

State of Feeling subsequent to the Revolution. — Proceedings of the County and of the Town. — Mr. Avery's Letter. — Armed Men assemble at Concord. — Courts stopped. — Notice of the Insurgents. — Proceedings of the Town. — The War of 1812. — County Courts and Shire Towns regulated. — Proceedings of the Town on this Subject.

CONCORD, from its central situation and importance in the county, was also the theatre of many interesting events during the insurrection of 1786, known as "Shays's Insurrection." In common with other towns, it felt, with great severity, the pressure of the times immediately succeeding the revolutionary war. The large drafts on the town for men and money to carry on that war, the scarcity of money and the depreciation in value of that received for public service, the decay of business, the increase of public and private debts, and the numerous law-suits arising therefrom, the introduction of profligate manners and the want of confidence in government, with other existing evils, were grievances (as they were then generally called), which produced great public and private embarrassment. There were a few persons in this, and many in other towns in the county, who were inclined to join in such an appeal to arms as would, in their opinion, compel the government to grant relief. A great majority of the inhabitants of Concord lamented the existing evils, but their proceedings were constitutional, conciliatory and highly commendable. Interesting and able instructions, given to the representatives in 1782, 1784 and 1786, express the sentiments of the town on the subjects which then agitated the community, and are found in the town records.

A convention of delegates from a majority of the towns in the county of Middlesex was held in Concord, August 23, 1786, "to consult on matters of public grievance under which the people labor." This convention was called by Captain John Nutting, of Pepperell, chairman of a convention of committees from Groton, Pepperell, Shirley, Townsend and Ashby, which had met at Groton the 29th of the previous June. Concord was represented in the convention by Messrs. Isaac Hubbard, David Brown, Jonas Lee, Joseph Chandler, and Samuel Bartlett; and, to guard them against any rash proceedings, the town instructed them, "to oppose every unconstitutional measure that may be proposed by said convention, strictly to adhere to the rules prescribed by the constitution of this commonwealth; in particular, to oppose any instructions in favor of paper money being emitted; and that they endeavour to take every measure to encourage industry, frugality, and good economy through the country." John Merriam and Timothy Jones were delegates from Bedford; Simon Tuttle and Thomas Noyes from Acton; Samuel Farrar and Samuel Hoar from Lincoln; and Thomas Hutchins and Asa Parlin from Carlisle. After the objects of the meeting had been considered, ten articles of grievance voted and an address to the public adopted and ordered to be published, the convention adjourned to meet again on the first Tuesday in October. There were several in this convention who took an active part in the subsequent opposition to government.

These proceedings did not meet the entire approbation of the people of Concord. They were aware that some of these sentiments were highly improper, and, if carried into effect, would lead to open rebellion. On the 22d of August, conventions had been held in the counties of Hampshire and Berkshire whose proceedings were similar to those in Middlesex; and about 1,500 men had actually assembled under arms at Northampton, and prevented the sitting of the court there. The Court of Common Pleas, which was to sit in Concord on the 12th of September following, had been mentioned by the Middlesex convention as one of the public grievances. And though there was good ground to believe the people of this county were more averse to rebellion than some others, yet disturbance was anticipated.

September 8th, the Governor ordered that the artillery companies of Roxbury and Dorchester be called upon to march to Concord, "to support the court on Tuesday next, to be under the command of General Brooks." Such other companies as the exigencies might require were to be ordered from the county of Suffolk.

At this critical period, a special town meeting was called on Saturday the 9th, when the riotous measures, which had taken place in other counties to suppress courts of justice, were "seriously and deliberately" discussed. The town voted that they were "alarming" and "declared their utter abhorrence of such riotous conduct." A committee, consisting of the Hon. Joseph Hosmer, Rev.



Ezra Ripley, Mr. Samuel Bartlett, Jonas Heywood, Esq., and Capt. David Brown, was chosen to prepare a circular letter to other towns in the county, "inviting their cooperation in acting as mediators between the government and the opposition, and in using their utmost endeavors to calm the people's minds," should they meet the next week to prevent the session of the court. After an adjournment of half an hour, the committee reported the following address, which was several times read and unanimously adopted.

*"To the Town of \_\_\_\_\_*

"GENTLEMEN, "Alarmed at the threatening aspect of our public affairs, this town has this day held a meeting and declared unanimously, their utter disapprobation of the disorderly proceedings of a number of persons in the counties of Hampshire and Worcester, in preventing the sitting of the courts there. And apprehending the like may be attempted in this county, and probably attended with very dangerous consequences, we have thought it advisable to endeavour in conjunction with as many of the neighbouring towns, as we can give seasonable information to, by lenient measures, to dissuade from such rash conduct as may involve the state in anarchy and confusion, and the deprecated horrors of civil war. We conceive the present uneasiness of the people to be not altogether groundless; and although many designing men, enemies to the present government, may wish and actually are fomenting uneasiness among the people, yet we are fully persuaded, that the views of by far the greater part are to obtain redress of what they conceive to be real grievances. And since the method they have taken cannot fail of meeting the hearty disapprobation of every friend of peace and good order, we cannot but hope from what we know of the strenuous exertions which have been made by the towns around us, and in which those disorders above mentioned now exist, to purchase at the expense of blood our independence, and the great unanimity with which they have established our present government; and from what we know of the real grounds of their complaints; were lenient measures used, and a number of towns united to endeavour, by every rational argument, to dissuade those who may seem refractory from measures which tend immediately to destroy the fair fabric of our government, and to join in legal and constitutional measures to obtain redress of what may be found to be real grievances; they would be attended with happy effects. We have therefore chosen a committee to act in concert with the neighbouring towns, for the purpose of mediating between opposing parties, should they meet. And we cannot but hope, our united endeavours to support the dignity of government and prevent the effusion of blood, will meet with general approbation, and be attended with happy consequences.

"If the above should meet with your approbation, we request you to choose some persons to meet a committee in this town, chosen for that purpose, at the house of Captain Oliver Brown, innholder in Concord, on Monday evening or Tuesday morning next, that we may confer together and adopt measures which may be thought best calculated for the attainment of the ends above proposed. We are, gentlemen, with great esteem and friendship, your humble servants.

JOSEPH HOSMER, *Chairman,*

*in behalf of the Town's Committee.*

*"Concord, September 9, 1786."*

Copies of this address were immediately sent to the several towns in the county, and, notwithstanding the short notice, twenty-four were represented in the convention. Captain Duncan Ingraham of Concord, was chosen to present the address to the Governor for his approbation. This was done the next day (Sunday) when, on account of the critical state of public affairs, a special session of the council was convened in Boston. The proceedings of Concord were highly approved, and the address was copied by order of the Executive, and sent to Bristol county, with an urgent request that similar measures might be adopted there. In consequence of these timely proceedings, the orders to General Brooks for calling out the militia were countermanded; and much good was anticipated from the proposed mediation.

The following letter to the Hon. Joseph Hosmer from the Secretary of State, in relation to the



proceedings of Concord is deemed worthy of preservation.

*“Boston, September 10, 1786.*

“DEAR SIR, — The address of the town of Concord, to the several towns in the county of Middlesex, does the town great honor; and I cannot but think, that the measures you have adopted will have a happy tendency to conciliate the minds of the people and be productive of great good. Your address came in a critical moment, which his Excellency communicated to the judges of the Supreme Judicial Court, and several gentlemen of the Senate and of the House of Representatives who were assembled, by the desire of the Governor, to consult on measures necessary to be adopted at this very alarming crisis of our affairs, who expressed their approbation, in the warmest terms, respecting the proceedings of your town. And be assured that the measures that were taken in the consequence thereof gave me the highest satisfaction; and as a convincing proof, I have set myself down this evening to express it to my good friend, Major Hosmer, whose goodness of heart I have long been acquainted with through very perilous times.”

[Here follows a copy of the counter order to General Brooks above noticed.]

“It is the greatest grief to me to see people, who might be the happiest in the world, adopt measures to sap the very foundation of our excellent constitution. I am sensible that we are under great embarrassments and there are grievances, but in my humble opinion they are most of them really imaginary. If a little more industry and economy were practised by the community at large, they would be very happy; but there are some idle people going from county to county, inflaming the minds of many, filling their heads with stories of the most improbable nature, sowing sedition, and making every attempt to overthrow our excellent constitution. The stopping of the Courts of Common Pleas, in several counties, is but a small part of their infernal plan, which many worthy good people, who join these persons, are little aware of, but sooner or later they will be acquainted with it.

“I have not time to add further, except wishing that the gentlemen who shall meet at Concord on Tuesday, next, upon the subject matter of your address, may have divine direction in their deliberations.

“I am, Sir, with respect, your friend and humble servant.

JOHN AVERY.

“Hon. JOSEPH HOSMER, Esq.”

Notwithstanding these precautionary measures, about 100 men under arms from Groton and its neighbourhood, commanded by Captains Job Shattuck of Groton, and Nathan Smith and Sylvanus Smith of Shirley, assembled at Concord about 5 o'clock on Monday afternoon, September 12. They lodged that night in the court-house, barns and such temporary shelter as they could obtain, and on Tuesday took possession of the ground in front of the court-house, marked out their lines, and formed in columns around it, to prevent any but their own party from entering. About 2 o'clock, P.M., one of the party, acting as a sergeant, with two drums and fifes, went some distance, and in about half an hour returned at the head of about 90 men, armed and on horseback, from the counties of Hampshire and Worcester, left by one Wheeler of Hubbardstown and Converse of Hardwick, and joined the other party, which had increased to about 200.

The convention, invited by Concord, convened at the meeting-house on Tuesday morning, and was organized by choosing Isaac Stearns of Billerica, chairman, and Samuel Bartlett of Concord, secretary. It was opened with prayer by the Rev. Ezra Ripley. A committee was appointed to confer with the people under arms, to know the purpose of their assembling; and another to wait on the justices of the courts to inform them of the objects of the convention and of the insurgents. In this manner, communication was opened between the different parties. The committee to confer with the armed men were unsuccessful in convincing them of the impropriety of their conduct. About one o'clock they received the following note.

page 135

“To the Honorable Justices of the Court of General Sessions of the Peace and



Court of Common Pleas for the county of Middlesex, &c.

“The voice of the people of this county is, that the Court of General Sessions of the Peace and Court of Common Pleas shall not enter this court-house until such time as the people shall have a redress of a number of grievances they labor under at present, which will be set forth in a petition, or remonstrance, to the next General Court. JOB SHATTUCK.

“*Concord, September 12, 1786.*”

After the reception of this paper the committee used further arguments to dissuade from violence, and to contented with the opening and adjournment of the courts, which finally produced the following endorsement:

“*Half past 3 o'clock.*”

“Since writing the within, it is agreed that the Court of Sessions may open and adjourn to the last Tuesday of November next, without going into the court-house.

JOB SHATTUCK.”

The committee laid these communications before the justices of the courts, and stated the particulars of their conference with the insurgents; and it was recommended that they should suspend their session. While this subject was under consideration, the insurgents became impatient. Smith beat round for volunteers and addressed the people, declaring that “any person who did not follow his drum and join his standard, should be drove out of town at the point of the bayonet, let them be court, town committee or what else.” “I am going,” he said, “to give the court four hours to agree to our terms, and if they do not, I and my party will compel them to it. I will lay down my life to *suppress* the government from all *tyrannical oppression*, and you, who are willing to join us in *this here affair*, may fall into our ranks.” Few, however, joined his standard. His language was offensive even to his own party.

Two companies, one on horseback and another on foot, marched to Jones’s tavern where the court was assembled, and halted and faced about towards the house in a menacing manner. They were informed that neither court would be open; and the party marched off to the main body. The court soon after left town; and the convention separated, after choosing a committee to lay their proceedings before the Governor, and adopting the following expression of their sentiments.

“This body cannot forbear to express their disagreeable and painful sensations, that their endeavors to dissuade from rash and unlawful measures have proved so ineffectual. They declare their utter abhorrence of the measures adopted by the body in arms, and are fully sensible of the high criminality of such opposition to established authority, which, if not speedily prevented, must unavoidably involve the commonwealth in calamities innumerable and inexpressible.”

The insurgents increased during the day to about 300, nearly 200 of whom were armed with guns and the remainder with swords, clubs, etc. They generally looked wretchedly. “Almost all the muskets,” says a contemporary writer, “were rendered useless by the rain, and the men by New England rum, so that probably, if occasion required, not above 30 or 40 men would have been procured capable of opposing any governmental measures.”

They dispersed late on Tuesday night; and it was several weeks from that time before any new exertions were made in Concord in opposition to government. The discontented turned their attention to other counties. These events, however, produced great excitement among the people. All classes arranged themselves with, or in opposition of the government. Even the boys in the streets were seen with their hats labelled with “government,” or “opposition.” It was indeed a day of great anxiety.

The county convention, which met here, as already noticed, on the 23d of August, met again by adjournment of the 3d of October. Eighteen towns were represented. The following petition to the General Court was drawn up and signed by Samuel Reed, chairman, praying relief for seventeen specified articles of grievance. The first ten were the same as voted at the first meeting of the convention on the 23d of August. It specifies,

“That your petitioners, being chosen by their respective towns for the purpose of collecting the sentiments of those towns which they represent respecting their



present grievances, and to seek relief in a peaceable, orderly, and constitutional way; viewing, with the greatest abhorrence and detestation, the late riotous proceedings of a rash and inconsiderable body of people, in opposing the sitting of the courts of justice, notwithstanding their leaders did falsely pretend to signify the 'voice of the people' in this county in so doing; and, having collected the sentiments of the several towns, which we here represent, do point out the following particulars as grievances, and pray the honorable court for redress, viz.

"1st. The sitting of the General Court in the town of Boston, which, for the reasons we we trust obvious to the honorable Court, is by no means adapted to expedite public business.<sup>1</sup>

"2d. That the Court of Common Pleas is so burthensome by reason of the extraordinary expense arising therefrom, without any considerable advantage to the people.

"3d. That lawyers are permitted to exact such exorbitant fees, to the great injury of many in the community.

"4th. That the salaries of several public officers are greater than the abilities of the people will admit of.

"5th. The want of a circulating medium has so stagnated business that, unless speedily remedied, it will involve the greater part of the community in a state of bankruptcy.

"6th. The taking of men's bodies, and confining them in jail for debt, when they have property sufficient to answer the demands of their creditors.

"7th. That the accounts of the United States are not settled, by which means we apprehend ourselves disproportionably burthened.

"8th. That greater duties, or imposts, are not laid on superfluities, imported from foreign nations.

"9th. The manner of electing jurors, as to their qualifications and pay. Serving as jurors has been esteemed as a burthen on the subject, which has been the means of filling our boxes with many men entirely unqualified for that business.

"10th. That such heavy taxes are laid on lands, and no encouragements given to agriculture and our own manufactures.

"11th. That our unappropriated lands are not disposed of towards the discharge of our domestic debt.

"12th. That the moneys arising from the imposts and excise are not appropriated towards the discharge of our foreign debt.

"13th. That the registering of deeds, under the present establishment, is far more expensive than is necessary, as the same might be done in the several towns.

"14th. That the duties on writs and executions should be exacted of the debtors.

"15th. The present fee table as it now stands, being higher, in some instances, than is necessary.

"16th. The present method of collecting excise, as the same might be collected in the several towns at much less expense to government.

"17th. That the thirtieth article in the bill of rights in the Constitution is not more strictly attended to - in admitting persons to hold seat in our legislature to enact laws, and at the same time to hold and exercise the judicial powers of government, as thereby our government becomes a government of men and not of laws.

"Your petitioners humbly beg your honors' attention to these, our grievances, and pray for a speedy redress and, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By order of the committee,  
SAMUEL REED, *Chairman.*"

The proceedings of this convention were taken into consideration by the town of Concord at a meeting held October 9th, when, after long deliberation, it was voted not to approve of them. A committee was chosen to draw up instructions to their representative, who reported at great length and with great ability, the reasons which governed them.

On the 31st of October the Supreme Court met at Cambridge, and it was anticipated that

1. The people wished the General Court should sit in the country; and Concord was, for several years about this time, talked of as the place of meeting.



efforts would be made to oppose its proceedings; and about 3,000 of the militia marched thither for its protection. They were shortly dismissed. The chief justice, in his charge to the grand jury, spoke of the riotous proceedings of the insurgents in strong terms of disapprobation.

On the 28th of November the Court of Common Pleas was to sit in Cambridge; and though the leading insurgent of the 12th of September had been persuaded not to take any measure in opposition to government, his agreement was overruled in secret council with the leaders in Worcester county. On the 27th a party, headed by Oliver Parker marched to Concord, intending to proceed to Cambridge. Job Shattuck came in a secret manner; and after his arrival, went under cover of night, "to Weston to get intelligence of the Worcester forces; but though they had begun their march, they did not appear; and from want of cooperation the whole plan fell through. The insurgents at Concord, growing disheartened, scattered before any force could reach them."

Warrants were issued for apprehending the leading insurgents in Middlesex, and were committed to the sheriff. A military force volunteered to assist him, leaving Boston the 29th of November, and proceeding immediately to Concord. The militia of Concord stood ready to afford any assistance. A party of horse was despatched to secure the subjects of the warrants, and returned at night with Page and Parker prisoners. Not having succeeded in apprehending Shattuck - the principal leader, they proceeded to his house in Groton, and on their arrival found he had taken the alarm and fled to the woods. A search was made and after considerable exertion he was taken about 10 o'clock, a.m., November 30th. He received several wounds from his pursuers during his arrest, some of which were very dangerous, — a treatment which was generally censured. He was taken to Boston the next day and confined to prison where he received medical aid but he never entirely recovered the use of his limbs.

In the following May he was tried at Concord, and condemned to be hanged. But the government treated him with leniency, as they did all those who unfortunately acted, as he did from mistaken views, and gave him a full pardon September 20, 1787.<sup>2</sup> Ephraim Wood, Esq. obtained this pardon from the government.

page 140

After the apprehension of the opposing leaders in Middlesex, the insurrection was confined to other counties. Detachments of soldiers were made in January to suppress it. One from Concord marched to Worcester, Springfield, Hadley, Amherst, Petersham, back to Amherst, Hadley, Northampton, Westhampton, Pittsfield, Farmington, Loudon, Sandersfield, Southwick, West-Springfield, back to Worcester and home. The officers of this company were Roger Brown, Captain; Amos Barrett, Lieutenant; and Jonas Heald of Acton, Ensign, and were attached to the regiment commanded by Colonel Henry Woods, of Pepperell, and Lieutenant Colonel William Monroe, of Lexington. They left Concord, January 19th, and returned February 26th. On the 27th of January, the town voted "to provide the families of those soldiers that were gone with the necessaries of life, while absent, if asked for." A bounty was paid by subscription. All the militia marched as far as Marlborough; but, before they had been long absent, they were ordered back again. The people of this town took no further part in the insurrection.<sup>3</sup>

From the following instructions, given to the representative in May, 1787, it will be perceived that the town had not forgotten the critical state of the times. As it was the last time the town instructed its representative, it is thought proper to present them entire.

"To Mr. ISAAC HUBBARD,

"SIR, — The critical period in which you are appointed to represent this town in the General Court, points out to us the importance of a strict adherence to the principles of our constitution, while we express our sentiments on those measures

2. Captain Job Shattuck died in Groton, January 13, 1819, aged 84 years. He had been a brave and successful officer in the French and Revolutionary Wars, and often affirmed that he looked on no act of his life with more satisfaction, than that to which I have adverted; though he is said to have felt grateful for the pardon at the time, and remarked, he "would always be a good subject afterward." Whatever the object of those acts might originally have been, the ultimate results were undoubtedly good. The people were thereby taught the necessity of a general union of the states, and of the speedy adoption of the federal constitution. They were induced to take such measures as gave the people confidence in the government and promoted the general posterity.

3. General Daniel Shays, the leader in the insurrection, died at Sparta, New York, September 29, 1825 aged 84. Notwithstanding his conduct in this affair, he was pardoned, and was afterwards a pensioner on government. (He was born in Hopkinton, Mass. 1747)



we suppose necessary to be adopted. With real sorrow we have seen, in the course of the year past, an attempt made by wicked and unreasonable men to destroy that constitution we have so lately established and to interrupt the execution of those laws, without which our lives, property and every thing dear and sacred would be insecure. We should be wanting in gratitude should we neglect, on this occasion to express our hearty approbation of the wise and spirited measures, adopted by the legislature for preventing the calamities which of late threatened this commonwealth, and for supporting the dignity and authority of our government, and for the effects which have happily followed those measures. We conceive it to be highly expedient, that a similar line of conduct should still be preserved in order to perfect peace and tranquillity among us.

“The happy privilege enjoyed by us of choosing annually our rulers, men from among ourselves, who must share equally with their brethren the weight and burthen which may be necessarily laid and who are responsible to their constituents for the faithful discharge of their duty, must greatly aggravate the folly and madness of those, who, under pretence of procuring a redress of grievances, have drawn the sword against their own government and laws; especially as our representatives, if they are men of ability and integrity, may remove every real grievance complained of. Many causes concur to render our present situation critical and distressing. The debts contracted in the late war, public and private, the decay of public faith and credit; the want of public and private virtue; the shameful neglect of economy, frugality and industry; an unbounded fondness for foreign luxuries, fashions, and manners, with a restless, impatient, and unreasonable jealousy of our rulers, are the causes of our present unhappiness; to remove which we conceive no effectual remedy can be applied, unless as a people we tread back the steps that have led us to our present unhappy situation.

“The want of confidence in public promises requires, that every exertion should be made, when promises are made by public bodies, that they should be held sacred and inviolable. To restore public and private virtue, those in higher stations (whose manners are readily copied by the lower classes of men), should set the example; and all orders endeavor to revive and practise that honesty and simplicity of manners, that have hitherto been the characteristic of the inhabitants of this state.

“There is certainly need of economy and prudence in the expense of government, as far as it consists with the preservation of the same; that *every encouragement be given to our own manufactures and that such further duties be laid on foreign luxuries as shall tend to stop their importation*. And that our government may be preserved and respected, it is necessary that the laws should be punctually executed. To provide some way for raising some supplies for the public expenses which shall be less burdensome on the landed interest, is an object we particularly recommend to you. And we especially instruct you to oppose the emission of paper money. When any matter of importance is to be transacted, respecting which the mind of your constituents is not known, you will have recourse to them for direction. And at the close of the session, or at the end of the year, in order that your constituents may have the fullest information of the doings of the legislature, as well as the reasons therefor, that you be ready to satisfy them. And in every respect, that you make the constitution of this commonwealth your rule, and the happiness and prosperity of this and the United States the end, in all measures adopted. By order of the committee,

“*Concord, May 28, 1787*      EPHRAIM WOOD, *Chairman.*”

These instruction were drawn up by a committee, consisting of Messrs. Ephraim Wood, James Barrett, Samuel Bartlett, Jonas Lee, and Asa Brooks, and were attributed to the pen of Mr. Bartlett.<sup>4</sup>

From this time to 1812, no events of great importance took place in town, excepting such as will hereafter be mentioned in the miscellaneous history. June 6, 1794, there were detached 41



persons, under command of Captain William Jones, and composed part of the "Oxford Army."

In the war, declared in 1812, Concord furnished several enlisted and several drafted soldiers. The Hon. John L. Tuttle, a Colonel till his death (he will be noticed among the professional men) and Frederick Hildreth, a lieutenant a short time, were the only commissioned officer in the regular service. Lieutenant Sullivan Burbank was stationed, as a recruiting officer, in the house [in Concord] now owned by the Honorable Samuel Hoar.

The militia were called upon several times. The town voted, in May, 1812, to allow \$3 each in addition to their wages, to all who should be detached under the United States law. Early in September, 1814, orders were issued for calling out the militia of the state for the defence of the sea-coast. the Light Infantry and Artillery companies of Concord and the Acton Blues, marched September 10th. Nehemiah Flint was Captain, John Brown, Lieutenant, and Artemas Wheeler, Ensign, of the Concord Infantry; and Reuben Brown, Captain, Francis Wheeler, 1st Lieutenant, and Cyrus Wheeler, 2nd Lieutenant, of the Artillery. The infantry were attached to the first regiment under the command of Colonel Joseph Valentine. Eliab W. Metcalf was Adjutant, and the Rev. Nathaniel How, Chaplain. These companies were stationed at South Boston, and returned home, October 31st.

Military affairs then much engaged the attention of the people. A company of exempts was organized here, September 13, 1814, and Colonel Roger Brown was chosen Captain, Colonel John Buttrick, Lieutenant and Major James Barrett, Ensign. At a parade October 3d a standard was presented by the ladies with appropriate ceremonies.

In 1813 several British naval officers, prisoners of war, resided in Concord on parole, some of whom were taken in the *Guerriere*. A number left here, November 23rd, but their places were supplied by others the next day. Some of them were of distinguished families and scattered their wealth with liberal hands.

In regard to the political sentiments of the town at this period, it will be sufficient to remark generally, that they partook of the excitement of the times. For many years the vote of the two parties was nearly equal, and in one instance a sick man was carried to the poll and turned the scale. Many of the political conventions of the county were held here, and some of them were distinguished for the high party zeal with which they were managed.

The political history of those times is, however, marked with no peculiar feature in this town, and is therefore omitted.<sup>5</sup>

page 144

In 1814 efforts to establish Concord as the principal shire town, where the county records should be kept, were made for the last time. And it may not be amiss in this place to give a brief history of these efforts.<sup>6</sup>

The County of Worcester was incorporated April 2, 1731; and in the following winter a convention of delegates from several towns in Middlesex was held in Concord; and, by adjournment, May 26, 1732, when it was agreed to petition the General Court to have the towns of Concord, Sudbury, Framingham, Marlborough, Groton, Chelmsford, Billerica, Stow, Littleton, Bedford, Dunstable, Westford, Dracut, and North Town [?], incorporated into a separate county, of which Concord was to be the shire town. Messrs. Benjamin Whittemore and John Fox were chosen, by Concord to aid the object. It does not appear, however, that any definite measures were taken.

In 1763, petitions were again presented from several towns and the agents had a hearing in January, 1764. Captain Abel Lawrence and others of Groton and the adjacent towns, renewed the petition, at the following June session, to have the western part of Middletown and the northern part of Worcester erected into a separate county. These petitions were continued under agitation till 1766. Remonstrances were sent in by the town of Concord, and others more easterly; and also petitions for Concord to become the only shire town in the county. Several

4. Samuel Bartlett, Esq., was the son of Roger Bartlett and Anna Hurd and born in Boston, November 17, 1752. He was bred a goldsmith, and soon after commencing business removed to Concord in 1775, and was married the next year. While resident here he was an influential and useful man. In 1795 he was chosen register of deeds, and removed to Cambridge, where he died, September 29, 1821, age 69; having held that office until his death. Of his three sons, all born in Concord, Samuel [Bartlett, Jr.] was bred a mechanic; John [Bartlett] born May 23, 1784, graduated at Harvard College, in 1805 and is now [1835] minister at Marblehead; and Benjamin Dixon [Bartlett], born September 12, 1789, graduated at Harvard College in 1810, and is now [1835] settled as a physician in Maine.

5. For a list of votes for Governor from 1780 to 1829, see Appendix.



towns were very anxious that the last project should be carried into effect. The whole subject, however, was finally abandoned after several orders of notice had been issued, and several different committees of the General Court had had it under consideration.

In May, 1791, Duncan Ingraham of Concord, Aaron Brown of Groton, Zaccheus Wright of Westford, Charles Whitman of Stow, Jonas Brooks of Acton, and John Minott of Chelmsford, the Representatives from those towns, petitioned the legislature to have Concord made the only shire town in the county; and that accommodations for the safe keeping of the public records be made in the new court-house proposed to be erected there by the county. An order of notice passed on this petition, May 9, 1792, but here ended the proceedings on this subject.

The county buildings at Cambridge had become so much out of repair, that the authorities began in 1812 to consider the subject of erecting new ones. This was a favorable time to attempt again to have the county offices removed to Concord. January 16, 1812, the town chose Samuel Hoar, Jr., Esq., Joseph Barrett, Esq., and Jonas Lee, Esq., to draft a petition to the legislature for this object. The following was report and accepted; and the same committee with the addition of Messrs. Tilly Merrick, Isaac Hurd, Jonas Buttrick, Francis Jarvis, and Benjamin Prescott, Jr., were chosen to sign and present it to legislature.

page 146

“To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

“The inhabitants of the town of Concord, in the county of Middlesex, humbly show, that the existing laws, requiring some of the sessions of the courts for said county to be holden in said Concord and others in Cambridge in said county, are in their execution attended with many inconveniences. The clerk of said courts is required to transport a large number of dockets and other papers from his office in Cambridge to Concord, when the courts are to hold a session in the latter place; delays are often produced in the trial of causes by the unforeseen demand of papers, in the public offices, at a distance from the place of trial; a large bill of costs is annually crated to said county by the transportation of prisoners from one of those towns to the other, for trial; parties, jurors and witnesses, when the courts sit at Cambridge, are drawn to one extremity of the county to attend the trial of causes; much useless expense to said county is created, not only in building, but in the frequent repairing two court-houses and two jails. The court-house and jail in Cambridge are now old and decayed, and unfit to answer the purposes for which they were built; and others, if the courts are hereafter to be holden there, must soon be erected.

“Your memorialists further represent, that said Concord is nearly in the centre of said county, and that a court-house and jail in said town have recently been erected at a considerable expense, which are commodious and sufficient for the use of said county; that in the court-house in Concord, convenient rooms for all public offices for said county may be fitted up at a trifling expense, in which the

6. During the colony charter, the county records were held alternately at Cambridge and Charlestown. After the second charter, a new organization of the courts took place. In 1692 the Inferior Court of Common Pleas and the Court of General Sessions of the Peace, were established, and ordered to sit at Cambridge on the 2d Tuesday of September, at Charlestown, on the 2d Tuesday of December and March; and at Concord, last Tuesday of August. In 1751 the session at Concord was altered to the 1st Tuesday of September. In 1765 at Charlestown on the 1st Tuesday of March and last Tuesday of November; at Cambridge, 3d Tuesday of May and at Concord, 2d Tuesday of September. In 1770, at Cambridge, 3d Tuesday of May; at Charlestown 2d Tuesday of March and last Tuesday of November; and at Concord, 1st Tuesday of September. November 9, 1775, both the sessions before held at Charlestown, were ordered to be held at Concord at the same time. In 1778, a session was ordered at Groton, 3d Tuesday of May and at Cambridge last Tuesday of September, and at Cambridge last Tuesday of November. In 1795, an additional session at Concord, 3d Tuesday of May. In 1796 all the sessions were altered from Tuesday to Monday. In 1797, at Cambridge, the Monday next preceding the last Tuesday of November, and at concord the Monday next preceding the 3d Tuesday of March, 1st Tuesday of June, and 2nd Tuesday of September, and at Cambridge 3d Tuesday of December. In 1812, and since at Concord, 2d Monday of March, 2d of June and 2d of September, and at Cambridge, 2d of December.

The Supreme Court was first held in Concord on the 2d Tuesday of April, 1776, having been annually held in Charlestown at the same time. In 1783 at Concord, 2d Tuesday of April and at Cambridge last Tuesday of October. In 1800, at Cambridge 4th Tuesday of October and in 1805, 1st Tuesday of November. In 1816, at Concord, 1st Tuesday of April. In 1820, the 2nd after the 4th Tuesday of September at Cambridge and at Concord the 4th Monday of March. In 1826, on the 2d Tuesday of April and at Cambridge, on the 3d after the 4th Tuesday in October.



public records may be deposited more safely than in their present situation.

“Wherefore your memorialists pray, that said Concord may be made the shire town of said county, and that all the courts for said county may in future be holden in said town of Concord. And as in duty bound will ever pray.”

Orders of notice were passed on this petition and sent to all the towns in the county. Twelve towns in the lower part of the county, containing 19,559 inhabitants voted in favor of Cambridge; and thirty-two towns containing 23,233 inhabitants in favor of Concord and petitioned the legislature accordingly.

page 147

All these efforts, however, were unavailing and the Court of Sessions finally determined to build at Cambridge. It then became a question of great interest to each party, whether these buildings should be at Old Cambridge or Lechmere Point. The agents for each of these places appeared before the Court of Sessions and made public offers of the encouragement they would afford, in case their wishes should be preferred; and several times bid upon each other. At length, Messrs. Craigie, Otis and Coolidge, agents for Lechmere Point, made a private, written proposition, which was not disclosed in open court, agreeing to give the land and \$24,000 in money; and it was determined in their favor at an adjourned session, October 19, 1813. The agents for the town of Cambridge preferred a petition to the legislature in which they state at length the arguments for preferring Old Cambridge to Lechmere Point and praying the interference of the legislature in their favor. An order of notice passed January 18, 1814. They had offered the land and [\$]5,000[?]. At the same session, Messrs. Joseph Hosmer, Jonas Lee and Tilly Merrick, agents for the town of Concord, petitioned again in favor of that town. But these petitions were in vain; the legislature did not interfere definitely and the decision of the Court of Sessions in favor of the Point was adhered to; subjecting the inhabitants to have the greater part of the business transacted at one extremity, instead of the centre of the county.

**TO CONTINUE READING:**

CHAPTER X. — ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY. — Organization of the Church. — Installation of the Rev. Mr. Bulkeley and Mr. Jones. — Church Covenant. — Proceedings of the Church. — Notice of the Rev. Mr. Jones. — Letters of the Rev. Mr. Bulkeley, and Notice of his life and Writings. — Rev. Edward Bulkeley. — Rev. Joseph Estabrook. — Rev. John Whiting.

[Back to the Special Collections homepage](#)

<http://concordlibrary.org/collect/scoll.html>

[Home](#)

<http://concordlibrary.org/index.html>