WASHINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

1777-1977 OUR 200th YEAR
1777 – 1977
Two Hundred Years

The history of the town of

Washington, Massachusetts

Compiled &
Edited by
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Dedicated to the memory of:
Mrs. Genevieve Hutchinson
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The Town of Washington

quiet town, laid out by lofty souls
Along the mountain top where keen winds blow,
Where motors trickle 'neath a sunwood hills,
What is the charm that makes men love you so?

It is the peace that broods on your fairest fields,
That sings itself in wild birds’ carolings.
That walks the lanes serene at evening time,
And knows no value in what men call things.

It is the unsoiled country-side, still fair
As in the days when pioneers dreamed dreams,
Still free from smoke of industry and strain.
Of striving after power that only seems.

It is the spirit of that heritage
Called liberty, that blossomed with your birth.
That made men glad to toil by sweat of brow,
And strike their roots deep, knowing Freedom’s worth.

O quiet town, built high on Berkshire hills,
Face set to other hill-tops and the sky,
There are men living proud to claim you theirs
By birth or heritage, and of them, I.

Spring ’27.
Washington.

Mrs. Hutchinson’s poem “Washington” from her book.

Washington Historical Commission

Louise E. Elliot
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This is the story of a little Berkshire town whose hopeful settlement did not lead to the prosperity and growth anticipated. By and large it is the same story as that of so many other towns not only in Berkshire County but across the country as circumstances beyond control force changes upon them.

The hilltop beauty lured settlers here and defeated them as farmers by late spring and early fall frosts. The beauty remains. The farmers who so hopefully settled here are gone. Although farming remained essentially the same since Biblical times, all of a sudden everything changed with the advent of machinery to eliminate much of the slow hand methods; but to afford the machinery the farmers needed large cleared fields, not the little patchwork clearings perched on steep hillsides that were our lot. So the early farmers left as new areas opened up west of us. New ones came through the years but didn't stay long. There has been such a continual change as waves of new owners came and went that there is no family in town with a thread through all our past.

In days of hope the population almost hit one thousand. In days when modern change and growth passed us by, the population dropped to under three hundred. Now that we fit the pattern of a bedroom community outside of Pittsfield, the population is inching up again to almost 500. New houses are going up at a faster rate than at any time since settlement.
The fields, cleared at such prodigious cost of labor and time, have reverted to woodland. The city of Pittsfield holds more than four thousand acres as its watershed around Ashley Lake, which it acquired before the Civil War and kept enlarging until the last farmer, named Loehr, was forced from his beautiful place at the top of the hill from Pittsfield and Dalton, and all along the mountaintop the old farms were taken. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has about eleven thousand acres in its October Mountain State Forest and keeps enlarging its holdings. The town's land is now less than nine thousand acres.

At a time like this, no one can predict what the next hundred years—or even one hundred days—will hold for the little community as patterns of life are changing across the whole country and across the world. We can only dimly sense the past from our records, and try to see where we are today.

The Appalachian mountain range on which we perch is the oldest, most weathered and liveable in the world. To the north the Presidential Range defies habitation. To the south the mountains again reach formidable heights.

In spite of our relatively modest hills ranging north and south, they were still a barrier to east—west travel by settlers. From the Plymouth Settlement in 1620 and Boston in 1630, it only took settlers until 1636 to reach Springfield.

The Dutch were already at the Connecticut River, but they were pushed out. Settlers went into what is now Connecticut and once more dislodged the few Dutch in possession of trading posts there. This whole area was claimed by the Dutch and they knew every brook and path, as evidenced by a map at Fort Crillo in Rensselaer, New York. This map is dated 1680 and shows the whole present Commonwealth of Massachusetts as part of New Holland, and shows it in great detail to and along the coast and Cape Cod.

"Narratives of New Netherlands" states:

"All the islands, bays, havens, rivers, hills and places even to a great distance on the other side of New Holland or Cape Cod have Dutch names, which our Dutch shipmasters and traders gave them. These were the first to discover and trade to them, even before they had names, as the English themselves well know; but as long as they can manage it and matters go as they please, they are willing not to know it. And those of them who are at the Fresh River (Connecticut) have desired to enter into an agreement and to make a yearly acknowledgment or an absolute purchase, which indeed is proof positive that our right was well known to them, and that they themselves had nothing against it in conscience, although they now, from time to time, have invented and pretended many things in order to screen themselves, or thereby to cause at least delay.

"Moreover, the people of Rhode Island, when they were at variance with those of the Bay, sought refuge among the Dutch, and sojourn among them. For all these things, and what we shall relate in the following pages, there are proofs and documents enough, either with the secretary of the Company (West India Company) or with the directors.

"In short, it is just this with the English, they are willing to know the Netherlanders, and to use them as a protection in time of need, but when that is past, they no longer regard them, but play the fool with them. This happens so only because we have neglected to populate the land; or, to speak more plainly and truly, because we have, out of regard for our own profit, wished to scrape all the fat into one or more pots, and thus secure the trade and neglect population."

It further notes that the banks of the Connecticut River were purchased from the Indians in 1632. It also says that British settlers arriving in Boston in 1636 first dispossessed Dutch settlers there.

The Housatonic was the last river taken from the Dutch who had a trading post there. The question has been raised whether they ever lived here. It is now known that they did build in some other Berkshire communities. The oldest house in town apparently is that owned by Mrs. Cameron. One elderly man who used to live here says that years and years ago he helped put new sills under the Cameron house and that the old sills had slots for guns and observation which they jokingly said wouldn't be necessary any more.

As soon as the threat of French and Indian attacks against the frontier was gone, there was a surge of settlers waiting to push in to the new lands thus opened. We will focus only on Berkshire County, which was very sparsely settled. Under its mantle of primeval forest was land of unknown potential to be had for small cash outlay and hard work.

Land speculation was widespread all through the colonies even George Washington profiting by it. There is no absolute proof of what happened in the founding of this town, but apparently Robert Watson, of Sheffield, and his lawyer, David Ingersoll, convinced some men in Hartford that Watson
had bought from the Stockbridge Indians a specified piece of land. Undoubtedly they produced a rough map of the property and played up its assets. Sufficient interest was aroused to form a company of proprietors in 1757 to buy this land from Mr. Watson—even to name it Watsontown.

Without doubt a group of men was sent to look over their new property and plan on selling it. Somehow they learned that Mr. Watson had no right to claim that he had paid the Indians for it, and the Indians demanded the rest of the money due. This sent the proprietors looking for Mr. Watson. Apparently someone else who had been cheated by him got to him first, because they found him jailed and bankrupt.

The proprietors hurriedly changed the name of the property to Greenock, paid the Indians and got a deed from them signed by Benjamin Kokhikewnaamunt, John Pophnehuaanwah and Robert Nunghauwot.

From the “Proprietors’ Book we take the following quotations.

Nov. 13, 1761: “That whereas at the meeting of the Proprietors in June Last they voted a Lott of land unto Samuel Brown Junr. of Stockbridge & Ephraim Kidder of Yoakin-Town within the contents of the said Township of Greenock as therein by the aforesaid vote is Particularly Described and now the said Samuel and Ephraim being willing to Relinquish & Quit the said land & agreement Concerning the same then made. Have therefore voted that the Committee chosen by the said Proprietors to take care of the Prudentials of said Proprietors Employ some Person they think proper to go & settle on the above said Grant they first Hire the Native Indians to fence and Build on the same & to put said Person into the Possession and that the said Committee bestow so much Provision on the said Person that shall so settle as they think proper & that they lay out to him one Hundred acres of said Grant which he shall ever hold as his own.”

Plans went on for settling of the town. John Walker was chosen and sworn in as Clerk and Treasurer. Each proprietor was assessed to pay a tax on each of his rights and would lose his rights if late in making payment.

Most of the meetings of the proprietors were held at the inn of David Bull in Hartford, and there is a David Bull listed among the proprietors. It would seem then that the meetings were long and comfortable as they played with their paper records. They would vote for some project, and almost immediately vote to cancel the first vote. Some meetings were so long that they were adjourned to the next morning at 9 A.M.

Somehow word got to them that even now their purchase was not legal inasmuch as the Province of Massachusetts had already paid the Indians for the right to dispose of some of their lands and did not recognize as legal the deed that they had just obtained from the Indians.

Perhaps some of the difficulty was caused by feelings of enmity between Massachusetts and Connecticut over their borderline. This dispute ended when a border was finally drawn and Connecticut was appeased by a grant of land in what was then called “The Northwest Territory”. Eventually Connecticut helped fill this land with settlers, many from Washington.

In the meantime, it became apparent that nothing further could be done here without the approval of the General Court in Boston. Further assessments were made upon the proprietors to send men to Boston “they to take such evidence, Plans or papers as they shall think Necessary for accomplishing the said grant”. They had a petition drawn up to present to the General Court Jan. 18, 1763.

This petition was granted by the Provincial Council Feb. 8th, 1763, on these conditions:

“That security be given to the Province Treasurer to pay to him for the use of this province the sum of eight hundred pounds in one year without interest, that there be reserved for the first settled minister one sixty-third part of said township; for the use of the ministry, one sixty-third part, and the like quantity for the use and support of a school. That within the space of five years from this time there be sixty settlers residing in said township, who shall have a dwelling house of the following dimensions, viz: twenty-four feet long, eighteen feet wide and seven feet stud, and have one acre of land well cleared and fenced and brought to English grass or Ploughed; also settle a learned Protestant minister of the Gospel in said township within the time aforesaid.

“And whereas Mr. John Walker, one of the said associates, attorney to said Nathaniel Hooker, John Townsley and Isaac Sheldon, hath informed this Court that he stands ready to
give this security for the said eight hundred pounds:

"Therefore, resolved that upon his so doing, the grant aforesaid be made to said associates in manner aforesaid, upon their paying to said Walker their proportionable part of said eight hundred pounds, on one year, and upon failure of their so doing the right in said township of those so falling, to belong to said Walker, and he shall have full power to sell and dispose of the same to any person that shall perform the conditions aforesaid."

"Sent up for Concurrence,
Timothy Ruggles, Speaker
In Council February 9th, 1763,
Read and Concurred.
John Cotton, D. Secretary"

A more illuminating item is this:
"Voted that George Smith's bill for Expenses for wages horse hire & Expenses for going to Stockbridge this Month to Warn the Proprietors in Berkshire County be allowed to him amounting to fifty shillings lawfull money."

This proves that there was travel back and forth from Hartford to this town, that it was possible to make the trip at least to Stockbridge on horseback, and that there were settlers already working on their lands. This may be the time to say that the first ten settlers were:
*George Sloan
*Andrew Mumford
William Mickle
Elijah Crane
William Beard

*Proprietor

David Bull's Inn must have been the real headquarters for Feb. 9, 1763 two rights were sold to men from Albany for twenty-five pounds each, and the sales were signed by "John Townley, Isaac Sheldon and David Bul, Committee".

June 29, 1763 name changed to Hartwood without explanation.

"Met the first Tuesday of September, 1763.

"Voted to choose a committee of Enquiry, empowering said committee to enquire of Mr. John Walker concerning the list of names in the grant who are esteemed as Strangers and Aliens Fraudently imposed upon the propriety of Hartwood, And said Committee to make Report of the Answers Recd. from Mr. John Walker Concerning the above mentioned Articles."

Alas! For our curiosity there are no recorded answers. It would be nice to know who the strangers and aliens were.

March 20, 1765: "Voted that Colln. Samuel Talcot of Hartford & George Sloan of No. 4 Be a Committee to Treat with Sum Suitable Person that will Undertake to Build a Saw Mill in the Most Convenient Place in the Township and Mak Report thereof to the Proprietors at their Next adjourned Meeting."

"Voted and Granted as an Encouragement for the first ten settlers that shall Settle in said Township agreeable to the Grant Made by the Provence that twenty five Acres be Laid out, by lots In the Second Division in sd Township to Each Famiely To them or their heirs or assigns with their lots if they have any if not by it Self by lot or otherwise as the Proprietors shall Vote the division to be made."

"Voted that George Sloan & Daniel Furt be Agents to prossiclit Any Tresspases Comited in the Township of Hartwood."

March 18, 1766. "Voted that Mr. George Sloan be appointed an agent to keep in Repair the Country Road through the town of Hartwood." Voted a tax to defray this expense.

January 14, 1767: "Voted and granted that seventy two pounds be levied and assessed on the proprietors according to Law for the purpose of building an house of publick worship in the township of Hartwood that the aforesaid sum be collected and paid to the Treasurer by the first Day February 1768." "Voted that Coll Samuel Talcott Mess David Bill & George Sloan be a committee to contract with some person for a quantity of boards and shingles for the purpose of covering a Meeting House."

"Voted that Mr. Andrew Mumford, George Sloan & Daniel Foot be appointed to clear and frame one acre of land on the lot laid out for the use of the Ministry where they shall judge the most suitable place to erect a meeting house and improve for a burying ground."
October 7, 1767: "Voted that Collo Sam'l Talcott, Mess David Bull and George Sloan be a Committee to contract with some suitable Person to raise and cover an House for Publick Worship the dimensions to be thirty six feet by thirty feet."

Feb. 18, 1768: "Voted that Mess David Bull, George Sloan and William Smith be a committee to make a Lott by making 63 Numbers on papers Cut and Rolled alike to be put in one box and sixty three other papers of Equal dimensions with the Names of the original proprietors name on each paper the Minister on one and Ministry on another the school on another which papers they shall cause to be put into another Box and shall then to be fairly drawn out in the presence of the Meeting and Each Proprietors Lot shall be first, second, third, etc. according to the Number that shall be drawn out of the other Box against his name which shall be entered on proprietors Book of Records and the committee appointed to Lay out the Division shall layout the Lots on the Original Rights in order and Number according to the Lot so drawn and entered."

June 15, 1768: "We the subscribers being appointed a Committee by the Proprietors of Hartwood to fix a spot for the Meeting House in said Township have attended said bussiness and have agreed to Report as follows that considering the situation of the Lots already layed out and votes of the Proprietors for Laying out their Second Division Lots we Do Judge and Determine that the North east end of the Lot Number 82 on the New Plan Belonging to Mr. Isaac Sheldon where we affix a stake and stones be the Most Suitable place for the Erecting said house."

Wm. Williams
Moses Graves
Natl. Kingsley"
May 18, 1769: “Voted that the Meetinghouse be not set where the steak was set by the Comtee Chosen for that purpose but set east of that on the highway and that Squire Bliss George Sloan & Daniel foot be a comtee. to Set a Steak where sd. house shall stand & make their Report this meetings.”

Nov. 22, 1769: “Voted that the Report of the Comite Apointed to Ractify the Misstakes maid in those house lotts that Interpared on the County Grants that as they have laid out a lot No. 39 by Deweys Grant to James Coldwell that it Do Pass.’

Oct. 27, 1773: “Voted that the Proprietors Concurr with the Church and Inhabitants in their Choice of Mr. A Aaron Bliss for to settle with them in the work of the Gospel on Conditions he Relinquish his Right to the Ministry Right—” We don’t know why Mr. Bliss lost out to Mr. Ballantine.

Now we are in the time period covered by the old Church records, and on March 14, 1774 they voted to make provisions for the ordination of Mr. William Gay Ballantine, which event is fully covered in the Church record.

This item may be interesting to anyone wanting to know who lived on the “Settling Lots” along the Street. On Page 94 of the Record Book the following names appear as abutters on the County Road, when the bounds were renewed.

Beginning at Hartwood south line then

Daniel Olds
Robert Mc Knight
Millikens Corner
Samuel Curtiss
Daniel Olds
Joseph Knox (proprietors clerk)
Bushes Corner
Andrew Mumford
Ministry Lot
Amos Beards
Crain
Meeting House
Stower Grant or Cassway
Zenos Noble
John Plum
Major Fairleghys

Sept. 9, 1783: "Voted that the following Persons hereafter named their heirs and assigns be entitled to the Grant of twenty-five acres given them as an Encouragement for there being the ten first Settlers in said town at a Meeting held at Hartford the 20th Day of March 1765:

Mr. George Sloan
The heirs of Andrew Mumford
William Millican
Elijah Crane
Amos Beard
Wm. Beard
The heirs of Nathan Ingraham
Joseph Know
Matthew DeWolf
The heirs of Doct. Joseph Chaplin

"Voted to Chuse an agent to go to Boston in order to git the Proprietors Book of Records Confirmed and git a Particular act of the General Court to Enable the Assessors and Collectors to Collect all arrearages of taxes Granted by the Proprietors.

"Voted and Chose Azariah Ashley to be our agent for the above business."

Oct. 4, 1784 (in Lee): "Voted that the report of the Committee appointed to ascertain the Quantity of Common and undivided lands be accepted which is as follows viz Wee the Subscribers being a Committee appointed by the Proprietors of the Common and undivided Lands belonging to the Original Proprietors of Hartwood now Washington beg leave to Report that having Surveyed several lines and taking them from the plan--find that there is yet undivided land belonging to the said Proprietors or owners the Quantity of Eight thousand Six hundred and five Acres of Land Exclusive of all former Grants made by the Proprietors according to the best of our Knowledge.

"In witness whereof wee have hereunto Set our hands

Moses Ashley
Prince West
Azariah Ashley
Committee"

Lee, December 7, 1785. "Voted to Chuse a Committee of three Indifferent men to View and average Sundry Rights or Lots of Land which appear to be not equally divided and the Proprietors have thought fit not to Establish them as Voted and Established at there former Meeting and the said Committee are to say what Number of Acres of Land shall be taken from those best lots and put to those Mountain or bad lots so called, and the said Committee are to say where the said lands shall be taken off and to judge of the Matter so as to make those mountain lots upon an average with the Right of the lots in the said Division."

This would seem an impossible task to anyone familiar with our area, where level land is in such short supply and there are ravines, precipices, swamps, and piles of glacial boulders. However, the committee did try, and there are several pages of adjustments which seem too complicated to understand. As it stands now, the good farms have disappeared with the bad, and most of them are reverting to the condition in which they were found—thickly forested and hiding again the contours of the land.

There are rumors that there were several Dutch homes in the area, and it is entirely possible. In 1749 a grant of 700 Acres was laid out to Elias Van Schaack, in present Hinsdale or Dalton judging by the sketch, and it is possible that this was to repay him for removing from the new grants, perhaps from Hartwood.

Last meeting of proprietors was Dec. 31, 1788 in Lee.
Washington Mountain is the highest portion of that part of the Hoosac Range which lies in the town. Once you climb the mountain, the top is surprisingly long and level, with steep hill sides dropping off on either side. Undoubtedly there was always some kind of path across the top from earlier times—deer trails, Indian trails, and later the Dutch investigating what they considered their territory in the New World.

When the original surveyors of the proposed new town decided on the geographical center of the town, it happened to be right on this hilltop. The first division of land was along the path as it ran from near Pittsfield to the Becket line. Becket looked mostly to Westfield and Springfield, but there was need of a route west to Pittsfield and Albany. It is hard to realize even now that Albany is a port city, but it was discovered early that goods could be shipped most easily and cheaply from Boston and other eastern ports to the port of Albany, where they could be collected and drawn to Berkshire County by oxcart.

The settlers lost no time in clearing their settling lots, and in building their homes. No information has come down to us about what the very first houses were like. Sawmills would be needed before frame houses could be built, but there was a pioneer tradition of almost one hundred fifty years behind these settlers so they would know how to go about it. Probably they built some sort of log houses, using the over-abundance of trees they had to clear away.

As the homes were built, it would be natural to walk back and forth between them to exchange help and companionship. Oxen are good at threading their way through woods, but eventually it was necessary to plan something better to keep up with the expanding population and more travel.

Soon each town meeting voted a group of men to be surveyors of roads, and these men were responsible for laying out new roads and directing the men who worked on them. New roads had been accepted by vote in town meeting, and almost every meeting in those early days described a new road laid out and accepted. What work it must have been for the town clerk to push his quill pen through page after page of description of each proposed road. One road in 1790 took five pages in the clerk’s record, the beginning of which is:

“Survey of Highway in Washington Beginning at a stake and stones at the corner of the road which leads from Gideon Bushes to Jesse Ladd’s stand in a few rods southward of said Ladd’s house—
Thence running S 54°E 39½ Rods to a Stake & Stones
Thence S 47°E 19¼ Rods to a Small Elm tree marked
Thence S 26°E 15¼ Rods to a dry Hemlock Stub
Thence S 57°E 20 Rods to a Maple tree marked
Thence S 22°E 22 Rods to a hemlock tree marked”

and on and on for page after page. The whole town was eventually crisscrossed with “highways” leading to every building in town. Some were discontinued from time to time, and new ones added. Existing roads were rerouted frequently until they were confined by stone walls bordering various properties.

Some of the roads were called “Pent Roads” meaning that they were roads with gates or bars to keep livestock in or out, as the case might be. There was some argument about who paid for having the gates or barriers erected. The road across the mountain was variously known as “The Street” or County Road, and eventually most of the new roads converged on it. One of the oldest roads is Schulze Road (as it is now named) which connected the farms on the Street with other settling lots on what is now called Lovers Lane Road.

Taxpayers in each district were allowed to work out their road taxes, and it would be a good way of checking who lived in town at any particular time by the listing of names of men who took this opportunity of saving a little cash.

The earliest stage route from Springfield to Albany went over the highest hilltops through Washington Center. There were two taverns on the Street, one now owned by Mrs. Schuman, and the other up at the center. It is said that Daniel Webster, John Adams and other notables traveled over this turnpike.

When the Pontoosuc Turnpike was built through the valley about 1830, it was so much easier on the horses (and passengers) that the old road over the mountain was left to the farmers living near it, and this was a severe blow to this part of the town.

The Pontoosuc turnpike contracted with local land owners to chop all tress, clear a sufficient width for a twenty-six feet traveled road. The owner of the land was allowed to remove all the timber and logs except such as could be used in the road construction. The contract also specified that all rocks be removed, stone, and logs, and trees, stumps and roots. No stone was to be covered unless it would be at
least ten inches below the surface. A sufficient number of sluices were to be made of stone when practicable, and suitable swells (or “thank-you-ma’ams”) were to be made in the road to prevent its washing. On all side hills, or in any place where the road required, railings were to be made, agreeable to the instructions of the directors. The price per rod for the work was $56.00. The ruins of the Pontoosic Turnpike are still visible along the stream following the valley to Westfield.

Later the turnpike route was changed so that it ran past the Sibley grove, so called, and led down to the source of the stream which feeds Muddy Pond. In order to cross this swamp and muddy stream, it was necessary to cover it with a bridge which rested upon the water and this gave it the name of “floating bridge”. It was some 700 feet in length. It was built in 1834. It is interesting to know that for this highway nine different bridges were built over the swamp, as each in turn sank when the planks and timbers gradually became heavy and water soaked, at last becoming dangerous for teams to drive over them. The last bridge was submerged in water to the depth of nearly two feet when it finally disappeared about the year 1853-4, and the present highway was opened for travel.

The stage coaches were run by relays of about ten miles to a lap. One of the relay stables was at the Crane homestead. There was also another at the Deming tavern, which was located at the edge of the village. Absalom Deming kept this tavern and with it a country store. The Deming tavern was long and favorably known. Dances and social gatherings were held there by the young people of the town.

At this time the little village at the foot of the high hill upon which the church and town house stood was divided by a steep hill into what was known as the upper and lower village. In the lower village, through which the stage coach now passed, was the first Methodist Church, a woolen mill built and owned by Capt. Horace Herrick, a grist mill, a saw mill and carding factory owned by Daniel Higgins. The earliest built saw mill, known as the “flutter wheel mill,” was then owned by Phillip Banes, who bought it from its early builder, Joel Crane.

In the upper village there was also a saw mill owned by William Donovan, a potash factory owned by Sylvester Arnold, and a blacksmith shop owned by John E. Stacy. There was also a Venetian slat curtain factory owned by Lon Jackson and Nelson Cross. It was at this time that this little village acquired the name of “Washington City”.

Last but not least, in this upper village was the little school house on Valley Road. This was the most flourishing school of the town. Here on the snowy days of winter gathered sixty boys and girls.

The Pontoosic Turnpike became the main stage route from Boston to Albany. The stage coach was now in the heyday of its prosperity. The town was growing wealthy, its population was increasing, and the community felt itself in touch with the outer world.

The passing of the stage coach ended the most charming period of our New England life. With the coming of the railroad, the New Era was here. The turnpike, the stage and the tavern passed into history.
Revolutionary War Period
REVOLUTIONARY WAR PERIOD

The first thing we find in tracing this period is that there are no official records — not a word — of what went on from June 1774 to April 16, 1778. Mention is made of searching the old records but there is no copy of what was found. It was August 10, 1778 that is was "Voted Sixty Pounds to Procure Clothing and a Town Book" and "Voted to send Jabez Cornish to Join Ye County Convention." At that time George Sloan was town clerk and he copied several previous records of meetings in the new Town Book, but his ink must have been of poor quality because it is faded to such an extent that it is impossible to read everything written on the first few pages, to say nothing of the difficulty of translating the old fashioned letters and different spelling.

We know from other sources that in 1774 the counties held "Congresses" of deputies chosen by the several towns to consider "the alarming state of public affairs." Berkshire was the first County in the State to call such a Congress and to deliberately and formally put its acts on record. The deputies from Washington were William Spencer and Moses Ashley, Jr., and although not mentioned again they were very probably the deputies to the several Congresses that followed.

Previous to the outbreak of hostilities the volunteers, the "Minute Men," met and drilled under the direction of Captain Horace Bushnell and Captain George Sloan on what was known as the "parade ground," ten acres around the meeting house.

The news of the Battle of Lexington reached Berkshire in the afternoon of April 20th, 1775, incredible as it may seem, and by the 23rd, Captain Peter Porter's company of Minute Men of Becket and Hartwood were on their way to Cambridge. There was much marching across the State, as men walked to the fighting, walked home to do their planting, and walked to the next emergency, which was Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. A few of the men joined the Continental Army and fought their way to the conclusion at Yorktown in 1781. Most of them returned home.

On June 28, 1776 the Massachusetts Assembly resolved to raise 5,000 men to reinforce the Continental troops in Canada and New York, and the quota assigned to Washington was five men.

In 1777 came the plea for help against the British trying to take Bennington, Vt. Men from this town responded — it was really standing between a nearby enemy and their homes and families. The Battle of Bennington was fought over the line in New York State, and the British were defeated. Then most of the men came home.

It turned out that the region's safety was assured by Thaddaus Kosciusko, from Poland. He had volunteered to General Washington in 1776 and was commissioned as Colonel of Engineers for $60 a month and soon sent to Ticonderoga, then in the possession of American defenders. He saw immediately that men within the fort were at the mercy of guns of the enemy who might take Mount Defiance, and he urged that guns be put up there to prevent its capture. American General Schuyler ignored this advice. He was sure that the sides of Mt. Defiance were too steep for any men to carry canons to the top.

General Burgoyne arrived at Ticonderoga on June 30, 1777 with a well disciplined and well equipped army of 7700 regulars and another 2500 Canadian, Hessian and Indians. Five days later the Americans in the fort could see "Gentleman Johnnie's" troops hauling cannon to the top of Mount Defiance, and Ticonderoga was suddenly rendered untenable. The Americans beat a hasty retreat, leaving behind the supplies they could so ill afford to lose.

As the Americans retreated with the British in close pursuit, it was Kosciusko who directed the work of obstructing the progress of the pursuing British. Trees were felled across trails and creeks, bushy tops toward the British, bridges were destroyed, streams flooded and trenches dug to make quagmires of what was already swampy country.

The fall of Ticonderoga was very serious for the American cause, because if Burgoyne could follow through and reach Albany and the Hudson River, he would cut off the whole New England area from the rest of the country.

General Schuyler had been removed from command for losing Ticonderoga, and General Gates took over, preparing an offensive to save a very serious position. The call went out for help again, and Washington men were there in time for the action. Kosciusko went ahead to find the best site for the battle. He knew that the British were trying to send a force up the Hudson to meet up with Burgoyne somewhere near Albany. He knew that Burgoyne's supply line from Canada was stretched to the utmost. Kosciusko picked a place called Bemis Heights, about halfway between Stillwater and
Saratoga. Although the Americans were in poor mental and physical condition, every able-bodied man was put to work building redoubts and entrenchments upon a series of steep slopes and terraces. Below the American position were ravines and woods as natural barriers.

Much has been written of this battle, the flanking movements, the charges and deployment of troops. Enough to say that through the confusion and deaths, the Americans won and in so doing really insured winning the war, because on the strength of hearing of this victory the French finally declared war on England and sent their fleet and many soldiers to help. They got it all together at Yorktown and were instrumental there in persuading General Cornwallis to surrender and finally end the war in 1781. The town of Washington went the whole way with a few of its men, through the many defeats, the winter at Valley Forge, the fighting and hardships until it was all over and the United States of America was born.

On October 17, 1777, Elijah Fisher wrote in his diary:

"Gen. Burgoyne and his howl army surrendered themselves Prisoners of War and Come to Captivate with our army and Gen. Gates... Then at one of the Clock five Brigades was sent for Albany (for there came nuse that Gen. Clinton was a comin up the North river)... Gen. Clinton having nuse that Gen. Burgoyne had capiteted and had surrendered his army prisoners of war he Returned back to New York."

It unfortunately was not actually a total surrender. General Burgoyne was able to persuade General Gates, the American commander, into making it a "convention" not a surrender. General Gates agreed to let the British army stack their arms in a secluded spot, out of sight of the Americans, allowed the officers to keep their swords to identify them as officers, and allowed some one hundred Tories, Canadians and Indians to return to Canada immediately. Of course General Gates thought he still had to fight the troops General Clinton was bringing up from New York so he was in a hurry to get Burgoyne out of the way. General Clinton never came, but that Convention sent General Burgoyne's people on a five year path of wandering from Boston, to New York, through Pennsylvania and to Charlottesville, Virginia, back to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and eventually British officers were sent to East Windsor, Connecticut to the Old Newgate Prison. It wasn't until April 15, 1782 that final arrangements were made for British ships to pick them up, with other British prisoners, and sail them home.

At the beginning, there were nearly 5,900 officers and soldiers, 3,379 were British and 2,492 were German troops mostly from the Duchy of Brunswick Luneburg, whose hereditary prince had married a sister of King George III. In addition, there were about a thousand women and children. The British had permitted these camp followers to accompany the soldiers to America and they issued them daily rations from the commissary.

Financially, the British army was better off than the Americans, and they had money to buy food and shelter on their march to Boston. They had "hard" money and the Americans were anxious to exchange their continental for it. Around Albany the Americans were offering to trade nine continentals for a guinea. At Williamstown, Mass., they were offering eighteen or twenty dollars for the same coin. In business dealings with the British Convention Army, the Congress specified that the British pay in hard money, partly because the same British refused to accept continental money in any of their transactions with the American army. Actually the British were busily counterfeiting American money to increase its already disastrous depreciation.

There was also vigorous argument that the British did not live up to the rules of the convention in that they did not surrender their regimental colors. Burgoyne swore "upon my honor" that they had been left in Canada. Actually, Baroness Riedesel, wife of a German officer and traveling with the army, had sewn the colors of the German regiments into her mattress; and British officers had hidden their regimental colors in their personal baggage. This Baroness Riedesel was not alone in accompanying her husband, but also had their three daughters, aged six, three and nineteen months.

One British officer paid his money to a farm family south of Williamstown to sleep for the night out of the cold rain. He noticed that there were only two beds in the house and asked which was his. The mother said she and her husband needed one, and that he could bundle up with the "pretty, black eyed" young lady in the other. She pipped up that she had bundled with many a man before, but never an Englishman — but he spent the night on the floor.

The German soldiers were much impressed with the American affluence they saw in their travels, especially "The incredible stores of grain" in the barns around Albany. They noted that the Dutch farmers breakfasted on milk, tea, roast meat, baked apples and all kinds of rich butter cakes.

The prisoners being marched through the Berkshires agreed on one thing — the weather was just abominable. A severe snowstorm struck. One British soldier wrote: "After this, it is impossible to
describe the confusion that ensued. Carts breaking down, others sticking fast, some oversetting, horses tumbling with their loads of baggage, men cursing, women shrieking and children squalling. He saw a soldier’s wife giving birth to a baby, sheltered from the storm by nothing but a bit of old oilcloth.

The Germans, on the 28th of October, near Great Barrington encountered “alternately hail, rain and snow. The wind was so piercing, that no matter how warmly we wrapped ourselves in our cloaks, it penetrated to the very marrow. In addition, our wet clothes froze as stiff as iron. The oldest soldiers admitted that they had never before experienced such a march.”

Two of our own Washington soldiers, Gideon Bush and John Walker, were part of the escort of these prisoners. Most of our local men were involved with the part of the War that centered around this area — Bunker Hill, Bennington, and the longer ordeal of Ticonderoga and points south. We can sympathize with the discomforts of the Convention Army, but they apparently were better organized and equipped in most ways than the Americans. After all, most of our soldiers in these encounters were men who suddenly grabbed up their guns, left their farm chores and joined in bands to march informally to the trouble spots. Their uniforms, if any were issued, were nondescript, consisting of anything the men might have already and the addition of white shirts and white knee stockings for uniformity on the battlefield. They were laden like pack animals with heavy long-barreled rifles, lead shot and wadding, iron cooking kettles, anything available for blankets rolled in a pack, home knit wool stockings and cowhide boots, and everything else they might need. All the vicissitudes of the weather were shared equally, the only difference being that the Americans were on home territory and would soon rejoin their families and interrupted routines. The prisoners didn’t know it then at the beginning, but their journey would last five years.

Desertions from the prisoners were numerous. It was reported from Boston “that the whole band of the 62nd regiment, excepting the Master, deserted in a body, and are now playing to an American regiment.” By the fall of 1778 there were only 2300 British and 1900 Germans on the muster rolls. Most of the men didn’t desert to join the American cause but to try to get back within the British lines.

The nearest the war came to town was shown in Lt. Hildreth’s diary of his route from Ticonderoga with prisoners. They camped in town for two days while waiting for a man to die — he could have had smallpox which was of epidemic proportions at the time, or he could have succumbed to wounds from a skirmish a few days before. Rumor has it that the campsite was in back of where Daniel Phillips now lives. There is a bountiful spring there, and the campsite showed plainly a hundred years ago — large flat rocks on formation for the campfires they needed for cooking and warmth, a pile of small cannon balls left neatly piled beside the spring, a well-built narrow opening in the stone wall, and an apparent grave marked with an upright flat rock in almost the shape of a regular headstone. At the same place, almost a hundred years ago, was a big old tree, thickly covered with initials and regimental numbers, but the tree fell and disappeared completely years ago. It is said that another similar group of soldiers and prisoners followed the hilltops through Middlefield and the two forces could signal with campfires.

The few Hildreth and Capt. Ford notations show how expenses were figured.

From the Diary of Micah Hildreth of Dracut (Lieutenant in Capt. Ford’s company) are given the routes taken by the troops on their march from Chelmsford on July 25, 1776 and on their return, leaving Ticonderoga Nov. 26, 1776 and taking until the end of December 1776 to Fort George; Albany; then across the River to Green Bush; Scoduck; New Lebanon; Green Groves, called Philipstown; Pittsfield; Patridgefield; Washington, etc.

Abstract from Capt. Ford’s expense account for travel from “Fort George and for mileage from Albany home at one penny per mile and one day’s pay for every twenty miles from Albany home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Capt. for travel</th>
<th>265 miles</th>
<th>200 mile mileage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lt.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>2 Lieuts.</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Lieuts.</td>
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<td>4 Ensign</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Ensign</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Seargt.</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Corpl.</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Drum &amp; fife</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 Privates</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>134.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>16.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0."
Capt. Ford's Company was at the taking of Burgoyne and brought back with them between forty and fifty of the prisoners from Stillwater to Cambridge."

"An abstract for pay Due to Capt. John Ford and his Company for pack horses to carry their baggage to Stillwater and for horses Expenses and for the men to bring back their horses and for Extroydenary Expense in their Return as they Brought back the prisoners.
9 horses for 58 men at 6d pr mile each 160 miles each

136-0-0

for 2 men to bring back the pack horses 15 days at 8s. per man per day

4-10-0

and for their expenses for the men to Bring back the horses

4-10-0

and for the expence for the above horses at 11-16s-0 per horse

16-4-0

for milage to Bennington 58 men 160 miles 2 pence per mile each

35-6-8

for Extraordinary Expense from Stillwater to Cambridge in bringing back the prisoners 250 miles

Each and one penny per mile

51-0-10"

There is no indication of why they came through Washington. Perhaps they were guided by a Washington man on his way home. It is rumored that they came to visit Isaac Brooker who lived just south of the camp site.

ACTS AND RESOLVES

Some idea of how the supplies for the army were acquired is given by reading the Acts and Resolves of the Province of Massachusetts. Towns were assigned quotas, agents were appointed to receive the things requested and there is much highflew oratory by the Legislature as they made their various requests.

Chapter 1092 is fairly direct. William Williams, Esq. of Pittsfield is to receive as Washington's share thirteen pairs of shoes, thirteen pairs of white stockings, thirteen white shirts, and six blankets. If the towns cannot furnish the actual articles, they can pay a cash equivalent to allow purchase elsewhere.

In 1780 a demand was made for 3,220 pounds of beef or its cash equivalent. The demand began:

"The good people of this State need not be informed that those who now call on them are subject and willing to bear an equal share of every burthen on this community; burthens which have been felt by every nation who have been obliged to contend for their liberties, and resist the lawless hand of tyranny, and must appear very small when compared with the dreadful alternative, an alternative fraught with the completest misery, a subjugation to a cruel and unfeeling enemy, whose pride would lead them to insult us for want of public virtue, should any necessary supply be withheld from our army; and whose avarice would strip us of the property which an ill-timed parsimony may endeavour to preserve."

Washington was to produce 6 men in 1780, and it was resolved: "Each person procured shall supply himself with a good firelock, bayonet, cartouch-box, haversack and blanket, and shall at the expiration of his service, if he produce a certificate from his Captain or other Commanding Officer of his company, that he hath been constantly provided therewith at his own expense, receive, for the use of his firelock, bayonet and cartouch-box, five Pounds, and for the use of his blanket, fifteen Pounds, and in like proportion for any or either of them."

In Chapter 121, there is a more fervid plea for horses, of which Washington was to furnish four.

"Whereas the state of the treasury renders it impracticable to procure said horses with money; as guardians of the public security, this Court is constrained to apply to the patriotism and public spirit of the good people of this State, In an unusual, indeed, but absolutely necessary method: Be it therefore

"Resolved, That the Agents appointed to procure said horses, be, and they are respectively directed, as soon as possible, to apply to the selectmen of the several towns within their respective limits; and the selectmen aforesaid are hereby earnestly requested (as they would prevent the further effusion of blood; as they would restore their country to security and happiness; and as they would avoid a most ignominious bondage to a cruel, haughty and implacable enemy) to procure, in the most speedy and effectual manner, on the terms prescribed in said resolve, the number of good and serviceable horses allotted their respective towns in the schedule hereto annexed..."
At that time, our representative in Boston was Mr. Artemas Easton. This book of Acts and Resolves (1779-1780) is full of interesting and puzzling items such as a list of supplies which Col. John Allen got to "proceed to finish the Fort at Machias, or build two Block Houses, as he shall think best."

"Articles which the Board of War can supply viz. "5 hhd Rum and 5hhd Molasses, Coarse Cloath as a substitute for 10 ps Stroud, 300 steel Indian Knives, 50 barrels Beef, 2 boxes Glass, 30 lb Thread and three Casks Nails.

"They can borrow from James Richardson, a Continental Commissary 50 barrels Carolina Pork not very good, 2,000 lb. Rice, 30 bushel Peas: of Messieurs Samuel Allyne, Otis & David Henley 12 ps Shaloon as a substitute for Calimanco.

"Remains to be purchased with money

3 ps. Broad Cloath, qs 75 yds. 5 hhd weight of Tobacco
10 ps Stroud 2 boxes pipes
400 white shirts, qs 1,400 yds. 100 small Hatchets
50 ps Ribbon, qs 900 yds 6 doz Silk Handkerchiefs
50 ps Binding, 1,200 yds 4 doz linnen ditto
12 ps Calleo, 14½ yards 12 ps Linnen, 300 yds
20 ps Ferret 6 ps Chex, 150 yds
80 pounds of Thread 1,000 shott
6 doz scissors 100 barrels Flour
24 Scott Moulds 1 pipe wine qs 120 gallons

Two hundred years from now, our own war supplies will probably be just as puzzling as this list is to us.

During the Revolution, since the fighting was so near home, a large part of the Washington men saw service, marching off for a few days' fighting at Bunker Hill, Bennington or the series of fights from Ticonderoga to Stillwater. Some enlisted in the Continental Army and served until the end of the war. The records are confused and contradictory. Men moved from town to town and enlisted from where they happened to be at the time. Also Hartwood had recently become Washington, and had lost many inhabitants to the new town of Lee.

General Moses Ashley, Jr. was by far the most prominent man that went out from Washington, and one of the most distinguished sent by the State of Massachusetts to the Revolutionary War. He was born in Westfield, Mass., June 16, 1749. He was graduated at the early age of eighteen from Yale College in the class of 1767. It was said of him that "while at college he was distinguished by industry and éccentricity of behavior."

He came to Washington with his father and family in the spring of 1772, and at once assumed a prominent place in the town affairs, being appointed an ensign in the Militia soon after his arrival there. He was sent as one of the representatives of the town to the County Convention held in Stockbridge July 6, 1774. On the alarm from Lexington he went as Lieutenant in Captain Peter Porter's Company, Colonel Paterson's Regiment, which left Becket April 23, 1775. He did not return to Washington with his Company, but entered the army at First Lieutenant in Colonel Fellow's Massachusetts Regiment, May 23, 1775. He was in the Battle of Bunker Hill, and a letter to his brother giving a description of the battle has been preserved, and is given in full in the Ashley Genealogy. In September 1775 he was recruiting officer for his regiment, and was commissioned as Captain November 5, 1775, and served as such in the Fifteenth Continental Infantry for 1776, being at the Siege of Boston. During the summer and fall of 1776, he served in the Northern Department, and then marched south to Washington's Camp and was doubtless with him at Trenton and Princeton.

January 1, 1777 he was made Captain in the First Massachusetts Regiment, and served with it throughout the Saratoga Campaign, and witnessed Burgoyne's surrender. He then joined Washington and wintered with him at Valley Forge, 1777-78. In June 1778 he was in the Battle of Monmouth, and in August following in the Battle of Rhode Island. From 1779 to the close of the war he was stationed with the main army on the Hudson watching the British in New York. He was made Major of Colonel Vose's
In Memory of
Brig. Gen.
Moses Ashley Esq.
who being in perfect health
and in the midst of public business
died in a sudden and unexpected
manner, August 25th, 1791,
in the 43rd Year of his Age.

Both of the conquest death are human things;
The pomp of empires and the pride of kings;
But know the chains shall burst their chains a rise
To thrones celestial in their hundred skies.

Gravestone rubbing of Moses Ashley's stone.
Photo courtesy of The Berkshire Eagle.
Regiment January 6, 1780, and from July 25th was Major of the Fifth Massachusetts Regiment under Colonel Rufus Putnam. He was afterwards transferred to the Sixth Massachusetts and served for a time as Brigade Inspector. He was honorably discharged June 12, 1783, after having given his country over eight years of continuous service.

While still in the army in 1783 he married the widow of Colonel Thomas Williams, one of his fellow officers, Thankful Ashley Williams, a descendent of Robert Ashley, their common ancestor by another line.

After the war he settled in Stockbridge and was an active businessman and became possessed of considerable property. In 1787 he was one of the Commissioners appointed to treat with the Indians for the purchase of a tract of land near Binghamton, New York, involving ten whole townships. He was County Treasurer in 1785 and Brigadier General of the State Militia in 1790. He was a member of the Massachusetts Society of Cincinnati, his certificate being dated May 5, 1784, and signed by George Washington, President, and General Israel Knox, Secretary. He had a forge on a pond in South Lee, and while engaged in repairing a dam on it was drowned August 25, 1791.

He left two sons and one daughter.

Gen. Ashley still owned many acres in Washington at the time of his death, and there are references to settling his estate in the town records of the time.

It seems that all the following men also saw service: James Allen, Justus Allen, Timothy Arnold, Azariah Ashley, Simon Babcock, Amos Bacon, Jacob Bacon, Amos Beard, William Bill, Aaron Bixbee, Silas Blym, Peter Brown, Gideon Bush, Thomas Chadwick, John Chaplin, Joseph Chaplin, Joseph Chapel, Phineas Cole, Timothy Cole, Adam Collins, Jabez Cornish, Jabez Cornish, Jr., and Abel Crane.

Also listed are Asahel Dodge, Alimaz Easton, Harvey Ensig, Daniel Foote, George Foote, Jonathan Foote, Philip Foote, Daniel Franklin, Frederick Frost, Seth Gillett, Ithamer Granger, Thomas Granger, Ebenezer Handy and Asa Hill.

Others are John Ingraham, Samuel Ingraham, Joseph Isham, John Kent, Sr. (Conn.), Thomas Lewis, Jonathan Lyndes, Abel Mattoon, Patrick McGee, James, John, Robert and Thomas McKnight, Bille Messenger, William Milliken, Perez Moore, John Morse and Henry Mumford.


After the Revolution most of these names do not show up in the old town records so they probably moved on to other places. However, the town gained two erstwhile enemies who did stay. John Henry Seagers was a Hessian hired to fight with the British Army. He was mustered out at West Point, N.Y. in April 1781, bought a farm in Washington in 1802 and lived there for the rest of his life. He was a founder of the Methodist church in the days of the “circuit riders.” His son Henry was a soldier in the Civil War.

David Cairn Cross was born April 6, 1757 in Steamer Gate, near Dundee, Scotland. In 1777, contrary to the wishes of his parents, he enlisted in the British Army. Twice his father bought him off, but he succeeded in joining the Burgoyne Army as it was about to embark for America. He fought with Burgoyne's troops until the surrender at Saratoga.

Under guard of James Mulholland of Chester, he was among the detachment of prisoners who passed through Washington, Westfield and Springfield, with a stop at Chester where James Mulholland visited his family and where David Cross saw Nancy Mulholland, and fell in love at first sight. When the prisoners resumed their march toward Boston, David Cross found an opportunity to desert, and as soon as it seemed safe he returned to the Mulholland home and declared his intention to marry Nancy. In 1787 he and Nancy were married, and some time later he purchased a large tract of land in Washington near the Middlefield line, which he developed into one of the best farms in town. The buildings are now gone but the name still clings to Cross Place Road, and Cross Place.

David and Nancy Cross joined the Methodist class in 1810, and he lived to be 96. Originally there was a family burying ground on his farm where he and his wife were buried, together with some of his children. When the farm was about to be sold, his children had the remains removed to the cemetery in Becket village. His granddaughter married Charles Crosier, who was a long-time resident of Washington.
John Coates, who had been a Revolutionary War soldier from Lenox, came alone to Washington. His land was unbroken forest and for the first year his home was by a large rock which supported a shelter of overlapping pieces of hemlock bark. Later he built a log house and raised a large family of sons and daughters. His brother Charles at that time owned the farm now occupied by Curtis Roosevelt.

**SHAY’S REBELLION**

Shay’s Rebellion was a sad little local war. Farmers who had fought for years came home weary and flat broke. They were paid with Continental dollars. To this day the saying is of something worthless, “Not worth a Continental.” Their farms were neglected, high taxes and high mortgage payments were due. The laws of the day permitted a man to be thrown in jail if he couldn’t pay his debts, and the courts were busily turning out such judgments.

In 1786 a three day convention was held in Hatfield to decide on a course of action, and they started by attacking the County Courthouse in Northampton. The enraged farmers also tried to take the federal arsenal at Springfield, led by Daniel Shay of Pelham and Luke Day of West Springfield. The attempt failed and from then on it was continual retreat with a few pitched battles. It is said that Washington proved a hiding place toward the end of the little rebellion, and presumably some Washington men were involved, notably Mark and Anthony Eames who refused to take the oath of Allegiance so they could take town offices to which they were elected in 1789. They must have taken such an oath later because once again they were elected to various town offices. We have no record of how many others took the oath under more private circumstances.

George Washington in Virginia urged reforms to make such protests unnecessary in the future. The financial situation of the whole country was in disarray for some years until the new government could get finances on a firm basis. There was a severe depression and new communities still hacking farms out of wilderness would not have the resources to hold out for long.

**WAR OF 1812**

This short war with Great Britain made no real impact upon this town because it isn’t even mentioned in the Clerk’s Record Book. However, apparently we were represented by Lt. Daniel Eames, Musician Meded Eames, Jonathan Chapel, William Milliken, Hiram Savery. Phillip Eames recruited a Company but it did not see active service. A rule was passed ordering all able-bodied men to drill and train on holidays.

A further random military note: In 1826, forty men from Washington greeted Lafayette on his visit to Pittsfield.

Now we enter a prolonged period of peace — as far as wars are concerned.
Indians
INDIANS

Since all phases of this history tend to overlap, perhaps this would be a good place to say a few words about our Indian neighbors of the period. There probably never were any great numbers of resident Indians, but this was their hunting and fishing grounds as far back as we can fathom. The Indians from eastern Massachusetts, western Massachusetts and in the vicinity of the Hudson River were all of more or less the same tribe, and generally called Mohegans. The Indians of Stockbridge served valiantly as the only Indian tribe enlisted on the American side of the Revolution. They went to Concord and were voted a blanket and ribbon per man by the Provincial Congress meeting in Lexington on April 1, 1775. They fought so bravely at White Plains that a monument was erected to commemorate their valor. Some were at Valley Forge, and at Yorktown for the final act of the Revolution. Perhaps our own Gen. Moses Ashley was in touch with them. Konkapot was appointed a Captain, and Umpachenee a Lieutenant, and a son of each was later taken to Yale for private instruction.

At the end of the war, on General Washington’s authorization, a whole ox was donated to the tribe for a feast, together with whiskey rations to celebrate the eventual victory. Four had been killed at White Plains and others died in hospitals. In spite of this good will, their land was constantly taken from them under various pretenses, and as shortly after the Revolution as 1786-8 there was a general migration from their home lands to the Oneida’s reservation in Central New York State, and then several moves later to Shawnee County, Wisconsin.

They kept alive the tradition of their homeland, and representatives would come back occasionally to pray at certain holy places here. One of our oldest former residents says that his mother was half Fox Indian, and two or three Indian men would arrive without warning, refuse to sleep in beds but would sleep on the floor, would stay several days, and talk in a soft musical Indian language, and then leave, also without warning. While they were here, they made it a point to visit several stone monuments in town—one in what is now the State Forest, and perhaps the puzzling pile of stones on the Jarvie Property is also an Indian monument.
There was formerly a stone monument at Monument Mountain, from which the mountain is named, long since destroyed by vandals.

As long ago as 1734 Mr. Sergeant’s interpreter in Stockbridge informed him “that though they (the Indians) still throw each his stone as he passed, they had entirely lost the knowledge of their reason for doing so. He supposed it might be an expression of gratitude for their safe return to the place; but all certainty was lost then, and cannot, of course, have been recovered since.”

The native Indians built houses of long poles covered with mats of finely dressed birch or chestnut bark. It is possible that our settlers made use of such temporary dwellings. The Indians girdled trees for their gardens by building fires around the trunks. Perhaps that was partially the method our first settlers used, and from the Indians they would learn how to plant between the killed but standing trees, their Indian corn, beans and squashes.

The Indians did grind corn here. When the Jarvies bought their place there was a stone that apparently long had been used for that purpose. It is now down on the little lawn in Becket across from the library. Also at Jarvie’s and at Phillips’ was an array of very flat large stones which had apparently been used in connection with camp sites, perhaps to keep fires from burning into the ground.

There is a lot of information about the Stockbridge Indians whose descendants keep in touch with their homeland to this day, even going to court to claim their old Bible now at the Mission House.

What isn’t so obvious is why they were such tried and true friends of the whites. They must have heard of the massacres of the Indians in Connecticut in 1637 when a stockaded Pequot town near the Mystic River in Connecticut was surrounded and burned, and 600 inhabitants, men, women and children, were burned or shot as they tried to run out of their lodges to escape the fire. The Plymouth governor wrote, “It was a fearful sight to see them frying in the fire—and horrible was the stink and stench thereof. But the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave praise thereof to God.” . . . Later the white men surrounded a crowd of Indians in a swamp. The adult male captives were killed, boys sold to the West Indies, women and girls parceled out among the colonists as slaves.

At approximately the same time, the Dutch settlers on the Hudson, after living peaceably alongside an Indian village where the Indians had gardened and camped for generations, suddenly set upon the Indians one dark night, murdering men, women and children with knives, hatchets and by throwing them into the water and pushing them down with sticks until they died. This was apparently the land from which the Stockbridge Indians had formerly come. Surely there must have been enough of a link to carry this dreadful news.

There were many more atrocities against the Indians in New England and right here in Massachusetts, especially during the King Philip War. Surely word must have filtered this comparatively short distance.

As a matter of fact, the first recorded history of the English coming into Berkshire County was when they were chasing some wounded, bleeding Indians from a fight further east, leaving a trail of blood on the ground and on the bushes as the Indians helped their wounded on their flight toward the west.

Whatever the reason, the Stockbridge Indians were faithful allies during the Revolution.
Churches
HISTORY OF CHURCHES

This section may be disproportionately long, but only because it is better documented in the Proprietors' records, the Congregational Church record, and in the Town Clerk's Record Book beginning in 1778. It is only incidental in the church records that anything is said about the buildings. Apparently the first meeting house was built prior to 1774 on Washington "Street". It was, of course, also the Town Hall.

For nearly two hundred years after the settlement of New England by the Pilgrims and the Puritans, the church and town governments were closely related. For many years none but church members were legal voters. Invariably when a grant was made for a new settlement, provision was made for the church and minister. As we have seen there was no exception in the case of Hartwood, the site of the meeting house was decided at a meeting held June 15, 1768 viz.,—"The North East end of Lot #23 on the plan belonging to Isaac Sheldon."

Even by November 27, 1770 the house does not appear to have been finished for it was then voted "that Daniel Foot be paid for building the meeting house as fast as any sum shall become due to him."

In October 1778 the proprietors concurred with the town in extending a call to Rev. Aaron Bliss of Springfield "to settle with them in the work of the gospel" and in the following December his letter of acceptance was recorded in the proprietors' book. A committee was appointed to make the preparations for his ordination. Mr. Bliss was never settled, however. Apparently he had a grievance against the town and was going to bring a suit for damages because we find that the town in January 1784 voted to send Azariah Ashley, town clerk, to Springfield to effect a settlement with him but was apparently unsuccessful. Mr. Bliss was nothing if not persistent because on April 1, 1793 it was voted "to allow the sum of six shillings to Elijah Crain for one Days servis as a Committee man for the purpose of retaining Sqr. Strong with respect to Mr. Aaron Blyss case." Nothing more appears in the records to tell what happened next.

In April 1774 a call was extended to the Rev. William Gay Ballantine to settle as minister and "four dollars on each right for settlement" was levied "one-fourth to be paid in money and three-fourths to be paid in work and materials toward building a house." His salary was to be "$45 pounds a year for the first five years and then rise three pounds a year till it rise to 60 pounds, to continue at that during his ministry to the township of Hartwood." The inhabitants were also to furnish him with 40 cords of wood yearly.

From here on, the chief source of information is the handwritten "Record of the Church in Washington, formerly called Hartwood. This church is Congregational & truly evangelical or orthodox."

NTCL: It was on April 9, 1827, under Rev. Knight, that it was voted to procure a suitable book, at the cost of the church, to keep the Church records in, and Dr. Absalom Deming was appointed assistant in revising and transcribing the old records. It is obvious that Absalom Deming enjoyed this task as he filled page after page with his distinctive writing, with no better light than candles, with homemade ink and quill pens. The old records must have been in terrible condition for he will note that he has just found a loose scrap of paper with some important record that he must incorporate out of sequence. There are pages cataloging the members, even more pages of baptisms beginning with Oct. 2, 1774, Margaret, daughter of Gideon and Margaret Bush; and Oct. 30, 1774, Marion Milliken, daughter of William and Mary Milliken. Marriages are listed in the official town records, and deaths are listed there, too; but we cannot find any cemetery records from the past.

After Mr. Deming brought the book up to date, it was kept by the ministers and church scribes fitfully and the writing is sometimes impossible to follow.

There is a copy of this church record in the Local History Room in the Pittsfield Library for anyone who wants more information.

A personal glimpse of the ordination proceedings comes to light in the diary of the elder Ballantine, as follows:
"June 14, 1774. Set out for Hartwood with my wife, son John and Esq. Taylor, halted at Pease's Blandford, Dined with Rev. Mr. Hunn, Becket, lodged at Mr. Foot's Hartwood. My son examined and approved by all but Mr. Keep who dissent because he—William—holds that unregenerate man may partake of the Lord's supper."

So there is the ordination of William Gay Ballantine, twenty three years old, and a recent graduate of Harvard. He wrote a long letter of acceptance which is in the Church records. 'We the subscribers members of the Church in Hartwood having for some time attended upon the preaching of Mr. William Gay Ballantine and being satisfied as to his gifts and qualifications proceeded to make choice of the said Wm. Gay Ballantine to settle in the work of the Ministry among us and presented our said Choice to the proprietors for their concurrence.'

Hartwood June 15th, 1774
Thomas Beard
George Sloan
Daniel Foote"

"At an Ecclesiastical Council convened at Hartwood June the 15th 1774 in consequence of letters missive directed to us from the Church and people of Hartwood

Present: The Rev. Mr.
John Ballantine
Ebenezer Gay
Thomas Allen
Whitman Welch
Tadock Hume
Aarom Bascom
John Heep
Adonijah Bidwell

Delegates Present
Eldad Taylor
Aschel Hathaway
Eli Root
Isaac Stratton
Nathaniel Kingsley
James Hamilton
Silas Kellogg

Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Gay (his uncle) was chosen Moderator by the Council and Thomas Allen, Scribe. After Mr. William Gay Ballantine presented himself for examination it was unanimously voted by this Council, that Mr. Wm. Gay Ballantine is in our opinion duly qualified for the work of the gospel ministry and that we proceed to set him apart to it over this Church and people according to the Holy Scriptures. The Council then proceeded to the Meeting House and after prayer and a sermon preached by the Rev. John Ballantine (his father) adapted to the Occasion, he was regularly invested with the ministerial office by prayer and the laying on the hands of the Presbytery.

"Attest
Rev. Thomas Allen Scribe
Rev. Ebenezer Gay, Moderator"

It was a surprise to meet Rev. Thomas Allen's name when it first appeared in the Church Record because of his fame as "The Fighting Parson" of the Revolutionary War. Much has been written about his exploits. One little story about him and the battle after Ticonderoga:

"Their post by the river was attacked by a party led by the fiery Parson Allen. Recognizing some of the Tories who came from his own district, Allen went forward, stood on a log and exhorted them in his best pulpit manner to defect to the American cause. 'there's Parson Allen. Let's spot him', came the cry from the redoubt. His neighbors' volley failed to harm Allen, who led the rush over the breastwork.'

Then the Church Covenant, and on June 30, 1774 twenty-three members signed.

George Sloan and Sarah his wife
Daniel Foote and wife
Thomas Beard
Moses Ashley
Phillip Mattoon and Eltinor
Nathan Ingraham and Mary, his wife
William Spencer

From these on, several new members were added each year until one hundred twenty-six names are listed by 1816 followed by the notation: "Such above as are stated to have been admitted must be understood to have professed religion in this Church. Record of admissions under Rev. Mr. Ballantine are ended."

From the Town Record, "November 16, 1778 it was voted that the Rev. Dr. Ballantine's salary for the present year be paid at ye Rate of Wheat at 6 per bushel, that Rye at 4—6 per bushel, Indian Corn at 3
per bushel. Labour at 3 per day and all other Mechanicks at ye sd rate.”

Then there is this notation on page 19, “Sept. 10, 1820. The last Sabbath on which that dear and good man the Rev. William Gay Ballantine was able to attend the services of this Sanctuary. He baptized my son Lorenzo Jarvis. Attest: Absalom Deming, Scribe to the Church. Appointed to copy the ancient Record of the Church.”

On the very first page of the Town Record Book are the following notations, showing how the Congregational Church was losing its financial support in the town.

“June ye 25th, 1778 Voted George Sloan, Jabez Cornish and Andrew Mumford be a Committee to Treet with the Anabaptize. Voted Instructions to the above sd. comtey as follows viz them to treet with Anabaptize and that they have Power to Discharge them if they agree and in Order for that they must agree by themselves and if they cannot Do that they Must Settle it by indigent men.”

“July ye 17, 1778. Voted Nathan Ingraham and William Spencer be a Comee. to go and treet with the Town of Lee Confirming the Province Tax. The Committee. Chose to treet with the Baptize Brought in their Agreement and the Town Voted fifteen of the Inhabitants who have imbodyed themselves into a Society of Anbaptize they are to pay all Back rates from the Date hereof and then to be Cleared from all Minister Rates So Long as they Shall Continue in such Society”. The men listed are:

 Jacobs Bacon
 Elisha Smith
 Ephraim Smith
 Barnabas Dixon
 Elisha Smith Jun.
 Amos Bacon

 Jointh arret
 Saml. Smith
 William Smith
 Asel Brown
 Ruben Draper
 William Congdon
 Isaac Hodgkins

Here is a different view of the church. From “A Narrative of a Tour through the State of Vermont from April 27 to June 18, 1789” by Rev. Nathan Perkins of Hartford. Out of print but a copy is at Forbes Library in Northampton.

“8 o’clock journeyed to Becket and was richly and sumptuously entertained at my brother’s—Wednesday 10 o’clock left his house, one of the best in the County. Dined with Rev. Ballantine of Washington—a poor town and a disgrace to the exalted name which it bears—cold land—bad for grain—good for grass—came to Mr. Moses Steele’s. They were overjoyed to see me—ready to eat me up with love and kindness. Wished and wished I could preach there that the people might see the house once crowded and that the people might know what preaching was. Left Washington 4 o’clock, and reached Pittsfield about sun-set.”

On the return trip—“Rode on to Becket. At Washington called on Mr. Steele—see Col Steele—Mrs. Millican—all overwhelmed with joy to see me. Reached my brother’s about dark, fatigued very much overcome with the suffering of my journey. Brother Samuel is coming to preach at Becket. How mysterious the events of Providence! hope he will do good.”

The catalog of members continues in some confusion and with increasingly illegible penmanship. From 1823 there is a steady listing, and in 1827 eighteen names were added.

On page 38 of the church record, we come to “Cases of Discipline” wherein husbands and wives were confessing guilt of “bedding together before marriage”, probably based upon the arrival of offspring in less than the approved nine months.

3rd Nov. 1796—It appears that disaffection in the church existed respecting “the Conduct of Ezekiel Case and Sarah Mattoon in going after the Methodists, that various church meetings were called to consider the matter” but there is no record of its outcome. Five pages are devoted to problems with Mr. Elijah Crane, beginning with the complaint on March 10th, 1803 “which humbly sheweth that the said Elijah Crane not having the fear of God before his eyes has Violated the laws of Christ and given offence to the Christian Brethren in the following particulars, viz

1st: By making advances toward Mrs. Byxbe’s bed manifesting a desire to get into bed with her at a time when Col. Byxbe her husband was absent. This took place at a time when Col. Byxbe’s family lived in Mr. Crane’s house, and a time when Mr. Crane was building a back lintel to his house.

2d: By endeavoring to vilify the Character of the Rev. William G. Ballantine in the following instances, viz
"1st Saying that the said Wm. G. Ballantine was a dishonest man one instance of the alleged dishonesty was exhibited in a deal respecting a yoke of oxen said Crane Bought of W.G. B. Another instance of alleged dishonesty consisted in refusing to pay Nathaniel Hardy and Samuel Daniels a Contribution which said Wm. G. B. agreed to make to Maj. Stephens for removing a Certain rock out of the road

2d By declaring that the sd. W.G. B. blasphemed whenever he went into the pulpit.

3d Repeatedly declaring that W.G.B. was a damned Fool.

4th Repeatedly defaming W.G.B. in his own family and before strangers.

5th By allowing a horse to be brought into his house on Saturday evening of the 12th Dec. last and joining the sport made with the horse while in the house.

6th By forsaking our worship and following after strange preachers thereby violating his Covenant engagement with this church."

"April 27th, 1808—After the meeting was opened Mrs. Byxbe made the following declaration before the Church viz: That in the year that the meeting house was built & While Mr. Byxbe was gone to New York one Night or toward day some person trod upon her foot as she lay in bed: she perceiving it to be Mr. Crane Called out to him and says Mr. Crane be gone! he said that if she would say no more he would go. That then she got up and called up Mr. Haws and sat up the remainder of the night."

* * * *

"July sixteenth: Voted 1st to suspend judgment further on the first article in the Complaint and that Mrs. Byxbe be notified that it was the opinion of the Church her incumbent duty to procure further evidence to support the first article in the Complaint if further evidence was to be had."

There were several other meetings on this matter, and then it was agreed to "call a Council of five Ministers of the Congregational order to Consider of the matter of Complaint against Mr. Crane. —

* * * *

"Sept. 2 . . . 1804: At the appointed time four of the Gentlemen who were Chosen appeared and sat in Council viz —

The Rev. Thomas Allen of Pittsfield
Rev. Alvin Hyde of Lee
Rev. Jonathan Nash of Middlefield
Rev. Samuel Shepherd of Lenox

These Gentlemen in the result of their deliberations on the matters which were laid before them say as follows—"The Council are of opinion that the evidence exhibited in support of the first Article of Charge in the Complaint tho it is such as may excite strong suspicions against Mr. Crane Yet is not so clear and full as warrants us to condemn him of Lascivious Conduct. Respecting the 3d article of Charge in the Complaint the council agree that it stands supported and that Mr. Crane from his own Confession before us, has been guilty of Vilifying the Character of Rev. Mr. Ballantine and of wounding the cause of Christ.

"In regard to the 3d Article of Charge the Council are of opinion that Mr Crane was guilty of unchristian Conduct in the affairs which took place at his house on the Saturday evening Specified in the Charge, and that as a friend to the holy sabbath he ought to condemn himself therefore. Respecting his foresaking the worship of God in this place and going after strange preachers as specified in the last Article of Charge his proceedings Notwithstanding all the provocations which he supposes he had, we are Unanimously of opinion were unwise and irregular. The Council then exhort Mr. Crane to review his conduct and to his duty That he may let his light shine before his Brethren and before the world;"

"They furthermore press it as their opinion that if Mr. Crane publicly on the Lords day accede to this result—it will be the duty of this Church to forgive him and to consider all matters specified in the Complaint to be settled.

"As Mr. Crane did not accede to the result at the time specified nor has since done it, He is by the foregoing Resolve of the Church cut off from any special relation to it.

This read publicly April 14th 1805

William Gay Ballantine, Pastor"

April 29, 1804 there is an account of how Absolam Deming, church scribe, and Reuben Bollis were
charged with intemperance. Both made confessions before the church and were continued as brethren as attested by John Knight, Pastor.

"At a Church Meeting held July 1st, 1825 the following Request was presented by the Rev. Hempstead with his reasons for making it.

"It is well known that I have long doubted whether it be my duty to Continue any longer my relation with this Church and people which I now sustain—this doubt has been increased since the last town meeting on the Subject Whereas then only 4 voted for my salary for the ensuing Year. Therefore I request that the church agree with me in Calling a Council to advise what is my duty under my present circumstances and if they think it expedient to dissolve the Connection This request being presented before them they voted unanimously not to grant it."

"At a meeting of the Church held Feb. 20th, 1826 Deac Eames stated that the town could no longer raise money for the support of the minister and expressing a wish that the Connection be dissolved that they had Chosen a Committee to effect the above purpose."

This Council met and decided to dissolve the agreement between Rev. Hempsted and the Church.

Apparantly he had been awarded $500 for settling in the town, and the church argued that some part of this settlement fee be returned because of his comparatively short service. After some argument it was decided to deduct $51.75 from what was due him.

On the 2nd of October 1826, the Rev. Hempsted was still in town apparently and joined in deciding to call Rev. Caleb Knight to settle with them. Rev. Knight wrote in part, "The sum you have offered as a Salary tho probably as much as you can feel safe to engage at present you all undoubtedly feel is too low to afford me a Comfortable support, but you were encouraged to hope for aid from the Domestic Missionary Society to supply the deficiency—I seem to hear a voice saying this is the way, walk ye in it."

A Council was called and Mr. Knight was installed December 13, 1826.

There was a flurry of new regulations and a sudden surge in church membership.

Nov. 2, 1830 Deacon Eames was delegate to a meeting at Chester called by the Mountain Association where Reuben Tinker was ordained as a Missionary destined to the Sandwich Islands.

On Friday the 13th of April, Brother Simeon Clapp was "called up" on the charge of profanity, which he denied. "After an explanation of the word, profanity by the moderator, the witnesses were called & solemnized.

"A Wells first witness testified that in answer to a question respecting a pair of cattle Mr. Clapp replied that he might as well undertake to make an Almighty as to tame them & further that if God Almighty’s Creation stood between them & hell they would break through & further that the cattle were no more raised in Pittsfield than they were in heaven."

"Mr. Squiers 2d witness deposed that in conversation respecting the steers Mr. Clapp said that hell & damnation could not stop them."

Brother Clapp was found guilty, did not officially repent, and after several meetings and many prayers he was excommunicated.

Then it was the turn (again) of Brother Absalom Deming. On Friday, October 26, 1838 "a Complaint was presented by Deac. Pitts against Brother Absalom Deming for the following faults viz 1st for immoral unchristian conduct committed at the annual Town Meeting in March 1831. 2d for committing an assault on the person of Capt. Phillip Eames on his way home and for making use of unchristian language. 3d For intemperate & improper use of ardent spirits and for profaneness committed at different times & places 4th for refusing publicly and at other times to do anything for the support of the Gospel in this Society. The Complaint being read—Voted to adjourn 2 weeks from today."

At a later meeting the 4th article of complaint was struck out, and later meetings were cancelled on account of a funeral, a severe storm, and a couple times by lack of a quorum.

Finally on March 1st, 1838 he read his confession to the congregation, and it is in his own writing, over his large and flourished signature, as follows: "Brothers and Sisters, I acknowledge that I grievously offended in the assault on Capt. Eames in the road from the town meeting, both in the assault & in profane language. I by no means justify myself nor can I say I was wholly free from excitement by ardent spirits—but this I say that I thought myself so when I went from the town meeting—and I freely confess that I may have indulged myself in its use to a dangerous extent at other times & places than I have been aware. But this sin having been so plainly pointed out to me by your faithfulness it shall be my official endeavor to avoid that in the course of this case of Discipline I have spoken hard and offensive things against the officers of the Church I acknowledge of this. I am heartily sorry I wish to be forgiven & to live with them on amicable & Christian terms. Brothers & Sisters in the
Church I ask your forgiveness for every offence by which I have grieved you. I desire to return to my duty & walk with you in the fellowship of the Gospel. Pray for me, that I may be watchful & faithful & kept by the almighty power of God from again falling into sin. I abhor myself and have no reliance on my own Goodness. To God alone I look for help. May his grace be sufficient for us—his blessing rest upon us—may we love & pray for one another.”

On June 16, 1835 an ecclesiastical council met at the house of William Morgan “for the purpose of hearing statements of the circumstances and difficulties of pastor & people” and adjourned to the following day at 7 A.M. “The pastoral relation existing between Rev. Caleb Knight & and the Church & Society be and it hereby is dissolved.

There are several pages about random meetings and discipline against a Dr. Little, apparently for intoxication which he denied, and he was excommunicated.

Rev. Kinsman Atkinson served the Church from May 1840 until April 1842 when another council convened to dismiss Mr. Atkinson from his duties here, with “feelings of fraternal kindness & love”,

Next called was Rev. Francis Norwood.

The record is silent for five years when, in his own handwriting, Mr. Norwood copied his communication to the Church as follows:

“September 13, 1851: Gentlemen; It is now five years last spring since I came among you & have labored among you as a minister of Jesus Christ. You were then in a very low and broken state, like a few sheep scattered upon the mountains. Since that time a convenient parsonage house has been erected. The Society has been reorganized, a goodly number have been added to the Church; a new and comfortable house of worship has been completed. And had it not been for a large number of substantial supporters of worship, who left here last season, you would have had strength enough to maintain the gospel independently of foreign aid.”

In 1859 there is the notation: The ministry of Rev. M.M. Longley commenced April 1859 by vote of both M.E. & Congl. Societies to become ‘Pastor’ for one year. Vote passed March 3rd, 1859. Rev. Longley makes a notation that when he became pastor of the Congregational Church there were no male members, and seven females, five of them widows.

Communions were listed as taking place “at Street” or “at City”. In 1860 there were a number of admissions—it doesn’t specify to which church but presumably the Congregational, including Justin Morgan and his wife Hannah from West Springfield, he descended from the Justin Morgan who started the Morgan breed of horses.

Also admitted were M.M. Longley and his wife from Peru, but to which church? In 1862 there is a notice signed “M.M. Longley, Pastor”

“Nov. 2nd, 1862—Lord’s Supper at Street. Brethren L. Crosier, C. Abbot & M. Spring present for last time before leaving us to join army”

March 14, 1868. At a church meeting held at Town House, the Union Society being in session at the same place during the afternoon, there are reports of all sorts of plans for the Union Church, including plans for special instruction “till such time as giving good evidence of being born again” When they may be recommended for membership.

On Dec. 4, 1864, “Voted unanimously the following: The members of the M.E. and Congregational Churches present here tonight, having for nearly five years past walked in union with each other, & believing this is pleasing to Christ & the best way to support the Gospel, are ready to come into one church on a Union plan, with full liberty for Sisters to speak & pray in social meetings, and whatever may be God’s will in the future.”

A committee was formed to ask Rev. M.M. Longley who had “labored with us in the Gospel ministry for nearly five years” to continue as minister of the new Union Church, and he accepted.

The last page of the membership list seems written under stress of emotion, a hurried scrawl with underlined words and dark, long crossings of “it’s”, quite unlike other previous writing of Rev. Longley.

“The work of the Congregational Church in aiding to organize the Union Church of Washington and being resolved into the same, was sanctioned by Berkshire North Association and the New Church recognized by a Council to which both Methodist and Congregationalist were invited. See minutes which are back and minutes of Council.

“There ends the history of a church at least 91 years old. If not ended, it assumes a new form.

M.M. Longley
Pastor of the M.E. & Congl. Churches
for more than four years
"Who here leaves on record that Christians of different names can walk as one; & that if this Union fails at all, it fails for want of encouragement, or letting alone of Denominational Leaders, out of the Township.

"Who here records, that it is precious to work for the unity of Christ's flock, even if reproached therefore.

"May CA's last prayer soon be answered.

"That they may be one.'

"Feb. 9th, 1865, MML.

The Union Church records show that Rev. Longley was persuaded to withdraw his resignation as pastor of that church, but it is soon recorded that Rev. Longley was elected to the General Court in November, 1865 and was granted a leave of absence to attend.

In 1866, Rev. Longley again submitted his resignation, and this time it was accepted. Rev. Longley, his wife, and his son Lawrence were dismissed from the Union Church at their request, and recommended for admission to the Unitarian Church in Fitchburg, Mass.

Rev. Longley

A letter from Rev. Longley years later,

"Belvidere Boone Co. III.
Mch 2, 1899

"Mr. Curtis Messenger

"My dear Brother,

"Do you ever think of your old Pastor, of our Long rides together, one to a wedding in "West Woods" round by Chapel's, long, long. To meetings, one the last "Union" of which Dr. Carhart agreed to report "Union pleasing to God and ought to continue". Draw a veil over what he did. Language fails. Hard to believe of a man, not say a Christian! Even now, I shudder as I think. Near your home snow, water slush in hollow! Do you remember how deep? But we got through though it seemed impossible! Do you remember in that little study? You bowed before God, conferred, gave up, promised to serve. Prayed; After that I laid you in the water, in the name of the F. & S. & Holy Spirit! Do you remember? Were I near I would come with some brethren & break the bread & take of the cup (unfermented) together! I should love to do it. I trust somebody has done it. But it is not necessary to Salvation—"Whoever
confesseth & forsaketh shall find Mercy!" Do you stand fast there? If not let us renew confession and consecration & accepting Christ together to this day. I say "God be merciful to me a sinner"—me, Moses Maynard Longley. Me, me Lord! I will think of you as thus saying, for "Curtis Messenger". I would love to say it with you. Were I sick & live till summer I should be strongly inclined to come to the dear old Hills & see you who are still there & if you are "shut in" we would have the Lord's Supper together! We would. Pray for me. I have been almost laid aside for 3 years. Short breath. Catarrh, Grippe & age 83! And we have a great work, Bro. Pomeroy can tell you. It needs more than we can give of Time, Strength, Money! Only I never know their Homes! & Now worship in S.S. part of new Church. Home, left the Dance Hall, the rent 17.00 per month for Sunday and Tues. Eve. Even this part of house not finished outside, but seats 400. Come and see us.

Good Daughter & New Son Fred Jones will give a welcome. Dear wife before me & in two weeks for days too feeble to speak whispering "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms" she went Home to Heaven. One of God's Best. She lived for others. "Little Henry" (I wish his body dear could lie in old Hawley or in Joliet beside dear mother, but it matters not). "Little Henry", for whom you bought that beautiful casket, is with dear wife and two of Laurence children.

Rev 21.24-27 & 22. 11 & 14.—God bids all "come" 22-17

Yours in Christ
M.M. Longley"
Dec. 23, 1863, said council met (only one Methodist minister being present, and he declining any part save in the discussions) and "the Union Church of Washington" was formally recognized as the church of Christ, with as members; 28 Methodist, 37 Congregational, and Rev. M.M. Longley was installed Pastor.

The church was organized, not to divide but to unite and to maintain Gospel Institutions; it was organized with the hope even of a permanent union of Christians in Washington, "believing this is pleasing to Christ and the best way to support the Gospel."

Following are:

- "Principles of Organization"
- "Articles of Faith"
- Covenant
- "Rules" Including

"12. Those who become members of this church are considered as pledging themselves not to traffic in or use any intoxicating liquor as a drink; but only when needed strictly for medicine.

"13. This church believes the Sabbath to be an institution of Divine appointment, and that the observance of it is essential to the social, civil and religious interests of men, and its members are expected by example and influence to persuade all persons to abstain from worldly business, traveling and amusement, and to attend the public worship of God on that day.

Pastor—M.M. Longley

Deacons—J.M. Chapel, Lewis Crosier."

Occasionally someone finds an old letter that paints a better picture of the time than we can reconstruct from dry records. This one was written to the wife of a minister at the Union Church. It would really have been even better if we had Mrs. Lawrence's answer giving information of the town of Washington as she found it. The parsonage where she must have lived is still on Route 8, and that was near the railroad, post office and other activities of the town.

Copy of note with old letter "On Thanksgiving day 1879 Emma Wilkes married Rev. Alphonso Lawrence. This letter was written by Ella Wilkes (my grandmother). The couple was married in the Wilkes home in West Cummington. Their wedding trip was by horse and sleigh to his new parish in the town of Washington. Uncle Phon, as we called him, was a grand old fellow who lived to be 93 or 94 years old.

Lila T. Sears
Windsor, Mass."
COPY OF LETTER, beautifully written with shaded strokes of the pen.

"West Cummington
Dec. 10th, 1879

My Dear Sister:—

Your welcome letter was received this evening, and its contents eagerly perused. We had looked for a letter before. I went to the P.O. Monday & Tuesday nights, but did not get any letter. I sent you some papers Monday night—I hope you won’t get sick over your housework. You must take it as easily as possible and not fuss over it.—Don’t you worry about not earning anything last fall, for we shall get along nicely; we are living on the top shelf, plum pudding, wedding cake, three kinds of pie, and nice roast pork every day.

Was the cake that you carried with you good? How long did your brother remain with you. Have you had good success with your cooking? Have you made any jelly cakes yet? I should like to step in tonight and see what you are doing? I do want to see your little Bennie. How I should love him! Can’t you send him to me in a letter.

I visited Mrs. Hawley last week and played upon Mr. Polly’s new organ, it is one of the Beatty organ, it is a fine instrument, good tone, has nine stops and a knee swell; a music stool and an instruction book were given; and the entire cost was only 860.

The Virginia gentleman called here Monday, split some wood for Mother, and then started for the North Pole.

The paper is so poor that I can’t use pen and ink & so shall finish with a pencil. I want you should write me about the church, and your house, & the people that you visit. Do you have any company? Are you near a school house? Have you become acquainted with any teachers yet? Mrs. Spencer Tirrell has lost a little girl. Babe & she is quite low.

Have you become acquainted with many young people? Anything lively going on in Washington? How many houses are there near you?

Mother sends her love and would be delighted to make you a visit and wash your dishes for you, but she dreads to go in the stage & cars, if we could only ride from here direct to your house she would like to go. Mr. Morris returned home last Saturday but Mrs. Morris did not come.

Velpeau Wilkes sends his best respects to Bennie Lawrence. Mr. Wilkins is teaching the Winter term No. 6 in Savoy. I want you should write me a long letter soon. Send it to Ashfield, but don’t write it when you are tired. I shall go to Aunt Sarah’s Friday night, and reach Ashfield Saturday. Please write to Mother as soon as you can for she will be lonesome after I----- (remainder written upside down at the top of the first page) leave. I will close with my love to Brother Alphonso & your self.

From sister Ella “

Installing new bell at church
In the old Congregational record book is the following:

“A Brief History of the Beginning of St. Andrew's Church in the town of Washington.”

“On the feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, 1899, the Rev. Wm. C. Hicks, the minister in charge, turned the first sod for the building of St. Andrew’s Church in the town of Washington upon the land selected for the purpose on the main road from Becket to Pittsfield. The building which together with the land is the gift of Mr. George F. Crane of New York City is a memorial to Mrs. Crane’s parents, the Reverend Andrew Oliver D.D. and Adelaid Imlay his wife. It stands on the site of the house of the Rev. Wm. Gay Ballantine who was minister of the township of Hartwood (now Washington) from 1774-1820, and marks the beginning of the second movement to establish the Episcopal Church in Washington. The first Church St. John’s and marks the beginning of the second movement to establish the Episcopal Church in Washington. The first Church St. John’s was established with 6 communicants in 1825 under probably a lay Reader and was discontinued in a few years.

“St. Andrew’s Church, which is an Early English Gothic Structure is build of field stone after the plans of Mr. George C. Harding of Pittsfield, Mass. The corner stone was laid by the Rev. William H. Vibbertdd, Vicor of Trinity Chapel, New York City on Monday, Sept. 4, 1899, assisted by Rev. Wm. C. Hicks. The following articles were placed in the corner stone. A copy of the Holy Bible and of the prayer Book and Hymnal, a memorial sketch of Rev. Dr. Oliver. The Oliver memorial number of the Seminarian by Rev. Philander K. Cady. A service card of St. Andrew’s Church for the first season 1899. A copy of The churchman, a United States half-dollar and one cent piece for 1899, a copy of the Springfield Republican for August 31, 1899 containing a picture and description of St. Andrews, and a copy of the Pittsfield Sun. The Church was consecrated on Friday, June 15, 1900 by the Bishop of Massachusetts, the Rt. Rev. Lawrence D.D. Bishop Lawrence, assisted by Archdeacon Tebbetts celebrated the Holy Communion, and the Rev. Wm. H. Vibbert, D.D. preached the sermon, his text being “This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.” Among the memorials presented with the church are the Alter Cross and Vases given by Wm. H.P. Oliver, the Organ given by F.D. Winslow and the Litany of Mrs. S. J. Whyte. The original Trustees were George F. Crane, Frank D. Winslow, S.J. Whyte (Treasurer) J.B. Colt and George W. Messenger who and their successors, by the deed of gift, hold the property together with the endowment. J.B. Colt and George W. Messenger who and their successors, by the deed of gift, hold the property together with the endowment given at the same time by Mr. Crane for the benefit of the Town of Washington under the spiritual direction of the Bishop of the Diocese of that part of Massachusetts in which Washington lies. The above was written by Rev. Charles Smith Lewis, attest John B. Watson, Town Clerk.”

Services at St. Andrews were held when the Crane family was in residence at Bucksteep Manor. They had Christmas parties at the church for neighboring children, giving oranges, small gifts, and candy to each child. In the meantime, the horses with their carriages or sleighs were blanketed and tied in the horse sheds that stood across the road from the gateway to Bucksteep.

Eventually, as the Crane children grew up, the need for Bucksteep lessened. Mr. Crane gave it to what became the diocese of Western Massachusetts. For many years it was used as a conference center and summer camp for the Girls Friendly Society, and as such became well known all over New England. Services were held in chapel during the summer months. Then its use was discontinued and all the property stood deserted except that David Watson lived as caretaker in a farmhouse that formerly stood south of the chapel. Occasionally the chapel was opened for a funeral service of some former member, but after Mr. Watson died, and his house was bulldozed down, the property was sold to Judge Rudolph Sacco, with the exception of the chapel. In 1976 the Bishop decided to sell the chapel to a young man to convert it into his dwelling; but as the chapel stands on only one quarter acre of land and the zoning requirement is two acres, this was denied. There the matter stands as we enter 1977.

Newspaper accounts of church activities

“Fred Stone and Miss Grace Chase were married in the St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church Sunday morning by the rector, Rev. Mr. Arnold. The bride was gowned in a pretty white muslin dress, white hat and carried bride’s roses. The wedding march was by Mrs. George F. Crane of New York. Mr. and Mrs. Stone will reside in one of Mr. Crane’s cottages at Washington.” (First marriage in the chapel)
St. Andrew’s July 29, 1903
MARRIED IN CHAPEL. The marriage of Miss Agnes Watson, daughter of John R. Watson, to Charles R. Johnson took place at St. Andrews Episcopal chapel in Washington last Wednesday evening, July 28th, at 8 o'clock in the presence of a large number of friends and relatives from that town, Becket, Dalton, Holyoke, Great Barrington and this city. The Rev. Mr. Houghton officiated, the full Episcopal service being used. Mrs. Crane played the wedding march. The church was beautifully decorated for the occasion with white carnations, sweet peas, ferns and smilax, the work of artistic friends, the affect being wrought out by a beautiful chandelier, which Mr. Crane presented to the church, this being the first time the church had been used in the evening. John Watson, brother of the bride, was best man, and Miss Jennie Allen of this city was bridesmaid. The bride was attired in white peau de soie with white satin trimmings and wore a veil caught up by carnations and maiden hair fern. She carried a bouquet of carnations and maiden hair ferns. The bridesmaid wore mousseline de soie and also carried carnations. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson held a reception immediately following the ceremony at their future home, "Prospect Place", which adjoins the home of the bride's parents, to which 65 friends and relatives adjourned, where a social evening was held, dancing, varied with songs and recitations, music being furnished by Alexander Allen. They were the recipients of many useful and valuable presents as well as the best wishes of many friends. The young couple is well and favorably known and there is every reason to believe a happy life awaits them. Mr. Johnson is employed on the Crane place. They were presented by Mr. and Mrs. Crane with table linen, also a beautiful sideboard, ornamental lamp. Among the presents deserving special mention is a set of china received as a present by the bride's mother on her wedding day and which originally came from Scotland.

"Bishop Thomas F. Davies had charge of the service at St. Andrews church on Sunday confirming a class of 12 candidates. This was the largest class confirmed at one time in St. Andrew's for many years. The spiritual influence of Wolcott Coil Treat who has had charge of the little church during the summer months is being felt in this vicinity. Mr. Treat has taken a great interest in his parish and is well liked by his people. Mr. Treat will be in charge of the service. There will be choir rehearsal Friday evening at 8 o'clock.

"The list of candidates confirmed by Bishop Davies on Sunday includes Mr. and Mrs. E. Wood, Frank Wood, Mrs. C.E. Anderson, Miss Doris Anderson, Chauncey Corey, Frebon Corey, Miss Ruth Corey, Miss Alma Corey, L.E. Stone, Murray Stone and Harold Horne."
Picture of stained glass windows in St. Andrew's Chapel
First choir at St. Andrew's, about 1900: Dick Messenger, Fred Stone, Mrs. White, Mrs. Crane, Charles Johnson, Mrs. Lewis, Grace Stone, May Sanders Watson, and Agnes Watson Johnson
Cemeteries
TOWN CEMETERIES

There are four cemeteries in town and they were surveyed and mapped in 1975, but many graves were unrecognizable. The West Branch Road Cemetery (called the Chapel Cemetery in some old records) has been nearly destroyed by vandalism by groups partying there in seclusion. The cemetery around the old town hall needs expensive and extensive repairs as the stones succumb to the weather. The Stonehouse Road cemetery is in fairly good condition. Almost no one knows of the little Kent cemetery off by itself near the Middlefield line.

Mr. Crane explains that in the earliest days a spot was usually selected in close proximity to the church which was across the road from where the old town hall now stands. The soil there was so thin above the rocks that they soon moved the graves to their present location, having bought and fenced this cemetery around 1805.

The Stonehouse cemetery was bought in April 1805 when Anthony Eames was paid six dollars and sixty seven cents in full compensation for this land out of the town treasury. Then Anthony Eames was one of the first to be buried there where his old gravestone still stands.

However, since Mr. Eames' death was on a public highway, the town followed an old English custom by erecting a suitable monument for this first traffic death which occurred in 1808 between the present Poland home and Elliot's. Anthony Eames, one of the earliest settlers, was taking a sleigh load of handmade shingles to Hartford, but the load overturned and he was instantly killed on February 24, 1808, "in the 55th year of his age." A suitable white marble monument was erected at the spot beside the little dirt road with this inscription:

"Death like an overflowing stream
Sweeps us away; our life's a dream,
An empty tale, a morning flower,
Cut down and withered in an hour."

This monument stood beside the road from the Town Hall to the village of Becket for almost a century, frequently scaring horses into running away with more or less disastrous results, horses considering anything standing white and still on the roadside an object of great concern and a just excuse for excitement.