

F 74

.W33 W6











HISTORICAL SKETCH  
OF THE  
Town of Watertown

Commemorating the Two Hundred  
and Seventy-fifth Anniversary  
of its Settlement as an  
English Colony

EMBRACING A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE LIMITS  
OF THE TOWN AND THE HISTORY OF THE  
OLD MILL AND THE GREAT BRIDGE

*John Franklin Whitney*



BOSTON, MASS.  
PRESS OF MURRAY AND EMERY COMPANY  
1906

✓  
472634





## SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF WATERTOWN.

---

The town of Watertown has just passed another quarter-century milestone of its history. It is eminently fitting that it should take note of the fact. Faith in its noble origin, its progressive life, its promising future alike commend a brief retrospect of its course so far and an attempt to learn from its progress to this point what its onward course may be made. Clearness of vision is of no greater value to the engineer who is laying out the line of a great railway into an undeveloped country than to the men of affairs who are shaping the policy of a civic community in the early stages of its growth.

Watertown although two hundred and seventy-five years from its first settlement as an English colony is yet in the condition of undeveloped youth. Its natural advantages although early recognized in embryo have not begun to be realized in their possible relations.

Let us recount to ourselves some of the facts accomplished, look over the new works now being undertaken that show still the fresh spirit of enterprise natural to a vigorous youth, and take heart for newer and broader and greater efforts for the future.

Possibly it will be found that there is profitable employment for the farthest-sighted among us as well as for the skill and the labor of the humblest dweller within our borders in doing his level best in developing the possibilities of the town as a delightful residence, a beautiful home of culture and refinement for those engaged in the great life of a great intellectual and business center in this corner of our growing country.

The river running through our town was first called Charles River by John Smith who made a voyage along our coast in 1614. He made a map which is preserved to us in which he thus named this river in honor of Prince Charles, afterwards Charles I., and the country in this neighborhood he first named New England instead of North Virginia as it was known

before. Stories about John Smith and the colony at Jamestown in Virginia are familiar to all. The causes of his want of permanent success there are not so well known. Writing home from Virginia, he wrote, "When you send again, I entreat you, rather send but thirty carpenters, husbandmen, gardeners, fishermen, blacksmiths, masons, and diggers up of trees' roots, well provided, than a thousand such as we have." Similar advice based on the experience of the first thirty years of that century had its effect upon our immediate ancestors and contributed to make their labors effective in the end. Most of those settling the lands of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were either men of property with their servants or the better class of men with some useful occupation as is shown by general accounts of the time or in such papers as Savage's Gleanings for New England history.

Watertown was the first inland town settled in New England. Hundreds of vessels had for several years visited the shores of America for fish or to trade with the Indians for furs. But no permanent settlement of any considerable size had been made on any inland river.

Plymouth settled ten years before was on the seashore. The charter under which Governor Winthrop, Dudley, and our Richard Saltonstall came to possess and occupy the country was issued by King Charles, under date of 18th March, 1628. The lengthy document, which extends over a score of pages twice the size of these, with much repetition and particularization provides that almost unlimited powers of government shall rest in the Massachusetts Bay Colony over "all that part of New England in America which lyes and extends betweene a great river called the Merrymack river and a certen other river there called Charles river, being in the bottome of a certen bay commonly called Massachusetts bay, and also lands lyeing within a space of three English myles on the south parte of said river called Charles river, or any and every part thereof . . . and also all the lands whatsoever within the space of three English myles to the northward of said river called Merrymack."

After two years of preparation in England under the lead of the first governor of the Colony, Matthew Cradock, a wealthy merchant in London, active steps were taken to establish the colony in New England. During this time some ships had been sent over with prospectors and agents who landed at Salem.

After long delays by head winds and stormy seas four ships with the new governor, John Winthrop, with Richard Saltonstall and others as assistants, and Thomas Dudley as deputy governor, came first to Salem, and afterwards to Charlestown. Eight more ships immediately followed, and two more in July or August, seventeen in all in this year, 1630. Some people went up the Mystic and founded Medford, and others particularly those with Sir Richard Saltonstall, with Rev. George Phillips, came up the Charles river and landed probably at what came to be known as "the Watertown landing," below what is now Mt. Auburn Cemetery. Here in the immediate neighborhood, finding good ground for tillage and for his cattle, Sir Richard established his home. Early he undertook to provide a home for Rev. George Phillips, the first minister of the new settlement.

To show something of the character of the men engaged in the undertaking, and its difficulty, we give the following quotations. Thomas Dudley, deputy governor, in writing home this first year, probably from Cambridge, after speaking of the hardship and dangers of their stormy voyage, and the fright caused by reports of French preparations against them, says "they scattered up the rivers." "They who had health to labor fell to building, wherein many were interrupted with sickness, and many died weekly, yea, almost daily." He adds "If any come hither to plant for worldly ends which can live well at home, he commits an error" "but if for spiritual ends, and no obstacle hinders his removal, he may find here what may well content him, viz., materials to build, fuel to burn, ground to plant, seas and rivers to fish in, a pure air to breathe, good water to drink, which with cows, hogs and goats brought hither may already suffice for food; but for clothes and bedding

they must bring them with them till time and industry produce them here." He calls for "men not of the poorer sort yet for years, who will come over out of religion's ends to help us in our good work." One of the ends was to christianize the Indians, another end to enjoy religious freedom. With all, as one can see, they hoped to better their estate.

### Indians.

The country granted to the colonists of "Massachusetts Bay" was previously occupied,—sparsely occupied,—by roaming bands of Indians. When Saltonstall and his servants and those of the party proposing to settle on the Charles River came, they found a well established Indian village near the falls. There have been found abundant evidences in the shape of arrow or spear heads, axes, stone implements, of a former Indian occupancy along the banks of the river. We can well believe the story of the exchange between our early settlers and Indians of a loaf of bread for a fish, the legend preserved in the arms of our town. "The town was never invaded by hostile Indians," although "Watertown soldiers and emigrants contributed their full share to Indian wars and massacres in other places."

The number of the Indians was not large at the advent of the English in New England. The number of Massachusetts Indians is seldom ever stated at above three thousand which number had probably been greatly reduced by pestilence just before, but they were numerous enough to have given our forefathers greater trouble had they not been pacified by kind treatment. The apostle Eliot, for instance, and those who devoted their efforts to their conversion to Christianity and orderly lives, did their utmost to win their kind regard.

The covetousness of the selfish, the grasping and overbearing conduct of many of the early colonists, however, must have gone far to neutralize the good effects of the wise efforts of the rulers and christian ministers and their helpers. Still the "pallysadoe" set up in Newtowne never had to be used for defence against them; nor was that planned for this town

between what is now Main and Belmont streets, Lexington and Warren streets ever constructed, although the people had been ordered to locate their houses there and some began to comply with the order.

As confidence gained, the farmers gradually spread farther and farther from their first location. When some of our people had reached the fertile meadows by Sudbury River, by the spread of their settlements, it is true the train bands under Capt. Hugh Mason and others were called into action to put down the organized opposition roused by the growing jealousy of the native Indians to the spread of our encroachments. But who can blame the "poor Indians" for rising when, alas, for them, it was too late for them to defend their ancient heritage.

#### The Limits of the Town and its First Settlers.

The town at present is only about three miles in length from east to west and scarcely a mile in width. At first there were no definite limitations of its extent. By the settlement and organization of other towns it was gradually curtailed and hemmed in by definite bounds. Her people were agriculturists. Sir Richard Saltonstall with Rev. George Phillips, and their companions, after their arrival from England, and the removal of the seat of the colony from Salem to Charlestown, probably before the middle of July of 1630, came up the Charles River, and having found a suitable landing and convenient fields for agriculture, brought thither their servants and their cattle, of which they had liberal store, and their goods and began a settlement, which afterwards (September 7th), was by vote of the Court of Assistants, called Watertown. The vote—"It is ordered that Trimontaine shall be called Boston, Mattapan, Dorchester, and the towne upon Charles Ryver, Watertoun."

The location of the landing first made and which continued to be "the landing" of those coming up the river for many years, was that shown on the map\* of 1720, and is that below Mt. Auburn Cemetery and back of the Cambridge Hospital.

\* This old map is reproduced in Watertown records, vol. 2.

This landing known some years since as Gerry's landing, a committee of the Cambridge Board of Aldermen in 1883 reported was the original town-landing for Watertown, and, with the way leading from it, is mentioned in the early records of the town, soon after its settlement in 1630, and continued a part of Watertown till annexed to Cambridge, April 19, 1754, in a grant of the General Court.

In 1631 Deputy-Governor Thomas Dudley looking about for a convenient place for a town for the traders, "a fit place for a fortified town," fixed upon a location between Watertown and Charlestown and called it New Town (about Harvard Square). Dudley and others built there. Governor Winthrop put up the frame of a house there, which, the next year, he took down and carried to Boston, which he probably saw would be a more fitting place for commerce and for the government.

In February, 1632, three-score pounds was "levyed out of the several plantations within the lymitts of this pattent towards the making of a pallysadoe\* aboute the new towne" (Cambridge), of which levy Watertown's part, the same as Boston's, exceeded all others. Watertown, at first, refused to pay the part assessed upon her because they had had no voice in making the order. This led to the appointment of two representatives from each town to "the General Court," and thus laid the foundation for representative government in America. In 1635 the General Court appointed three men "to lay out the bounds betwixte Waterton and Newe Towne," who reported, "It is agreed by us that the bounds between Waterton shall stand as they are already, from Charles Ryver to the great Fresh Pond" (by Sparks street and Vassal lane, nearly) "and from the tree marked by Water Towne and Newe Towne on the south-east syde of the pond, over the pond to a white poplar tree on the north-west syde of the pond, and from that tree up into the country nore-west and by west upon a straight line by a meridian compasse; and further, that Waterton shall have one hundredth rodds in length above

\*The line of this palisade is still marked by the old willow trees on Mt. Auburn street, also by those near the Longfellow place on Brattle street, and those back of the Agassiz Museum.

the weire, and one-hundredth rodd beneath the weire in length, and three-score rodd in breadth from the river on the southe syde thereof, and all the rest of the ground on that syde of the river to lye to New Towne." These bounds were again confirmed by vote of the General Court, 13th March, 1634. This act set bounds to Watertown except in one direction. The only possible room left to grow in was to the west and southwest.

In 1635, by vote of the General Court, on the 3rd September, "It is ordered that there shall be a plantation settled, aboute two myles above the falls of Charles Ryver, on the northeast syde thereof." On September 8, 1636, it was "ordered that the plantation to be settled above the falls of Charles Ryver shall have immunity from public charges as Concord had . . . and the name of the said plantation is to be Dedham." The same court ordered that "there shall be a plantation at Musketequid, and that there shall be six miles of land square belong to it, . . . and the name of the place shall be Concord." Thus the town of Watertown was limited on the southwest by the incorporation of Dedham, and on the northwest by the incorporation of Concord.

As the lands of Watertown were gradually filled up and soon some felt straitened for want of room, they naturally looked westward towards the pleasant meadows along the river "that runs towards Concord," and, greatly pleased by the prospect of possessions along that pleasant river, with its sedgy banks and its grassy upland slopes, finally petitioned the General Court for permission to go thither to found a new town. On the 20th November, 1637, it is recorded in the records of the General Court held at Newtowne (Cambridge): "Whereas, a great part of the chiefe inhabitants of Watertown have petitioned this court, that in regard of their straitnes of accomodation and want of medowe, they might have leave to remove, and settle a plantation upon the ryver which runs to Concord, this court, having respect to their necessity, doth grant their petition." It provided what should be done if said inhabitants of Watertown did not, to the number of

thirty families or more, actually settle on the land,—ordered that they “shall have power to order the scituation of the towne, and the proportioning of lots, and all other liberties as other towns have under the proviso aforesaid.” “September 4, 1639, it is ordered that the new plantation by Concord shall be called Sudbury.”

Thus was Watertown entirely circumscribed, and thus, although there are no very early maps, it is possible to fix quite definitely the entire bounds of the town as its bounds came to be defined.

The external as well as the internal changes of the bounds of Watertown at different times are well illustrated by the admirable sketch map of Dr. Bond which is here reproduced.

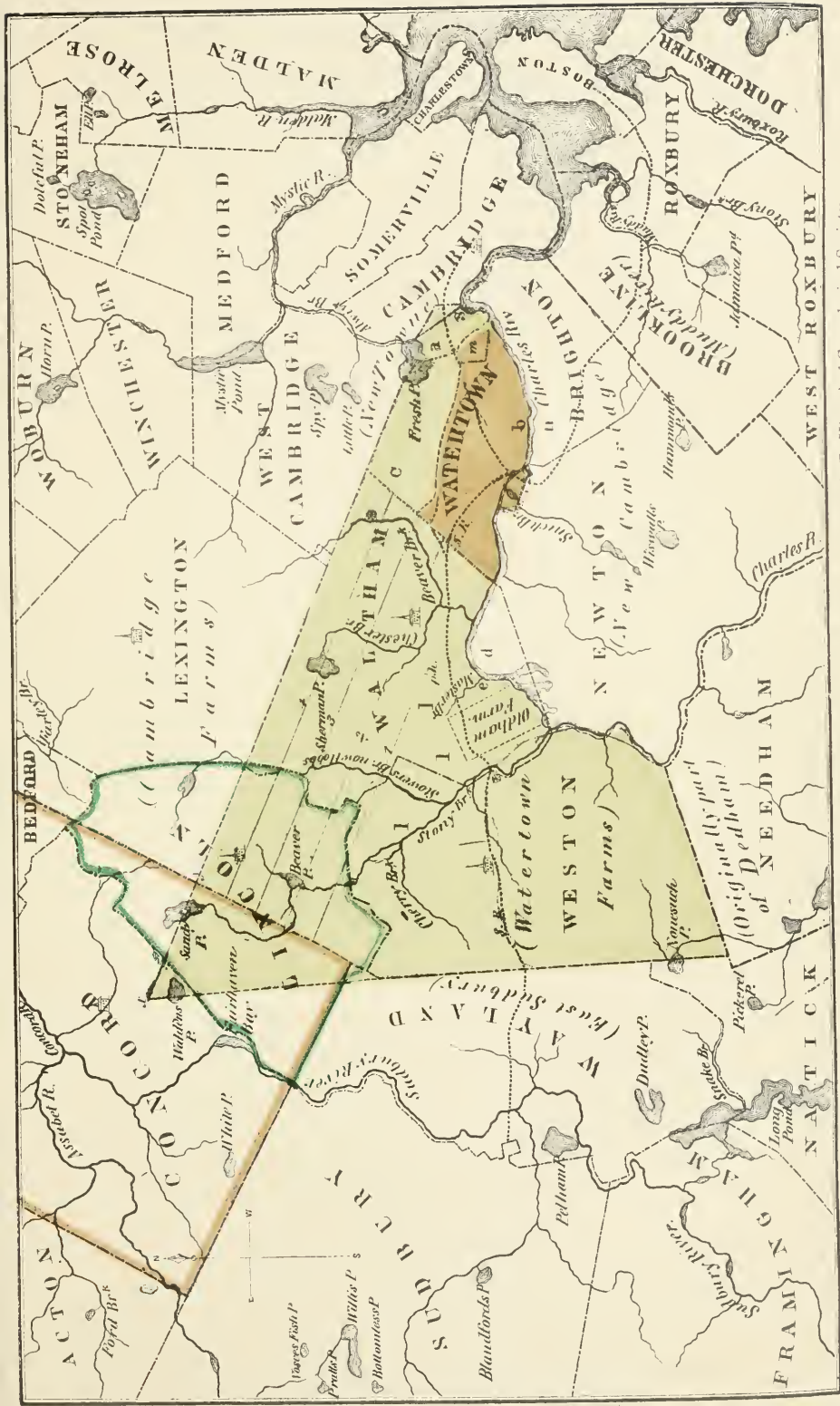
### BOND'S MAP.

“The accompanying map is intended to show the relation of Watertown to the surrounding towns; its original boundaries and extent, as determined by the Court; the overlapping of the grants made to Watertown and Concord, and the several excisions, by which Watertown became reduced to its present small dimensions. Also some of its most important localities.

*S*, the homestall of Sir Richard Saltonstall, and afterward of his son Samuel; *a*, the portion of territory taken from Watertown and annexed to Cambridge in 1754; *b*, Dorchester Field; *C*, Pequusset Meadow or Common; *d*, the portion of Newton (about six hundred acres) annexed to Waltham in 1849. Nearly all of this was included in the ancient Fuller Farm, and constituted about two-thirds of it; *e*, Mount Feeke; *m*, Mount Auburn Cemetery; *l.l.l* “lieu of Township” lands; *n*, Nonantum Hill; *p.h*, Prospect Hill; *S.R.* Sudbury Road; *x*, the N. W. corner of Watertown, according to the original order of Court; *y*, the corners of Watertown and Cambridge (Lexington) contiguous to Concord. The lines marked 1, 2, 3, 4, denote the *Squadron lines*, or the dividing lines of the four *Great Dividends*. This mark [\*] denotes the sites of the three ancient mills on

This map and description are copied from Bond's "Genealogies of the Early Settlers of Watertown," vol. 2, by the permission of the New England Historical Genealogical Society. The darker color is introduced to show approximately the present limits of Watertown.





Copied from Bond's "Genealogies and History of Watertown" by the permission of the N. E. Historical Genealogical Society.



Charles River at the bridge, on Beaver Brook, and on Stony Brook. The village or the center of the town is denoted by the figure of a meeting house. The four squadron lines on the map, appear to begin at the eastern boundary of Waltham, and they did so very nearly; but the exact line has not been ascertained in its whole extent."

Whatever indefinite ideas its early settlers may have had previously to this, they henceforth, to obtain more room, must go beyond the bounds of other towns and settle in the boundless wilderness beyond. They asked for and received grants of such extraneous portions of land for special services, as after the Pequot and again after the Narraganset war. From the largest of such grants the town of Westminster on the slopes of Wachusett was largely made. In granting to the new town Concord six miles square, the General Court, from the want of exact surveys, unwittingly gave to Concord a portion of territory already included, as one can see by looking at the map, within the limits of Watertown. For this they later granted two thousand acres of land, located on the side of Wachusett. Henceforward the changes in her territorial possessions, like those which preceded, will be by division, by curtailment. Watertown henceforth, by division within, or by want of a common interest, suffers loss of territory, loss of inhabitants, which too often the people were, after long contest, too willing to part company with.

The bounds of the town were hardly fixed before they began to settle the outermost portions in systematic manner. On October 14, 1638, it was "Ordered that the farmes granted shall begin at the nearest meddow to Dedham line, beyond the line runneth at the end of ye great dividents, parallel to the line at the end of the Towne bounds, and so to go on successively from Dedham Bounds," etc. The earliest map preserved in the archives of the State is a map of a portion of the extreme southwest corner of the town, next to the Dedham line, giving the location of lines running east and north across "Nonesuch Pond," which lies partly in Sudbury.

This ancient map,\* bearing the date of 1687, gives the lines in position with reference to this Nonesuch Pond, and their direction by the compass, thus determining the boundary line between Watertown and the north part of Dedham, afterwards Needham, and later still, the line between Weston and Wellesley on the south, while on the west the line in position and direction between Watertown and Sudbury, now between Weston and Wayland. By continuing this line in a northerly direction until we meet the six miles square of Concord, we have the early western boundary. Of course this was fixed after many measurements and surveys by committees appointed by the towns, but this remains substantially the boundary between Weston and Wayland, the eastern part of Sudbury, to this day.

#### Division and Reduction of Area.

“Watertown has well been called ‘the mother of towns,’ for out of her territory have been formed the towns of Weston and Waltham, and parts of Lincoln, Cambridge, and Belmont. Besides these contributions from her area, she sent forth colonists to the Connecticut river settlements, to Weathersfield, Connecticut, Marthas Vineyard and neighboring new settlements in eastern and central Massachusetts, so that hardly a town in Middlesex County but has families which trace their origin to this prolific and enterprising mother. In 1636 it was the most populous town in the Colony.”

The boundary on the east, between Cambridge and Watertown, has been changed several times, always at the expense of territory of Watertown. At first, as reported to the General Court in 1635, it was near what is now Sparks street and Vassal lane, thence across Fresh Pond to a certain poplar tree on the northwest side; thence by a straight line northwest by west, eight miles into the country, till it met the west line between Sudbury and Watertown, or rather would have met it at an angle beyond and above Walden Pond, had

\*This is reproduced in "Watertown records," vol. 1.

not that portion been cut off by the grant to Concord of six miles square.

### Separation of the West Farms, or Weston.

Frequently during a period of many years after the apportionment of lands to the one hundred and fourteen townsmen, in 1637, the division of the lands at the West Farms was a source of disagreement and contention at the regular and irregularly called meetings of the town.

The historian of Weston will doubtless show how delightful those fields were, and what objects of contention among all the townsmen, who had naturally equal right to some possession among them; how many prominent men were drawn away from the older settlement to gain by occupancy these farms; of the remoteness from church privileges, and from schools; of the injustice of church rates and other taxes, which were spent where they could not easily profit by them, till finally, March 13, 1682-83, it was voted in town-meeting that "those who dwell on west of Stony Brook be freed from school tax;" and November 10, 1685, it was "voted that the farmers' petition should be suspended as to an answer to it until it pleaseth God to settle a minister among us." In 1692 a town-meeting was held to decide upon a site for a new meeting-house, but there was so great excitement and such differences of opinion among the people, that the Governor and Council were called in to decide the matter. The Governor and Council were unable to please either the people on the "Farms" or the people in the east part of the town. In 1694, at a town meeting, the east bounds of the West Farms Precinct were fixed at Beaver Brook, but the General Court, in 1699, fixed them at Stony Brook. At the May session of the General Court the petition praying for leave "To set up the public worship of God amongst the inhabitants of the west end of Watertown" was granted, the farmers having been exempted from ministerial rates the preceding year. After long and vexatious contention the act for the incorporation of Weston was passed, on the first of January,

1713. Thus there was cut off from the territory of the old town nearly half of its area.

### Separation of Waltham.

The next reduction of area came with the incorporation of Waltham in 1738, which took about six-tenths of the lands left to her. Before Weston was incorporated that part was called the West Precinct (Weston), this the Middle Precinct (Waltham) and the eastern portion the East Precinct. With the incorporation of Weston the part now Waltham became the West Precinct. The incorporation of Weston took away about 10,372 acres, of Waltham about 8891 acres and left the old town only 3833 acres; this was less than a sixth of the area of the three precincts together.

In April, 1754, a portion of the eastern part of the town was joined to Cambridge — all that part between the most northern bend of the river, near where Sparks street now runs and along Vassal lane to Mt. Auburn Cemetery. This took away, probably, most of the lands owned by Sir Richard Saltonstall and his early associates, the cluster of dwellings called "the town." The town of Watertown still retained its right to the wharf and landing on the river for a century longer.

In 1859, nearly all that part of the town north of Belmont street was set off to Belmont, so-called. This was the result of a long struggle and a fierce contest like each other excision of territory and loss of inhabitants. By this act, fourteen hundred and forty-six acres were taken from the town.

In 1704-5 a committee was appointed to find out the line between Watertown and Newton on the south side of Charles River. The committee reported in 1705 the line nearly as at present represented on the map on the south side, giving by estimation about eighty-eight acres. This has at different times been extended, till at present, with Water, Boyd and Cook's Ponds, it includes one hundred and fifty acres.

The last excision of territory was arranged amicably with Cambridge, she buying the lands of the owners and paying the town of Watertown \$15,000 for loss of taxable property for

lands taken between Mt. Auburn Cemetery and the river for the Cambridge Cemetery, and authorized by act of the General Court, which transferred the Winchester estate to Cambridge; also the road passing between Mt. Auburn and Cambridge Cemeteries.

There now remain within the bounds of the town including Charles River, the marshes, the ponds, Mt. Auburn and Catholic Cemeteries, according to the surveys of Henry Crafts, 2668.25 acres, of about four and one-sixth square miles. The number of acres taxed in 1890 was 2027, in 1905 it is 1882, with a valuation, including buildings thereon, of \$10,265,500.

If we had the space and this were an appropriate place, we might enter upon the *personal* history of the town, upon the *educational*, or the *ecclesiastical history*, or we might trace the change in the modes of transportation, the streets and by-ways of the town, the introduction of wheeled vehicles, of stage lines or their various substitutes—railway cars, horse, steam or electrical—the different modes of lighting the homes and streets of the town, the introduction of water for house use, or of sewers and other improved drainage, the new and improved modes of policing the town, the control of the liquor habit, the adoption of systematic district nursing and caring for the sick, the spread of parks and open air modes of pleasing and occupying the well. Any one of which if traced in its introduction and relations to the general life of the town would prove of wonderful interest to all. Any one of these topics taken up by the diligent student and followed out in its logical relations to the town's history would repay the student for the necessary research required, for in the town's library there are being gradually stored up works that contain the facts which would enable the careful searcher to re-weave the web which the centuries are weaving, far more interesting than novels, the flimsy tissues so industriously woven from the imaginations of dreamers, which are now so much in repute.

Fortunately, as we have not now the space or the time, it is not necessary to construct so elaborate a fabric to commemorate the great advance of the last two and three quarter

centuries. Any one of these lines of enquiry, or any similar one will answer as well. In view of the great changes in progress we will content ourselves in speaking more in detail in regard to the *old mill* and its rights to *water power* and of the life of the *Great Bridge* now about to be reconstructed, the history of either of which has touched at so many points the life and interests of the town.

It would be interesting to name the early ministers in order, to note the introduction of new societies, to trace the history of the churches and the progress of religion in the town. This having been done by various clergymen, notably by the last town minister, Dr. Converse Francis, before division of church interests, and followed up since by others, it is only necessary to refer to his history and to the columns of our local papers.

The genealogies of Dr. Bond, besides giving a most admirable account of the early history of the town in all its relations, brings a wealth of information in regard to personal history and the relation in families of most of the town's former inhabitants. This work is more consulted by genealogical students perhaps than any other, partly from the research of its author and partly from the fact that Watertown's honored citizens have spread to every part of the country, and their descendants delight to trace back to our loved town their honored ancestry.

In view of the fact that in this 275th year of our history one of the earliest institutions, if not the earliest, is doomed by the progress of events and the changes in manufactures and commerce and the interests alike of the growing population of the great metropolis, of which we are a part, in sanitary and æsthetic matters, we will give some space to the *old mill*.

### The Old "Corn Mill."

The old mill is no longer needed. There is no corn grown here to be ground. Breadstuffs are prepared in the far West and brought to our doors. We can get a peck of meal from Minneapolis more easily and for less money than we could from our farmers if raised in town. The old mill must yield to



the growth of a lawn with its grass and shrubbery and fresh air. We have always seen the old mill by the river. Our fathers and the farmers far and wide have always gone to the old mill with their grists. What is its history? What its origin?

We must confess it is clouded in mystery. Old accounts differ. No one speaks with absolute certainty.

In the cargoes sent out from London by Governor Cradock in 1629 and 1630, were articles of apparel for one hundred men, leather coats, shoes, stockings besides stuffs for other clothing and for their houses; food, seeds for planting as well, arms for defence and for offence, ammunition, tools to work with, iron, steel, also *burrs* and *plaster of Paris for mill stones*, etc., etc. Governor Cradock sent also farmers, carpenters, sawyers, and an *engineer*, one Thomas Graves, who was sent partly at the expense of the Colony and partly at the expense of Matthew Cradock to look out partly for his own private ventures.

Dr. Bond says that "neither the exact date nor the builder of the first mill in Watertown has been ascertained, but it was probably built in 1634, by Edward How, at the joint expense of himself and Mr. Matthew Cradock." We have quoted from the "records of Massachusetts Bay" the statements that Matthew Cradock the first governor sent in the ships *burrs* and *plaster of Paris for mill stones* and made a contract with Thomas Graves, "*an engineer skilled in iron works, . . . . and in leading water for mills*, partly at the expense of the colony and partly at his own expense, and what is more natural to suppose in the absence of any statement that this engineer used these materials for the benefit of his employer and that some one else on the ground furnished timber and labor. The first mention of the mill in the records is that one-half of it was sold by Edward How to Thomas Mayhew in 1635, and the other half was sold to the same in May, 1639, by the agent of Matthew Cradock.

"It was built at the head of tide-water on Charles river on Mill creek, which was a canal wholly or partly artificial."  
"It is probably the oldest artificial mill-race or canal in this

country that has continued in uninterrupted use." Its use has lately been discontinued as a mill, although an old building,—not very old,—and the race-way remain. Before the building is destroyed and the race-ways are filled up some pictures and maps should be prepared for reference, so that the students of the future may understand the facts which are matters of observation with us. The mill, "the corn mill," was probably first used by the servants of Sir Richard Saltonstall, who with others from New towne beyond brought up their grain to be ground from the first *town* site near "the landing." The road leading from there to the mill is called "Mill street" on the old maps, now Mt. Auburn street. There have been on the site various kinds of mills. We have not its full history. It is recorded that in 1686 a *fulling mill* was erected by the side of the corn-mill. We find mention of a *planing mill* just back of the grist mill. There was also a *paper mill* by the side of the grist mill.

In 1777 Hezekiah Learned conveyed to John Remington the ancient grist mill. In 1805 the grist mill building was extended seventeen feet and an additional story erected making four stories, and a water-wheel put in and power to run six hundred and forty-eight spindles with other necessary machinery guaranteed, for the spinning of cotton warps, Joseph Pierce, gentleman; Jonas Wood, miller; Uriah Moore and Enoch Wiswell, paper makers, all of Watertown, made deed to Jeduthan Fuller of Beverly, spinner, of space and necessary power.

These warps were used by farmers' wives all through the country in weaving coarse cloth for clothing, blankets, coarse sheeting and for rag carpets.

The water-wheel used was an undershot wheel which supplied the required power. This may be seen by the story of "a boy five years of age of a Mr. Smith's who fell into the water just above the mill. He was drawn by the current under the wheel; there happened to be a board out so he passed through underneath and was found by the miller sitting in shoal water under the mill unhurt."

This mill being the oldest mill on the stream had the first right to water. Few people may know that the rights of this mill have been the subject of much legislation and of many legal contentions in the courts. Few may know that it has had much to say about the quantity of water allowed to be drawn off by Mother Brook at Hyde Park from the Charles River to the Neponset which was finally fixed at one-third part. The town as the present owner of the mill and the water privilege must see to it that the proportion of the water to which it is entitled, especially when the water is low from a general drouth in the summer months, is not taken away from our water parks and led away by Mother Brook.

Each topic of our history is connected with all other topics at many points.

The population of the town at first was as large or larger than Boston. In the tax levy of September and again November, 1630, the amount assessed to Watertown was the same as to Boston and larger than to any other town in the colony.

The levy of 1632 for a "pallysadoe" about Newtowne, the first fortification of the colony against the Indians, was again Watertowne and Boston eight pounds each, Newtowne (Cambridge) three pounds, Charleton seven pounds, Rocksbury seven pounds, Salem four pounds.

This proportion continued for some years, the relative amount charged to Watertown growing smaller as Boston and other places increased in wealth beyond the farming town of Watertown; but not for four years, perhaps not for fourteen years, was the population of Watertown less than that of Boston.

In connection with taxes, as we have before mentioned, the protest of Watertown against being taxed without representation led to the appointment of representatives from the towns and so to the introduction of representative government in this country.

In regard to the government of towns by *boards of selectmen*, and in regard to the history of the *Great Bridge*, I can not do better than to quote from a recent address of the Chairman of

the Board of Selectmen, Mr. Bartlett M. Shaw, given at the two hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the First Church.

He said, "Speaking for the Board of Selectmen, it might be fitting for me to mention the origin of this body.

"Preserved in the vault at the Town Hall are the original Town Records beginning in 1634. If any existed previous to this time they were lost. These records at the beginning show that a body of freemen were chosen annually to order the civil affairs of the town, and thus originated that peculiarly New England municipal body, the Board of Selectmen. By referring to the original records it will be seen that they were not at first designated as Selectmen. The first time this title is found in the records is in 1647. The number varied, but in 1634 there were three as at present.

"It has been stated that Watertown has the distinction of being the first town to be governed by a Board of Selectmen.

### **The Great Bridge.**

"On account of the changes which are now going on in the center of our town, necessitated by the widening of Galen street, the town has recently voted to build a new bridge across the Charles River, and has also recently purchased the grist mill and water rights, and is contemplating the filling of the canals. It has seemed to me that a review of that portion of the town's history which relates to this bridge and the waterway, would be of interest.

"In the Town Records there is no notice of any ferry, but from the Colonial Records, it is found that the Court on November 5, 1633, granted a license to Mr. Richard Brown to keep a ferry over Charles River opposite his house. The spot where this was kept has not been ascertained. It was supposed to be a little to the east of Mt. Auburn where said Brown owned land.

"The first bridge was built by Thomas Mayhew in 1641, and was supposed to be merely a foot bridge. No reference to this is made in the Town Records. The earliest reference to it is in

the records of the General Court in 1641, when it was ordered that the toll of Mr. Mayhew's bridge is referred to the Governor and two magistrates to settle for seven years. The privilege of a toll bridge was not granted, as appears by the record of the Court; for in 1643, he was granted 300 acres of land in regard to his charge about the bridge at Watertown Mill and the bridge to belong to the Country.

"The granting of one hundred and fifty acres on the south side of the river to Mr. Mayhew was supposed to have been on account of this bridge. While in 1644, the Court ordered the grant of three hundred acres to be laid out to Mr. Mayhew, there is no record of its location.

"It is evident that this was only a foot bridge, and although it was to belong to the country, there was no provision in the three hundred acre grant to Mr. Mayhew for the repair and maintenance of it, and very soon after obtaining this grant, Mr. Mayhew moved to Marthas Vineyard.

"The earliest mention in the Town Records of a bridge over the Charles River in Watertown, was at a meeting of the Selectmen in December, 1647, when a committee was chosen to consider how a bridge over the river should be built, and to agree with the workmen for doing it according to their best discretion. This action of the Selectmen seems to have been upon the order of the General Court in May, 1647, when an order was sent to the town to build a horse bridge.

"When the bridge was completed does not appear in the records, but on the 28th of November, 1648, the Selectmen ordered payment for the work done at the bridge.

"The construction and materials of the bridge were so defective that it was frequently repaired or rebuilt, and it proved to be a very heavy burden to the town. As it appeared in the grant to Mr. Mayhew that the bridge was to belong to the country, not to the town, the town asked aid from other communities, but without success.

"It seems that between 1648 and the building of the great bridge in 1719, there were times when the bridge was either unfit for use, or was entirely carried away, which caused many

applications to the Court to require Watertown to repair and rebuild the same. Several applications of the town to the General Court to have the cost and expense of the maintenance of the bridge maintained by Middlesex County, seem to have been in vain, as in 1716, the Court dismissed a petition finding that Watertown had maintained and supported a foot and horse bridge over said river upwards of fifty years, and ordered Watertown to repair said bridge, forthwith.

“ The foot bridge which had for many years been the only one over the Charles River in Watertown, having gone to decay, a question arose in a public town meeting on the 5th of September, 1718, whether it was better to repair the bridge or to build a new one on the same or another place. A committee was appointed to consider the question, and in their report they advised to build one at a place further up the river. The report was accepted and the town voted that the proposed bridge should be a good and sufficient cart bridge for the accommodation of the public, and especially some particular towns.

“ This, however, was considered so great an enterprise, that they would not consent to undertake it without the assistance of the public, as the expense would be unavoidably great, far greater than Watertown and Weston can bear. Weston having been set off from Watertown in 1713, was not relieved of its responsibility in the cost and maintenance of the bridge.

“ In 1719, the town entered into a contract with Mr. Thomas Learned and Capt. Thos. Prentice to build ‘ the big bridge,’ and voted to pay one hundred and sixty pounds. Beside this they were to have what they could obtain from other towns which were interested in the undertaking. This bridge seems to have been regarded as the common cause of nearly all the towns west of Watertown, for a great proportion of the people from that quarter passed over the river at this point and went to Boston over Roxbury Neck.

“ The bridge, when finished, cost a little over three hundred and nine pounds, and was the first bridge for wheel carriages in the town. The building of the bridge marks the

location of the present bridge crossing the river on Galen street. The foot or horse bridge which had been used previous to this time is supposed by some to have crossed the river at, or near, the old town landing. This first cart bridge was (Dr. Francis states in his history) within the memory of some then living, so narrow that only one carriage could pass at a time.

“The bridge has been rebuilt and made wider from time to time during the past one hundred and seventy-five or more years. A vote was passed in 1734, asking the Court to grant some of the unappropriated lands belonging to the Province to enable the town to support the bridge, and in 1744, in connection with Weston and Waltham (Waltham having been set off in 1738) applied to the General Court for a land grant for this purpose. Both of these applications were unavailing. They persevered from time to time to try to get assistance, and in 1752, their representative was instructed to join with the representative of Weston and Waltham in searching the Province records to find a grant of fifteen hundred acres of meadow; having thus proved their right to such a tract, to ask the General Court for an equivalent to it in some of the unappropriated lands belonging to the Province which might be applied for the relief of the great burden relating to the bridge. It does not appear that the town ever obtained the fifteen hundred acres of meadow or the equivalent for which they petitioned, and probably help of the Provincial Government in maintaining the bridge was abandoned.

“One incident in connection with the attempt at widening the bridge twelve feet, in 1784, was the authority of the General Court given to the Watertown Bridge Lottery, wherein the town pledged to indemnify and save harmless the managers. The scheme seems to have been a failure, and in 1791, the town chose a committee to look into the matter, and soon after, appropriated money to compensate for the losses.

“In 1797 and 1798, Weston and Waltham petitioned to the Legislature to be liberated from the burden of caring for the bridge over Charles River, but these towns do not seem to have

been then relieved. In 1801, arrangement was made with Weston and Waltham discharging them forever from any further expense in maintaining the bridge, those towns giving up to Watertown all the privileges in the fishery which were granted to them in common with Watertown in 1798.

“ The coming year it is the purpose of the Committee on the Widening of Galen street, appointed by the town, to replace the old bridge by a new one which will probably be built of masonry in beautiful proportions, eighty feet in width.

“ The territory called Watertown at its early period was very large and its boundaries on the west for a long time undefined.

“ Now, our territory has narrowed down to small limits; our lands are fast being covered with dwellings; the census taken the present year shows a rapid increase in population.”

With this quotation, we must bring this historical sketch to a close.

SOLON F. WHITNEY,

*Member of the Historical Society.*













**DOBBS BROS.**  
LIBRARY BINDING

BY 72

ST. AUGUSTINE  
FLA.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 075 290 3

