

HISTORY OF BEDFORD.

General History. — Ecclesiastical History. — Description. — Miscellaneous Notices.

BEDFORD lies northeasterly from Concord [Massachusetts], and, as has already been stated, belonged originally in part to that town. The inhabitants of the Winthrop Farms, which were included in this territory, with others in Billerica, petitioned the General Court, in 1725, to be erected into a separate parish or town. An order of notice passed on this petition, but being opposed by Billerica it was unsuccessful. The following petition fully explains the motives which originated it, and met with more success.

“To the gentlemen the selectmen, and other inhabitants, of Concord in lawful meeting assembled; the petition of sundry of the inhabitants of the northeasterly part of the town of Concord humbly sheweth.

“That we your humble petitioners, having, in conjunction with the southerly part of Billerica, not without good advice, and we hope upon religious principles, assembled in the winter past, and supported the preaching of the gospel among us, cheerfully paying, in the meantime our proportion to the ministry in our towns; have very unanimously agreed to address our respective towns to dismiss us, and set us off to be a distinct township or district, if the Great and General Court or Assembly shall favor such our constitution.

“We therefore the subscribers hereunto, and your humble petitioners, do first apply to you to lead us and set us forward in so good a work, which we trust may be much for the glory of Christ and the spiritual benefit of ourselves and our posterity. Our distance from your place of public worship is so great, that we labor under insupportable difficulties in attending constantly there as we desired to do. In the extreme difficult seasons of heat and cold we were ready to say of the Sabbath, Behold what a weariness is it [*sic*]. The extraordinary expenses we are at in transportation and refreshing ourselves and families on the Sabbath has added to our burdens. This we have endured from year to year with as much patience as the nature of the case would bear; but our increasing numbers now seem to plead an exemption; and as it is in your power, so we hope it will be in your grace to relieve us.

“Gentlemen, if our seeking to draw off proceed from any disaffection to our present Rev. Pastor, or the Christian Society with whom we have taken such sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company, then hear us not this day. But we greatly desire, if God please, to be eased of our burdens on the Sabbath, the travel and fatigue thereof, that the word of God may be nigh to us, near to our houses, and in our hearts, that we and our little ones may serve the Lord. We hope that God, who stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to set forward temple work, has stirred us up to ask, and will stir you up to grant, the prayer of our petition; so shall your humble petitioners ever pray, as in duty bound, &c.

“We humbly desire our limits may be extended from Mr. Stephen Davis’s to Mr. Richard Wheeler’s and to the river, the line to extend so as to include those two families.”

This petition was dated Concord, May 1, 1728, and signed by Joseph French, Joseph Dean, John Fassett, Samuel Merriam, Stephen Davis, Daniel Cheever, Thomas Woolley, Joseph Bacon, Benjamin Colburn, Nathaniel Merriam, Zachariah Stearns, Andrew Wadkins, Jonathan French, David Taylor, Daniel Davis, Richard Wheeler, and James Wheeler; all belonging to Concord.

Concord gave them liberty to be set off; and the General Court passed an act, September 23, 1729, incorporating them as a town by the name of Bedford. The boundaries of the town, as described in this act, were nearly the same as they are at present [1835], excepting the farm of Edward Stearns, which was set off from Billerica and annexed to Bedford by a special act, passed in 1766.

The first town-meeting [of Bedford] took place October 6, 1729. The first town officers were, Samuel Fitch, Town Clerk; Jonathan Bacon, Samuel Fitch, Nathaniel Merriam, Nathaniel Page, and Daniel Davis, Selectmen; Israel Putnam and Stephen Davis, Constables; John Fassett, Town Treasurer; Job Lane and Samuel Merriam, Surveyors; Daniel Cheever and Josiah Fassett, Tithingmen; Obed Abbot and Benjamin Colburn, Fence-viewers; James Wheeler and Jonathan Bacon, Hog-reeves; John Lane, Sealer of Weights; Thomas Woolley



and John Whipple, Field-drivers.¹

After the first organization of the town, there is nothing of peculiar interest to distinguish its civil history anterior to the revolution. It furnished its share of men and money in the intervening French and Indian wars; but the particulars I [Dr. Lemuel Shattuck] am unable to obtain. Several of its inhabitants held commissions.

Many facts in relation to the part Bedford acted in the Revolution have already been detailed in the History of Concord. Such others as more immediately relate to the proceedings of the town, will now be given.

In March, 1768, the town [of Bedford] voted "to encourage the produce and manufactures of this province, and to lessen the use of superfluities." A town meeting was held March 1, 1773, to take "into our most serious consideration the melancholy state of the British colonies in North America in general, and this province in particular," when, "after solemn prayer to God for direction," the subject was referred to a committee, consisting of Deacon Stephen Davis, John Reed, Esq., John Webber, Dr. Joseph Ballard, Mr. John Moore, Mr. Joseph Hartwell, and Mr. Hugh Maxwell. At an adjourned meeting, 23d May, they made a long report, which was unanimously accepted, expressing sentiments similar to those given in the History of Concord.

page 258

In March, 1774, it was voted not to use any tea till the duty was taken off; and on the 30th of June following, the inhabitants of the town entered into a solemn covenant "to suspend all commercial intercourse with Great Britain till the said act should be repealed," — not to "buy, purchase, or consume, in any manner whatever, any goods, wares, or merchandise which shall arrive in America from Great Britain," and to break off all "trade, commerce, or dealings" with those who do it, and to consider them as enemies to their country. This covenant was offered to all the inhabitants of the town for their signatures. Those who did not sign it were to be treated as enemies. At this meeting the first committee of correspondence was chosen, consisting of Deacon Stephen Davis, John Reed, Esq., Mr. Joseph Hartwell, John Webber, and John Moore.

A minute-company being formed, the town voted, 6th March, 1775, to allow 25 men "*one shilling* per week til the first of May, they exercising four hours in a week, and *two shillings* to be allowed to officers, they to equip themselves according to the advice of Congress." Jonathan Wilson was Captain of this company, and was killed on the retreat of the British from Concord on the 19th of April, in the 41st year of his age. He was a brave and meritorious officer.

The town voted, June 17, 1776, that "we will solemnly engage with our lives and fortunes to support the colonies in declaring themselves independent of Great Britain."

Bedford, like the neighboring towns, contributed "her lives and fortunes" to obtain the independence of America. Though I [Dr. Lemuel Shattuck] cannot give a full view of what was actually done, a few facts taken from the town records, in addition to what has already been given in the History of Concord, will present the most favorable view of her patriotism.

November 24, 1777, the town raised £377 3s. 3d. to pay the following bounties to soldiers

1. The following were the taxable inhabitants in Bedford in 1748.

South List. — Samuel Bacon, Stephen Davis, James Dodson, Joseph Fitch, Zachariah Fitch, Peter Fasset, John Fasset, Benjamin Fasset, Stephen Hartwell, Joseph Hartwell, Henry Harrington, William Hastings, James Housten, John Merriam, Amos Merriam, Samuel Merriam, Nathaniel Merriam, John Moore, Joseph Meeds, Walter Powers, Paul Raymond, William Raymond, Edward Stearns, James Rankin, David Taylor, Thomas Woolly, Jonathan Woolly, Thomas Woolly, Jr., Richard Wheeler, Samuel Whitaker.

North List. — Obed Abbot, Josiah Bacon, Josiah Bacon, Jr., Benjamin Bacon, Michael Bacon, John Bacon, Thomas Bacon, Jonas Bowman, James Chambers, John Corbet, Samuel Dutton, Benjamin Danforth, Cornelius Dandley, Benjamin Fitch, Jeremiah Fitch, Josiah Fasset, Jonathan Grimes, Benjamin Hutchinson, Timothy Hartwell, Benjamin Kidder, Deacon Job Lane, Col. John Lane, Capt. James Lane, John Lane, Jr., Job Lane, Jr., John Lane 3d, Timothy Lane.



LEMUEL SHATTUCK'S

1835 HISTORY OF CONCORD

for services performed that year, as reported by a committee.

For the Continental soldiers' hire	£236	10s.	0d.
For the bounty to the Rhode Island men	22	10	0
For the bounty to the men who went to Bennington	48	0	0
For one man to guard the Continental stores	6	0	0
For three 30 day men to join the Continental army	24	0	0
For allowance for hiring the Continental men	4	11	0
For fire-arms, lead, and flints for a town stock	35	12	3
	<u>£377</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>

page 259

November 16, 1778, the town allowed the accounts of the military officers and committee for hiring soldiers, amounting to £1746 16s. 3d. The following bounties for services the year previous were also allowed.

3 men, 2 months to Rhode Island, May 1, 1777,	no bounty		
8 men, 2 months to Bennington, August 21, 1777, each £15	£120	0s.	0d.
8 men, 30 days "to take and guard the troops," September, 1777, £2	16	0	0
5 men, 3 months "to Boston with Captain Farmer," February 1778, £12	60	0	0
8 men, 3 months "to Cambridge with Captain Moore," April 1, 1778, £11	88	0	0
John Reed, to Rhode Island	9	0	0

The next year, in November, 1779, the following bounties were allowed.

1st tour of duty to Rhode Island, 2 men, £39 each	£78	0s.	0d.
2d to Rhode Island, 2 men, 48 bushels of corn, £9 per bushel each	864	0	0
3d to North River, 3 men, 2 of whom to have £300 each	600	0	0
The other to have £138 in cash and 51 bushels of corn at £9 per bushel	587	0	0
4th to Boston, 2 men, £22, 10 each	45	0	0
5th to Claverick, 6 men 1 ¹ / ₃ month, £80 per month	640	0	0

In September, 1780, the town raised £550 to pay for hiring soldiers in the United States service for the two last campaigns. In June previous, seven men, John Johnson, Rufus Johnson, Nathan Merrill, Jonas Bacon, Cambridge Moore, Jonas Duren, Cesar Prescott, had been hired to go to the North River, six months for a bounty of 120 bushels of corn each; and eight men, Joshua Holt, John Webber, Ebenezer Hardy, Amos Bemis, Jonathan Wilson, Andrew Hall, Isaac Simonds, and Israel Mead Blood, were hired for three months to Rhode Island for 90 bushels of corn each.



page 260

By the resolve of December 2, 1780, Bedford was required to furnish 8 men. One was hired by the town for \$200 in silver; and the town was divided into 7 classes to procure the others. Captain John Moore was chairman of the first class, Moses Abbot of the second, Thaddeus Dean of the third, Christopher Page of the fourth, John Reed of the fifth, William Page of the sixth, and Stephen Davis of the seventh. The first five classes paid "20 head of horned cattle at 3 years old each," as a bounty; the 6th paid \$250, and the 7th \$220, in silver!

Daniel Hartwell Blood went to Rhode Island in June, 1781, and received £19 10s. in silver; and Nehemiah Wyman, Moses Abbot, Stephen Syms, Timothy Crosby, John Merriam, and Israel Mead Blood went to join General Washington's army at West Point, and received £19 16s. each. The town was divided again in March, 1782, into three classes to hire 3 men for the war.

When it is recollected that the town then contained only about 470 inhabitants, it is truly wonderful that they could submit to so frequent and so heavy burdens of pecuniary and personal service.

In September, 1776, the town voted, that the General Court might form a constitution, but they must furnish a copy to the town before it was enacted. In May, 1779, voted, 34 to 1, not to have a new constitution formed at this time. The constitution formed that year was approved by the town, after considering it at three successive meetings, by 25 to 1. In 1820, the town unanimously voted to instruct their representative to vote in favor of calling a state convention to revise the constitution. On the question of adopting the new constitution, articles 2d, 3d, 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 13th, and 14th, had no votes against them; the 1st had 3; the 4th, 5; the 5th, 30; the 9th, 14; the 10th, 55 (all that were cast); and the 12th, 13.

Ecclesiastical History.

The people began to erect a meeting-house before the town was incorporated; but it was not completed till 1730. In October, 1729, £460 was raised to pay the expense. Committees were chosen the next and many subsequent years "to seat the meeting-house," and were instructed, among other things, "to have respect to them that are 50 years of age and upward"; those under this age "to be seated according to their pay," — "the front seat in the gallery to be equal to the third seat in the body-seats below." Thirteen pews were built in 1733, and eight more in 1754. A bell was procured in 1753, weighing about 600 lbs., and the town "voted, by polling the assembly, to hang the bell about two rods and a half northward of the school-house, and as near to Mr. Benjamin Kidder's wall as can be with conveniency; and to build a house, not less than 12 feet nor more than 16 feet square; and so high as to hang the mouth of the bell 16 feet high."

A new meeting-house was erected in 1817. It was 58 feet long, 53 wide, and 30 feet posts, with a projection of 34 by 8 feet, and a spire. David Reed, Michael Crosby, John Merriam, Joshua Page, and Simeon Blodget, were the building committee; and Joshua Page and Levi Wilson, the builders. Cost estimated at \$6,101. The lower floor has 56 pews, and the gallery 16; which were sold for \$7,110.50, after reserving one for the minister. It was dedicated July 8, 1817; and the sermon, preached by the Rev. Mr. Stearns on the occasion, was printed. A time-piece was presented to the town by Mr. Jeremiah Fitch of Boston, and placed in the front gallery; and a new bell was procured from England, weighing 993 lbs.

Measures were taken soon after the incorporation of the town to obtain the regular enjoyment of public religious worship and ordinances, and William Hartwell and Job Lane chosen to carry these measures into effect. A candidate was employed; and January 22, 1730, was observed as a day of solemn fasting and prayer to God for direction in the choice of a minister, when the Rev. Messrs. John Hancock of Lexington, Samuel Ruggles of Billerica, and John Whiting of Concord were present to conduct the religious services. Feb. 11th, the town chose Mr. Nicholas Bowes, by 43 votes, to be their minister; and at the subsequent March meeting agreed to give him £90 the first year, and £100 and 25 cords of wood annually afterwards as a salary, so long as he should sustain the pastoral office; the money to be paid semi-annually, and always to be in proportion to the then value of silver, which was 18 shillings per ounce. He was subsequently presented with 16 acres of land. These propositions were accepted, and he was ordained, July 15, 1730, when the church was organized. The churches in Lexington, Concord, Billerica, and



Cambridge, by “their elders and messengers,” composed the council, of which the Rev. John Hancock was moderator. In the public religious exercises, the Rev. Mr. Appleton of Cambridge made the introductory prayer; the Rev. John Hancock preached from 2 Cor. xi. 28, and gave the charge; the Rev. John Whiting gave the right hand of fellowship; and the Rev. Samuel Ruggles made the last prayer.

While the church was making arrangements preliminary to its organization, it was agreed by a vote of 14 to 9, that “every person admitted to the church should give in a confession of their faith to be read in public”; and, by a vote of 15 to 7, not to call for a “handy vote” on their admission. The original covenant which follows, was adopted and signed by 24 individuals, — all the male members of the church at its formation.

“We, whose names are underwritten, sensibly acknowledging our unworthiness of such a favor and unfitness for such a business, yet apprehending ourselves to be called of God in a way of church communion, and to seek the settlement of all the gospel institutions among us, do therefore, in order thereto and for the better promotion thereof as much as in us lies, knowing how prone we are to backslide, abjuring all confidence in ourselves and relying on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for help, covenant as follows.

“We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be given by inspiration of God, and promise by the help of the Divine Spirit, to govern ourselves both as to faith and practice according to that perfect rule; and we also engage to walk together as a church of Christ according to all those holy rules of the gospel respecting a particular church of Christ, so far as God hath or shall reveal his mind to us in that respect.

“We do accordingly recognize the covenant of grace, in which we professedly acknowledge ourselves devoted to the fear and service of the only true God, our Supreme Lord and the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest, Prophet, and King of his church, unto whose conduct we submit ourselves, on whom alone we wait and hope for grace and glory, to whom we bind ourselves in an everlasting covenant never to be broken.

“We likewise give ourselves up one to another in the Lord, resolving by his help to treat each the other as fellow members of one body in brotherly love, and holy watchfulness over one another for mutual edification; and to subject ourselves to all the holy administrations, appointed by him who is the Head of his church, dispensed according to the rules of the gospel, and to give our constant attendance on all the public ordinances of Christ’s institution, walking orderly as becomes saints.

“We do likewise acknowledge our posterity to be included with us in the gospel covenant; and blessing God for such a favor, do promise to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord with the greatest care, and to acknowledge them in the covenant relation, according to the rules of the gospel.

“Furthermore, we promise to be careful to our uttermost to procure the settlement and continuance of all the offices and officers appointed by Christ, the chief Shepherd for his church’s edification and accordingly, do our duty faithfully for their maintenance and encouragement and to carry it towards them as becometh us.

“Finally, we acknowledge and do promise to preserve communion with the faithful churches of Christ, for the giving and receiving mutual council and assistance in all cases wherein it shall be needful.

“Now the good Lord be merciful unto us, and, as he hath put it into our hearts thus to devote ourselves to him, let him pity and pardon our frailties, humble us out of all carnal confidence, and keep it for ever upon our hearts to himself and to one another for his praise, and our eternal comfort, for Christ’s sake, to whom be glory for ever. Amen. — Nicholas Bowes, *Joseph French, *William Hartwell, Jonathan Bacon, *John Hartwell, *Nathaniel Merriam, Israel Putnam, Benjamin Kidder, *Daniel Davis, Samuel Fitch, Job Lane, *Josiah Fassett, John Lane, *Stephen Davis, *Richard Wheeler, Jacob Kendall, Christopher Page, *Daniel Cheever, Obed Abbot, Nathaniel Page, *David Taylor, *James Wheeler, *Eleazer Davis, Thomas Dinsmore.”²

page 264

The sacrament was first administered September 6, 1730, and every two months afterwards,

2. Those marked with an asterisk were from Concord, the others probably mostly from Billerica. The church and town records of those towns give their genealogy.



at which times collections were taken for the use of the church. November 12, 1730, being public thanksgiving, £7 were contributed. "A short time after, the good people of Concord contributed for the use of the church in Bedford £6." Mr. Isaac Stearns, widows Sarah Bateman, and Eunice Taylor gave 10 shillings each. The last left a legacy of £5 more, and Deacon Merriam one of £6.

Among the peculiar customs which prevailed in the church from its first formation to the ordination of Mr. Stearns, was that of making public confession of particular offenses committed by the members. These were drawn up in writing and read by the minister before the congregation. Frequent notices under different dates are specified in the church records, such as "the confession of _____ for the sin of intemperance," "for the breach of the seventh commandment," or other sins as the case might be, "was read before the congregation." This custom, though particularly revolting at the present day [1835], was not peculiar to the church in Bedford. It prevailed to some extent in most of the colonial churches. But that a detail of one's own crimes, given in minute particulars before the public, even if publicly known, tends to reform the heart of the confessor, or promote the good morals of the people, is a proposition to which few will now [1835] assent.

It does not appear that any special attention to religion prevailed during the ministry of Mr. Bowes, as was then the case in Concord and some other places; though the church received considerable yearly additions, and was in a flourishing state. Anterior to 1754, 161 individuals had belonged to the church; and allowing the original members to have been 50, the admissions would be 111. To this time there had been 83 marriages, 350 baptisms, and 173 deaths.

The Rev. Nicholas Bowes is said to have been born in England. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1725. After sustaining the pastoral office about 24 years, some circumstances occurred which induced him to consider his usefulness at an end, and to ask a dismissal. This was granted by the church August 22, 1754, and by the town, September 2d. In 1755 he went as a chaplain in the Northern Army at Fort Edward; but died at Brookfield on his return home. He is represented to have been "a man respectable for his abilities and learning, and of sound evangelical sentiments." Mr. Bowes married Lucy, sister of the Rev. Jonas Clark of Lexington, and aunt of Governor Hancock, and had William, Lucy, Nicholas, Elizabeth, Dorcas, Thomas, and Mary, one of whom married the Rev. Samuel Cook of West Cambridge.

The town voted, September 29, 1755, "that the church should proceed to the choice of a gospel minister"; and on the 17th of November, "to concur in the choice of Mr. Nathaniel Sherman, by 38 yeas," and agreed to give him £113 6s. 8d. as a settlement, and £53 6s. 8d. and 20 cords of wood as an annual salary. He was ordained February 18, 1756.

Some years after the settlement of Rev. Mr. Sherman, a controversy arose concerning admitting persons to the privileges of baptism only, without admission to the communion, by assenting to the "half-way covenant." November 6, 1765, the regulations for the admission of members were revised, and a vote was passed, "that there should be but one church covenant." Candidates for admission to the communion were to be examined before the pastor only, who propounded them several days before admission, when he informed the church of their "knowledge, experience and belief of religion." Faith in Christ, repentance for sin, holiness, and a belief in the Assembly's Catechism, were required of all candidates. If no objections were made, they were to be admitted without the vote of the church. The covenant was revised and adopted in a different form, principally effected by the influence of the pastor. Some of the alterations were unpopular with a majority of the church. In consequence of this controversy the affections of his people were alienated from Mr. Sherman. An ecclesiastical council was called December 5, 1766, who advised his dismissal, which was accepted by the church, and concurred in by the town December 17th.

The Rev. Nathaniel Sherman was born at Newton, March 5, 1724. His father, William Sherman, was son of Joseph [Sherman], and grandson of Captain John Sherman who came from Dedham, England to Watertown, in 1634 or 1635. His brothers were William Sherman, Esq. of New Milford, the Hon. Roger Sherman of New Haven, Connecticut, and the Rev. Josiah Sherman of Woburn. He was graduated at Nassau Hall in 1753. During his ministry of about twelve years, 46 were admitted to the church. In the unhappy controversy, which resulted in Mr. Sherman's dismissal, nothing occurred that affected his religious character. After leaving Bedford he was installed at Mount Carmel, New Haven, Connecticut, where he preached many years, and then took a dismissal, and removed to East Windsor, where he died



July 18, 1797, aged 73 years. He married Lydia, daughter of Deacon Merriam of Bedford, March 1, 1759.

After Mr. Sherman's dismissal several meetings were held to agree on the terms of communion. April 4, 1768, it was voted "that this church will have but one covenant and therefore require the same qualifications in all; yet if any person can desire to enter into covenant and receive baptism for himself or children, and yet fears to approach the Lord's table at present, he shall be received, he promising (though he come not immediately to the Lord's table) that he will submit himself to the watch and discipline of the church." The other regulations of the church, though revised, were not materially varied from those already noticed. During the interval till the ordination of Mr. Sherman's successor, 28 persons were baptized, and 7 joined the church in full communion.

On the 7th of September, 1767, the church chose the Rev. Josiah Thacher, a graduate of Nassau Hall in 1760, to be their minister, and the town agreed to give him £120 settlement, and £60 as his annual salary. But before the application could be regularly made to him, he received and accepted a call at Gorham.

February 18, 1768, the church made a second attempt to settle a minister, and chose unanimously (by 22 votes) the Rev. Joseph Willard. The town concurred, and voted the same salary as to Mr. Thacher, excepting that when he should be unable to supply the pulpit, he was to receive but £30. Before the terms of his settlement were finally agreed upon, he declined being considered a candidate.³

In the next attempt the church did not proceed with much harmony. A majority were in favor of Mr. John Emerson of Malden, but "for peace sake," Mr. Asa Dunbar, "a young candidate newly begun to preach," was employed for a month. At length, August 22, 1769, the church chose Mr. Emerson by 18 votes, and the town concurred, and voted him £133 settlement, and £66 13s. 4d. salary. "But there was such an opposition in town against Mr. Emerson settling here (though without any charge against his character either in doctrine or morals), that he was constrained to give the church and town a denial."

The next trial succeeded. Mr. Joseph Penniman was chosen, January 15, 1771, by 29 out of 31 votes, and the choice concurred in by the town. His salary was the same as was voted to Mr. Emerson. He was ordained May 22, 1771. The council consisted of the second church of Braintree, the second in Cambridge, the first in Woburn, and the churches in Billerica, Lincoln, Lexington, and Concord. The Rev. Mr. Sherman of Woburn made the first prayer; the Rev. Mr. Weld of Braintree preached from 2 Tim. ii. 2; the Rev. Mr. Cook of West Cambridge gave the charge; the Rev. Mr. Clark of Lexington made the last prayer; and the Rev. Mr. Lawrence gave the right hand of fellowship. The town voted, "that the day should be religiously observed agreeably to the solemnity of the occasion, that they were determined, as much as in them lay, to prevent all levity, profaneness, music, dancing, frolicking, and all other disorders."

After about twenty years, during which 42 persons were admitted to full communion, and 190 baptized, objections were brought against Mr. Penniman, and referred to a council, consisting of the churches in Waltham, Chelsea, East Sudbury, Billerica, Weston, and Charlestown. It met October 29, 1793 and, after three days' session, advised a separation. This was complied with by the church and town; and he was dismissed November 1, 1793.

The Rev. Mr. Joseph Penniman was born in Braintree, and graduated at Harvard College in 1765. After his dismissal he removed to Harvard, [Massachusetts] where he died. Though possessed of respectable talents, he was very eccentric in his manners and public performances. His prayers were more like a familiar conversation with a fellow being than an address to Deity. Many of his expressions, more marked than the following, are still recollected by his people. On a certain occasion when a plentiful rain had come after a drought, he said, "We prayed, O Lord, for rain, but we do not wish thou shouldst leave the bottles of Heaven unstopped." Soon after the 19th of April, 1775, he is said to have used the expression, — "We pray thee to send the British soldiers where they will do some good; for thou knowest, O Lord, that we have no use for them about here!"

December 5, 1793, was kept as a fast by the church and the town. The Rev. Messrs. Litchfield, Cummings, Ripley, Marrett, and Clark assisted in the public religious services on the occasion.

The Rev. Samuel Stearns was chosen December 17, 1795, by the church, and December 28th

3. The Rev. Joseph Willard was a native of Grafton, was graduated at Harvard College in 1765, ordained at Mendon, April 19, 1769, dismissed December 14, 1782, and installed at Boxborough, November 2, 1785. He died in September, 1828, aged 86.



by the town; having preached his first sermon in Bedford the 13th of the previous September. He was ordained April 27, 1796. The churches in Lexington, Billerica, second in Woburn, Concord, Lincoln, Carlisle, second in Andover, Epping, Chelmsford, and the Rev. Doctors Willard and Tappan of Cambridge, composed the council. The Rev. Mr. Stearns of Lincoln made the first prayer; the Rev. Mr. French of Andover preached from Isaiah xlix. 5; the Rev. Mr. Marrett of Woburn made the ordaining prayer; the Rev. Mr. Clark of Lexington gave the charge; the Rev. Mr. Cummings of Billerica gave the right hand of fellowship; and the Rev. Dr. Tappan made the closing prayer. The town agreed to give the Rev. Mr. Stearns £850 settlement and \$333-33 salary to be stated on the following articles: — corn 666 mills, and rye 833 mills per bushel; beef \$4-166 per hundred weight, and pork 55 mills per pound; one quarter of the salary in each of the above articles. In 1811 a new contract was made, and the salary fixed at \$560 and 20 cords of wood annually.

The confession of faith and the covenant were revised in 1798, and printed in 1821. The church then contained 105 members, of whom 40 were males and 65 females. In 1829 there were 140.

The Rev. Samuel Stearns, son of the Rev. Josiah Stearns, was born at Epping, New Hampshire, April 8, 1770, and graduated at Harvard College in 1794. His ministry has generally been remarkably peaceful and happy. It is only within the last two years that the town gave any decided indications towards a division of the religious society, after the example of many of her neighbors. In 1832 this division was made, and a new meeting house erected for Mr. Stearns.

Succession of the Deacons.

Names.	Time of Birth.	Election.	Death.	Age.
Israel Putnam,	—————	Aug. 4, 1730.	Nov. 12, 1760.	62
Nathaniel Merriam,	Dec. 10, 1672.	Aug. 4, 1730.	Dec. 11, 1738.	66
Job Lane,	June 20, 1689.	Feb. 11, 1739.	Aug. 9, 1762.	74
Benjamin Bacon,	Dec. 6, 1713.	Feb. 19, 1759.	Oct. 1, 1791.	78
Stephen Davis,	Nov. 6, 1715.	Dec. 29, 1760.	July 22, 1787.	72
James Wright,	born in Woburn.	Sept. 1, 1785.	Dec. 24, 1818.	73
William Merriam,	—————	May 16, 1796.	removed from office.	
Moses Fitch,	March 3, 1775.	June 10, 1805.	Oct. 12, 1825.	71
Michael Crosby,	born in Billerica.	July 15, 1817.	—————	
Zebedee Simonds,	born in Woburn.	Jan. 1826.	Sept. 20, 1826.	40
Amos Hartwell,	—————	Nov. 21, 1826.	—————	

MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES.

Bedford is not very well situated for an agricultural town. About half of it is meadow land, unimproved and partly incapable of improvement. It contains, however, several good farms, and nearly all the varieties of soil. Among the peculiarities of its geology is found a substance which has been used for painting, resembling yellow ochre, and commonly known as Bedford Yellow. It has not, however, been much used in late years. Lead has been found here.

The *Shawsheen* is the only considerable stream of water. It rises in Lincoln, and runs through



Bedford in a northerly direction, receiving *Elm Brook* which arises in Concord, *Farley Brook*, which arises in Lexington, and another which arises in Burlington. On the Shawsheen is a mill which was built before Philip's war in 1676 and was then owned by Michael Bacon, who was allowed to have two garrison soldiers stationed there for his safety.

Bedford is bounded westerly by Concord River, which separates it from Concord and Carlisle; southerly by Lincoln and Lexington; easterly by Lexington and Burlington; and northerly by Billerica. The lines are very irregular and contain many angles.

page 270

In 1765 it contained 67 houses, 72 families, and 457 inhabitants, of whom 201 were males, 240 females and 16 negroes. In 1800 it contained 538 inhabitants; in 1810, 592; in 1820, 648; and in 1830, 685.

The town contained in 1831, according to the return of the assessors, 8,593 acres of land. There were then 194 polls, 20 of whom were not taxed, 101 dwelling-houses, 3 shops adjoining, 16 other shops, 101 barns, 51 out-buildings, 295 acres of tillage land, 374 English mowing, 1405 fresh meadow, 2228 pasture, 784 wood land, 2,375 unimproved. There were raised 5,025 bushels of corn, 308 of rye, 50 of oats, 20 of barley, 364 tons of English hay, 689 of meadow; 486 cows.

Appropriations made by the Town at different Periods.

	1740	1750	1760	1770	1780	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830
Schools	£10	£20	—	£20	—	£40	\$300	\$400	\$400	\$300
Incidental	65	12	31	100	1000	—	300	300	500	900
Highways	60	15	30	20	1000	50	467	800	500	652
Price of Labor	6s.	2s. 4d.	2s.	2s.	£4. 10s.	3s.	1	1	1	1

The *Page Fund* for the support of the gospel ministry and sacred music, was constituted as follows: Anna Page, widow of Thomas Page, gave \$663-93, William Page, \$500 and Samuel Hartwell, \$300. It is to be increased by adding one sixth of the income to the principal annually, and now [1835] amounts to upwards of \$1,700.

Schools. — The first school was opened in 1733, and £5, equal to about 3 dollars, granted for its support. A committee was chosen the next year to hire a master to “settle a moving school.” For several years one school only was kept, sometimes in the centre and sometimes in different parts of the town. A school-house was first built in 1743. In 1744 a part of the money was divided into four quarters, to be expended for the use of schools by “school dames.” In 1758 a writing-school was kept four months in the centre of town, and “a woman’s teaching school six months in the quarters of the town;” in 1781 three months’ writing-school in the middle of the town, and six weeks’ women’s school in each of the quarters. In 1790 the town voted to hire a master four months, and should “he have a very full school, he shall principally attend to those who write and cypher.” In 1792 the town was divided into *five* districts, Centre, East, West, North, and South, and in 1799 a school-house was erected in each district. In 1818 the town voted, that the money raised for the support of schools should be divided as follows. In proportion to \$7,307, the Centre district shall draw \$1,640, the East \$1,550, the North, \$1,420, the South \$1,400, and the West \$1,297. This method has since been continued.

A building for a town-house and Centre school-house was erected in 1828 at an expense of \$2,216-43. A fire-engine, which cost \$482-32, was procured about that time.

Employment. — Agriculture is the employment of a large portion of the people. The manufacture of shoes for the Boston market was begun here in 1805 by John Hosmer and Jonathan Bacon, and has been increasing since under their management and that of others. The principal establishments in 1832 were owned by Reuben Bacon, Esq. and Mr. Chamberlain, in



which were employed 60 men and 80 women. About 90,000 pairs of shoes, estimated to be worth \$50,000, are made annually. This business has been the source of considerable wealth to the town. No shoes are in better credit than those made in Bedford. About 4,000 sets of "Bacon's Patent Lever Blind Fasteners" were made in Bedford in 1832, and it is the most approved article of the kind with which I [Dr. Lemuel Shattuck] am acquainted.

Individuals who have received a Public Education.

1. DAVID LANE, son of James Lane, was graduated in 1753, and went into the French War, in which he died.

2. JOB LANE, son of Job Lane, Jr., was graduated at Yale College in 1764. The following epitaph appears on the stone over his remains in New Haven.

"Siste Viator.

Hic juxta situs est

D. JOB LANE, A.M. Col. Yal. Tutor,

**Vir ingenio, modestia, literis, atque pietate
præclarus.**

Illum Bedordi natum Massachus^m. An. 1741

Literarum a puero avidissimum fuisse;

Studiis academicis præ cæteris eminuisse;

Evangelium studiose triennium prædicasse,

Tutorisque officio biennium fideliter functum;

Parentibus vixisse charissimum,

Amicis, omnibusque pietatis fautoribus dilectum,

Discipulisque vere honoratum;

Et omnibus maxime defletum;

e vita migrasse Sept^s. 16, An^o. 1768;

tibi declarat."

3. OLIVER WELLINGTON LANE, son of Captain James Lane, was graduated in 1772, and was a distinguished schoolmaster in Boston where he died.

4. JAMES CONVERS, son of Josiah Convers, was graduated in 1799, and is now [1835] a minister at Weathersfield, Vermont.

5. SAMUEL HORATIO STEARNS, son of the Rev. Samuel Stearns, was born Sept. 12, 1801, and graduated in 1823, and at the Theological Seminary at Andover in 1828.

6. WILLIAM AUGUSTUS STEARNS, brother of the preceding, was born March 17, 1805, graduated in 1827, and at the Theological Seminary at Andover in 1831, and was ordained at Cambridge Port December 13, 1831.

7. JONATHAN FRENCH STEARNS, brother of the two preceding, was born September 4, 1808, and graduated in 1830. He is now [1835] a student in Theology.

8. EDWARD JOSIAH STEARNS, son of Elijah Stearns, Esq., was born February 24, 1810, and graduated in 1833.

Physicians.

Dr. JOHN FASSETT, who came from Harvard, was the first physician. He died January 30, 1737, aged 66.

Dr. JOSEPH BALLARD came from Lancaster to Bedford in 1767, and died there January 29, 1777. He was a delegate to the Provincial Congress in Concord in 1774, and was a



LEMUEL SHATTUCK'S

1835 HISTORY OF CONCORD

distinguished man.

Dr. AMARIAH PRESTON from Uxbridge came to Bedford about 1790, and is now [1835] living there.

Among other physicians who have practised for short periods in Bedford, the names of Dr. Stephen Massy, Dr. Kendall, Dr. Gardner, and Dr. Kittredge, may be mentioned.

Justices of the Peace.

John Reed, Elijah Stearns, Amariah Preston, Thompson Bacon, William Webber, John Merriam, and Reuben Bacon.

Representatives.

When the year is not specified, the town was not represented.

John Reed, 1776, 1783; John Moore, 1780; John Webber, 1787; David Reed, 1805, 1806, 1808; William Webber, 1809-1811, 1821, 1823, 1824, 1827-1829; Thompson Bacon, 1812; John Merriam 1813, 1814, 1816, 1818, 1830, 1831; Amos Heartwell, 1832.

Dr. Joseph Ballard and John Reed, Esq., were delegates to the Provincial Congress at Concord in October, 1774.

John Reed was delegate to Cambridge in February, 1775, and to the Convention to form the Constitution in 1779.

Town Clerks.

Samuel Fitch 1729-1731, 1733-1737; John Fassett, 1732; Israel Putnam, 1738-1745; John Whitmore, 1746-1748; Stephen Davis, 1748-1760, 1766-1772, and 1775; John Reed, 1761-1765, 1773-1775; John Webber, 1776-1779, 1783-1793; William Webber, 1805-1829; Reuben Bacon, 1830.

TO CONTINUE READING:

CHAPTER XVIII. — HISTORY OF ACTON. — General History. — Ecclesiastical History. — Description. — Miscellaneous Notices.

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