

A
HISTORY
OF
THE COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE,
MASSACHUSETTS;
IN TWO PARTS

THE FIRST BEING A
GENERAL VIEW OF THE COUNTY;
THE SECOND, AN
ACCOUNT OF THE SEVERAL TOWNS.

BY GENTLEMEN IN THE COUNTY,
CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN.

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1829.

A HISTORY
OF THE
TOWN OF SANDISFIELD,

BY REV. LEVI WHITE.

THIS town now includes the original township of Sandisfield, and the tract formerly called the South Eleven Thousand Acres. This tract was incorporated as a district in 1797, and annexed to Sandisfield in 1819. The town is situated in the south-east corner of Berkshire County, and is in extent six miles from east to west, and about nine miles from north to south. It is longer, however, on the east than on the west line. It is bounded on the south by Connecticut line, which separates it from Colebrook and Norfolk; on the west by New Marlborough, and for a small distance, by Tyringham; on the north by Tyringham and Otis; and on the east by Otis and Tolland. It contains about 34,560 acres.

The surface of the town is hilly in general; the hills are to a considerable height, but not abrupt, rising into large swells. In the south-east section of the town, however, a considerable mountain rises on the western bank of Farmington river, known by the name of Hanging mountain. Its highest point of elevation is 450 feet above the bank, and presents to the south-east a mural perpendicular front, more than 300 feet high. Large pieces of rocks, dislocated by the frost, or other causes, often fall from the jutting side with tremendous force.

Farmington river runs near the east line of the town through the whole extent, and affords many mill-seats and water privileges. And there are other small streams intersecting the town, upon which are mills and other machinery. In the north part of the town, at the outlet of

Spectacle pond, the water privileges are excellent. But as the site is remote from any good road, but little use comparatively, is made of the water at present. There are two other ponds in the town, but small in extent. There are abundance of springs, and the town generally is supplied with excellent water.

The soil is various, but generally of a good quality. It consists of a moist loam; stony in many places, and principally adapted to grazing. Some parts of the town, however, are suited to the cultivation of different kinds of grain. Formerly the raising of live stock of various kinds, was the principal object of farmers: but for a number of years past, the dairy has been pursued with success, and carried on extensively.

This town was originally Indian hunting ground. In clearing a piece of ground, a few years since, a large number of heads of arrows, formed of stone, was found safely deposited between two rocks; probably placed there ages ago. So far as appears, the town was never an Indian settlement.

This town, in connection with Tyringham, New Marlborough, and Becket, was granted to a company who petitioned for the same in 1735. It was called No. 3. The proprietors generally lived in the county of Worcester. The charter of the town was granted in 1736; and the year following the proprietors held their first meeting for the purpose of choosing a committee to survey and divide the town into lots. Many meetings were held in successive years.

The town was designed at first to have been six miles square; but an addition was made to the south end of it, in consideration of ponds; and then there was left to the south and south-east, the South Eleven Thousand Acres abovementioned.

No family moved into the town until 1756. Thomas Brown was the first. Soon after, his father, Daniel Brown, Esq., moved in with his numerous family. He owned a large share of the town; and in transacting its concerns, was the principal man. He was born near Boston, though he had lived for some time in Enfield, Con. The settlement of the town advanced rapidly. A large number of families came in from Wethersfield, Con., and the adjoining towns; also a considerable

number from the towns below Plymouth, on Cape Cod. This town was incorporated in 1762.

The first white child born in the town, was Lot Smith. He was born on the 7th of Aug. 1757, and was thus called, because the proprietors, meeting on that day, talked of giving him a lot of land. Of this they failed, but his mother insisted upon his being called Lot. On the 13th of the same month, Mr. Sanford Brown was born, who is still living.

The General Court, in their original grant, manifested a regard for public worship, and made it a condition of the grant, that the proprietors should locate 300 acres, to be given to the first settled minister, and the same to the second. Afterwards, in 1766, the proprietors gave a lot of one hundred acres for the use of the successive ministers of the first parish. The town enjoyed a preached gospel within five or six years of the first settlement. The first meeting-house was erected about 1757, but was not finished till 1761. This remained till the second was built, which was in 1796. Its site is very nearly in the centre of the town, and the house is literally built upon a rock.

The Congregational church was formed in 1756. It consisted of seven male members: how many female, is unknown.

Three pastors have been settled over this church: the Rev. Cornelius Jones, Eleazer Storrs, and Levi White. As Mr. Jones was in a few years dismissed, little is known respecting the state of the church under his ministry. Under the ministry of Mr. Storrs, there were considerable numbers added to the church, though the precise number cannot be ascertained. In 1798, when the present pastor was ordained, the church consisted of about 70 members. There were about 25 active male members. Since that time, 307 have been admitted to the church. Many in the course of this time have died, and very many have moved to the new settlements.

The present number of members in the church is little rising of 200.

Mr. Jones was born in Bellingham, and graduated at Harvard College in 1752. He was ordained at the time the church was organized; and for want of a more con-

venient place, was ordained in a barn. The first Pre-
sident Edwards, then settled over the Stockbridge In-
dians, was moderator of the council, preached the ordi-
nation sermon, was active in forming the church, and
drew up the articles of faith and covenant, which are
substantially the same at the present time. In conse-
quence of difficulties, Mr. Jones was dismissed in 1761.
The year after, he purchased 10,000 acres of wild land,
which constitutes the principal part of the present town
of Rowe. He removed to the place in 1764 or 5, and
became a wealthy farmer, but preached occasionally.
About 1779 or 80, having disposed of all his lands, he
removed to Skenesborough, now Whitehall, in the State
of New York, where he died at an advanced age, hav-
ing sustained the reputation of a pious, good man. He
preached occasionally until his death, though he never
settled in the ministry after leaving Sandisfield. He
was a zealous whig, and in the capacity of a military
officer, commanded the militia of Rowe at the capture
of Burgoyne. One of his sons was killed in a skir-
mish with the Indians near Saratoga.

Mr. Storrs, the second minister, was a native of
Mansfield, Con. He was graduated at Yale College in
1762. He was ordained pastor of this church and peo-
ple, Feb. 26, 1766. He was a popular preacher, and
retained the affections of his people until the unhappy
Shays insurrection. At that time, from his measures
in favour of government, a considerable number were
offended, and left his ministry. He, however, conti-
nued his pastoral relation till, in consequence of ill
health, he was dismissed, April 26, 1797. He conti-
nued in feeble health a number of years, and died Dec.
24, 1810, aged 72.

Mr. White succeeded him, June 28, 1798, and is the
present pastor. He is a native of Randolph, in this
State, and is connected by consanguinity to Peregrine
White, who is said to have been the first child of Eng-
lish descent born in New England. His collegiate edu-
cation was received at Dartmouth College, where he
was graduated in 1796.

There have been a number of seasons of special re-
ligious attention in this town. Under the ministry of

Mr. Storrs, there were two or three partial revivals of religion, and some as fruits were added to the church.

In 1799, soon after the settlement of the present pastor, there was a revival of considerable extent. Thirty were added to the Congregational church, and a number to the Baptist. More than usual seriousness also prevailed in 1803. After this, for a number of years, there was but little special attention to religion, and the friends of Zion mourned.

In 1815, at the monthly concert in September, was a scene of solemnity long to be remembered, and such as never was witnessed before in this place. From this time, an unusual religious inquiry and solemnity rapidly extended into almost all sections of the town. This revival continued with little abatement for six months. About 200 indulged a hope of an interest in the Saviour. In less than a year, 140 were admitted to the Congregational church, and a considerable number to the Baptist.

In 1821, there was a partial revival of religion, and 22 were added to the church. Also in 1827 there was a religious excitement of considerable extent. To the Congregational church 40 were admitted as the fruits of it.

There are two Baptist churches in Sandisfield, though the meeting-house of the Second Church is in the south-west corner of Otis.

The first was organized Aug. 21, 1779. The society with which this is connected, was incorporated Feb. 25, 1794, by the Legislature of the State; and Baptists from Sandisfield, Tyringham and New Marlborough were permitted to unite with it. They meet for worship in the north-west part of the town, where they erected their present meeting-house in 1803.

On the 2d of Oct. 1779, Elder Joshua Morse, who was present at its organization, was constituted pastor of this church. He had been previously ordained, in May, 1750, at New London, Con. His connection with it was dissolved by death, July 26, 1795, in the 70th year of his age. The church gradually increased during his ministry. Those admitted to the church during his ministry, taken in connection with those admitted at its organization, were 101.

In 1798, Mr. Jesse Hartwell, from Ashfield, *improved* with the church, and on the 9th of January, 1800, was ordained an Evangelist; but preached generally to this people. In May, 1827, he was dismissed from the church, and soon after removed to Perry, Geauga Co., Ohio.

This church enjoyed revivals in 1798 or 9, 1806, 1815, and in the spring of 1818, to some of which, allusions have been already made. By the first, 74, by the second, 18, by the third, 27, and by the fourth, 14, were brought into the communion. In the spring of 1827, there was some special attention, but few admissions.

Besides the admissions already adverted to, individuals have been admitted at other times; so that the whole number admitted from the beginning is 270. The present number of communicants is 54.

The second Baptist church, consisting of 19 members, was constituted April 25, 1788. Gradually increasing, the church called Mr. Benjamin Baldwin, a native of Otis, to be their minister, who was ordained June 9, 1790. He died July 24, 1810, aged 52. Having been useful in life, he was greatly lamented. During his ministry there were several revivals, and about 211 added to the church.

Mr. Israel Keach, a native of Hoosic, N. Y., successor to Elder Baldwin, was ordained June 18, 1817; and dismissed Feb. 23, 1824. A revival occurred during his ministry, and 47 were added to the church.

Since his dismissal, though destitute of a pastor, the church has been favored with a revival, and 35 have been added to their number.

The whole number belonging to the church from the beginning, is about 288. It has ever enjoyed a good degree of harmony. The present number of members is 124.

There are in Sandisfield, 230 dwelling-houses, 5 stores, 2 post-offices, 3 taverns, 2 grist-mills, 8 saw-mills, 2 oil-mills, and 6 tanneries, some of them extensive.

There are 13 district schools in town, and the town appropriates \$600 annually for the support of schooling; a considerable sum is raised by the districts.

Two public libraries have been established in town; one in the centre containing about 350 volumes, and one at New Boston containing nearly as many. They have been of about 20 years standing.

The annual expense of supporting the poor of the town is about \$500; and the selectmen have the oversight of them.

Physicians in Sandisfield.

Amos Smith, — — Holden, — — Cowder, Samuel Carrington, — — Buckman, — — Morrison, Robert King, Erastus Beach, Ebenezer Balch.

Lawyers.

Ephraim A. Judson, David B. Curtis, and Thomas Twining.

Mr. Judson was the only son of the Rev. Mr. Judson, of Sheffield. He was graduated at Williams College in 1797, and admitted to the Berkshire bar about 1800. He died March 6, 1807, aged 31.

Mr. Curtis was a native of Granville, was graduated at Williams College in 1801, and admitted to the bar in 1806. He died at Black Rock, N. Y., during the late war.