

1928

Some of the Early Hisotry of Wellingotn, 1928

George P. Huff

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Recommended Citation

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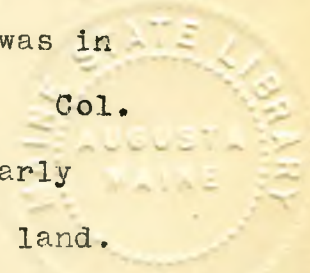
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SOME OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF WELLINGTON

We do not have to go back into the mists of antiquity to discover the earliest recorded history of the tract of land, six miles square, which on February 23, 1828, became the Town of Wellington. Probably the feet of white men never trod the soil of this township until after the American Revolution. Wandering bands of Indians probably hunted in its forests and fished in its streams, but they left no trace of their temporary sojourns, and no Indian legends concerning it have been preserved.

After the close of the Revolution the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, of which the District of Maine formed a part, was heavily involved in debt as one of the results of the seven years' struggle for freedom. In order to raise money to meet its obligations two tracts of wild land, each comprising a million acres, were sold to William Bingham of Philadelphia for the small sum of ten cents per acre. One of these tracts was east of the Penobscot. The other was on both sides of the upper Kennebec. This township was the southeast one and was officialy known as Township No. 3, Range 1, East of the Kennebec River. After Bingham's death his estate was in charge of agents for the disposal of the wild lands. Col. John Black of Ellsworth was the agent with whom the early settlers here dealt when they contracted to buy their land.

A quit-claim deed from the Bingham heirs, dated June 20, 1807, conveyed title to the township to James Bridge and Ruel Williams of Augusta. The bounds of the township had



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been established the previous year by Philip Bullen and a certain beech tree was mentioned as the southeast corner. Bridge and Williams paid down \$4,352.00 in cash and gave notes, one signed by Daniel Cony, one by James Bridge, one by Ruel Williams and one by Samuel Cony, each for the sum of \$4,352.00, and dated August 19, 1807. On the same date Bridge and Williams deeded to Daniel and Samuel Cony each one-fourth of the township for \$5,440.00 each. Each of the four Augusta men at that time mortgaged their share of the tract to Thomas Mayne Willing and Charles Willing Hare of Philadelphia, who were in some way connected with the Bingham estate, for \$4,352.00.

In 1808 the proprietors had the township lotted out by Jabez P. Bradbury. Beginning at the southeast corner he ran across to the southwest corner dividing it into lots a half mile square, numbered from 1 to 12. The next row he numbered from west to east and so on, lot 144 being the northeast corner. In honor of James Bridge the township was called Bridgestown. Probably the proprietors did not meet the payments on the notes given, for the title reverted to the Bingham estate, from which deeds were given to the settlers.

The first of these deeds were given in 1820 and others at various times thereafter. Up to 1838, when this town, with others, were set off from Somerset county and made a part of Piscataquis county, the Bingham heirs gave quit-claim deeds to the following settlers:

Daniel Davis, Lot 68, east half.

Henry Follett, Lot 120.

Enoch Waugh, Lot 121.

John Hamilton, part of Lot 7. (Balance of lot

Owned by James Knowles. Bounded east by land of Elder Johnson.)

Samuel Huff, Lot 105.

Isaac Hutchins, Lot 35, bounded south by land of Reuben Jordan, lot 14; west by Stephen Batchelder, Lot 36; also by 34 acres of Lot 35.

O. D. Wiggins, 36 acres northwest corner Lot 35.
(This was where Abram Lord lived in 1882.)

James Hutchins, part of Lot 10. (Where Clifford Huff now lives.)

Charles Lawrence, Lot 15. (Lot No. 11 occupied by John Moses and Lot No. 9 occupied by William Webber.)

Daniel Knowles, part of Lots 102 and 115. (In a part of this deed he is called David Knowles.)

James Knowles, ~~part~~ Lot 7, (Southwest corner bound of land sold William Knowles, north by land sold John Knowles 3d, east by land of John Knowles 3d.)

William Knowles, southwest part of Lot 6.

Nicholas Smith, Lot 6, east half.

John Ward, East half Lot 85. (Also northeast quarter Lot 84.--Lot 86 occupied by Timothy Pike.)

Oliver D. Wiggins and Samuel Libby. Lot 38.

Joseph Moses, Lot 34.

David Bemis and Reuben Jordan, Lot 14.

Ichabod Locke, Lot 13, west half.

Samuel Staples, Lot 36.

Robert Davis, part of Lot 12.

John Ware of Athens, east half Lot 13.

James Hutchins and John York, Lot 10.

David Staples, Lot 37.

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Eliphalet Taylor, Lot 63.

Noah Staples and others, Lot 62.

In 1840 Hastings Strickland of Bangor bought from the Bingham heirs title to some ~~22~~ 2,000 acres where the actual settlers had failed to get a title. This transaction probably closed out the Bingham interests in the township. Strickland transferred his title to William Cutler of Bangor, from whom occupants had deeds to their land, some as late as 1848.

These are all the recorded deeds from the Bingham estate, but I have no doubt that there were many others that were never recorded, as the county seat was at Norridgewock and means of communication were limited. Roads were lacking, and the early settlers came in by spotted lines through the woods.

In 1809 one Jeremiah McKisick gave to a man named Basford of Dixmont a quit-claim deed to what he described as "land where I now live in Bridges Town." This is all the description that he gave, and there is no record of any title that he might have had. It is probable that he was with Bradbury the year before, when the township was lotted out, and selected land which suited him and made an opening where he had some sort of camp or cabin. Neither he nor Basford were ever heard of ^{again} in connection with that particular parcel of land. Israel Huff, now the oldest man ~~now~~ residing in Wellington, told me a few years ago that he had heard from old settlers that McKisick's opening was on land that afterwards was owned by Sylvanus Davis and later by John Boston and his son, Roger Boston, on the South slope of Rocky hill.

But Jeremiah, by not staying on his land, failed to

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become the first permanent settler in Wellington. James Knowles and David Staples came in in 1814. Knowles took up land on Lot No. 7, next to the Harmony line. As Harmony had been settled for a number of years, we will assume that he had been a resident of that town before he moved over into Bridges Town.

David Staples came from Bowdoin or Bowdoinham. A number of others from those towns came in later. The land which he selected was Lot 37, just north of Hutchins corner. The farm is now owned by William Paul and the old Staples homestead has been torn down and only the stones of the foundation mark the spot where he lived. The building was re-erected by Seth Wing as a shed here at the village and was burned in 1898. When it was torn down a powder horn was found with the name of Noah Staples carved on it. This powder horn is now in possession of Noah Staples' descendants in the West.

The next year James Potter and John Ward, from Bowdoin, moved into the township and jointly took up Lot 85. After one or two seasons they decided to divide the lot by a line drawn north and south through the middle and bid in bushels of wheat for choice. Potter outbid Ward and selected the west half, next to the Brighton line.

It is not certain who came in next, but in a few years there were many settlers, some from Bowdoin and some from towns in York county. The coast towns in York county were among the first settled in Maine and many of the early settlers in Wellington were either direct from those towns or from towns which had been populated from them. The Staples family had previously

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been known in Kittery and Shapleigh. Peter Staple was living in Kittery in 1690. The Huff family had lived in Kittery and Arundel (now Kennebunkport) before appearing in Bowdoin. Many of the families settling in Wellington had been neighbors years before. In 1676 Ferdinando Huff and John Davis were next-door neighbors on a neck of land at Cape Porpoise which was called "Batson's Neck." Batson was afterwards spelled Easton and later, Boston.

Besides the Staples, Ward, Potter and Huff families, the Campbells, John, Samuel and Daniel, the Smalls, Stewards, Elliots, Temples and Adamases were from Bowdoin or Bowdoinham. The Libbys, Fryes, Davises, Pikes, and probably the Weekses, were from Shapleigh. The Hutchins, Wiggins, Bussell, Hanson and Whitehouse families were from Wakefield, N.H., which is but a short distance from Shapleigh. The Bostons, Elisha, John, Oliver and William, the Allens, Wells and Moultons were from Wells. The Curtis family was from Freeport. The Dennetts from Lewiston.

The settlers in the East part of the town probably came in from Parkman and Sangerville. Henry Carleton, who built a saw mill on Carleton stream, was a brother of Guy Carleton who developed the water power at Sangerville. The Oaks, Sears, Follett and Stevens families were connected with the Levi Oaks family which came from Canaan (Skowhegan) and settled in Sangerville about 1808. The Merrills, Charles, John and Levi, had lived in Harmony. They went West a few years after the town was incorporated.

As far as I have been able to learn, ^{but one} ~~none~~ of the early settlers in this town saw service in the Revolutionary war. ^{This was Bezebel Lowe} They were of a later generation, mostly young men, looking for new land where they could establish homes for themselves. Issac

and James Hutchins were sons, and Mrs. Oliver Wiggin was a daughter of Solomon Hutchins, who served on the ship Ranger under Paul Jones and took part in a raid on the English coast in that war. Delmont Hutchins^{now living} has the unique distinction of having seen a living veteran of the American Revolution.

As the township became settled, the need of roads, bridges and schools became apparent, and a movement for the incorporation was started. It seems that it was first planned to call the town "Evans," as a remonstrance, signed by John Moses and 49 others against that name and asking that any other name than Evans be selected, was sent to the legislature of 1825.

In 1827 a petition was addressed to the legislature asking for the incorporation under the name of Wellington, a name said to have been selected by Elijah King. This was referred to the next legislature and on Feb. 23, 1828, the town was incorporated. On the 25th of March the first town meeting was held, Benjamin Follett acting as moderator. Stephen Batchelder, Jr., was chosen Clerk, Henry Carleton, Stephen Batchelder, Jr., and ~~Henry~~ James Bussell, selectmen. The records do not state who was chosen treasurer.

In 1838 the town was set off from Somerset county and made a part of the new County of Piscataquis. The population at that time was 700, the largest it has ever been.

The principal roads in town were accepted by the voters at special town meetings held during the year 1828.

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In 1840 sixteen lots in the eastern part of the town were set off from Wellington and annexed to the town of Parkman by an act of legislature. This was a strip a mile wide, beginning a mile and a half below Burdin's corner and extending to the Kingsbury line. At the northerly end it was a mile and a half wide. The next year the legislature repealed this act, restoring the territory to Wellington.

In 1885 the legislature set off and annexed to the town of Cambridge lots No. one and two. These lots were owned by S. C. and J. D. Morrill. With this exception, the town lines are the same as when incorporated.

Wellington has sent a representative to the legislature five times in the past 100 years. In 1840 Ward C. Weeks was representative. In 1860 Taylor J. Small was sent. Albert Allen was representative twice, once in 1876 and again in 1891. William Allen, son of Albert Allen, was a member of the legislature of 1903.

Issac Hutchins was a member of the board of County commissioners in 1861-63, and Ardell C. Curtis was a member in 1897-99.

Mills and Waterpower

Loring's History of Piscataquis County states that John Davis built the first saw mill on Higgins stream in 1826.

This mill was burned and rebuilt. Edward Davis succeeded John Davis in ownership and he in turn by Alfred and ^{later, his son, Truman} Trueman Watson. It went out of existence some thirty years ago.

It seems that three mills were in process of erection at about the same time. Henry Carleton's mill was built that same year. In 1827, John W. Weeks of Brighton gave a deed to his sons, Ward D. and John, and describes the property as "the lot on which I, the said John W. Weeks, built a saw mill and house. A grist mill was built a short distance below the saw mill soon after and the voters in the first town meeting directed that notifications for future town meetings be posted at Weeks' grist mill. Later on, John Ward built another grist mill about half a mile below the Weeks mill. This was burned. In 1834 Ward C. deeded to his brother, Gilman Weeks, a part of the lot of land and a part of the mills and privileges. Gilman Weeks built and lived in a house on the high bank at the Beals bridge that was known afterwards as the Beals house. He was appointed the first postmaster while living at that place. Afterwards he located ~~here~~ at the village, where he ran a variety of business enterprises, a grist mill, shovel handle factory and potash works on the dam where Gordon's steam saw mill is now. The front part of Walter Libby's house was his store. Ernest Whitehouse, his ~~grand~~-grandson, has an old account book wherein Gilman Weeks recorded his transactions.

About 1860, Columbia Huntress built a shingle mill where Albert Carle now lives. Another shingle mill was built

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by Albert Allen and James Adams on Higgins stream about 1870. About that time Charles Small had a shingle mill on Buzzell brook and Samuel Nutter built a saw mill on Carleton stream about a mile above the Carleton, or Randall mill, ~~which~~

About 1882 the dam where Gilman Weeks formerly had his mills was rebuilt and a grist mill, ran by Ira Whitehouse was built and later converted into a shingle mill.

This completes the story of the waterpower development in the town. About 1860 Isaac Hutchins, Jr., built a steam planing mill at Hutchins Corner, which under the management of his grand-son, Harry Hutchins, is still doing business. Within the past fifteen years steam saw mills have been built at the village and waterpower has been almost entirely abandoned.

Loring's history states that the first store was opened by Levi Merrill at his home. He was succeeded by Gilman Weeks. James Staples had a store in 1856. Elbridge Burdin opened a store at Burdin's corner at an early date. Cyrus Libby and Oliver E. Davis were rival merchants in the '60s. Libby sold his business to Granville Herriman and moved to Levant. Herriman tore down the old red store where Libby had traded and built a large new one. This was burned in the spring of 1885 and the present building erected. Herbert Lawrence began trade in 1880 and built the store where Chester Davis now is. A. F. Libby and Sumner S. Huff had stores at Huff's Corner about 1875-80. Changes in business during the past 40 years have been numerous--too numerous to mention.

James Bussell was the first blacksmith in the town. James Frye was also an early iron worker. Turner Bussell, son of James, was probably one of the best makers of hand-made

axes of his time. Ethan Bussell, who died last year was the last of the Bussell blacksmiths. Franklin Frye, Sumner S. Huff and Henry Adams were engaged in blacksmithing at various times.

Militia Companies

In the early days the enrolled militia, composed of all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45, was formed into companies, Regiments, brigades and divisions. This arrangement prevailed up to about 1852, when the militia became a volunteer organization. The first Wellington militia company was formed in 1830. On October 30 of that year Thomas Sears was commissioned captain, John Weeks lieutenant and Nathan Dennett ensign. This company was designated as I Company, 2d Regt., 1st Brigade, 8th Division. Later on it was D Co., 5th Regt. and Ensign Dennett was promoted to be lieutenant colonel. In 1838 Isaac Pease was captain, John Carleton, lieutenant and John Pease ensign. Isaiah Huff was commissioned ensign in 1840 and on April 11th, 1843, he was promoted to captain and remained in command until the company was disbanded, Nov. 22, 1861. During this time Israel Bemis was lieutenant and Sumner Sears ensign.

In 1832 a second company was organized, designated as B Company of light infantry and attached to the same regiment. Oliver D. Wiggin was captain, John Grant, Jr., lieutenant and Noah Staples ensign. Later Aaron Buzzell was made ensign. In 1835 Captain Wiggin was promoted to major and from 1836 until 1841, when this company was disbanded, the officers were: John Grant, Jr., captain, Aaron Buzzell lieutenant, and Charles Russell ensign.

There was no organized company sent from this town in the

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Civil war. Each soldier volunteered or was drafted individually. There was, however, a sort of skeleton organization of the enrolled militia as a home guard during that time. In 1878 there was a revival of military order and an independent volunteer company was formed. Phineas Stevens was captain, Isaac Knowles and Sumner S. Huff lieutenants. At a muster of the units of independent militia held at Harmony in the fall of that year the Wellington company made a fine showing. I well remember the brilliant military spectacle they made in their uniforms of red shirts, grey trousers and black slouch hats, and armed with old Springfield muzzle loaders which had seen service in the Civil war. Each man in the company bore the expense of his own uniform and rifle.

In 1881 this company was reorganized as a part of the Reserve Maine militia and new breech-loading Springfields were issued to it by the State. The members of the company, ~~however~~, had to bear the expense of uniforms, however, and the complete outfit of uniforms of the Coburn Guards at Skowhegan were bought. These were gorgeous affairs of cadet blue, trimmed with much gold braid. The swallow-tailed and heavily padded coats of officers and privates alike bore heavy shoulder epaulettes. Henry C. Dore was captain and Silas Whitehouse 1st lieutenant. After two years the company disbanded.

Mention of the military organizations would be incomplete without reference to the drum corps that provided martial music for the trainings. It was made up of members of the Small family. Charles Small was the fifer, Stephen Small beat the bass drum, made by himself, hollowed out of a basswood log, painted blue with red hoops. He played it on both ends, with a drumstick

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in each hand. The snare drums were played by Leland, Sanford, Julius and Forrest Small. Sometimes other members of the Small family were included. The music which they dispensed is remembered long after they have gone to their rest.

Churches and other Organizations

According to Loring, "Elder Ephriam Johnson, ordained in 1822, moved into Wellington in 1826 and began to preach there. The next year a church was organized. It held its way for some time. In 1840 they built a meetinghouse in the southwest part of the town. Eventually the Associational Baptists (Buzzellites) came in and this church united with them. The meetinghouse is occupied by the Methodists a part of the time." This was written in 1880.

It is said that four public-spirited citizens of the town united to build the meetinghouse in 1840. It was a broad, low structure without a steeple or belfry. Probably, when new, it had a coat of white paint, but as I remember it, the paint had gone with the passing years. The interior was finished with clear pine lumber. The backs of the pews were of wide pumpkin pine boards of a width that is not found in Maine these days. This building was blown down by a high wind in November, 1900, and in 1902 the present church at the village was built. A few years later, by subscription a bell was purchased and hung in the belfry. About the same time another, smaller building for church purposes was built at Burdin's corner.

On June 21, 1830 a Universalist church was organized in the eastern part of the town with Thomas Sears, James Randall, David Wentworth, Elias Dean, William Stevens, John Rollins and Ichabod Read as incorporators. Many of its members moved away

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and the organization ceased to exist.

In the '70s and early '80s that part of the town called Zion was the center of religious activity, the meetings being held in the schoolhouse by the Free Will Baptist society. Quarterly meetings, holding over several days, were a feature, with large attendance from other towns. On these occasions the homes of the neighborhood were thrown open to the visitors, who often remained for several days. Perhaps it would be better to say that the schoolhouse was the nucleus of the meetings, as these meetings were usually held in June or September and the schoolhouse, which could accommodate but a fraction of the attendance, was surrounded with temporary plank seats so that the sermons could be heard by those unable to get inside.

Besides Elder Johnson, the first preacher, there have been others living in town who were ordained to preach the Gospel, including Elders Andrew Jaquith, Abram Lord, Asa Huff, John Small, Joseph Huff, Franklin Frye, Hezekiah Lancaster, George Potter and Ezra Andrews, the latter being also an attorney-at-law, the only one to have an office here,

A lodge of Good Templars flourished for several years after its organization in 1892. It met in a hall in the Herriman building.

In 1896 Wellington Grange, P. of H., was organized. It has grown in numbers and influence ever since and in 1898 the present Grange hall was built and it has become a real community center. Credit is due to the members of the Grange for having promoted the observance of this Centennial of the incorporation of the town and providing the location for the boulder bearing the bronze tablet which you have seen unveiled today perpetuating the names of the soldiers from this town who saw service in two wars.

January 3, 1958

The following pages were left in the
Library. Neither the owner nor author is known.

ms stubbs

(Written for the 1928 Centennial
of Wellington)
Centennial Report of

Wellington

George P. Huff

(Info: Florence Emhoff
Sheila Garrett)

1917 -

World War -

1919

Curtis, Walter W.

* Huff, Adair C

* Drew, Irving C

Knowles, Ray

Hamilton, Harry B

Small, James W

Small Waitstell

Did you get a list of the Antiques? There were some interesting and very old articles on display. It would be the right thing to do it seems to me to mention that the boulder was given by Walter Libby it being found on his land.

But did not know that he was named on that Com. and I did not until about noon, but it is all over now, a good deed has been accomplished so perhaps our errors will be overlooked.

We greatly appreciate the great service you rendered us from the beginning to the end of this event.

We will want to purchase a few copies of your paper and I have heard others say the same thing. I wish we could have Edgar Davis' Original Poem printed as well as your historical sketch. I want to read the whole of that; you only outlined it as the time was late.

Very truly yours

Mr. I. F. Drew

1861 — Civil War —

1865

Davis, Jane, Nurse
Allen, Albert
Allen, Hosea
Russell, Oshea
*Curtis, Frank B.
Davis, David
Davis, David
Davis, Gilman
Davis, John
*Davis, Luther, Jr.
Davis, William
Dean, Valentine
Dexter, Calvin, Jr.
*Dore, Asa
Dore, Frank
Downs, Joshua
Drew, Reuben
Ellis, Atkins
Ellis, Otis
Farrar, Charles W
Farrar, Warren
Frye, Franklin J.
Hanson, Ephraim
Huff, Charles
Huff, Israel

Huff, William
~~Pike (2d), Gilman~~
Johnson, John H
Knowles, Hiram
Lishon, John
Locke, Alanson
Moses, Eli N
Moulton, George T
Nutter, John F
Oakes, Edward M
Philbrick, Samuel H
Pike, Gilman
Pike 2nd, Gilman
Rolf, Asa H
Smith, Ambrose
Smith, Floriman
Smith, James
Stevens, Daniel
Stevens, Erastus
#Stevens, Harrison
Stevens, Phineas
*Stewart, Moses
Tibbetts, Henry L
*Trafton, Harrison
Troy, Sylvester B
Watson, Benjamin