, Jacob Flynn, Ebenezer Averill, Joseph Wallace, Josiah Osgood, Daniel Burns, Josiah Crosby, and as many more as can be admitted, to occupy the ground between the school-house and Jonathan Buxton's barn on the north side of the road in building horse-sheds for their own convenience." These horse-sheds built under this permission are remembered by many now living.

In 1803, Jonathan Buxton was appointed bell ringer. His duties consisted in ringing the bell on Sundays for divine service and in tolling it at funerals. His compensation was ten dollars per year. The town also voted unanimously to pay a bounty of twelve and one half cents for all crows killed in town. The dead crows came in so fast that after a year's experience, under the suspicion that some of the birds presented for bounty were not killed in town, the vote was rescinded, and the town saved from threatened bankruptcy. The pews in the meeting-house belonging to the town were annually rented.

In the year 1800, the sense of the people was taken upon the question of revising the state constitution. One vote was given in favor of revision, and fifty-five against.

The town had a light infantry company as early as 1802, for in that year we find the town voting to furnish a uniform for the company.

The town's poor were sold¹ at auction, as it was called, as in other towns, i.e., once a year, usually at the close of the annual town meeting, the moderator officiating as auctioneer, the public was called upon to say at what price per week or year the support of each pauper would be assumed. The first offer constituted the first bid, and thereafter the auctioneer called for lower and still lower bids, until it was evident that no lower figure could be reached, when the maintenance of the pauper was struck off to the lowest bidder.

Slavery was never legalized or established by law in New Hampshire², but it was tolerated and regulated, and slaves were owned and taxed as property up to 1789; after that date, in some instances, servants who had been held as

¹ As showing the advancement which has been made in such affairs during the past seventy years it can be said that in a town in Hillsborough county, not seventy years ago, the town's poor were sold at the close of the annual town meeting, the moderator (the parish minister) acting as auctioneer. To help along the bidding, the auctioneer held in his hand a decanter filled (at the commencement of the sale) with new rum, repeatedly calling attention to the bead upon the liquor and to the rule of the sale that every bidder was entitled to a glass of the spirit. The writer has this from an eye witness.

² A descendant of Captain Josiah Crosby informs the writer that there is a tradition in the family, that when his great-grandfather came to Milford in 1753, he brought with him two children, one white and the other colored; that the latter was obtained in the following manner; M. Crosby was one day in Boston, with his wife, making purchases. The mistress of the shop was complaining of the large number of children that from time to time appeared in the

slaves remained in the families in which they had lived, and were sometimes spoken of as slaves. How many persons have at any time been held in servitude upon the soil now the town of Milford cannot be ascertained, but the number is small.

It is said that there were but two chaises owned in town as early as 1800, and that pleasure wagons were not used prior to 1810, and that then they were not provided with springs, the body of the carriage resting directly on the axle. The mail, at the time of the incorporation of the town and long after, was carried on horseback. The earliest post-route affording accommodations for this town was established from Portsmouth and Exeter to Amherst by way of Thornton's Ferry. The route was afterwards extended through Milford to Wilton and beyond. At a later day a route was established direct from Boston, by way of Nashua.

The first stage-coach in this vicinity was placed on the route from Amherst to Boston in 1795. It was a two-horse covered vehicle, and made the trip to Boston once a week. There was no change of horses, the same team making the entire journey. This stage was looked upon as one of the wonders of the times.

For a long time public conveyances from the seaboard going west of Milford, passed through the then important town of Amherst, but early in the century, an independent line of coaches was established from Nashua to Keene and the Connecticut river, stopping at Milford to change horses, and at times to take dinner. After the opening of the forest road, through Greenfield, Hancock, and other towns to Charlestown on the Connecticut river, and the improvements upon the great road to Keene, not far from 1835, the amount of travel by stage and otherwise through Milford became very large, and so continued until the opening of the railroad to Wilton in 1852. The amount of freight passing through town on these routes was very large, the regular baggage wagons being drawn by four, six, eight, and in one case, nine horses. These stages and teams called for taverns at frequent intervals along the road. Not only was the public-house in the village well patronized, but fifty years ago the Dean tavern at Pine Valley, a few rods east of the county bridge, did a thriving business. The house now occupied by Edwin D. Searles on the Wilton road was at one time used as a public-house, and probably others, so large was the amount of travel on this great thoroughfare during the last half of the century.

During the winter the farmers from the west of the state and from Vermont, were accustomed to carry their produce to Boston on two-horse sleds, and upon their return trips bring such articles as they needed or would bring ready money. The writer (about 1848) counted fifty such teams in sight near the old Wright tavern in South Merrimack, all of which had come from the west through Milford or over the second New Hampshire turnpike through Amherst. It is not easy to over-estimate the amount of business done upon this great highway prior to the building of the railroads. Farmhouses in the vicinity of public-houses received the overflow of patronage and were made lively by the presence of strangers, generally respectable and substantial farmers.

family of her Negro wench, rendering her of little service as a servant. The shop keeper added that she did what she could to keep the number at home within bounds, by occasionally giving away a Negro baby, and offered one to Mr. and Mrs. Crosby. They concluded to accept the gift, and named the boy Jeffery. They sold him at the age of five years to go to Billerica, Mass., and a few years since it was said that he had descendants living in Dracut, Mass.