

## CHAPTER II.

*Old Dunstable.*

*Farm Grants—New Plantation Chartered—Its Extent—Its Disintegration—Names and Dates of Incorporation of Towns Formed from Its Territory in New Hampshire—Copy of Proprietor's Deed—Old Canal Leading Out of Muscatanipus Pond—Rock Ramond Hill.*

The township of Brookline as constituted at the present time includes within its eastern limits a tract of land two miles in width and extending north and south for the entire length of its east boundary line which was originally included in the territory of Old Dunstable, of which it formed the extreme western limits.

In 1746 the west part of Old Dunstable, including this tract, was incorporated as a new township under the name of Hollis.

In 1769 this tract was taken away from Hollis and in conjunction with the southern part of the Mile Slip, incorporated into a township under the name of Raby. Thus it appears that the history of this tract, up to the time of the incorporation of Raby in 1769, was identical with the histories of Old Dunstable and Hollis during the same period. But the social, civil, political and ecclesiastical histories of each of the latter towns has already been written and published; and thus, partly because those histories are easily accessible to the general public, but more especially because of the fact that the early settlers in that part of Dunstable and Hollis which subsequently became a part of Raby were so remote from the centres of activity in each as to have few or no interests in common with either, a repetition in these pages of the subject matter in them contained, except so far as the same may be necessary for the purposes of this work, is deemed by the writer to be unnecessary. But because of this early territorial connection of Raby with Old Dunstable, we deem it proper at this point to narrate as briefly as possible the story of the origin, life and disintegration, territorially considered, of the latter township.

Prior to the establishment by the King, in 1741, of the boundary line between the Provinces of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, the

latter Province had claimed, and virtually exercised, jurisdiction over all that part of southern New Hampshire lying west of the settlements at Dover and Portsmouth; and under that claim had issued, at various times and to different individuals and companies, grants of lands lying in the valley of and on both sides of the Merrimack river in New Hampshire.

These tracts of land thus distributed were known as Farm Grants. Among the larger of them were the Charlestown School Farm containing 1000 acres, and located on the south bank of the Souhegan river in the present town of Milford; and of which the southwest corner, now marked by a granite monument, was at Dram-Cup hill, and was identical with the northwest corner of Old Dunstable; and the Artillery Farm Grant, which was made in 1673 to the Honorable Artillery Company of Boston, Mass., and which comprised 1000 acres of land lying on the north bank of the Nashua river and west bank of the Merrimack river in Nashua.

In the year 1673 the number of acres that had been disposed of by these grants amounted to about fifteen thousand; and the grants were scattered over a large territory, few of them being contiguous, some of them unsettled, and others sparsely settled.

Of those which were settled, the inhabitants of each, acting independently of each other, were practically without any local government, and so far removed from the home government at Boston as to be practically outside of its oversight and control. Recognizing the inconveniences and hardships to which they were subjected from the existence of these conditions, in September, 1673, the proprietors of certain of these grants petitioned the Great and General Court of Massachusetts to consolidate them into a plantation. After due consideration, the Court, on the 26th day of October, of the same year, granted the prayer of the

The and on the same date issued a charter for the plantation.

petition, new plantation included not only the original grants of the proprietors to whom the charter was issued, but also all of the territory lying outside of their several grants which was afterwards in the township of Old Dunstable. In 1674 the plantation received the name of Dunstable; the name being given in honor of Mrs. Mary Tyng, wife of Edward Tyng, an immigrant in 1630 from Dunstable, England.

The plantation of Old Dunstable as it was originally constituted contained about two hundred square miles of land lying on both sides of the Merrimack river. On the east side it included nearly all of the present town of Litchfield, a portion each of Londonderry and Pelham, and all of Hudson. Its southeast corner was located at the corner of Methuen and

Dracut, Mass. West of the Merrimack river, it was bounded on the north by the Souhegan river, on the west by a line running due south from Dram-Cup hill to the Groton new line, established in 1730; (this west boundary line ran, at its nearest point, about 18 rods west of Muscatanipus pond in Brookline); and on the south by Groton Plantation, Chelmsford, and Provinceland, now Townsend, Mass. The following named towns in New Hampshire and Massachusetts were included wholly or in part within its original limits. In New Hampshire:—Nashua, Hollis, and Hudson in full; and, in part, Amherst, Merrimack, Milford, Litchfield, Londonderry, Pelham, and Brookline.

In Massachusetts:—Dunstable and Tyngsboro in full; in part; Groton, Dracut, Pepperell and Townsend.

### Disintegration.

The process of the disintegration of Old Dunstable in New Hampshire began in 1722. In that year a small tract of land was taken from its northeast corner and annexed to Londonderry.

The dates of the incorporation of the several towns which either in whole or in part were formed out of its territory in New Hampshire are as follows:—

Hudson: twice incorporated; the first time as Nottingham, by Massachusetts, Jan. 4, 1733; the second time as Nottingham West, by New Hampshire, July 5, 1746; the name was changed to Hudson in June, 1830.

Litchfield: twice incorporated; the first time by Massachusetts, July 4, 1734; the second time by New Hampshire, June 5, 1749.

Munson, by New Hampshire, April 1, 1746. In 1770 Munson surrendered its charter to the State, and its territory was divided between the towns of Hollis and Amherst; where it remained until 1794, when it was taken in conjunction with the northerly part of the Mile Slip and the Charlestown and Duxbury School Farms to form the town of Milford.

Nashua: by New Hampshire as Dunstable, April 1, 1746. The name Dunstable was changed to Nashua Dec. 7, 1836.

Merrimack; by New Hampshire, April 2, 1746.

Hollis; by New Hampshire, April 3, 1746.

Pelham; by New Hampshire, July 5, 1746.

Brookline; by New Hampshire, March 30, 1769.

Milford; by New Hampshire, Jan. 11, 1794.

During the years intervening between the issuing of their grant in 1673 and the year 1794, when by the incorporation of Milford all the territory which it originally included had been incorporated into townships, the proprietors of Old Dunstable continued to exercise the rights conferred upon them under the terms of their charter.

As a matter of fact, for many years after the incorporation of Milford, they continued to issue grants, or deeds, of lands located within the original bounds of Old Dunstable; and only ceased to do so when, by reason of their having revoked, for conditions broken, so many of their grants and made so many reconveyances to so many different parties of the same tracts of land, the titles to the same became so hopelessly involved as to render their acts farcical; and as grantors of land under the Old Dunstable Grant, they finally dropped out of sight. But they left behind them, as a legacy to their descendants, a crop of law suits over contested titles to lands which for many subsequent years supplied the county courts with business; the echoes of which are occasionally heard, even at the present time.

These grants, or proprietors' deeds, were certainly issued as late as 1803. The following copy of one of them is inserted here as a matter of curiosity. It is dated in November, 1791, and is one of many similar grants now in the possession of the writer which, taken together, include 2900 acres of land within the limits of Brookline; and in all of which David Wright of Pepperell, Mass., the great-grandfather of the writer, is named as grantee.

"Laid out to David Wright on the original right of Robert Ox two hundred and fifty acres of land lying in that part of Old Dunstable called Raby fifty acres on the forty-second Division the remainder on the third Bounded as follows Beginning on the east side of the stream or river running out of Muscatanipus pond just where the water enters into the ditch that leads to Conant's mills thence Down the east side of the road to stake and stones thence East to the North West corner of lot of land Laid out to Maj'r Hobbart Being about twenty rods thence East by the North Bounds of the said lot last mentioned fifty rods to a lot of land claimed by Randal McDonols thence North three Degrees West by said McDonols land one hundred and thirty-one poles to a small read oak tree marked thence north eighty degrees East fifty-eight Poles to a large White Pine tree marked on the side of the road west of said McDonols House thence North five degrees West by said road one hundred and four poles to a Pine tree marked thence North one hundred and twenty Poles thence West one hundred and fifty-six Poles to land formerly layd out to

Mr. Benjamin Prescott on Rock Raymond thence South thirteen degrees West by said Prescott land eighty Poles thence south seventy degrees West by said Prescott land fifty-six Poles to a Great Pine tree standing on the East Bank of the North Stream thence Down the easterly Bank thereof to the place of Beginning.

Surved by Joseph Blanchard

The two hundred acres lay out on the third Division to be equal to fifty acres of the Best Land

Joseph Blanchard, }  
Noah Lovewell, } Committee"

The foregoing grant, or laying out, was approved by the proprietors at a meeting holden at the house of Jonathan Pollard, innholder in Dunstable, Nov. 1, 1791; as appears by the attestation, signed by Noah Lovewell, proprietor's clerk, on the back thereof.

The grant is interesting, not only because it shows the usual form of the proprietor's deeds, but also because it establishes the fact that at the time of its date, in 1791, a canal, of which the vestiges are visible at the present time, extended from the east shore of Muscatanipus pond down the east side of the river for the purpose of carrying water to operate a sawmill below the outlet of the pond, and that the mill was known as "Conant's."

It is interesting, further, because of its mention of the hill on the northeast shore of the pond by the name of Rock Raymond, instead of "Rock Rament"; thus conclusively proving that the latter name, by which in modern times this hill has been known, is a corruption of the former.