

Reuben Rockwell's Journal, 1835

The writer of the following brief Historical View of the Town of Colebrook, having been an inhabitant of the town from its first settlement and cognizant with its history for more than half a century, and having had access to the Proprietor's Town and Society's Records, is enabled to write as respects facts, a correct history of the town.

His object in this undertaking is to retain in his family, in manuscript, a record of historical facts which he himself can be relied on in To traditionary tales respecting times gone by, which generally gain belief in the absence of authentic history.

The Town of Colebrook is one of the seven towns patented to the towns of Hartford and Windsor by the Colony of Connecticut in 1729.

The means by which these seven towns came into the hands of the two towns of Hartford and Windsor may be known by examining Trumbull's History of Connecticut vol. 2, page 95 and onward.

By this it appears that when in the reign of James second, Sir Edmond Andros was sent over by that tyrant to demand the charters of the several New England Colonies, and Connecticut expected to lose their charter. The General Assembly made a grant to the towns of Hartford and Windsor in the words following: "This court grant to the plantations of Hartford and Windsor those lands on the north of Woodbury and Mattituck and on the west of Farmington and Simsbury to the Massachusetts line north; and to run west to the Housatonic River, provided it be not a part of it formerly granted to any particular person to make plantation or village on." This grant was made January 26, 1686.

Hartford and Windsor subsequently claimed this grant as good and valid while the Colony on their part regarded this grant as nothing but a plan devised and adopted at the time to save the lands of the colony from the grasp of Sir Edmund Andross and prevent his enriching himself and his followers by the sale of them. That the grantors made in a hasty and inconsiderate manner, and at a time when the colony was threatened with its most valuable rights and privileges and paid no regard to the claims of Hartford and Windsor.

The controversy respecting these lands between the contending claimants was long and violent – continuing until seventeen hundred and twenty nine.

In 1724 Governor Walcott, Mather Allen and Roger Walcott proposed a petition to the assembly praying that the controversy might be amicably settled and that a committee might be appointed for that object.

Upon this application, James Wadsworth, John Brainard and Hezekiah Brainard were appointed a committee to examine the claims of Hartford and Windsor and to receive back propositions as should be made and report to the Assembly that the difficulties might be settled.

The committee, after laboring on the business for nearly two years made their report. Upon which the Assembly resolved that the lands in controversy should be divided between the Colony and the Towns, the Colony to retain the western and the two towns the eastern division.

In pursuance of this resolve, the Governor & Company, on the 22nd of May, 1729, gave a patent to the towns of Hartford and Windsor of one half of said lands, and about three years after,

in May, 1732, an act was past empowering Mather Allen, Roger Walcott, Samuel Mathers and the other inhabitants of Windsor to make partition of the m ---- of the lands then patented to said towns bounded north on the line of Massachusetts, west partly on lands belonging to the Governor & Company and partly on Litchfield, south partly on the Town of Waterbury and partly on the Town of Farmington, and partly on Simsbury, and partly on lands belonging to the Governor & Company. One half of this tract was granted to Hartford.

The proprietors of the Towns of Hartford & Windsor made a partition by deed executed February 11, 1732.

The townships granted to Hartford in the division being New Hartford, Hartland and Winchester and the eastern half of Harwinton. To Windsor: Torrington, Barkhamsted, Colebrook and the western half of Harwinton.0

On the 7th day of April, 1732, the inhabitants of Windsor made a division of three and a half towns among them ----- to a certain number of patenters or proprietors to have and to hold the same in sev----dty to them and their heirs forever. These preparatory measures having been adopted by the proprietors, the General Assembly passed an act of incorporation vesting them with all powers necessary for the disposing of said lands & securing them forever to those who should purchase.

The first tract of land mentioned in the patent is Torrington, said to contain 20,924 acres granted to Mathew Allen, Roger Wolcott Esqr. and the rest of the proprietors of the said Torrington.

The second parcel of land is Barkhamsted [containing] 20,591 acres to Captain Thomas Moor and Lieut. Jonathan Ellsworth and the rest of the proprietors of Barkhamsted.

Colebrook was granted to Captain Samuel Wheeler, Mr. Harry Wolcott and the rest of the proprietors of Colebrook, said to contain 18,199 acres.

In the fourth parcel is the western half of Harwinton, containing 9,560 acres granted to Samuel Allen, Daniel Bissel and the rest of the proprietor of Harwinton.

It is probable, though it does not appear on the proprietor's records, that the whole of the three and a half towns were divided to the inhabitants of Windsor on the same list, as the names of the original proprietors of different townships are not the same.

The amount of the list on which the township was divided was £3,987/4/8. quantity of land divided 18,199 acres being about four and three-fourths acres on one pound, or twenty shillings on the list.

The first meeting of the proprietors was holden in the Meeting House of the First Society in Windsor Jan. 30, 1732. At this meeting Capt. Joseph Phelps, Roger Newberry and Thomas Allen were appointed a committee to perambulate with the neighboring towns, the town line of Colebrook to view and see the land lying in said Colebrook and the form thereof, and it does not appear that another meeting of the proprietors was holden till May 22, 1756 – a period of twenty-four years.

The township was surveyed and laid out in 1760 into twenty-nine rights; that being the original number of the proprietors.

Sixty acres was laid out as a Ministerial Lot to be the property of the first Orthodox Minister, who should be settled, or ordained in town; one hundred acres as a school lot for the benefit of Common Schools, and ten acres as a parade to build a meetinghouse on.

The township was laid out in three divisions and eight tiers, and each proprietor's number was chosen by lot. Number one beginning at the southwest corner of the town, then running northward on the first, or west tier to the Massachusetts line; number 52 being the north lot in the first tier. Then turning eastward and beginning the next number at the north end of the second tier and running down on said second tier and pursuing that course through the town, the tiers being two hundred and forty rods in – except the east tier, which does not hold out that width – especially at the south end.

Ten rod highways were laid out between each tier, and a number of four rod highways across the several tiers.

The committee who laid out the town were: Peletiah Allen, Joseph Phelps, James Rockwell, Ephraim Wolcott and Nathaniel Filley.

The meeting at which this survey was executed was holden July 16, 1767.

The first settler in town was Benjamin Horton in December 1765

Joseph Rockwell, who arrived with his family from East Windsor January 16, 1766. Joseph Seymour in February or March following, Nathan Bass in April or May of this second year, and Samuel Rockwell in February 1767. The two latter from East Windsor. After these, among the early settlers were Gideon Horton, Francis and Aaron Griswold, David Viets, Samuel Mills, Joseph and Ebenezer Bidwell, Hezekiah and William Simons, John Porter and David Pinney.

As the inhabitants were not experienced in the most approved mode of clearing lands & bringing them into cultivation and [were] generally poor, and the whole town one entire forest covered with heavy timber, its transformation into fruitful fields and cultivated farms was slow and protracted.

The few who had property at command, advanced the clearing and improvement of their lands with considerable rapidity.

The usual mode of clearing land was to girdle the timber, and the third year after girdling to clear off the timber that had fallen; sow it in rye, and seed it with herdgrass and white clover.

The average crop when well turned, was twenty or twenty-five bushels to the acre. The land when thus partially cleared produced good pasturage and when moist, good crops of grass for seven or eight years. When the remaining timber having principally fallen, and briers and other bushes beginning to overspread the lands, it became necessary to clear and fallow it – which, when well performed produced good crops of wheat or rye.

New lands also produced good crops of red potatoes [*sic*] and turnips, but Indian corn did [not] usually succeed and was not a profitable crop. Peach trees flourished, and in favorable situations soon came to maturity. Apple and other fruit trees did not succeed, but appeared stunted and slow in their growth.

Various causes conspired to retard the advancement of the town, and among others was the high price of land compared with its real value, and the general inclination of proprietors to

keep their lands until the prices were advanced and the heavy expense of clearing and improving land covered with timber.

It appears by an enumeration, or census taken Sept. 1, 1776, about ten years from the commencement of the town, that the number of its inhabitants amounted to two hundred and seven. Another census was made in 1782, when the number was two hundred and seventy-two and forty families. The period between these two circumstances being that of the Revolutionary War, accounts for the slow advance of population during that period.

The town was incorporated and invested with town privileges at the October session of the General Assembly of 1779, and the first Town Meeting was holden on the 13th day of December of the same year.

Though the town had not arrived at that stage of wealth and population which had generally been considered requisite in the General Assembly, and to subject them to the payment of State taxes, yet the evils and calamities of the war of the Revolution fell on them in common with their fellow citizens generally through the country.

Portions of their militia were called into the field and several of their young men served in the Continental Army, and some of their valuable citizens lost their lives.

Those who opposed the Revolution were called Tories. Not a single individual in the town was of that [persuasion].

The civil and providential concerns were generally managed with discretion & economy.

The original ten rod highways and four rod highways when not wanted for tracts, were exchanged for necessary roads.

The expense for pa ----- ors was trifling, so that the principal town expenses for a number of years were for building and supporting bridges.

The early settlers deserve much commendation for their exertions to establish and support schools. Neighborhood schools were established at an early period and in 1781, the town was organized into two school districts. All the inhabitants within two miles of the south line of the town except John Porter, who was connected with a district in Norfolk, were to constitute the South District, the remainder the North District. For several years ten pounds a year were paid out of the town treasury to each of these districts for the support of schools.

As the population increased, other districts were formed and the organization of School Societies in 1796, the society was divided into six districts of the following names: North, South, West, Beech Hill, River and Forge. Three additional districts have been formed *viz*: Center, West and North districts. Note: The old North District is now called the Rock District.

The lot of one hundred acres situated on the Farmington River was sold or leased in 1795. The interest of which is currently applied for the support of schools.

When the township was laid out in 1760, the proprietor's committee, not knowing exactly where the Colony line ran, made a line that was called the northern line of the town to which they laid the lots.

About the year 1795, some of the ancient monuments made by the committee who ran the line between Massachusetts and Connecticut in 1717, were discovered. The line from one monument to another against the Town of Colebrook ran, and it was found that between the

northern lots in each tier and the state line, there was unlocated land, though it had not been known previously exactly where the state line ran, yet it was known from the first settlement of the town that there was unlocated land on the north side of the town called undivided land.

The proprietors, before the town was settled, granted to Erastus Wolcott Esqr., the undivided [land] on the eighth tier estimated at sixty acres, for putting up the first sawmill in town. That in the first and second tiers was granted to him for some other consideration.

At a proprietor's [meeting] holden at Colebrook in 1795, it was voted that the undivided lands at the north end of the town be sold, and the principal be forever kept entire and the interest annually accruing, applied for the support of schools in the town.

The sum total of the principal for which these lands sold, together with the school lot before mentioned, amounts to \$1,712 dollars and 97 cents; which together with the amount received from the State Treasury has, on an average, amounted to \$375.69 cts. a year.

The number of persons between the ages of four and sixteen years as returned by the comptroller of the state in 1820 was three hundred and ninety-six. In 1829 the number was 362.

In resuming the History of the Town as such, it may be observed that nothing worthy of special notice transpired for several years.

The town gradually increased in wealth and population until at the session of the General Assembly in 1795, a resolve was proposed requesting the Town of Colebrook to transmit to said Assembly at their next session, a list of their polls and ratable estate. The object of this order was to ascertain whether the town had arrived at that stage of adornment in wealth and population that it would be reasonable to call on them for state taxes.

The people did not wish any longer to enjoy the exemption, as in consequence they had no representation in the legislature, and they were subject to laws they had no voice in enacting.

They therefore chose representatives to the Assembly and were first represented in that body in the October session of 1795.

The number of inhabitants in 1800 was 1,004, and of families, 192. In 1810 the population was 1,243; in 1820, 1,276 and in 1830, 1,333.

The following is a list of the inhabitants who resided in the town previous to the commencement of the Revolutionary War, and the time when they removed into the town:

1765 – Benjamin Horton

1766 – Joseph Rockwell, Joseph Seymour and Nathan Bass

1767 – Samuel Rockwell, Gideon Horton and Andrew Hillyer

1768 – Francis Griswold and Aaron Griswold

1769 – Samuel Mills, Moses Wright, Hezekiah Simons, William Simons and David Rockwell

1770 – David Viets, Samuel Phillips, John Porter, Jacob Ogden and Ebenezer Shepherd

1771 – Joseph Bidwell, Daniel Hall, David Goodhue, Joseph Langworthy, Joseph Taintor, Daniel Hoskins, David [and] William Denison, John and James Mead, John Seymour

1772 – Henry White, David Pinney, Aaron Simons, Thomas Feax

1773 – Pelatiah Mills, Andrew Buckingham, Stephen Russel

Benjamin Horton, the first inhabitant, removed into town January 16, 1765, and built a house about forty rods east of J. E. Hoyts.

Joseph Rockwell, the second settler, moved into town January 16, 1766, and built a house about ten rods southeast of Rufus Holmes' present dwelling, and with him his two sons John and Elijah Rockwell, who were both over 21 years of age and were both considered as among the earliest settlers, although at that time unmarried.

The two houses above mentioned were the only ones on the road from New Hartford to Norfolk.

Joseph Seymour, the third settler, came in February or March 1766 and lived on the bank of Sandy Brook about ten rods south of the house of Gen. Phelps.

Nathan Bass, the fourth settler, removed into town in April or May of the same year. He lived on or near where his son Nathan Bass Esqr. last lived. He died at New York while in the Army of the Revolution.

Samuel Rockwell was the fifth settler, and removed into town February, 1767. The house he first built and occupied is the back part of the house where his son Reuben Rockwell lived and died, and is the only one remaining which was occupied by the first settlers.

Of the above – Benjamin Horton was from Springfield.

Joseph and Samuel Rockwell and Nathan Bass were from East Windsor; Joseph Seymour from Windsor.

After these were Gideon Horton, who lived some thirty rods east of J. E. Hoyts'.

Andrew Hillyer lived on the same ground now occupied by the brick house built by Alpha Sage. He stayed but a short time, and his brother James Hillyer took the place.

Aaron Griswold lived near the house where Lewis Holmes now lives.

Francis Griswold lived on the north side of the road about half the way from L. Holmes' to the road that leads to Erastus Seymour's.

Samuel Mills lived on or near the ground where the old house stood occupied by Arthur Howd.

Moses Wright lived in a log house where his son Alan now lives.

Hezekiah Simons lived forty rods north of Abel Bunnell's house.

William Simons lived where Abel Bunnell now lives.

David Rockwell lived about thirty rods south of Abel Bunnell's house where Bildad Seymour afterward lived.

Samuel Phillips lived on the Farmington River where Henry White since lived, about eighty rods southeast from Samuel Whiteford's.

David Viets lived about 100 rods west of Nathaniel Cobb's in the north part of the town on the road leading from the old Baptist Meeting House to Beech Hill.

John Porter lived on the Norfolk Road in a log house a little east of Runus bog.

Elizur Bidwell was the 17th family that removed into town, and lived on the ground now occupied by the Baptist Meeting house now occupied as a parsonage.

Jacob Ogden lived on the place now occupied by Clark Roberts.

In 1770, Richard Smith from England, who previous to this time had bought and carried on the Old Furnace in Salisbury, which was the only one in the state, built a forge in this time now known as the Old Forge Place, which he carried on until the commencement of the Revolutionary War, when he, favoring the cause of Great Britain, returned to England and never came back.

He left this forge and the furnace in Salisbury without any agent to take care of them. The furnace was, through the war, carried on by the State of Connecticut, and was used extensively for casting cannon and ball for the defense of the country.

Mr. Jacob Ogden, from New Jersey, was employed by Smith to carry on this forge from 1770 till he, Smith, left the country, after which Mr. Ogden carried it on upon his own account, and received the whole avails during the war.

After the close of the war, Mr. Todd, an agent of Smith, took possession of it, and soon after sold it to Joseph and Elisha Bush.

The workmen who lived at lived at this place were William Dennison, John and James Mead, John Seymour (Who was drowned by the bursting of a flume), Thomas Feax and probably some others.

Daniel Hall lived a little north of the Old Burying Grounds in a log house.

Ebenezer Shephard lived where Erastus Seymour now lives.

David Goodhue lived on the ground where Linas Bidwell lived west of Osborn Stillman's.

Joseph Langworthy lived on the road leading from the saw mill near Charles Phelps to Norfolk on the east side of the pond on land now owned by Charles, where Thomas Minor afterward lived.

Joseph Taintor first lived on the Old Road over the hill from Arthur Howels to Andrew Bailey's, and 20 rods south of where he afterward lived.

David and Daniel Hoskins lived in the west part of the town near Nathan Allen's.

David Pinney lived about 50 rods south of Ira Whiting's.

Aaron Simons lived where Samuel Simons now lives.

Paletiah Mills lived where Samuel Mills Esqr. afterwards lived – about 100 rods north of Samuel Mills.' Andrew Buckingham lived opposite Rufus Holmes in the house owned and afterwards occupied by John Rockwell.

Elijah Rockwell Esqr. lived where his Theron now lives.

The first person buried in the Old Burying Ground, and it is believed in the town, was Lydia Mason Wright, wife of Mr. John Wright, who lived in the north part of Winchester, where Samuel Rowley now lives.

The quantity of land in the Town of Colebrook is not very accurately known. It was estimated in the original patent to contain 18,199 acres. Its length from north to south on the west tier, taking for data the width of the lots as they were originally laid, is five miles and one hundred rods, on the east tier four miles and 160 rods. The average width would be five miles and ten rods, provided the tiers will hold out 240 rods in width. The town would be six miles and seventy rods east and west.

The west tier of the town and the tier lines, of course, which run parallel to that line when the town was laid out in 1760, was called to run north 19 degrees east.

The east line adjoining Hartland runs south twenty degrees west, which would make the south line shorter than the north line.

The east tier is said to fall short in width at the south end.

The northern line to which the lots were laid was not the Colony line. It appears that the committee who laid out the town did not know where the Colony line [was], which was run in 1717 by commissioners from the two colonies. They made a line, which ran east ten degrees and fifteen minutes south, which was called the northern line of the town to which the lots were laid.

Calling the town five miles by six, it would be 30 square miles. At 640 acres to the square mile would make 19,200 acres – but as the lots are not run square, but lean diamonding unless they overlaid in width on the tier lines, they would fall considerably short of the quantity of land as contained in the original survey.

There are in town the following roads originally turnpike roads *viz.* Waterbury River Road, six miles; GreenWoods, or Hartford Road, two miles; Hartland Turnpike, six miles; Farmington River, four miles; Still River, three miles; Sandy Brook, five miles, making in all 26 miles.

The travelling highways contain probably 420 acres of land.

The amount of assessment list for 1829 was \$17,100.

A tax of five cents amounts to \$855.00. The tax for defraying town charges has for several years been six cents on the dollar, amounting to \$1,026 dollars. From this sum ought probably to be deducted for abatement \$100.00, leaving \$926.00 which, together with the annual state tax of one cent on the dollar, which after the abatements amount to \$150.00 will make \$1,076.00; which will make the sum total of Town, State and highway taxes \$1,931.00. Besides Society and school expenses.

The number of cows contained in the assessment list of 1829 was 781. Of these probably fifty were not milking cows. The number of sheep 3,007; of horses 160; oxen 221; and 440 young cattle.

Civil Authority in the Town of Colebrook from its incorporation in 1779 to 1830;

Elijah Rockwell from 1782 to 1817.

Samuel Mills from 1796 to his death in 1814.

Reuben Rockwell from 1809 to 1835.

Nathan Bass from 1815 to 1820.

Seth Marshall from 1816 to 1835.

Grove pinney from 1823 to 1835.

Lancelot Phepls from 1818 to 1832.

Samuel Whitford from 1823 to ----

William S. Hollabird from 1821 to 1824.

Select Men from 1779:

1779 Samuel Mills, David Pinney, John Porter
1780 Samuel Rockwell, David Pinney, Sam Mills
1781 Samuel Rockwell, David Pinney, Sam Mills
1782 Sam Rockwell, Sam Mills, David Pinney, John Porter, Edmund Howell
1784 Sam Mills, John Porter, Edmund Howell
1785 Sam Rockwell, Sam Mills, John Porter, Edmund Howell, David Pinney
1786 Samuel Rockwell, Sam Mills, John Porter, Daniel Eno, Edmund Howell
1787 Joseph Bidwell, David Eno, Isaac Kneeland
1788 Edmund Howell, Daniel Eno, Elijah Rockwell, John Porter, Isaac Kneeland
1789 Edmund Howell, Daniel Eno, Arah Phelps
1790 Samuel Mills, Sam Rockwell, Elijah Bidwell
1791 Samuel Mills, Elijah Rockwell, Arah Phelps
1792 Sam Blakesley, Sam Mills, Arah Phelps, Elijah Rockwell, Epaphras Bidwell
1793 David Pinney, Stephen Skinner, Sam Blakesley
1794 David Pinney, Edmund Howell, ---- Rockwell
1795 Samuel Mills, Reuben Rockwell, Grove Pinney
1796 Samuel Mills, Reuben Rockwell, Grove Pinney
1797 David Pinney, Stephen Skinner, Reuben Rockwell
1798 Reuben Rockwell, Nathan Bass, Asa Bishop
1799 Nathan Bass, Reuben Rockwell, Moses Wright, Jr.
1800 Grove Pinney, Arah Phelps, Eliazah Bidwell
1801 Grove Pinney, Arah Phelps, Eliazah Bidwell
1802 Eliazah Bidwell, Abraham Pinney, Jacob Chamberlain
1803 Reuben Rockwell, Frederick Brown, Asa Bishop
1804 Reuben Rockwell, Frederick Brown, Sam Blakesley
1805 Asa Bishop, Nathan Bass, Moses Wright, Jr.
1806 Nathan Bass, Moses Wright, Jr., Joshua Osborn
1807 Aseph Pinney, John Whiting, Samuel Whitford
1808 Reuben Rockwell, Seth Marshall, Roger Stillman
1809 Roger Stillman, Seth Marshall, Ammi R. Robbins
1810 Seth Marshall, Selah Treat, John Fyler
1811 Reuben Rockwell, Roswell Marshall, Selah Treat
1812 John Fyler, Selah Treat, Samuel Cowles
1813 John Fyler, Selah Treat, Samuel Cowles
1814 Samuel Cowles, Robert Stillman, Rufus Holmes
1815 Rufus Holmes, Elijah Grant, Daniel Stillman
1816 Elijah Grant, Daniel Stillman, Grove Pinney
1817 Grove Pinney, Samuel Whitford, Reuben Rockwell
1818 Grove Pinney, Timothy Babcock, Theron Rockwell
1819 Grove Pinney, Samuel Whitford, Theron Rockwell
1820 Grove Pinney, Theron Rockwell, Samuel Whitford

1821 Grove Pinney, Theron Rockwell, Henry bass

1822 Theron Rockwell, Henry Bass, Thomas Conklin

History of the controversy in Colebrook respecting the location of the meeting house and this society to 1830:

The town was not organized as an Ecclesiastical Society until 1786, at which time a tract of land one mile square was taken from Winchester, on which were several inhabitants, and annexed to Colebrook Society. Previous to this time all society business was transacted in Town Meetings.

In September 1780, the town voted to apply to the court for a committee to set a stake for a meeting house, and Capt. Urial Holmes of Hartland, Col. Seth Smith of New Hartford and Giles Pettibone of Norfolk composed the committee. This committee, after viewing the town, affixed on a place near the dwelling house of Rev. Chauncey Lee, now owned and occupied by Mr. Allen Seymour, which was established by the court according to law; but when the question of building was brought forward, the people belonging to the southern part of town began to manifest considerable dissatisfaction with regard to the location, and a desire for another committee and another trial; and as after the place as before stated was legally established, it became necessary to apply to the legislature to get the doings of the court set aside, and a new committee appointed.

The southern people were about to prefer their petition to the General Assembly for this object, when the northern people, to give them satisfaction & maintain the peace of society, agreed to join in the application for another committee, which was accordingly voted in Town Meeting.

The committee were: Daniel Humphrey of Simsbury, Hezekiah Fitch of Salisbury and John Watson of Canaan. This committee, after viewing the town, and attending to the representations of the people, set their stake near where Calvin Sage's dwelling house now stands.

Perceiving that the Mill Brook, so called, was the Rubicam [*sic*] [Rubicon], which neither were willing to pass, it seemed to be their object to set their stake as near as practicable to the line of demarcation.

The southern people were dissatisfied for two reasons – first because it was set north of the brook, secondly the ground was very unsuitable for a meeting house – several declaring they had much rather go thirty rods north to the place where the first stake was set, than build on a place so unfavorable.

The northern people, though not pleased with the ground, yet as they had gained an important point in having the stake north of the brook, made no objection to the place, and a committee was appointed and preparations were made for building the house.

As a considerable part of the land belonged to non-resident proprietors, and as the value of the lands would be considerably increased by building a Meeting House, it was Considered just and reasonable that the owners of lands should be taxed to a greater amount than would fall to their share by a tax raised on the list in the usual mode of taxing for other objects.

Application was accordingly made to the legislature for a land tax to be applied towards building the house, a privilege that had usually been granted to new towns, and a grant of six pence on the acre obtained.

The committee proceeded to prepare the foundation and frame the house, when an opposition on the part of southern people was manifested; a meeting called, and after much altercation and mutual crimination, it was voted to postpone for the present raising the house.

The timber was piled and secured from injury.

The prospects at this time were gloomy. Every appearance seemed to indicate a people ruined by contention, the termination of which seemed more remote than ever.

While these difficulties were prevailing, Saternian Teachers made inroads into the town and gained proselytes – especially in the northern part, and from this unhappy controversy may be dated the rise of the Baptist Society in the northern part of town. Things remained in this situation for a considerable time, when the excitement, having in some measure subsided, and the evils resulting from the present state of society became more and more realized.

At this time some person, perhaps one inclined to speculation and hazardous enterprises, [Reuben Rockwell?] suggested a plan, which soon became a subject of general conversation, and as the people were heartily tired of the controversy, they were prepared to listen to any expedient which appeared calculated to terminate the difficulties. The plan was this, and proposed in terms like the following: We are none of us pleased with the plan now established. There are handsome and convenient sites not far distant both north and south, and we and our posterity will forever regret a result so unwise as to build the house on a plan so unsuitable and improper when good plans are so near. Therefore let us affix on two places, one north and the other south of the brook, [which is] the line of separation, and cast a lot to decide on which of the two places the house shall be built, and thus forever decide the controversy.

Strange as it may seem, a project so novel met with almost universal approbation, was adopted and soon carried into effect.

The places agreed on were, on the north part, the place near where the first stake was set; and on the south part, on the place where Mr. Martin Rockwell's house now stands. The lot was drawn, and fell in favor of the southern place; and the measures were immediately taken to remove the timber and raise the house. This was accomplished, the house covered and lighted, the floors laid and apparent tranquility & acquiescence on the part of northern people appeared for a while to prevail; but it was not long before it became apparent that the wound, though in appearance healed, was still festering, and would soon be about and become more alarming in its symptoms than ever.

The northern people refused to join in procuring preaching, or in any measure to build up society, and though there was a meeting house, nearly one half the people would not enter its doors.

Things were in this situation for a considerable time and the prospects of union seemed as remote as ever.

The lot they considered as an unfortunate thing which in their desire to have something done to remove the difficulty, they had inadvertently agreed to [it].

The decision of the two communities was in favor and nothing but chance against them, and nothing less would satisfy them than the removal of the house north of the brook.

New actors were coming on the stage, and some of the southern people, tired and worn out with a fruitless controversy, seemed inclined to withdraw and let others manage the business as they pleased.

A vote was obtained in the spring or summer of 1793 to remove the house north of the brook, the expense to be defrayed by a tax on the society.

Preparations were accordingly made to accomplish this object. The plan adopted after due consideration was to remove the house standing, during the winter, with oxen. Preparations were accordingly made to perform the Quixotic enterprise, and in February, 1794 the attempt was made. About one hundred and fifty pairs of oxen were collected and fastened to the house, and it began to move majestically forward, but there being a small descent soon to pass, it was found contrary to [the] confident expectations of Capt. Watson, the man employed to superintend the moving, that it would move forward with rapidity without being drawn, and as in order to proceed, the descent necessary to pass was much greater, it was judged impracticable to proceed, and after two days labor, the house, having been removed about thirty rods, the project was for the present abandoned.

In the following autumn another attempt at the expense of subscribers was made to remove the house with vessel machinery, pullies and ropes; but after a trial, this plan was also found to be attended with insuperable difficulties. Tired, worn out and frustrated with these fruitless projects, the actors in this business seemed disposed to sit down and count the cost.

The delusions of party feelings and obstinacy seemed in a measure to vanish, and sober consideration to resume their influence, and they were led to enquire whether the object they were with so much perplexity and expense pursuing, could be accomplished, and provided it could be, whether the southern people generally would unite with them in building up society.

Neither of these questions could be affirmatively answered with correctness. It was therefore after due consideration agreed to open a negotiation with the southern people in order to settle the controversy.

The overtures submitted were that the house should be placed on the nearest suitable to where it then was, and the expense incurred in the attempt to move, defrayed by the Society.

A meeting was called, the agreement consummated and the house removed to the place where it now stands; [today 561 Colebrook Road] and thus after a controversy of fourteen years, peace and union were restored, and all seemed disposed to join their efforts and aid in building up society. Measures were adopted to procure preaching.

Dr. Jonathan Edwards, who had recently been dismissed from a parish in New Haven, was applied to, and commenced preaching here about the first of September 1795. Previous to his settlement, a fund was raised for three years sufficient to pay his salary by subscription.

The ministerial lot of sixty acres granted by the proprietors to the first orthodox minister would by terms of the grant become the property of Dr. Edwards, but he agreed to acquit his right to said lot to the society, which was accordingly done.

In the year 1797 the society agreed to sell the lot and lease the parsonage [lot] of one hundred acres on a long lease. The principal sum for which said lots were sold, to be a perpetual fund toward the payment of the yearly ministerial salary. These lots were disposed of at auction. The parsonage lot sold for \$12.12 cents per acre – amounting to \$732.60 cts., in all \$2,286.17 cts. The annual interest of which is \$137.17 cts.

The proprietors at the time they ceded the undivided lands to the town, as previously stated for the support of schools, also ceded such part of the original highways (ten rod), as had not been previously exchanged for roads, to the town, and at a town meeting holden September 21, 1795, the town voted to sell such part of said highways as should not be wanted to exchange for roads then laid out, together with that part of the parade lot, so called, not wanted for a burying place, and that the principal sum for which said lands sold, constitute a fund for the support of the gospel ministry. The annual interest of which [is] to be divided annually to the several denominations according to their respective lists.

The amount for which these lands sold was \$1, 678.00. The annual interest of which is \$100.68. Of this sum, the Congregational Society on an average, draws about \$54.00, which added to the avails of the public lands as above stated *viz.*: \$137.97 + \$54.00 = \$191.17cts. In addition to this, the society has \$100.00 in the Phoenix Bank of Hartford, which was a grant from the state to the various religious societies for the support of the gospel: so that the permanent funds amount annually to \$197.17cts. For a more particular account of Ecclesiastical Society, Church reference may be had to society and church records.

During the long protracted controversy respecting the location of the Meeting House, a considerable number of the people in the northern and eastern section of the town embraced the Baptist persuasion.

When they first began to hold meetings, one Mr. Douglass, who then resided in Massachusetts contiguous to Colebrook, was their preacher. Other elders of that denomination occasionally supplied them, and in 1795, Elder Rufus Babcock was ordained their pastor, his church and congregation being composed of people in Colebrook, Norfolk and Sandisfield, making a respectable congregation. Soon after Mr. Babcock's settlement, a meeting house was built. In 1828 Mr. Babcock, having arrived at the age of 70 years, resigned his pastoral office and was succeeded by Elder Thomas L ----, their present minister.

Reuben Rockwell

History of the Ecclesiastical Fund of the Congregational Society of Colebrook:

On the 18th day of October, 1757, at a meeting of the proprietors of Colebrook, legally warned and held in Windsor at the Meeting House in the first society, voted as followeth: that there be laid out sixty acres of land to be and belong to the first **Orthodox Minister** that shall be ordained in said town, to have and to hold to him and his heirs forever. That there shall be laid out one hundred acres of land for a parsonage to the use of an **Orthodox Minister** in said town; the profits always and at all times to belong to the minister that is ordained and settled

in said town at the time when the profits arise, and this land never to be alienated from said use under any pretense whatsoever.

The committee appointed to lay out the town into lots to each proprietor in 1760, did lay out adjoining to lot 51 in the fourth tier on the south side of 51, a ministerial lot in width ten chains, [660 feet] to a Beech studdle and stones marked "P". Adjoining this on the south lot in width sixteen chains and sixty links [1,586.64 feet] to a Beech tree and a stone marked "N.H."

On the 30th day of December, 1795, Dr. Jonathan Edwards was settled and installed over this society as their pastor. He being the first minister settled in accordance with the grant of the proprietors as above stated. The ministerial lot of sixty acres became his property. But previous to his settlement, he agreed to acquit his right to said lot to the society, which he did by a deed dated Febr. 5, 1796.

In 1797, the society agreed to sell this lot of sixty acres and lease the parsonage lot of one hundred acres on a long term lease; the principal for which this land sold to be a perpetual fund toward the payment of the yearly ministerial salary.

The lots were sold to Isaac Benedict & others. The parsonage lot sold for \$15.57 cts. per acre, amounting to \$1,553.57 cts. (fifteen hundred and fifty-three dollars and fifty-seven cents).

The ministerial lot [sold] for \$12.21 per acre amounting to \$732.60 cts., in all to the sum of \$2,286.17 cts., the annual interest of which is \$137.17 cts.

In 18 --, the Legislature of Connecticut passed an act for the support of literature and religion, the funds from which this grant was made were received from the United States government for ----mus [?] ,made by this state for general defense during the war commencing in 1812.

By the above, the assembly granted to the Presbyterian, or Congregational denomination of Christians, one third of said fund. The amount received by this society was about \$90.00. This was increased to one hundred, and invested in stock in the Phoenix Bank, making one share, which we have a right to draw out at any time by giving six months notice, but cannot be sold to others. The manner in which this \$100.00 shall be applied is stated in a note of the society passed in 1818, and recorded in the records of said society.

In about the year 1830, Mr. Luman Barber, by will, gave to this society \$120.00. The manner that this sum of \$120.00 and the \$2,286.17 cts. received for the parsonage and ministerial lots.

In the year 1757, October 24, the proprietors of Colebrook voted that the committee appointed to lay out the town shall lay out ten rods [165 feet] in breadth for a highway between each tier of lots, and so for cross highways between the lots as they shall judge convenient, which may be exchanged by the proprietors or by the select men or inhabitants of the town for other highways, which they shall be better informed when it is best and most convenient for highways to be laid out. These highways were never considered by the proprietors, nor by the owners of the lot adjoining as belonging to the adjoining lots, nor as travelling roads, but as [exp --] in the grant to be exchanged for travelling highways when they shall be better informed when it is best and most convenient for highways to be laid, and were laid between each tier

[---?] them together that it might better accommodate the inhabitants making the exchange for travelling highways.

That these were the views of the proprietors in making the grant may be seen by the following vote: At a meeting of the proprietors of the Town of Colebrook held at Windsor on the last Monday of January 1769, Capt. Josiah Phelps, Capt. Isaac Pinney, Ensign Nathaniel Filly and Samuel Rockwell be a committee to lay out of the proprietor's lands in Colebrook left for roads a [meet ?] recompense to the owners of the lots in said Colebrook that have lost lands by the laying out of the Norfolk and No. 3 Roads across their lands and report their doings to the next meeting of the proprietors.

Two of this committee were of the committee that laid out the town *viz*: Capt. Josiah Phelps. Ensign Nathaniel Filley and Capt. Isaac Pinney was one of the principal proprietors and had acted in all their meetings.

The proprietors likewise, on Oct. 18, 1757, voted that there be laid out ten acres of land in [a] convenient place at or near the center of the town for the building of a Meeting House and a place of parade.

At a proprietor's meeting holden at Colebrook in 1795, it was voted that said proprietors cede to the town such part of the original ten rod highways and such part of the parade as may not be wanted for a burying ground, or sold, excepting what may be exchanged for roads already laid out. That the principal of the avails of the ten-rod highways and parade be left entire forever, and the interest appropriated yearly according to the list of the several denominations in the Town of Colebrook for the support of the gospel, and for nothing else whatever.

The amount for which these lands sold was \$1,678.00.

The security given for this sixteen hundred and seventy-eight dollars is made payable to the treasurer of the Town of Colebrook. The interest is to be collected by him and paid over to the order of the committee appointed annually by the interest to the several denominations.

This sum [of] \$1,678.00 is secured by bond and mortgage except \$500.00, which was invested by a committee, or select men in the Phoenix Bank Hartford in the name, and to the credit of the Congregational Society of Colebrook.

This stock is subject to the same regulations as to taking it from the bank as is specified above in regard to the one hundred dollar share in said bank.

On the 18th day of Oct. 1757, the proprietors of Colebrook voted that there be laid out 100 acres of land for the use and maintenance of a school or schools in said town under the tuition of such master or masters as shall be employed by the inhabitants, and the land not to be alienated forever from said use.

The End

