

## Berkshire County, Massachusetts in 1838

A few months ago we reproduced the text for several Connecticut towns from a book written in the 1830s. There is a companion volume for Massachusetts complete with wood cut engravings that you might find interesting. Two Massachusetts counties border Colebrook, Hampden and Berkshire; here are some interesting facts that are now nearly 170 years old:

Sandisfield was granted to a company who petitioned for the same in 1735. It was called No. 3. The proprietors mostly lived in the county of Worcester. The patent of the town was granted in 1736, and soon after the location of town lots was made. No family moved into the place till 1750. Thomas Brown was the first. Soon after, his father, Daniel Brown Esq., moved in with his numerous family. He was one of the principal men; was born near Boston, but had lived for some time in Enfield, Connecticut. The settlement of the town advanced rapidly. A large number of families came in from Wethersfield, Conn., and the adjoining towns, and also a considerable number from the towns below Plymouth, on Cape Cod. The first white child born in the town was named Lot Smith, Aug. 7, 1757, because the proprietors, meeting on the day he was born, proposed giving him a lot of land.

The first meetinghouse was erected in 1757, and stood till 1796, when a new one was built. The site was nearly in the center of the town, and the house is literally founded upon a rock. The first minister, Rev. Cornelius Jones, a graduate of Harvard College in 1752, was the first minister, and was ordained at the time the church was organized. The place of the transactions of the day, for the want of a more convenient place, was a barn. The notable Jonathan Edwards, then settled over the Stockbridge Indians, was moderator of the council, and preached the ordination sermon.

The surface of Sandisfield is hilly; the hills rise to a considerable height, but not abrupt, they being mostly large swells. A considerable mountain rises, however, on the western bank of the Farmington River, in the S.E. section of the town, known by the name of Hanging Mountain. It is 450 feet in height above the bank, and presents to the southeast a mural perpendicular front. This town was originally Indian hunting ground. In clearing a piece of woodland a few years ago, a large number of arrowheads of stone were found carefully deposited between two rocks, probably placed there years ago. It does not appear that the town was ever an Indian settlement. The present population is 1,493.

Tolland was incorporated in 1810, and was taken from Granville, Sandisfield and what was formerly called Southfield. This township is on elevated land, which is adapted for grazing. Considerable quantities of butter and cheese are produced. It is watered by the Farmington River, the western boundary of the town, which is here a beautiful and lively stream. In 1837 the value of shovels, spades, forks or hoes manufactured here was \$3,500. Population, 570.

Granville was incorporated in 1754 and included in its original limits the present town of Tolland. The principal village in this town is in East Granville. It is situated on a very elevated hill about 17 miles from Springfield. In 1837 pocketbooks were among the principal articles manufactured in the town; the value of these was \$6,240. The population is 1,439. The church in East Granville organized, from their own number, a church to form a settlement in Granville, Ohio. This colony laid the foundation of one of

the most respectable churches in Ohio, and now consists of about 400 members. The church in West Granville likewise organized a church, which settled in Charlestown, in the same state; this is also in a flourishing state.

Sheffield. As early as 1722, Joseph Parsons and 176 other persons within the county of Hampshire petitioned the general court of Massachusetts for two townships of land on the river Housatonic. This petition was granted Jan. 30, 1722-3, and a committee appointed for the purpose of making the purchase of the Indians, dividing the tract, granting lots, admitting settlers, etc. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1724, the committee made the purchase of the Indians and received from them a deed, "in consideration of £460, three barrels of cider and thirty quarts of rum." This deed was signed and sealed by Konkepot and twenty other Indians at Westfield, before John Ashley, justice of the peace. The Indians in this deed reserved to themselves two small tracts, which on their removal, about 10 years after, they exchanged for land in Upper Housatonic, within the present town of Stockbridge. There were two or three small Indian settlements in this town, though but a few traces of them are now to be found. On a gravelly hillock in the north part of the town, in a tract that they reserved, it is supposed was their burying place. Human bones were discovered in making the turnpike road through the town two and a half miles south of the meetinghouse, on the rise of ground a few rods south of the turnpike gate, which led to the conclusion that this spot was an Indian burying place.

In 1723 a general division was made of the lower township, especially the part lying upon the river; and soon after the place began to be settled by individuals from the county of Hampshire, and mostly from the town of Westfield. In 1726 the settlers were subjected to much inconvenience and vexation by some of the Dutch inhabitants of the province of New York, who contested the titles to the lands. They were also subjected to privation through fear of the Indians, and were obliged for safety to picket in two or three dwellings in different parts of town, to which they resorted to spend the night.

In the town of Adams is located the highest elevation in the state. The text reads: "The following shows the appearance of Saddle Mountain, as seen from the Williamstown Road about one and a half miles from North Adams village. The elevated peak seen on the left is called 'Grey Lock,' from its hoary aspect during winter. It is stated to be 3,580 feet above the tidewater at Albany, and is the highest land in the state. The other peak of this mountain, seen on the right, is called the 'Saddle Ball.' The depression between the two peaks is called 'the Notch,' and comprises several valuable dairy farms."

"The 'Massachusetts Fort' (real name 'Fort Washington') so famous during the French wars, stood near the barn represented in the fore part of the engraving."