

HISTORY OF ACTON.

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

THE town of Acton lies wholly within the ancient limits of Concord. It does not, however, include any part of the six miles square first purchased of the Indians, but in subsequent grants and purchases, adjoining and lying westerly of the "old town." These lands were granted to the town of Concord "for feeding"; excepting the Iron-Work Farm, Major Simon Willard's farm in the north part of the tract, and two grants near Nagog Pond, one to the Indians, and the other to Joseph Wheeler and others. An account of these grants has already been given in the History of Concord. Their bounds, as renewed in 1706, began where the present southeast corner of Acton meets with Concord and Sudbury, and ran nearly on the present line separating Acton and Stow, Boxborough and Littleton, till it comes to the "westerly end of Nagog Pond" and from thence "up to the line of Chelmsford towards Tagnack," (near Heartwell tavern now in Westford); from thence the line ran easterly to the north part of "Virginia Meadow," or "Blood's Dam," so called Carlisle; and thence by Billerica to "Berry Corner," and by Concord old bounds to the place first mentioned. Though the bounds or extents of the several grants, which make up this extensive tracts of land, are not very particularly defined, the description is sufficiently accurate to enable us to form tolerably correct idea of each. When actually surveyed, they were found to contain a greater number of acres than nominally specified on the grants. The section lying in the southeast part of the "Village" as it was called, nominally contained 1,000 acres, but actually contained more than that number, was granted to Major Willard for the benefit of the Iron Works, and known as the Iron-Work Farm. This was conveyed to James Russell, Esq. Of Charlestown, when Mr. Joseph Sherman was employed as an assistant in the business, and by him 600 acres of it were sold in 1701 to Samuel and Ephraim Jones, and Jonathan Knight, together with all his right in the village, for £150. This tract and another northerly, conveyed by deed from the Indians in 1684 already given,¹ the grants to Joseph Wheeler in 1660, to Major Willard in 1665 in the north part, and the half of Nashoba purchased by the Hon. Peter Bulkeley and the Hon. Thomas Henchmen in 1686, covered much more land that is now included in Acton. Littleton took a part near Nagog Pond, and Westford and Carlisle a large tract in the north and northeasterly sections. Considerable difficulty arose between the proprietors of the Village and the proprietors of individual grants, included in the above described lands, concerning their boundary lines. The heirs of Robert Blood inherited the Willard farm. Their title was however doubted, and after perplexing controversies and lawsuits, it was finally adjusted about 1710.

A settlement was commenced in these grants as early as 1656, and perhaps a few years earlier. The Shepherd and Law families were among the first. Captain Thomas Wheeler commenced an extensive improvement here [in Acton] in 1667, as noticed in the History of Concord.² Several others had particular lots granted or sold to them by special vote of the town.

Many of the meadows were open prairies, and afforded, with little or no labor, grass in abundance. Some of the uplands had been cleared by the Indians, and were favorite places for feeding. The meadows were leased, and the rents either paid into the town treasury, or reserved for the proprietors. In 1706 the meadows were leased to Jonathan Knight and Ephraim Jones for £5 6s., and about the same sum was annually received for them for some years afterwards.

These lands were granted to the proprietors of the town of Concord at the time the grants were made. And, though the selectmen, under direction of the town, managed them as they did other common property, they were considered distinct from the whole town from about 1690. New emigrants into Concord were not considered as proprietors. In 1697 a committee was chosen to obtain a list of the proprietors, who after several consultations concerning the best method of admitting them, proposed, June 29, 1702, "that every freeholder that was possessed of house and land in the year 1684, and makes it so appear, shall be added to the former proprietors." The proprietors, as admitted by committee according to the above regulation, were generally accustomed to hold their meeting immediately after town meetings, and on the same day, from

1. See pages 41, 42 [Chapter III, search for the string "this fifth day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred eighty and four"].

2. See page 43 [Chapter III, search for the string "In 1668 the town leased to Capt. Thomas Wheeler"].



1698 to 1710; and their proceedings were recorded by the town clerk with the proceedings of Concord. A Village clerk was first chosen in 1710.

The disposal of these lands, and the manner in which they should be divided, occupied the attention of the proprietors for many years. Meetings were held on the 16th of June, 1719, legally summoned by James Minott, Esq., on the 9th, 22d, and 29th of March, and on the 8th of July, 1720, at which several votes were passed, one of which was to admit persons who were freeholders in town in 1684 to rights in proportions to 1 to 3 of the freeholders in 1661; and committees were chosen to obtain lists of the proprietors agreeably to this vote; and divide the meadows into 120 thirty-acre lots. As these committees proceeded in their business, so many obstacles presented themselves, that the plan was finally relinquished. Another vote was passed to divide it in proportion as 1 to 2 for the times abovementioned, but this was also unsuccessful.

At length a petition was preferred to the town of Concord, which resulted in the following proceedings.

“We the subscribers being chosen a committee by the town of Concord at a general meeting on May the 25th, 1722, continued by adjournment from the 15th of said month, to consider and make report what we think is proper for the said town to do about their Village or New Grant, report as follows.

“1. We find the grant from the General Court, as also the Indian deeds of conveyance from the Indians were made to the inhabitants and proprietors of the town of Concord.

“2. We find no act of the said town of Concord, in any town meeting legally warned for the purpose, that has fully settled the proprietors or altered the constitution thereof, but considerable to the contrary.

“We are therefore humbly of opinion as followeth.

“1. That the town pass an order to forbid all person cutting wood, timber, &c., on the Village without order, and that the town do forthwith proceed and choose a committee, and fully empower them to prosecute at the law all persons that do any ways trespass on their said New Grants by cutting wood or timber contrary to order.

“2. That the town choose a committee to enquire into the matter of a farm-grant made out of the premises to Mr. Joseph Wheeler, whether the present proprietors thereof have not encroached and come beyond their bounds, and to make a report.

“3. That the town, as soon as may be, settle the proprietors of the premises, and in order thereunto do choose a committee to consider of and report under their hands unto the town, what they think is the most just, honest, and safe rule, for stating the proprietors and diving thereof, and present it to the town for their further consideration.”

This document is dated November 12, 1722, and signed by Richard Parks, John Wheeler, Nathaniel Stow, Samuel Wright, Samuel Chandler, John Fassett, and David Whitaker.

The committee proposed in this report were chosen, and reported the next February, “that reach freehold of house and lands, that was such in the year 1666 or in the year 1684, to have a five-acre right in said Village or Town's New Grant; and each freeholder of house and lands, that was ratable in the year 1694, to have a four-acre right in the premises; and each free hold of house and land, that was ratable in the year 1704, to have a three-acre right; and each freehold of house and land, ratable in the year 1714, to have a two-acre right; and each freehold of house and land, ratable in 1722, to have a one-acre right, but none to draw in more that one order for one freehold abovementioned. And we think it very proper, that a committee be chosen to take a list of the proprietors in each order as above-said, that each proprietor may know his right, that when the Village is divided, it may be divided as abovesaid.

“Noah Brooks, Samuel Wright, Joseph Fletcher, Richard Parks, John Fassett, George Farrar, Samuel Chandler, John Fox, and Samuel Heywood.”

This report was accepted by a ballot of 60 to 2; but after it was declared, 14 others came in and requested to have their dissent recorded. A committee, to make a list of proprietors agreeably to this vote, was chosen, who reported at length at a subsequent meeting; and other preliminary arrangements were made for dividing the Village. But 25 freeholders dissented; and there appeared so much want of harmony on the subject, that the plan was finally relinquished. Meantime some of the common land had been taken up and improved, and some



of the occupants were prosecuted and tried before the court.

At length, after several more meetings, the proprietors voted, June 16, 1725, "That all such as are possessed of a freehold, consisting of a dwelling-house and improved land in Concord, which was such a freehold in the year of our Lord 1661, shall have or draw 3 acres; and all such as are possessed of a freehold, which consist of a dwelling-house and improved lands in said Concord in the year 1684, shall have or draw 2 acres; and all such as are possessed of a freehold, which consisted of a dwelling-house and improved land in said Concord in 1715, shall have or draw 1 acre; or agreeable to that proportion, except when the right of said Village or New Grant is sold or reserved from said freehold." And "Ensign William Wheeler, Mr. Samuel Jones, and Mr. Ebenezer Wheeler were chosen a committee to draw a list of all the proprietors of said Village or New Grant according to the votes of the proprietors."

This, though afterwards remodeled, formed the basis of the principle by which the division was made, and settled this difficult subject. It was rendered more explicit by a vote passed June 30, 1727, which was, "That the committee chosen for the laying out of said lands in said Village, be hereby directed to lay out so much of the best of the lands as to lay to every acre right 10 acres, so that every '61 right (so called) being 3 acres, be laid into 30-acre lots; and every '84 right (so called) into 20-acre lots; and every late allowed right (so called) into 10-acre lots. And all the meadows be divided to each according to the several rights as aforesaid proportionally; and all said lots and the meadows to be laid so as to be made equally good as possible may be, either enlarging or abating of the number of acres in each lot, as said committee may think best to proportion the same."

And another vote passed May 17, 1728. - "Whereas it has been voted and agreed, that all the rights in the Village should be laid out into 10-acre lots, 20-acre lots and 30-acre lots, so that every freehold, that consisted of a dwelling-house and improved land in '61, should draw 30 acres, and every freehold, that was so in '84, have 20 acres, and that every freehold, that was so in '15 have 10 acres; but since thought better to lay it out into bigger lots, viz. 100-acre lots; so that every 10 single rights may draw one of the 100-acre lots. And where it so happens that those that have but 10-acre lots, or those that have not 10 of those single rights to draw, and they can't agree to join 10 of them together to draw one of those 100-acre lots, it shall be in the power of the committee to join them and draw for them, or appoint somebody to draw; and if they can't agree to subdivide, the committee shall subdivide it at the charge of the propriety."

The committee for ascertaining the proprietors, and for dividing the Village according to the forgoing principles, were a long time in accomplishing the business. A list was finally reported, which was referred to the committee constituted by the following proceeding, had June 26, 1730.

"Voted, that Messrs. Samuel Chandler, Benjamin Whittemore, and William Wheeler be a committee to correct the list of proprietors (more especially the first order), and present the same to the proprietors for their approbation; as also to take an account of the proprietors that do agree to join in the same hundred-acre lot and to join or couple such as cannot to agree to do it themselves, and see that no two be joined upon the same right, and also to subdivide their hundred-acre lots where the proprietors cannot agree to divide themselves."

The common land was laid out into lots nominally, but not uniformly, of 100 acres, and numbered in the lists and on the plan. Several of the proprietors had their rights coupled or joined together, and their lots were drawn according to this coupling-list, and subdivided according to each one's particular right. When lots happen to be poor, or of unequal value, some parts of other lots were taken and added to them. These were called *qualification* lots. This method of division, though it might have been equitable, destroyed the uniform size and shape of the lots, and rendered the farm disconnected and irregular.

Three divisions took place. At the first, September 9, 1730, were drawn 53 coupling lots, or 310 rights. At the second, July 7, 1732, 60 coupling lots; and 37 at the third and last, December 4, 1745. The proceedings during these intermediate dates relate principally to the grants and division of the lands. At the last period, 1745, a vote was passed to sell all the common lands then remaining. The proprietors' clerks were as follows: Thomas Brown, 1710 to 1715; Jonathan Prescott, 1715 to 1728, John Flint, 1728 to 1745; Stephen Hosmer, 1745 to ___; and



John Robbins from 1786.

A plan of Concord Village was taken in 1730 by Captain Stephen Hosmer; and it then contained, exclusive of Major Willard's farm, 12,986 acres. A petition was presented to the town of Concord in 1731, for leave to be set off into a separate precinct, but it did not prevail. Three others, subsequently presented, met with the same fate. It seems that the petitioners were desirous of being incorporated as a precinct rather than a town. And though they were unsuccessful at first, the town voted, March 4, 1734, "to set off the Village or town's New Grant a separate town, together with Major Willard's Farm, and that the inhabitants and proprietors petition the General Court for a sanction." Samuel Hunt and others presented a petition accordingly; and the following act of incorporation was obtained just *one hundred years* from the first incorporation of Concord.

"Whereas the inhabitants and proprietors of the northwesterly part of Concord, in the county of Middlesex, called the Village, or New Grant, have represented to this Court, that they labor under great difficulties by reason of their remoteness from the place of public worship, and therefore desire that they and their estates, together with the farms, called Willard's Farms, may be set off a distinct and separate township, for which they have also obtained the consent of the town of Concord.

"Be it therefore enacted by his Excellency the Governor, Council, and Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, that the said northwesterly part of Concord, together with the said farms, be and hereby are set off, constituted, and erected into a distinct and separate township by the name of Acton, and agreeably to the following boundaries, namely; beginning at the southwest corner of Concord old bounds, then southwesterly on Sudbury and Stow lines till it comes to the southwest corner of Concord Village, then northwesterly by Stow line till it comes to Littleton line, then bounded northerly by Littleton, Westford, and Chelmsford, then easterly by Billerica till it comes to the northwest corner of Concord old bounds, and by said bounds to the place first mentioned. And that the inhabitants of the lands before described and bounded, be and hereby are vested with all the town privileges and immunities that the inhabitants of the other towns within this province are, or by law ought to be, vested with.

"Provided that the inhabitants of said town of Acton do, within three years from the publication of this act erect and finish a suitable house for the public worship of God, and procure and settle a learned, orthodox minister of good conversation, and make provisions for his comfortable and honorable support." This act was passed July 3, 1735.

The history of the town [of Acton] from this time to the commencement of the revolution, contains no features worthy of particular notice. It had a slow but gradual increase in population and improvement. The proceedings for instituting schools, the preaching of the gospel, &c., were carried forward in harmony. During the wars which prevailed from 1740 to 1762, Acton contributed its share of men. But few particulars are preserved, either by tradition or records, concerning their services.

As early as the 21st of December, 1767, the town [of Acton] voted to "comply with the proposals, by the town of Boston, relating to the encouraging of manufactures among ourselves, and not purchasing of superfluities from abroad." On the 5th of March, 1770, the town [of Acton] entered into a covenant not to purchase nor use foreign merchandise, nor tea.

The state of public affairs was again brought before the town [of Acton] on the 21st of December, 1772, and referred to a committee, consisting of Capt. Daniel Fletcher, Francis Faulkner, Deacon Jonathan Hosmer, Deacon John Brooks, Josiah Hayward, Ephraim Hapgood, Captain Samuel Hayward, Simon Tuttle, and Daniel Brooks. Their report was made on the 18th of the following month, and expresses the general sentiments of the people in this vicinity.

At this time the town [of Acton] had no representative in the General Court, and a vote was passed recommending to the representatives of the people, that they use every constitutional measure in their power to obtain a redress of all their grievances.

A minute company was raised and commanded by Captain Isaac Davis; and the town [of Acton] voted, on the 18th of January, 1775, to pay 30 men 8*d.* per day to drill twice a week, 3 hours each day, until the first day of May. The important services rendered by this company in the Battle of Concord, on the 19th of April, and the unfortunate death of Captain Davis and Mr.



Hayward, have already been noticed in the History of Concord. This and the standing company were distinguished for their prompt and energetic action on that and other occasions.

In June, 1776, Deacon Mark White was chosen representative to the General Court, and received the following instruction from the town [of Acton].

“To Mr. MARK WHITE.³ — Sir, Our not being favored with the resolution of the Hon. House of Representatives, calling upon the several towns in this colony to express their minds with respect to the important question of American Independence, is the occasion of our not expressing our minds sooner; but we now cheerfully embrace this opportunity to instruct you on this important question. The subverting our constitution, the many injuries and unheard-of barbarities which these colonies have received from Great Britain, confirm us in the opinion, that the present age will be deficient in their duty to God, their posterity, and themselves, should they not form an American Republic. This is the only form of government we wish to see established. But we mean not to dictate. We freely submit this interesting affair to the wisdom of the honorable Continental Congress, who, we trust, are guided and directed in this important affair by the Supreme Governor of the world. And we instruct you, Sir, to give them the strongest assurance, that if they should declare America to be a free and independent republic, your constituents will support and defend the measure with their lives and fortunes.”

The following average of services, rendered by Acton for the year ending on the 25th of May, 1778, was made by a committee of the town.

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4 men,	Rhode Island,	2¼ months,	May and June,	at £6=£24
4 men,	Northern Army,	4 months,	Aug. to Dec.	at 24=96
4 men,	Northern Army,	1½ months,	Oct. and Nov.	at 9=36
4 men,	Cambridge,	5 months,	Nov. to April,	at 12=48
6 men,	Cambridge,	3 months,	April to July,	at 7¼=43½

A full estimate of the services cannot be made. This town [Acton] had the honor of furnishing several officers during the revolutionary war. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Faulkner and Captain Simon Hunt were in the battle at White Plains, and at other times were also engaged in actual service.

The constitution was adopted by more than two thirds of the votes of the town [of Acton].

The history of the town [of Acton] since the revolution is of little general interest. Like most towns in the vicinity, it has a gradual, but very slow growth.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY. A Meeting-house, 46 feet long, 36 broad, and 21 high, was built in 1736, which served as a public worship till the present one was erected in 1808. Considerable difficulty having arisen on the question, where it should be situated, as often occurs in similar cases, Col. Holman of Bolton was employed to survey the town [of Acton] and find its centre. The report of this survey was not satisfactory; and after several other trials to fix upon a spot, it was agreed to refer the subject to Gen. Joseph Varnum of Dracut, Gen. John Whiting of Lancaster, and Mr. Walter McFarlane of Hopkinton. These gentlemen made a report which was amicably accepted, Oct. 6, 1806.

Public worship was first held in the meeting-house in January, 1738, and that year the town [of Acton] raised the first money — 50 pounds, for its support. In March a day of public fasting and prayer to Almighty God was kept, preparatory to establishing the preaching of the gospel;

3. Mark White died on the 24th of January, 1792, aged 82. He was deacon in the Baptist church.



and the Rev. Messrs. Israel Loring, William Cook, John Gardner, Oliver Peabody, and Daniel Rogers, assisted in the exercises on the occasion.⁴

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In May, 1738, the town [of Acton] gave the Rev. John Swift a unanimous invitation to become its minister; and he was ordained the 8th of November following. He first received £250 as a settlement, and £150 as an annual salary, to be made of equal value, should the currency depreciate. The sum was altered several times, and permanently fixed at £70 lawful money. In 1741, the powerful revival of religion which prevailed in Concord and other places was experienced here [in Acton]. It is recorded that 28 persons made a public profession of religion, and 15 were baptized on the 28th of November, of that year.

The Rev. JOHN SWIFT was born in Framingham, and graduated at Harvard College in 1733. During the prevalence of the small-pox in Acton, in 1775, he was severely attacked, and never able to preach afterwards. He died 7th Nov. 1775, in the 62d year of his age, and the 37th of his ministry. He was a gentleman of talents, learning, and piety, though occasionally facetious, witty, and eccentric. His only printed publication which I [Dr. Lemuel Shattuck] have seen is a sermon preached at the ordination of Rev. Joseph Lee at Royalston. Mr. Swift married Abigail Adams of Medway, and had one child, who graduated at Harvard College.

The 14th May, 1776, the town [of Acton] voted to invite four candidates to preach four sabbaths each on probation. And a committee consisting of Messrs. Samuel Hayward, Francis Faulkner, Nathaniel Edwards, Josiah Hayward, and John Heald were chosen "to take advice of the President of the College and the neighbouring ministers, who said candidates shall be." Mr. Moses Adams was subsequently engaged eight sabbaths on trial. The 20th of December was observed as a day of solemn fasting and prayer to Almighty God for direction and assistance in resettling the gospel. Mr. Adams was invited to be their pastor 8th of January, 1777; and was ordained 25th of June, 1778. The first and fourth church in Dedham, second in Sudbury, second in Reading, and the churches in Concord, Stow, and Fitchburg, composed the counsel. He received £200 as a settlement, and £180 salary, according to the value of silver at 6s. 8d. per ounce, and his fire-wood.

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In 1785, the singers were directed for the first time to sit together in the gallery. In 1793, the practice of performing sacred music by reading the line of the hymn as sung, was discontinued. A church bible was presented in 1806, by Deacon John White of Concord.

The Rev. MOSES ADAMS was a native of Framingham, and a graduate of Harvard College in 1771. He died 13th of October, 1819, aged 70. During his long and peaceful ministry, 147 were admitted to the church in full communion, 137 owned the covenant to receive baptism, 833 were baptized, and 246 marriages were solemnized. In his intercourse with his people he was conciliatory but independent. He had talents without ostentation, and piety without hypocrisy; all his public performances and private acts were distinguished for their superior good sense. He was emphatically a good, a worthy, and a useful man. Few had died and left a character more deservedly worthy of imitation than his.

On the 25th of February, 1820, the Rev. Marshall Shed, a native of Newton and graduate of Dartmouth College, 1817, was unanimously elected to be their pastor. The town [of Acton] agreed to give him \$500 as a settlement, to which \$200 were added by subscription, and \$600 and 15 cords of wood, as his annual salary, so long as he shall supply the pulpit. He was ordained on the 10th of the following May. The introductory prayer on the occasion was by the Rev. John Pierce of Brookline; sermon by Rev. William Greenough of Newton; consecrating prayer by Rev. Jonathan Newell of Stow; charge by Rev. Jonathan Homer of Newton; fellowship of the churches by Rev. Rufus Hurlburt of Sudbury; address to the church and people by Rev. Thomas Noyes; and concluding prayer by Rev. Ezra Ripley. He was dismissed

4. The church records during Mr. Swift's ministry are so imperfect, that it will be impossible to give an account of its proceedings. They do not even mention the date of its organization, nor all the admissions of members.



at his request, May 14, 1831, and has since removed to New-York.

SUCCESSION OF THE DEACONS.

NAMES.	CHOSEN.	DIED.	AGE.
Joseph Fletcher	Dec. 15, 1738.	Sept. 11, 1746.	61
John Heald	Dec. 15, 1738.	May 16, 1775.	82
Jonathan Hosmer	—————	————— 1775.	64
John Brooks	—————	March 6, 1777.	76
Samuel Hayward	Sept. 29, 1775.	March 6, 1795.	78
Francis Faulkner	Sept. 29, 1775.	Aug. 5, 1805.	78
Joseph Brabrook	Sept. 29, 1775.	April 28, 1812.	73
Simon Hunt	April 29, 1792.	April 27, 1820.	86
Josiah Noyes	March 27, 1806.	Dismissed and removed to Westmoreland, N.H., Oct. 16, 1808.	
Benjamin Hayward	March 27, 1806.	Excused, June 15, 1821.	
John Wheeler	April 18, 1811.	Dec. 17, 1824.	64
John White	April 18, 1811.	April 3, 1824.	54
Phineas Wheeler	June 15, 1821.		
Daniel F. Barker	June 15, 1821.		
Silas Hosmer	June 15, 1821.		

There are now three religious societies in Acton. 1. The Orthodox, which seceded from the town [of Acton] and formed a separate parish during the latter part of Rev. Mr. Shed's ministry. The Rev. James T. Woodbury, brother of the Hon. Levi Woodbury, and formerly a member of the bar in Grafton County, New-Hampshire, was ordained over the parish, August 29, 1832, when the Rev. Mr. Cleaveland, of Salem, preached. 2. The Unitarian, which worships in the meeting-house erected by the town [of Acton]; and 3. The Universalist, which was organized 19th of January, 1816, and incorporated 27th of January, 1825. At the former period it contained 11 members, at the latter 49, and in 1827, 61, twenty of whom resided in other towns. The two last have no settled minister.

DESCRIPTION. - MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES. The surface of the town [of Acton] is rough and uneven, though there are no considerable hills; and with some exceptions the soil is rocky, hard to cultivate, and not well calculated for a flourishing agricultural town. It contains, however, many good, well-cultivated farms, on which are grown grain, grass, and other usual productions of the region.

A gentleman, who is familiar with the natural history of Acton, informs me, "that the geology of this town is decidedly primitive; stones are mostly granite of every degree of fineness and variety of appearance. Rocks are gneiss, passing into mica and hornblende slate. The strata are perpendicular which abundantly explains the stubbornness of the soil. Lime rock is found in the south part of the town, and has been wrought, but not recently. Iron is found in various combinations in different places; none, however, of much value. Tradition tells us, that lead used to be found in abundance in the southwest part of the town. Tremolite, actynolite, radiated



quartz, pudding-stone, and some other minerals are found here [in Acton].

“The botany of this place is not peculiarly interesting. The forests are composed chiefly of oak, of all the common varieties, together with some pine, maple, birch, hickory, elm, locust, and chestnut. Among the forest trees, or shrubs, perhaps, ought to be noticed several varieties of the box or cornel, especially the *cornus florida* and *sericea*, the barks of which have been used with success as substitutes for the Peruvian.”

Nagog Pond lying partly in Littleton is a beautiful collection of water. It is about a mile long, and is the source of *Nashoba Brook*. *Grass Pond*, lying south of Nagog, contains 133 acres. *Nashoba* and *Fort Pond Brooks* have been noticed in the history of Concord. On a branch of the former, which heads in Westford and unites with the main stream near Mr. Stearn's, are Wheeler's and Foster's Mills, and Robins's after their junction. On the latter are Jones's and Faulker's Mills. *Assabet* river runs across the southwest corner of the town [of Acton], where Sherman's Mills are situate.

The Population in 1764 was 611; in 1790, including Carlisle, 853; in 1800, 901; in 1810, 885; in 1820, 1047; and in 1830, 1128.

In 1821, there were 140 dwelling houses; 230 other buildings; 513 acres of tillage land on which was raised 705 bushels of rye, 932 of oats, 5833 of corn, 75 of barley, and 140 of beans. 1527 acres of mowing land, producing 956 tons of hay; 2026 acres of pasturing, keeping 939 cows, 196 oxen, 69 horses, and 181 swine; 2055 acres of wood; 3633 acres unimproved; and 1311 unimproveable; 240 used as roads and 500 covered with water. It then had 3 grist-mills, 2 carding-machines; 2 fulling-mills, and 4 saw-mills. In 1825, there were 236 polls. Valuation \$8629-28.

The principal employment of the inhabitants is agriculture. Barrels may be considered the *staple production* of the town [of Acton]. From 15,000 to 20,000 of this article, it is estimated, are annually manufactured here [in Acton], and this business is the source of considerable income.

During 20 years subsequent to 1800, there were published 208 intentions of marriage, and there occurred 161 marriages, 344 births (as recorded); 302 deaths, of whom 72 died under one year old; 32 were 80 and upwards, 8 were 90 and upwards, and one lived 99½. The average number annually was 15, about one in 70 of the whole population. The mean average was 35 years.

A Post Office was established here [in Acton] some time since and Mr. Perham appointed Post-Master; but it was not long continued. It was re-established in 1828, and Silas Jones, Esq. is [1835] the Post-Master.

The following table exhibits the appropriations for several objects at different periods in the town of Acton:

OBJECT.	1750.	1760.	1770.	1780.	1790.	1800.	1810.	1820.	1830.
Minister	£50	£52	£70	£3,562	£80	\$353	\$353	\$363	—
Schools	13	12	24	2,000	49	333	450	450	450
Roads	26	70	60	800	120	400	500	600	800
Incidental	20	12	80	10,000	100	500	1,000	1,400	600

The first town *School* town [in Acton] was kept in 1741, when it was voted to have a “reading, writing, and moving school for six months.” In 1743 a similar one was established and £18 old tenor, equal to about £3 lawful money, was raised for its support. Whether this afforded the only means of education does not appear. It is probable some schools might have been supported by private subscription. Several youth, as was then customary, resorted to the clergyman, for their education. People, however, enjoyed few other opportunities than were afforded in their own families. In 1760, the town [of Acton] was divided into six school districts, and in 1771 into seven. In 1797 the town [of Acton] was divided into four districts, East, West, South, and Middle, and several new houses were built. This division has since been



continued. The money is divided among the districts in proportion to the taxes. From the return made to the state in 1826, it appears, that the aggregate time of keeping the schools was 28 months, and that they were attended by 412 pupils, of whom 227 were males, and 185 females. 139 were under 7 years of age, 160 from 7 to 14, and 113 from 14 upwards.

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The *Acton Light Infantry* was organized in 1805, and then consisted of 41 members including officers. The following gentlemen have since successively commanded this company. Paul Brooks, Simon Hosmer, Abijah Hayward, Silas Jones, James Jones, Aaron Hayward, Jonathan Hosmer, John Fletcher, John Handley, Jr., Simon Davis, Abel Furbish, George W. Tuttle, and Thomas Brown. This and a standing company compose the militia of the town [of Acton].

The municipal officers of the town [of Acton] have not essentially varied from those of other towns. The Selectmen have uniformly been assessors and overseers of the poor, of whom the town clerk has been chairman.

TOWN CLERKS [OF ACTON].

Thomas Wheeler	1735, 1736.	John Robbins	1808-1817.
Simon Hunt	1737-1743.	Joseph Noyes	1818.
Jonathan Hosmer	1744-1755.	John Robbins	1819, 1820.
John Davis, Jr.	1756, 1757.	Joseph Noyes	1821.
Jonathan Hosmer	1758-1761.	Abraham Conant	1822.
Francis Faulkner	1762 - 1796.	Francis Tuttle	1823-1827.
Aaron Jones	1797.	Silas Jones	1828.
John Edwards	1798, 1807.	Stevens Hayward	1829.
David Barnard	1800-1807.	Francis Tuttle	1830.

REPRESENTATIVES [OF ACTON].

Daniel Fletcher	1768.	Jonas Brooks	1804.
Josiah Hayward	1774, 1775.	Samuel Jones	1805, 1806.
Mark White	1776.	Jonas Brooks	1807-1811.
Simon Hunt	1780.	Stevens Hayward	1812.
Francis Faulkner	1782-1785.	Joseph Noyes	1813-1818.
Thomas Noyes	1787-1789.	Joseph Noyes	1821.
Ephraim Robbins	1790.	Francis Tuttle	1823-1827.
Jonas Brooks	1791-1802.	Stevens Hayward	1828, 1829.
Asa Parlin	1803.	Francis Tuttle	1830, 1831.

In 44 years, since the town [of Acton] was incorporated, it has not been represented. Dea. Ephraim Robbins and Asa Parlin, Esq. were of Carlisle, when it was a district of Acton. Capt. Daniel Fletcher was chosen a delegate to the convention in Boston, 22d of September, 1768;



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Francis Faulkner and Ephraim Hapgood, to the Provincial Congress in Concord, October, 1774; Josiah Hayward, to Cambridge, February, 1775, and again in May; Francis Faulkner, to the Convention in Cambridge, for forming the Constitution, September, 1779; Capt. Joseph Robbins to the Convention, in Concord, to regulate the prices of articles of produce, &c. October, 1779; Simon Tuttle and Thomas Noyes, to Concord, 23d of May, 1786; and Asa Parlin, to the Convention in Boston, in 1788, to ratify the Constitution of the United States.

Samuel Jones, Esq., resided here [in Acton], as an Attorney, in 1805 and 1806, but left the town [of Acton], and died at the south.

Dr. John Swift, noticed among the native graduates, was the first physician.

Dr. Abraham Skinner, was from Woodstock, Conn., and commenced practice in Acton, in 1781, where he died April 16, 1810, aged 53. He married Sarah, daughter of Francis Faulkner, Esq. 1788.

Dr. Peter Goodnow was from Bolton, commenced practice in Acton, 12th of October, 1812, left 18th of February, 1827, and is now [1835] a merchant in Boston.

Dr. Bela Gardner resided here [in Acton] from 1823 to 1828, removed to Vermont.

Dr. Harris Cowdry, born at South Reading, graduated at the Berkshire Medical Institution, 1824, commenced practice in October, 1826.

Dr. Paul C. Kittridge, from Littleton, commenced practice in Acton, August 30th, 1830.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE [IN ACTON].

Francis Faulkner	Stevens Hayward	John Edwards
Jonas Brooks	David Barnard	Francis Tuttle
Winthrop Faulkner	John Robbins	Simon Hosmer.
Joseph Noyes	Abraham Conant	

GRADUATES AT COLLEGE [FROM ACTON].

NATHAN DAVIS, son of Samuel Davis, born 30th of November, 1737, graduated at Harvard College, 1759, ordained minister at Dracut, 20th of November, 1765, dismissed about 1785, removed to Boston, and was appointed chaplain at Fort Independence, and a review officer. Died 4th of March, 1803, aged 65.

JOHN SWIFT, only child of the Rev. John Swift, born 18th of November, 1741, graduated 1762, and settled as a physician in Acton, where he died of the small-pox about 1775.

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ASA PIPER, son of Josiah Piper, graduated 1778, and was ordained at Wakefield, New-Hampshire, 1785. He still [1835] resides in that town, retaining his relation to the church, though dismissed from his pastoral charge.

SOLOMON ADAMS, son of Lt. John Adams, born 18th of March, 1761, graduated 1788, ordained pastor at Middleton, 23d of October, 1793, and died September, 1813, aged 53.

DANIEL BROOKS graduated 1794, and settled as a trader in Westmoreland, where he held the office of Justice of the Peace. Died, several years since, at Springfield, Vermont.

THOMAS NOYES, son of Thomas Noyes, born 5th of February, 1769, graduated 1795, and ordained pastor of the 2d Church in Needham, 10th of July, 1799, dismissed in 1833 by mutual consent.

LUTHER WRIGHT was born 19th of April, 1770, graduated 1796, ordained pastor of the first parish in Medway, 13th of June, 1798, dismissed September, 1815, installed at Barrington, Rhode-Island, 29th of January, 1817, and dismissed 5th of July, 1821. In both instances he was dismissed at his own request by a council who recommended him to the employment of other churches. He now [1835] resides at Holliston.

MOSES ADAMS, son of the Rev. Moses Adams, was born, 28th of November, 1777, graduated 1797, and settled as a physician in Ellsworth, Maine, and was sheriff of the county of Lincoln.

WILLIAM EMERSON FAULKNER, son of Francis Faulkner, Esq., was born 23d of October, 1776



and graduated 1797. He read law with his brother-in-law, the Hon. Jabez Upham, of Brookfield, with whom he formed a partnership in business. He died October 1, 1804, aged 28, and left a most worthy character.

JOSIAH ADAMS, son of the Rev. Moses Adams, was born 3d of November, 1781, graduated, 1801, read law with Thomas Heald, Esq., was admitted to the bar, June, 1807, and settled in Framingham, where he now [1835] resides.

LUTHER FAULKNER, son of Francis Faulkner, Esq. was born 7th of May, 1779, graduated 1802, and has since been a merchant in Boston.

JONATHAN EDWARDS SCOTT was a native of Nova Scotia, but a resident of Acton for some time before he entered College. He graduated 1802, and has since commanded a vessel at sea.
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JOSEPH ADAMS, son of the Rev. Moses Adams, was born 25th of September, 1783, graduated 1803, and settled as an Attorney in West Cambridge, where he died, 10th of June, 1814.

JOHN RUGGLES CUTTING, son of Mr. William Cutting, graduated at Dartmouth College 1802, ordained at Waldoborough, Maine, August, 1807; dismissed, March, 1812, and has since been a teacher of youth.

HENRY DURANT graduated at Yale College, 1828, and is [1835] a tutor in that College, and pursuing theological studies.

All these excepting the first two and the last were prepared for College under the instruction of the Rev. Mr. Adams.

Biographical Notice of Col. Francis Faulkner

Col. Francis Faulkner was born in Andover, 29th of September, 1728, and died 5th of August, 1805, aged 78. His great-grandfather, Edmund Faulkner, who emigrated from England, was one of the founders of the church in Andover, in 1645, had his house burnt by the Indians, in 1676, and died in January, 1687. His wife was Dorothy Robinson; and his sons, Francis and John. The former was born 1651, and died 1732, aged 81, leaving sons, Edmund, Ammiruhammah, and Paul, of whom the second, father to Col. Francis [Faulkner], removed to Acton, in 1735, and erected the mills, which have since been owned by his descendants, where he died, 4th of August, 1756. Col. Francis [Faulkner] was early employed in public business, and was 35 years, from 1762, successively chosen Town Clerk. He was a member of the Provincial Congress in 1774, and a representative in the General Court in 1783, '84, and '85; and also a member of the committee of safety, and of several important conventions, held during the revolution. He held a military commission under George III.; but the oppressive and arbitrary acts of Great Britain induced him to renounce his allegiance to the Crown, and step forward as one of foremost opposers to the measures of the government. Accordingly, in February or March, 1775, he was elected Major of a regiment organized at that time to oppose any anticipated invasion. On the morning of the 19th of April, Doct. [Samuel] Prescott was sent on express to him with information that the British troops were on their way to Concord. He immediately fired three guns in quick succession, which was the pre-concerted signal of an alarm. The express arrived at day-light, and at the rising of the sun he marched with a considerable number of men, who constituted a part of the troops collected at the North Bridge, in Concord. He was in the engagement there that morning, and with his men pursued the British troops to Charlestown. He was afterwards several times engaged in actual service during the war; was Lieut.-Colonel in the regiment of Middlesex militia, called in to reinforce the continental army, when they took possession of Dorchester Heights, in March, 1776; was in service when Burgoyne was taken; and commanded the regiment which guarded the prisoners, taken on that occasion, to Cambridge. He was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1781, and on the 29th of September, 1775, was chosen one of the deacons of the church [of Acton]. In all places he exhibited the character of a gentleman of sound judgment, of a cultivated mind, and of good, practical common sense. He was a courageous military officer, an able legislator, a impartial justice, and an exemplary Christian.

He married, first, Elizabeth Muzzy of Lexington, in 1755, with whom he lived 2 weeks only before her death; and, secondly, in 1759, Rebecca, daughter of Capt. Keyes of Brookfield, who was killed in Lovell's fight, by whom he had 11 children. 1. Francis, Esq., Billerica; 2. Rebecca, married to the Hon. Dwight Foster of Brookfield; 3. Sarah, married to Dr. Skinner of



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Acton; 4. Elizabeth; 5. Mary; 6. Ammi; 7. Lucy, married to the Hon. Jabez Upham of Brookfield; 8. Susanna, married to Hannibal Hamlen, Esq., sheriff of the county of Oxford, Maine; 9. Winthrop, Esq. died in Acton, very much lamented, 17th of March, 1813, aged 39; 10. William Emerson, H.C. [Harvard College] 1797; and 11. Luther, H.C. 1802.

TO CONTINUE READING:

CHAPTER XIX. — HISTORY OF LINCOLN. — General History. — Ecclesiastical History. — Description. — Statistics. — Biographical Notices.

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