

CHAPTER II.

EARLY SETTLERS.

Kinship has always played a large part in migratory movements. Today, the solitary emigrant, finding the promised land, sends back for father, mother, brothers, sisters, cousins, neighbors. So it has ever been since that first band of neighbors landed on the bleak shores of Plymouth Bay.

Illustrations of this fact are to be found both in the early settlement of our little town and in the successive waves of emigration that have pushed out from her sheltering hills toward the ever receding frontier.

In less than twenty years from the advent of General Wait's family, Clinton and St. Lawrence Counties, New York, were taking toll of our early settlers. By 1818, these men were disappearing into the Western Reserve; 1835 saw Michigan drawing them away, and in 1845, another wave sent many pioneers into Illinois and Wisconsin, while but a few years later, Minnesota became the lodestone that has taken of our best. Whole families and groups of families that had established firm root in this soil, disappeared completely and any record of the early settlers of the town must deal with names that will be unfamiliar to many of the present day.

Two groups are early distinguishable among the pioneers. The first, from Windsor, Vermont, and Cornish, New Hampshire, and towns in their immediate vicinity, was attracted directly by Wait himself, and settled in the center and southerly portions of the town. The second, from Shelburne and Deerfield, Mass., settled in the old North District. Indeed there were few families in the latter group that were not united by ties of blood or marriage and a son of the town who attained prominence in his profession has said that one winter when he attended school there was but one among the sixty pupils to whom he was not in some degree a kinsman.

The settlement of New England began in 1620, and in the brief period to the cessation of English immigration in 1643 was planted a purely English colony of some twenty-six thousand

souls, which, with slight infusions of Scotch and French Huguenot blood, continued to multiply within itself until the close of the Revolution.

John Fiske well says "In all history, there has been no other instance of colonization so exclusively effected by picked and chosen men. The colonists knew this, and were proud of it, as well they might be. It was the simple truth that was spoken by William Stoughton when he said in his election sermon of 1688: 'God sifted a whole nation that he might send choice grain into the wilderness.'"

From this stock came the early settlers of Waitsfield. One glance at the family names reveals their origin from the earliest settlers of Massachusetts and Connecticut, whose fierce struggle for existence during more than a century and a half had left its impress upon their descendants. They "were ruder than their more favored brethren to the South, but they were also more persistent, more tenacious, and more adventurous. They were a vigorous, bold, unforgiving, fighting race, hard and stern even beyond the ordinary standard of Puritanism."*

Soon after 1800 came an admixture of Scotch blood from the north of Ireland, and finally a few Irish families that settled here between 1825 and 1850.

The comfortable log cabin that was rolled up in the summer of 1789 as a shelter for the family of General Wait was displaced after a brief interval by a house, commodious for the times, erected on the terrace just north of the village, near the northerly line of lot 134. The General owned a farm of six hundred acres, and Gilbert Wait, a son, had one hundred and fifty acres adjoining in lot 136. Ezra Wait, the eldest son, soon received from his father the southerly portion of lots 133 and 134, and built a house just north of the present Methodist parsonage. Benjamin Wait, jr., another son, was supplied with a farm from the northerly portion of lots 131 and 132, but after a few years he disposed of his holdings to his brother Ezra, and went West, while the latter conveyed his first farm to his younger brother Gilbert, who occupied it until about 1818, when he also sought his fortune in the Western Reserve, and became an early settler in Ohio.

It seems probable that Benjamin Wait's half-brother Jeduthan, came with him in 1789. In any event, he was here

* Lodge's "Life of Webster," p. 4.

in 1790. He purchased a part of lot 136 and lived there until his death in 1829, when his farm was divided between his sons.

The next in order of our early settlers was probably Francis Dana, born in Brighton, Mass., 1737. He had early moved to Cornish, N. H., but in 1788 purchased lots 143 and 144, lying well on top of "Dana Hill" and by the year 1790 had commenced his clearing. Here he lived until his death in 1813, although he early transferred substantial portions of the farm to his sons, Henry and Foster, who followed him to Waitsfield in 1793 and 1795 respectively.

In the spring and early summer of 1791, the first United States census was taken in Vermont and this reveals the fact that in less than two years from the first settlement of the town, there were sixty-one persons, divided into thirteen families, living within its borders. The names there given are as follows:

HEADS OF FAMILIES.	Free white males of 16 years and upward, including heads of families.	Free white males under 16.	Free white females, including heads of families
Gen. Benjamin Wait	5	4	3
Ezra Wait	1	1	4
Thomas Sherman	2	2	3
Jeduthan Wait	1	—	1
Beriah Sherman	1	2	3
Francis Dana	3	2	2
William Bartlett	1	3	3
Phinias Rider	2	—	3
Isaac Palmater	1	2	2
Salma Rider	1	—	—
David Seamonds	1	—	—
Mr. Chase	1	—	—
Mr. Pike	1	—	—

Of the heads of families here listed, Samuel Pike came from Brookfield, Mass., the Waits' old home, and was followed soon by his sons, Jonas and Joshua. Doubtless he settled first on "Palmer Hill," although the family a few years later took up land in the southerly portion of the town, second division lots 53, 54, 55 and 56.

Thomas and Beriah Sherman were natives of Brimfield, Mass. Both were soldiers of the Revolution. Thomas disappeared early, having probably removed to New York. Beriah settled on lot 110, where his son, William, succeeded him in 1827. He was a carrier and tanner and lived to the age of eighty-four. In 1832, he applied for a pension, and it is related

that, as it became necessary for him to go to Montpelier to complete his papers, he walked the entire distance, both going and returning, but as the weather was inclement, sickness resulted from the exposure and he died within a few weeks.

Isaac Parmenter came probably from Oakham, Mass., but of him we find no record and only know that he had left the town certainly by 1794 and possibly as early as 1792.

Moses Chase was born in Salisbury, N. H., the son of a schoolmaster. As a child, he went to Cornish, from which town he enlisted in 1777 for three years. He was active in the organization of the town of Waitsfield and a member of the first Board of Selectmen. His farm lay in lot 74 well up under Bald Mountain and he occupied it until 1813, when he conveyed it to his son, Moses, jr., and moved to a house on the northeast corner of the Common. Several members of the family found homes in western states, and no member of it now lives in Waitsfield.

A few years later (1802) a brother, William Chase, purchased and occupied the present Cassius Joslin farm, in lot 131. He removed later to Granville, New York, but returned in his old age, and died in Warren.

Another brother, Thomas, progenitor of those members of the family who now live in the town, settled early (1808) on lots 145 and 146.

Nathaniel Bartlett came, probably, from Alexandria, N. H. He is doubtless the man whose name appears as "William" on the census list. Of him we know but little. He was on the committee to lay out the second division of lots, and had a farm in lot 104, of which he owned about one-third. He left town in 1807, and it is said that the family removed to New York State.

David Symonds was from Hillsborough, N. H., and lived on lots 125 and 126, the present Wallis farm. He stayed until 1835, when he removed with his family to Moriah, New York.

Phineas and Salma Rider were first of the large colony from Shelburne, Mass. Phineas bought a farm comprising the northern half of lots 123 and 124.

Salma owned lot 107, which cornered on the Common. Both lived in town until their death, but no member of either family is now resident here.

After 1791 the town built up rapidly with sterling families, and the old assessment rolls or grand lists enable us to determine with some accuracy the order of their coming.

In the spring of 1795 the following were rated for poll taxes:

Eli Abbott	Samuel Pike
John Barnard	Phineas Rider
Samuel Barnard	Salma Rider
Joseph Barns	Samuel Stow Savage
Nathaniel Bartlett	Beriah Sherman
Moses Chase	Thomas Sherman
Francis Dana	David Symonds
Henry Dana	Eli Skinner
Moses Fisk	Elijah Smith
Alpheus Freeman	Salah Smith
Elijah Freeman	Abel Spaulding
Elijah Grandey	Elijah Sperry
Joseph Hamilton	Nathan Sterling
Ezekiel Hawley	Simeon Stoddard
James Heaton	Jonah Strickland
Moses Heaton	Daniel Taylor
Moses Heaton, jr.	Silas Trask
Gaius Hitchcock	Benjamin Wait
William Joiner	Benjamin Wait, jr.
Abram Marsh	Ezra Wait
Aaron Minor	Jeduthan Wait
Jesse Mix	Elias Wells
Benjamin Palmer	John Weston
Jonathan Palmer	Daniel Wilder
Joshua Pike	Levi Wilder

During the succeeding years others followed in about the order given.

Samuel Bayley	1795	Isaac Trask
Stephen Pierce		Joseph Trask
Jonathan Seaver		William Wheeler
Jared Skinner		

John Burdick	*1796	Bisseil Phelps
Harba Child		David Phelps
Evan Clark		Durin Still
William Palmer		

William Allen	1797	James Joslin
Stephen Butterfield		Roswell Lee
Calvin Chamberlain		John Lamb
David Chamberlain		John McCloud
Job House		Moses Smith
Ezra Jones		Lemuel Savage
Jennison Jones		Nathan Stowell
Joseph Joslin		Job Tyler

* See Appendix A

	1798	Shubel Burdick Doud Bushnell Matthias Stone Jones Joseph Merrill Peleg Moore	Amasa Skinner Jonas Spalding Moses Stewart Elias Taylor
	1799	John Goss Vespasian Hoisington	Isaac Tuxbury John Wells
	1800	Thomas Green	Josiah Lee
	1801	Joseph Wallis	
	1802	Erastus Allen William Chase John Campbell	Frederick Richardson Josiah Willis Seaver William Williams
	1803	William Cochran Caleb Colton	Daniel Parker Edmund Rice
	1804	Christopher Avery Eliphalet Bates	Philip Gustin Aaron Quimby
	1805	Benjamin Butterfield Jonas Holden Ralph Turner	Nathan Thayer Oliver Wood Benjamin Wood
	1807	Thomas Chase Roderick Richardson	John French Jirah Wing
	1809	Rufus Childs Jonathan Campbell Stephen Durkee Constant Freeman	Silas Royce Ira Richardson Amasa Russ
	1810	John English	John English, jr.

	1811	William Burgess Jesse Carpenter	Joseph Whitcomb
	1812	Julian Dumas Ebenezer Cutler	Samuel Bowman Thomas Heald
	1813	Richard Colby James Baldwin	Suel Willis
	1814	John Leach Anson Hand	Thomas Piper Erastus Woodward
	1815	Guy C. Nichols	
	1816	Roswell Horr	
	1818	Jason Carpenter Robert Leach	Moses Willard Rice Rufus Barrett
	1820	Amos Tinkham Jacob Tinkham	John S. Poland
	1823	Robert Bates	Rodolphus Bates

James Heaton, a native of Swanzey, N. H., but from early childhood a resident of Shelburne, Mass., came to town in 1793, and purchased a six hundred acre farm, consisting of lots 119, 120, 121 and 122, in the northwest corner of the town, although portions of this large tract were conveyed by him at an early date, so that his home farm was substantially identical with that now occupied by George W. Folsom.

Moses Heaton was a physician, probably the first to settle in the town. He located on the south half of lot 123, now a portion of the Julius I. Palmer farm, and in 1794 was elected first Town Clerk. What became of him we do not know, except that he left town in the winter or spring of 1796.

John Heaton, a brother of the two preceding, was connected by marriage with the Riders and some others of the Northwest District. He lived in Moretown, but was closely associated with Waitsfield, and at one time petitioned that his farm might be incorporated within the limits of the town. His son, John, jr., was the builder of the first mills erected in Waitsfield. They stood in the extreme southwest corner of lot 138, and after a few years passed into other hands.

Stephen Pierce, who was a family connection of the Heatons, came from Charlemont in 1795, and was both farmer and physician, although it is in the latter capacity that he is best remembered by our older inhabitants.

The Barnards, John and Samuel, were from Shelburne, and came to this town about 1792. John was a member of the Shelburne Committee of Safety in 1777, and Samuel saw active service in the American forces in 1779. The former settled on the northerly portion of lots 119 and 120, while the latter took up lot 118. Both farms were in the hands of their descendants until within a few years. John Barnard was the first treasurer of the town and it was largely through his efforts that a church was gathered in 1796. He became its first deacon and continued in the office until his death in 1813.

Daniel Witherbee Wilder was another of the Shelburne contingent and came in 1795 with his sons, Levi, Enos, Asa and Francis. His farm of two hundred acres, purchased from James Heaton, takes in the south portion of lots 121 and 122 and is today occupied by his great-grandson.

Next comes Daniel Taylor, also from Shelburne. He settled in Waitsfield in 1792 on lot 114, now the Prentis farm, and during the following winter, his log cabin gave shelter to the family of a relative, Salah Smith, who had just come from the old home and purchased lot 116. Mr. Smith was the first school teacher in the town, held numerous town offices and was throughout his life a leader of thought in the community.

Elijah and Moses Smith, brothers of Salah, followed in 1794 and 1798 respectively. The former was a farmer and purchased a small tract of land from his brother and Daniel Taylor. The latter was a blacksmith and set up his forge not far distant from the present site of Chipman's blacksmith shop at Shepherd's Brook. The buildings probably stood near the present residence of Mr. Chipman.

In 1794 came Eli Skinner who was joined by his brothers, Jared and Amasa in 1795 and 1798. This family was from Colchester, Connecticut, but had for some years lived in Shelburne. All were farmers, although Amasa is called a clothier in the early deeds. Jared, who had held many offices of trust in Shelburne, purchased lot 124 and the south half of lot 123, and occupied the farm until his death in 1838. Elijah settled on lot 109, within which lies a portion of the farm later known as the David Phelps place. He removed later in life with some of his children to Gouverneur, N. Y., and still later to Illinois where he died. He alone of these brothers has descendants now living in Waitsfield.

Amasa Skinner settled on lot 72 just at the base of Bald Mountain and became a man of some prominence, having been Representative five times between 1808 and 1815. His wife was a sister of Doud Bushnell, a native of Saybrook, Conn., who followed his relatives to Waitsfield in 1798 and took up the adjoining lot (73), which lay well up on the slope of Northfield Mountain. He was a cobbler and was also extremely deft as a mechanic, a characteristic which has been strongly developed among his descendants, as indeed it has been in other branches of this family. Several of his sons became pioneers to the Western Reserve and to Wisconsin but others remained in Waitsfield and have been closely identified with its activities.

In 1796, John Burdick settled here and two years later, his brothers, Shubel and Ira, were in town. The family came from Shelburne by way of Canaan, N. H., and Moretown, where John had been town clerk in 1795. He was a farmer and a housewright, but better known as the local lawyer, or pettifogger, in which capacity he had no competitor for many years. In church he officiated on the bass viol. His sons were pioneers to Michigan and one became the founder of the present city of Kalamazoo. John Burdick leased the Ministry Lot 127, and his brother Shubel, whose stay was short, settled on the adjoining lot (129), which he divided with his father-in-law, Captain John Wells.

The latter came to Waitsfield as an old man, apparently to live near his daughters. No man had been more prominent than he in Shelburne, Mass. He was the first selectman of the first board elected there in 1768 and had held many other important offices. His declining years were spent in the family

of a son-in-law, Gaius Hitchcock who had lived in town since 1794.

In the same year, and also from Shelburne, came Moses Fisk, a leader in the church and deacon from 1801 until his death in 1847. He first settled on lot 118, but in 1810, bought from Rev. William Salisbury the north two-thirds of lot 112.

From Saybrook, Conn., by way of Windsor, Vt., came in 1794 Dr. Simeon Stoddard, who farmed and physicked in the southerly portion of the town on lot 139. He had a large family, many of whom stayed in Waitsfield and not less than seven of his grandsons enlisted from the town during the Civil War.

About the same time, Jonathan Palmer, with his sons, Jonathan, jr., William and Benjamin, appeared from Alexandria, N. H., where he had lived since 1773, a grant of land in that town having been given to him if he would settle there, presumably because he was a blacksmith. William and Benjamin stayed but a few years and our present families of the name all trace their descent to Jonathan, jr., who gave his name to "Palmer Hill."

From Hebron, Conn., by way of Middlefield, Mass., arrived Bissell Phelps, in 1795 or 1796, with several sons, who settled around him far up under the eastern mountains on lots 79 and 80 and a part of 107. From the first he was a leader and during his long life held many town offices.

Samuel Stow Savage removed from Windsor in 1794, and settled on lot 105, from which he gave the town two acres in the northwest corner to form a portion of the Common.

Joseph Hamilton had been a neighbor of Benjamin Wait in Brookfield, and was a son-in-law of Samuel Pike. These ties seem to have brought him hither from Cornish, N. H., soon after 1792. He lived on lot 56, well up on Palmer Hill, while Elijah Grandy, his son-in-law, from Reading, Vt., lived on an adjoining farm that lay in lots 81 and 83.

Other members of the Windsor contingent were Ezekiel Hawley and Samuel Bailey. The former had been a soldier under General Wait, and in 1794 removed to Waitsfield and purchased lot 95, upon which his descendants lived for many years. Bailey, who came in 1795, tarried in Waitsfield but a few years, and the same is true of William Joiner, who came from Royalton before 1795. The latter owned lot 103, and also had a saw mill on Sherman's Brook (now called Clay Brook) near the "high bridge."

Aaron Minor was a native of Woodbury, or Brimfield, Conn., and settled on lot 90 in 1794. With him were three sons, of whom Frederick T. was a physician and settled in the North District. The whole family, after some forty years of residence within the town, removed to McHenry County, Illinois.

In 1797 came the first of the Jones tribe, Ezra and Jennison, followed, a year later, by their younger brothers, Matthias Stone and Henry. The latter settled on the east side of the mountains and became identified with Northfield, but the other brothers were from the start active in the affairs of the town as their descendants have since been. All of them held numerous town offices and Jennison and Matthias S. were Justices of the Peace for thirty-six and thirty-five years respectively. This family came from Claremont, N. H., their father having been an early settler of that town and a proprietor of Waitsfield. Ezra settled on lot 106 and Jennison on lot 76, while Matthias S. found a poor location on lot 58 which he soon traded for a better farm in lots 84 and 86, although in later life, he resided in the village.

Following the Joneses came the Joslins in 1797-98. They were originally from Lancaster, Mass., but had lived for some twenty years in Weathersfield, Vt. Joseph Joslin and his seven sons were a sterling group whose descendants form, without doubt, the most numerous as they are one of the leading Waitsfield families. The father, who did not come to Waitsfield until his family was well established there, settled on lot 82 and his sons procured good farms nearby.

Some three years later (1801) Jonathan Wallis, a brother-in-law of Joseph Joslin, sr., was resident here. He was a native of Woodstock, Conn., but had lived in Weathersfield, Vt., since 1785. With him came a negro, Sam, who had been his father's slave in Woodstock, Conn., but was now classed as free under the Vermont Constitution. It is said that upon coming to Vermont, old Sam, then nearly eighty years of age, was told to go, as he was free, but he replied: "No, you have eaten old Sam's flesh, now you may pick his bones."

Treading closely upon the Joslins came the Richardsons (1802) from Tolland and Stafford, Conn., another of our strong and numerous families. Roderick was a saddler and harness-maker like his father, Lemuel, but active in many forms of business and best known as a successful merchant. He settled

first on lot 108, just north of the Common, but some years later acquired a large portion of the Wait farm and erected a dwelling and store within the limits of the present village. Frederick, the first to settle here, was a doctor. His residence faced the Common just south of the old church. Ira, another brother, removed to Fayston, where he was, during the remainder of his life, a leading man. His descendants have returned to Waitsfield and preserve the best traditions of the family. Roswell, who did not come to Waitsfield until 1827, removed some twenty years later to the town of Warren.

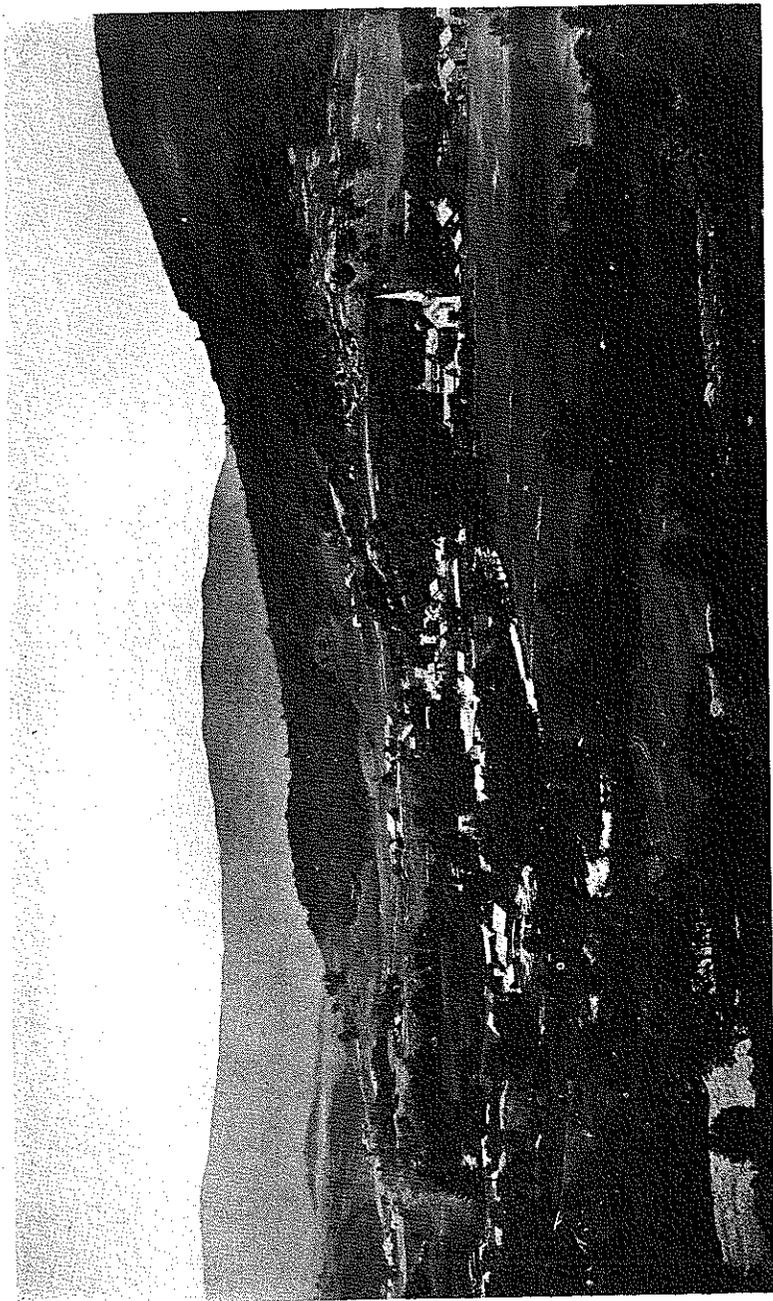
In 1802 John and Josiah Campbell, from New Boston, N. H., settled in town, first of the sturdy Scotch-Irish strain that came among us.

Edmund Rice, from Charlestown, N. H., cabinetmaker and early merchant, came in 1803 and was immediately and continuously prominent until his death in 1829, in fact there were few duties of the primitive community calling for some degree of mental training that he was not called upon to perform. Not only was he called upon to serve as selectman, town clerk and representative, but in the early days divided with John Burdick the duties of local pettifogger, using the word in its old and honorable sense. Occasionally also, he turned his hand to surveying and the plan which he made in 1816 of the original lotting of the town is now the oldest to be found.

Later by some fifteen years were the Polands, John S. and Benjamin, from Alstead, N. H., also Jason Carpenter (1818) from Sharon, Vt., a leader in the town throughout his life.

Roswell Horr (1816), blacksmith and captain of the militia company, came like the Durkees (1810) from Pomfret, Vt., but removed after some years to Ohio. His son, Roswell G., who was for many years Representative in Congress from the Saginaw District in Michigan, was born in Waitsfield a short time before the family departed.

Garinter Hastings came from Swanzey, N. H., soon after 1820, and for many years, was the proprietor of the tavern just north of the old center of business on lot 131.



WAITFIELD VILLAGE LOOKING WEST TO LINCOLN MOUNTAIN.

HISTORY
OF THE
TOWN OF
WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

1782 - 1908

WITH FAMILY GENEALOGIES

BY

MATT BUSHNELL JONES

BOSTON, MASS.:
GEORGE E. LITTLEFIELD,
67 CORNHILL,
1909.