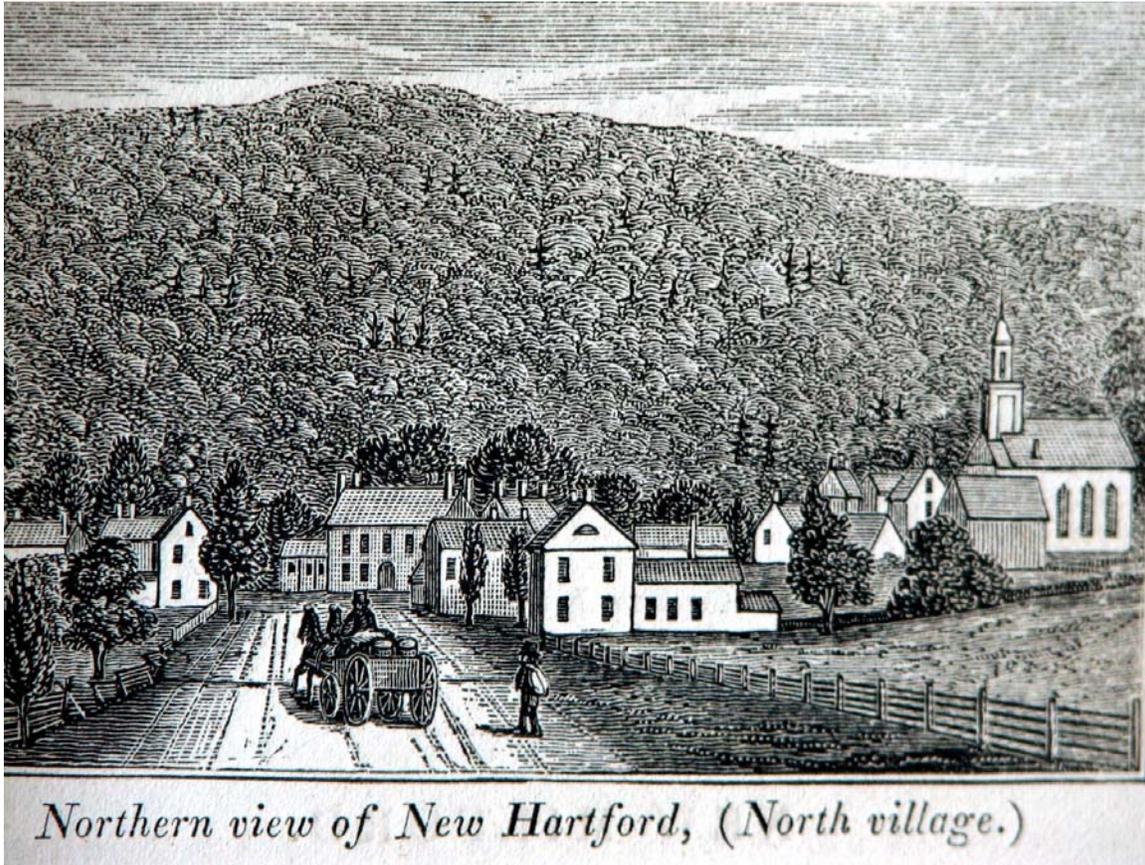


New Hartford 170 Years Ago



This community was the westernmost outpost of the populated Connecticut River Valley, and as such was of primary importance to the first settlers for many miles to the west and northwest. The present-day road leading from the Massachusetts township of Sandisfield into North Colebrook via Prock Hill Road is still named “The Old New Hartford Road” because that was the nearest outpost of civilization in the mid 1700s. In the Roman Empire, all roads led to Rome; in the uplands west of the Connecticut River Valley, all roads led to New Hartford.

“The township of New Hartford was granted to the Hartford patentees. The settlement commenced about the year 1733, and it appears to have been incorporated soon after. The first settlers were from Hartford. [There follows a list of 14 names.] The first minister in the town was the Rev. Jonathan Marsh, son of the Rev. Jonathan Marsh of Windsor, ordained October 1739. He continued in the ministry between fifty-four and fifty-five years. As this was a frontier town, some fortifications were erected for the defense of the inhabitants.”

“New Hartford is 20 miles northwest from Hartford. It is bounded north by Barkhamsted, east by Canton, west by Torrington and south by Burlington and Harwinton. It is six miles in length and averages about the same distance in breadth. The township is hilly and mountainous, containing a range of mountains of considerable elevation, consisting of granite and other primitive formations.”

“In the northern part of the town, the perennial, or evergreen region of Connecticut commences. Here several years since was an extensive tract of forests, called ‘Green Woods,’ but they are now reduced, roads having been opened through them, and considerable portions cleared. The Farmington River passes through the northeastern section of town, affording good sites for mills, etc. The town is also watered by numerous small streams, running in various directions. The lands are best adapted for grazing.”

“The engraving shows the appearance of the village as it is entered from the north, upon the Albany Road. It consists of about 30 dwelling houses, 1 machine shop and 4 mercantile stores. The village is mostly on the west side of the Farmington River, situated in a deep valley, the hills and mountains rising immediately on every side, excepting the valley through which the river and turnpike passes. The Congregational Church is seen on the extreme right of the engraving. The mountain is sometimes called ‘Bare Spot Mountain,’ from the circumstance of a bare spot, destitute of trees and shrubbery being found on its summit. The village is about 2 ½ miles north of the old Congregational church and town house, 20 miles from Hartford, 16 from Litchfield, 45 from New Haven and 75 from Albany. About three fourths of a mile to the southeast is another village, about the size of the one described, which has been built up in the course of five or six years past, called Kellogg, or lower village; it has a woolen factory and an establishment for manufacturing machinery for making woolen cloth. Besides the two Congregational churches, there is one for the Baptist denomination situated in the southwest part of the town.”

“In the eastern part of this town there is a rough and mountainous district, formerly designated ‘Satan’s Kingdom’, and the few inhabitants who lived here were in a measure shut out from the rest of mankind. An inhabitant of the town invited one of his neighbors who lived within the limits of this district, to go and hear Mr. Marsh, the first minister who was settled in the town. He was prevailed upon to go to church in the forenoon. In the course of his prayer, Mr. Marsh, among other things, prayed that ‘Satan’s kingdom might be destroyed.’ It appears that the inhabitants of this district took the expression in a literal and tangible sense, having probably never heard the expression used but in reference to the district wherein he resided. Being asked to go to meeting in the afternoon, he refused, stating that Mr. Marsh had insulted him; ‘For blast him,’ said he, ‘when he prayed for the destruction of Satan’s kingdom, he very well knew all my interests lay there!’”

The author added several extracts from New Hartford town records, among them are: “July 21, 1739 – voted to give Mr. Marsh one hundred pounds a year for three years and after that to add ten pounds a year till it amount to one hundred fifty pounds. Voted that we will proceed to build a meeting house, &c. and the length shall be 50 fouts, and the bredth 40 fouts.”

“Sept. 11, 1739 – Voted to add 5 fouts to the length of the meeting house. Voted that the time to begin to raise the meeting house be the 20th May 1740. Voted that the committee make a suitable preparation of liquer [sic] for the raising of the meeting house.”

Just as an aside, those readers out there who use Microsoft Word with spell checker will appreciate it when I say the whole system goes crazy when you’re typing old text exactly as it is spelled. The entire text is apt to be underlined with red and green. I hate to highlight the word “ignore”, as I get the distinct feeling that my machine is firmly convinced that I am a hopeless moron!