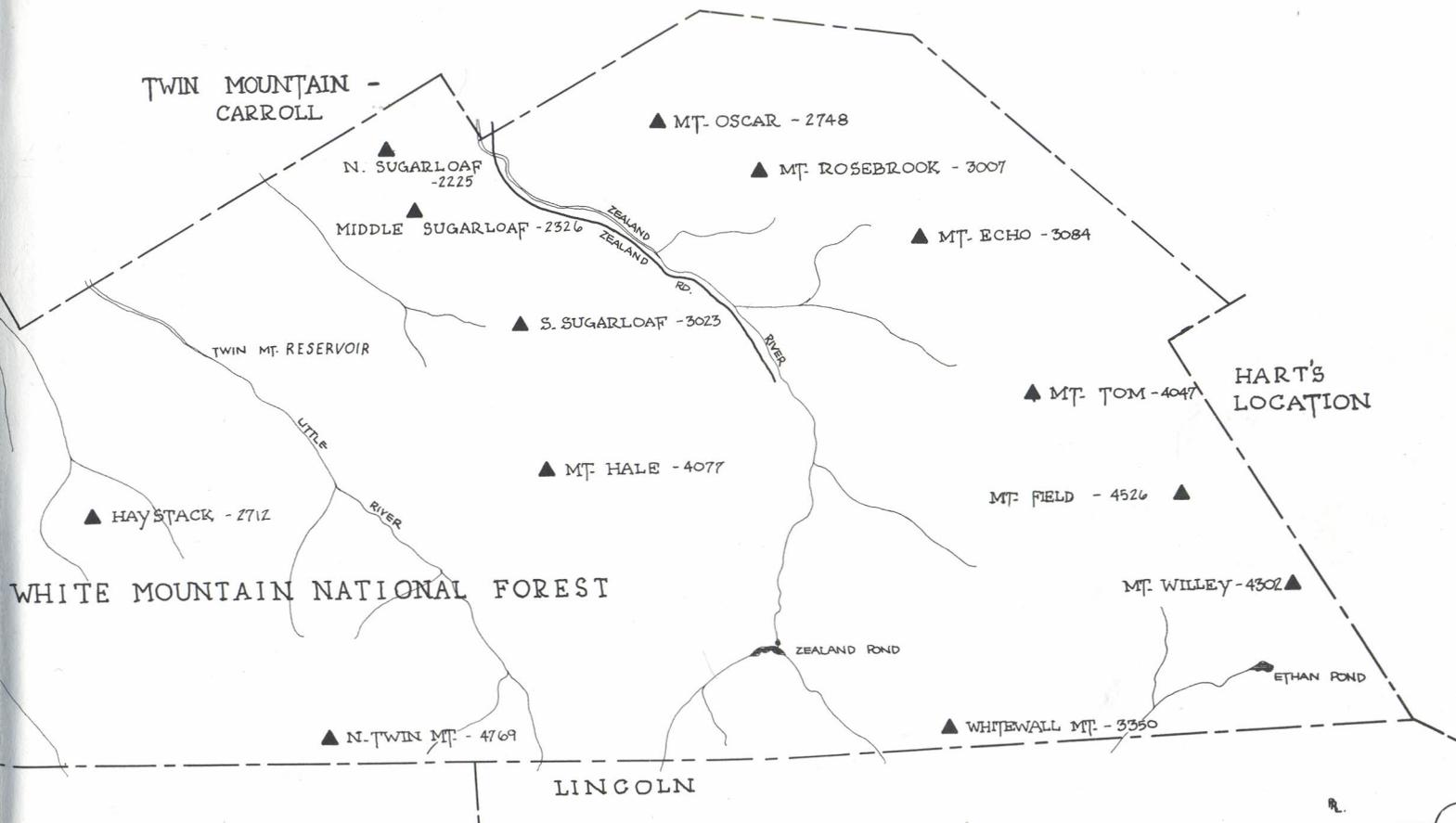


BETHLEHEM  
NEW HAMPSHIRE

# TOWN OF BETHLEHEM



# BETHLEHEM NEW HAMPSHIRE,

## A Bicentennial History

(Updated 1999 Edition)

*edited with introductory chapters by*

GEORGE C. WILSON

*and 1974–1999 update by*

MIKE DICKERMAN

and written by the people of Bethlehem  
with dedication to Hattie Whitcomb Taylor

1999

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Town of Bethlehem, New Hampshire

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A Bicentennial History

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## DEDICATION

*This book is rightfully dedicated to the historian of our town, Mrs. Hattie Whitcomb Taylor. In 1945 Mrs. Taylor began to collect pictures, maps, books, newsclippings and anything else related to Bethlehem. She gathered much of the material in large scrapbooks which she annotated with prolific notes. In 1960 she and her husband, Harold, wrote and published the first historic monograph on our town. That work has served as the foundation for this book. Without her tireless efforts, her knowledge of the town's history and her research materials, painstakingly gathered over the last three decades, this Bicentennial History could not have been accomplished. Bethlehem salutes the Taylors on this our 200th Anniversary and thanks them for preserving our history. God bless you both!*

GREGORY C. WILSON

## IN APPRECIATION

To Gregory C. Wilson, whose unselfish, cooperative, public-spirited and talented work as Editor has made the new History of Bethlehem a reality, goes the sincere appreciation of his fellow citizens as expressed in this way by the members of the Bethlehem Bicentennial Committee, and others with whom his volunteer work was carried out.\*

\*Through the cooperation of the Courier Printing Company, Inc., producers of this book, the Committee was able to accomplish the task of getting this tribute into the volume without the knowledge or consent of its modest Editor.





## THE INDIANS OF BETHLEHEM

The three major Indian nations in northeastern America were divided into three groups: the Algonquin, the Iroquoian and Siouan. The Siouan lived in the region of Lake Winnebago and Wisconsin, the Iroquois peoples lived to the west of the Algonquins and east of the Siouans in the area of New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, while the Algonquins occupied the coastal areas from North Carolina to Maine and out along the St. Lawrence River in Canada.

These nations had different forms of government, language and social customs, but there were many similarities. They hunted and yet the wild animal was their brother. They used wild plants with magic incantations and yet understood the fundamentals of an agrarian life. In Virginia they raised tobacco which was traded as far north as the St. Lawrence. Copper from Canada found its way to North Carolina.

Contrary to popular opinion, the life of these woodland people was not always one of total strife and warfare. While the Algonquin and Iroquois nations were in general hostile toward one another, a meeting between small groups or individuals was usually peaceful. War, by the white man's definition, was unknown to the Indians. Assimilation rather than annihilation was practiced by conquering Indian tribes.

The Indians who occupied the area of the White Mountains were known as the Abenakis. They were part of the Wabanaki Confederation which covered the region of the lower St. Lawrence River in Canada and northern New England. Referred to by present anthropologists as the North Atlantic Slope Culture, the Confederation formed six tribes: the Micmacs, Malecites, Passamaquoddies, Penobscots, Pennacooks and Abena-

ki. The Wabanaki Confederation was the most northern branch of the Algonquin family. The tribes had a basic unity, culturally and politically reinforced in part by their common enemy, the Iroquois in eastern New York.

Our area, the town of Bethlehem, was within the hunting region of the Abenaki tribe. The local Abenakis, covering the general area of the White Mountains, were called "Ammonoosuc" which means "narrow fishing river." Abenaki means "land the sun first bathes in light." A major Indian trail passed through the town of Bethlehem more or less following the Ammonoosuc River. The trail began at the upper reaches of the Saco River in Maine, passed through Crawford Notch and joined the Ammonoosuc River which it followed to the Connecticut River. The Connecticut River was a primary north-south Indian trail leading from Long Island, New York to Canada. The Ammonoosuc Trail was a principle east-west Indian trail, following the present Route 302, Ammonoosuc River and Littleton-Whitefield Road. Unlike the white man's trails, the Indians' trails meandered and criss-crossed along a basic route. Not meant to accommodate large populations or transport oxcars and wagons there was no need for trails to be wide and well developed.

There is little information on the Indian occupation of the region of Bethlehem or the White Mountains. The harsh climate, with a growing season too short for Indian corn, no doubt discouraged permanent villages from being settled. However, anthropologists and old colonial records have documented that Indians did dwell on the present sites of the nearby towns of Plymouth and Conway in New Hampshire, East Barnet and Newbury in Vermont, and Fryeburg in Maine. Today, gardeners in Bethlehem can see with their own eyes the difference in the growing season be-

tween those towns and Bethlehem. It is thus not surprising to find occupation evidence in those towns and not in Bethlehem.

The northern Algonquins depended more heavily on hunting than agriculture. A general practice was to establish a permanent village where a communal garden was grown. In the summer months the families would spread out from the village to specific family territories where they hunted, fished, and gathered wild foods. The territories were strictly adhered to by various families or groups, and it is reasonable to assume that Bethlehem had such a group spending the summer within its boundaries. It could be said that the Indians were our first summer tourists.

When white men first came to America, the Algonquins, including the Abenaki branch, tried to dwell in harmony with the new settlers. The colonial boundaries established by the new settlers made no provisions for the rights of the aborigines. The British and Dutch wished to maintain exclusive use of land for themselves and the Wabanaki tribes, like all the Algonquin family, had great difficulty working out equitable agreements. The conflicts between white man and red man have been well documented, but poorly told. Until very recent years, only a few historians recounted the great injustices inflicted upon the red man. For years, both the schools and the mass media conditioned us to believe the Indians were a savage, unsophisticated group of murderers. While the Indians were capable of horrendous acts, the white man they met on the frontier could be equally as savage. It is interesting to note that Jeremy Belknap, New Hampshire's first historian wrote in 1771:

"... it will be difficult to find them guilty of any crime which cannot be paralleled among civilized nations. They are defribed as remarkably cruel . . . We are frtruck with horror, when we hear of their binding

the victim to the stake, biting off his nails, tearing out his hair by the roots, pulling out his tongue, boring out his eyes . . . But is it not as dreadful to read of an unhappy wretch, fewed up in a sack full of serpents and thrown into the sea, or boiled in a red hot iron chair; or mangled by lions . . . and yet these were punishments among the Romans. What greater cruelty is there in the American tortures of confining a man in a trough, and daubing him with honey that he may be flung to death by wasps . . . or what great misery can there be—than in racking a prisoner on a wheel and breaking his bones . . . which tortures are still . . . used in some European kingdoms? I forbear to name the torments of the inquisition, because they seem to be beyond the stretch of human invention . . .”

Several factors prior to the white man's settlement of Bethlehem had a drastic effect on the Indian distribution of New England. In 1660 the Iroquois organized an expedition against the Abenakis in Maine. The supportive role of the English in this affair added to the Abenakis' dissatisfaction with white men. In 1675 the Indians of New England formed into a band under an Indian leader known as King Philip and started organized attacks on white settlements. Within a year King Philip and his band were severely defeated. Men, women and children were killed by the white men with such ruthlessness that most of the Indians fled to Canada to seek the protection of the French. King Philip's war was followed by a series of colonial wars between the French and English which involved the Indians, the Lovewell war of the 1720's and finally the American Revolution.

All of these wars resulted in the breakup and expulsion of Wabanaki peoples from New Hampshire and Maine. The Wabanakis assimilated with the Iroquois and settled in Canada on the St. Lawrence near St. Francis and Becancour at French missions. By 1800



Canadian Abenakis, descendants of the Abenakis who once roamed Bethlehem, selling gifts to summer visitors, circa 1870-1920.

practically all of the tribes of northern New England, excepting a tribe in northeast Maine, left for Canada.

Thus when the first settlers pushed ox carts through the wilderness of Lloyd Hills and began to hack away at the forest, there was one hardship they did not face—hostile Indian attacks. Since the Ammonoosuc River was a primary east-west Indian trail, it is logical to assume that Indians passed through our town during its early years. The conditioned attitudes of both the white and red man no doubt fostered a mutual respect and fear of one another. When Nathan Caswell, the first settler of Littleton, arrived at the site of his new log shelter in April 1770, he thought he detected evidence of Indians. Accordingly, he left his home after being there only one night and took his family to Bath. When he returned to his home site, he found a charred ruins, but neither he nor his family were directly confronted or harmed by Indians.

During the American Revolution, the British encouraged the Indians to make attacks on various settlements throughout New England. Accordingly, hostile acts by Indians during this period, 1775 to 1789, might more appropriately be defined as incidents of the War for Independence rather than acts of savage Indians against “innocent” settlers. However, while some of the early residents of Bethlehem, such as Samuel Turner, may have had hostile contacts with Indians, there is no trustworthy documentation that such occurred in Bethlehem.

Years later, during the era of the great hotels, the Abenakis returned to Bethlehem for the summer season. They came as merchants to sell and to teach the making of their tasteful art crafts to the tourists. They made many friends with the local people, and in the spring and in the fall their children attended the public schools. They were a positive addition to our community.

## WHITE MAN COMES NORTH

During the early 1600's when the settlement of New Hampshire was just beginning there was no provincial organization or government and the people practiced a form of local self government. Two brothers, Edward and Thomas Hilton, developed with David Thompson a fishing colony at the mouth of the Piscataqua River. They were working for John Mason who owned a land grant for a large part of the present State of Maine and New Hampshire. The Hilton brothers settled on the present site of Dover while Thompson set up a small fish drying factory at Rye. When Mason died in 1635 his investment in these two operations was over 22,000 British pounds, a sizeable amount even by today's standards. Land was cleared, forts built, trading posts established, factories built, and the development of New Hampshire had begun. Additional towns were formed at Portsmouth, Hampton and Exeter.

The operations in these early towns were expanded to include the fur and timber trade. The trade in fur brought the white man in direct contact with the Indians. The profits from fur were so huge that it is not unreasonable to assume that some of the early settlers left the security of the coastal towns to explore far up the rivers toward the mountains. While there is no evidence that white men trapped furs in the rivers of Bethlehem during the 1600's, it would not be unreasonable to suggest it might have happened.

Right: Some Bethlehem areas in 1974 still retain the wilderness of the early 1600's.



From 1623 to 1641 the towns in New Hampshire operated without any provincial government, but from 1641 to 1679 they were united with the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The original practice of self government appealed to residents of the New Hampshire towns and thus in 1679 they formed their own royal province with John Cutt as its president. This province lasted until 1698 when New Hampshire once again came under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. In 1741 when King George II came to the throne, New Hampshire once again became a separate provincial government, with its own governor. Benning Wentworth was the first chief magistrate and he ruled from 1741 to 1766. His nephew John Wentworth ruled from 1767 to 1775, the very beginning of the American Revolution and the end of British provincial rule in America.

The Wentworths were very popular both in America and England. They believed in the development of wilderness areas and worked very hard encouraging the settlement of the remote parts of middle and northern New Hampshire and Vermont. With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1762 (the end of the French and Indian Wars) and the expulsion of Indians in northern New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine, the lands of northern New England were ripe for development. The Wentworths realized this and enthusiastically encouraged more than 30,000 families to move into the unpopulated, two million acres in northern New England. They were responsible for establishing 152 new towns in New Hampshire and 128 in what is now Vermont but which was then part of New Hampshire.

The method of settling the area was logical and systematic. The land was divided into tracts and offered as a grant to an individual or groups of individuals known as proprietors.

The usual fee for the grant charter was 60 pounds sterling which was paid to the provincial treasury. Land however was often offered to persons in return for services offered the British government, such as outstanding military service. The terms of the grant were designed to maximize development and settlement, and a failure to meet the terms of the grant could invalidate the proprietor's right to own the land. The proprietors could convey only land and not political rights in the area of their granted land. The powers of government always came from the provincial government which was responsible to the rulers in England. No land became taxed until it was developed. In each grant, land had to be set aside for roads, churches, and schools which had to be built in a definite period of time. All tall pines on the proprietor's land had to be saved for the King's Navy.

Each proprietor was free to make his own arrangement with the new settlers wishing to settle in his town. Sometimes the settlers bought tracts of land outright and sometimes they were given extensive credit. The proprietors of course profited by having as many people as possible in their town. As people settled, they built roads, raised bridges, cleared the land and in general increased the value of the town's land. Most proprietors saved tracts of land for themselves in each town with the anticipation that the land would increase in value, the provincial government usually reserved 500 acres, located in the best part of the town, for his own benefit. As land increased in value, the provincial government could collect a greater tax and thus everyone seemed to make a profit. Very poor individuals were encouraged to move into the new towns with ample credit terms and to develop side by side with other wealthy farmers who bought their land outright. As the poor and

wealthy farmers developed their property, the value of their land increased; the farmer was happy, the proprietors were happy, the provincial governor was happy, and the government of England was happy.

Present residents of Bethlehem financing their homes and farms at 10 to 20 per cent interest may indeed be envious of their colonial forefathers, who acquired hundreds of acres of land at very easy finance terms.

While most of southern New Hampshire was rapidly growing, the northern areas remained inaccessible and thus unpopulated. To change this situation, Governor Wentworth in March of 1760 employed Joseph Blanchard of Dunstable to make a survey of the Connecticut Valley from Charlestown to the lower Cohos. Blanchard and his men passed up the river on the ice and made marks on trees every six miles. The marks formed the boundaries of towns, and they took the survey as far north as Woodsville at the mouth of the Ammonoosuc. A map was made showing the course of the Connecticut River with three tiers of towns protracted back from each side. This formed the basis from which the boundaries of many northern New Hampshire towns were drawn. Part of the present shape of Bethlehem resulted from this survey.

The following year, 1761, the towns of Bath, Canaan, Campton, Groton, Enfield, Lebanon, Lyman, Orford and Rumney were chartered. In 1762 grants were given in the towns of Colebrook, Columbia and Grafton, and in 1763 the towns of Haverhill, Lancaster, Lisbon, Woodstock, Thornton, Warren and Plymouth likewise received charters. Towns closer to our town, Benton, Landaff, Piermont, and Littleton, were chartered in 1764.

While many charters were issued between 1760 and 1765, the development of the area

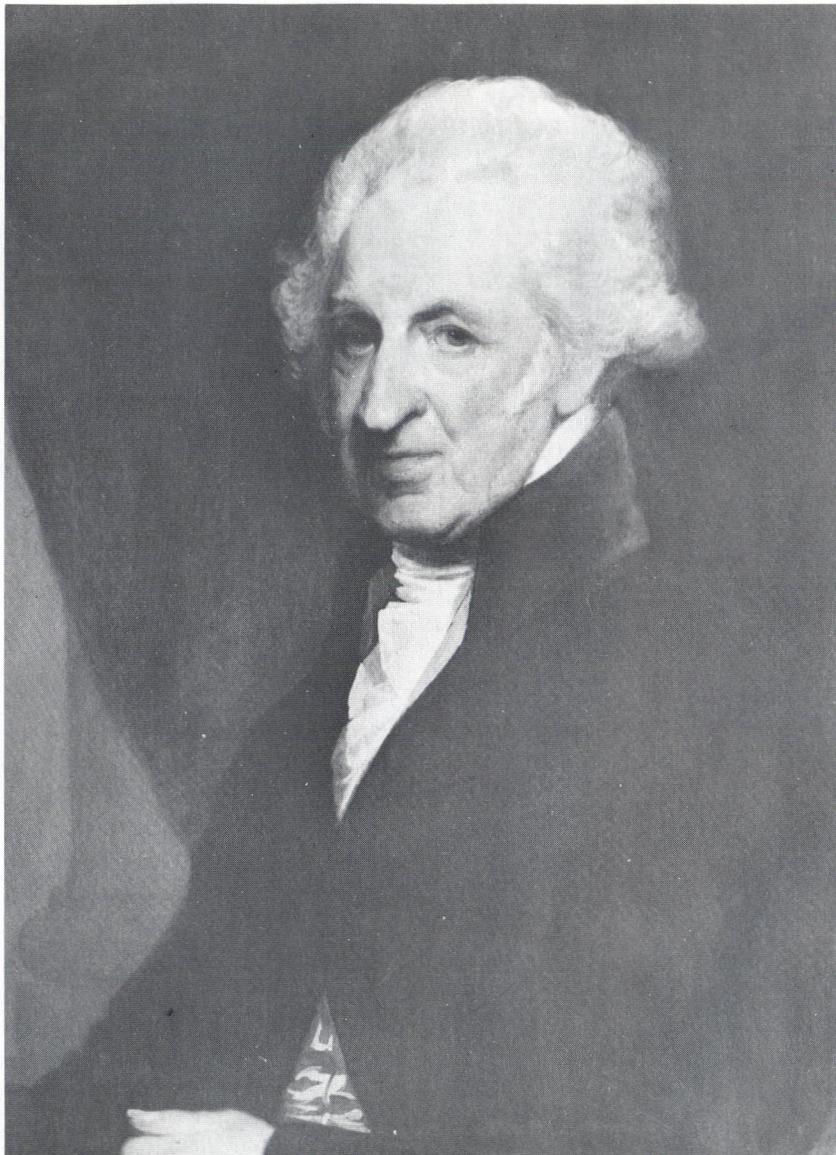
was slow. The pioneers in our region had great difficulties developing their land. The first serious settlement in our general area was in the town of Bath in 1765. It took four years for that town to grow to 22 residents, an insufficient number to meet the terms of the grant, which was forfeited and re-issued to another group. Other towns like Lisbon and Franconia had similar problems.

In 1770, five years after Bath's settlement, Nathan Caswell moved into Littleton. In another five years the entire population of New Hampshire was 8,200 and Littleton grew to a town of 16 people. The other towns in the area had also grown: Bath had a population of 140, Lisbon 47, Landaff 40, and Franconia three families. To the north of Franconia, the town of Lancaster had 61 persons, Stratford 41, and Jefferson had four.

Major forms of transportation were the rivers and crude ox wagons. Horseback travel was also a common method of transportation, for the roads could not easily accommodate wagons or stages due to their crudeness. Decades would pass before our region would be famous for its coaches.

Between the towns of Littleton, Franconia and Lancaster lay an area that apparently did not appeal to the early settlers. While it had a large river flowing through its center, it was a hilly, unbroken wilderness. Granted as a township in 1774 under the name of Lloyd Hills, it was to remain in obscurity until a decade later when its first residents moved onto its land, eventually calling their town, Bethlehem.

Dr. James Lloyd, the first proprietor of Lloyd Hills.  
Lloyd Hills was Bethlehem's original name.



Lloyd Hills was the last of the provincial grants of Governor John Wentworth and it also was one of the last towns in our region to be settled. Granted in 1774, the charter for Lloyd Hills was followed too closely on the fires of the American Revolution to have survived. It is not known if the original charter was ever signed by Wentworth, for a copy does not exist, as it does for other New Hampshire towns. Since the original charter does not exist, information concerning the town's early history is lacking. An early New Hampshire map by Holland indicates a region known as Lloyd Hills but subsequent New Hampshire maps show no listing. Furthermore, without the original charter the proprietors or first owners of our town cannot be absolutely indicated. It was probably the lack of a charter, and thus unclear legal titles to the land, that deterred the development of Lloyd Hills.

James R. Jackson, in 1905, wrote in his impressive *History of Littleton* that Lloyd Hills was named for Byfield Lloyd, a friend of Governor Wentworth. More recently, however, the famous New Hampshire historian Elmer Hunt wrote in *New Hampshire Town Names*: "The records indicate that in 1773 James Lloyd of Boston either purchased or was granted land by the proprietors in the new town of Dummer, and that another grant was made to him the following year in what was to be called Lloyd's Hills. This tract comprised some 23,000 acres, and James Lloyd was the sole proprietor. Upon the death of James Lloyd, the New Hampshire Lloyd's Hills grant was transferred to Commodore Loring . . ." Elmer Hunt indicates that James Lloyd was Dr. James Lloyd of Boston. This would mean that Dr. Lloyd was the first and sole owner of the present town of Bethlehem.

The first Lloyd to come to America was

James Lloyd, who came from Somerset, England, and settled in Boston in 1670. He became a rich merchant and passed on to his family a sizeable fortune. His son Henry Lloyd married Rebecca (Nelson). They had ten children, two of whom, James and Elizabeth, are important in our town's history.

Dr. James Lloyd was born in 1728 at Oyster Bay, Long Island. He was educated in a private school at New Haven, Connecticut, and was then apprenticed in medicine for five years to one of Boston's leading doctors, Dr. William Clark. After studies in England with the world's first "man-midwife," William Smellie, he worked with William and John Hunter, who later revolutionized obstetrics and surgery.

James returned to Boston in 1752 and began a successful practice of surgery, becoming the first surgeon in America to practice midwifery, thus putting obstetrics on a scientific basis. In 1800, when Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse began vaccination for smallpox in Boston, James became an ardent advocate of it, even though a large majority of doctors misunderstood its importance and the majority of the people feared it. In 1790 he received an honorary degree from Harvard. James built a large home on Beacon Hill and became a fashionable member of Boston's society. His garden was quite famous, for he was known as a scientific horticulturist. In 1835 his house was destroyed when the top of Beacon Hill was taken off in order to develop Pemberton Square as a residential area.

When the Revolutionary War exploded, James remained in America and gave medical service to both the British and the Americans. He suffered emotionally and financially from the war, and British soldiers destroyed parts of his Oyster Bay estate. He went to London to claim compensation for his loss, but his

claim was denied because he refused to become a British subject. He returned to America and continued his medical practice until he died in 1810. His wife Sarah (Corwin) died in 1797. A son, James Lloyd III, became a United States Senator from Massachusetts from 1808 to 1813, succeeding John Quincy Adams. He was a Federalist who sided with New Hampshire's Daniel Webster in opposition to the War of 1812.

Hunt's suggestion that Lloyd Hills was transferred to Commodore Loring upon Dr. Lloyd's death is confusing, for it is unlikely for several reasons. There were two Commodore Joshua Loring's, a father and a son, in America at the time of the original Lloyd Hills grant. Both died before Dr. Lloyd, in 1810, and both were loyal to the British Crown. Moreover, both Commodore Loring's had their property seized because of their Tory beliefs. Loring, Jr., however, was married to Elizabeth (Lloyd), the sister of Dr. James Lloyd, and one can logically assume there might be some connection in the ownership of Lloyd Hills. Furthermore, the *Dictionary of American Biography* indicates that Commodore Loring Jr. received 20,000 acres of land in New Hampshire for his military service during the French and Indian Wars. There is no record, however, that the grant was Lloyd Hills, although the approximate size of Lloyd Hills was 20,000 acres.

The first Loring's in America were Deacon Thomas Loring and Jane (Newton) who came from Devonshire, England and joined the Hingham colony in Massachusetts in 1634. Commodore Joshua Loring's father was an unusually interesting person. In his youth, Loring senior (1716-1781) learned the tanner's trade. In 1740 he married Mary Curtis of Roxbury, Massachusetts. When warfare broke out between England and France, he

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S. JAMES HOLLAND

became a privateer of a brigantine which was captured by the French in 1744. In 1754 he was commissioned captain in the British navy and in 1759-60 commanded naval operations in the Great Lakes against the French. He participated in the famous capture of Quebec by General Wolfe and the subsequent capture of Canada by General Amherst. At the end of the French and Indian War, he settled in Jamaica Plain, Roxbury. When revolutionary fires began to burn throughout the states, he remained loyal to the Crown. He was appointed a Commissioner of Revenue for the hated taxes the Crown imposed on the colonies. He also became a member of the British military staff, serving on Gage's Council.

The *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* notes a letter where Loring felt the concerns of his American countrymen were just, but he personally had to remain loyal to the Crown so as not to lose his navy pension. On the morning of the Battle of Lexington, he joined the British forces in Boston, an act which resulted in having him denounced by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts as an "implacable enemy of his country." Finally in 1778, he was "proscribed and banished" by act of the General Court, his home was seized by General Nathanael Greene, and his house became a hospital for American soldiers. Upon the evacuation of Boston he went to England where he died in 1781. With the passage of the confiscation act of 1799, his property became the possession of the state, for whose benefit it was sold.

Joshua Loring, Jr. (1744-1789), was born in Hingham, Massachusetts, and as a young man followed his father's military career. In July of 1761 he was commissioned as an ensign and in 1765 became a lieutenant from which he retired in 1768. For his military service he was granted 20,000 acres of land

in New Hampshire. In 1769 he was appointed permanent high sheriff of Massachusetts and married on October 19, 1770, Elizabeth Lloyd of Boston, one of the ten children of Henry and Rebecca (Nelson) Lloyd.

He became a prominent citizen of Boston and was even a pew holder in King's Chapel. He signed a protest against the rebellious League and Covenant issued by the Committee of Safety, and supported by public statement the actions of the royalist Governor Hutchinson. In March 1776 Loring went with the royal army to Halifax and in 1777 was appointed in charge of American prisoners in the British Army. He was charged with excessive cruelty in his treatment of prisoners, and Ethan Allen accused him of killing 2,000 American prisoners. Other charges included procuring and selling supplies for dead prisoners and pocketing the profits. Elias Boudinat, who was the American in charge of British prisoners, also accused him of neglect and ill treatment. Loring, Jr. of course was banished from Massachusetts, and he settled in England where he died at Berkshire in 1789.

One of his sons, John Loring, also followed a military career. Born in America in October 1775, he was not surprisingly given the middle name of Wentworth. He entered the Royal Navy the year his father died (1789) and quickly rose through the ranks, becoming a commander of the *Rattler* in 1798. In 1819 he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Royal Naval College in Portsmouth, England, and became an Admiral in 1851. Another son, Henry Lloyd Loring, was Arch-deacon of Calcutta.

The ownership of Lloyd Hills is not clearly established, primarily because the original Lloyd Hills charter has never been found. While the town was clearly granted as Lloyd





the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE and MOUNTAIN

Hills in 1774, there is no document to prove it. The book of town charters contains nothing concerning the township of Lloyd Hills, except one reference to it as a boundary of Whitefield.

However, in 1850 papers purporting to be copied at Portsmouth, N.H., by Philip Wilkins of Littleton, from original documents in the handwriting of Gov. John Wentworth, provide interesting information on our early history. These original papers were owned by Ira Goodall of Bath, and it is believed they were destroyed during the Civil War. However, this information cannot be entirely trusted because they are copies of the original documents which were of substantial value in settling a land dispute. While there is nothing to suggest the copies were a fraud, they may have been documents falsely created to provide favorable information for a land dispute in the 1850's.

The copy made by Wilkins has been lost but was printed in volume 24 the *Town Charters, Provincial and State Papers* along with the following information:

"In the late 1780's people interested in property in Bethlehem were concerned about the lack of a grant or a charter to Lloyd Hills. Without a charter or a grant clear property titles were impossible. Accordingly they wrote to Governor Wentworth at his estate in Hammersmith, England. His answer was kept secret because it supposedly would work against the interests of the people requesting the information. His letter reappeared in the 1850's in another land dispute.

His answer contained a correct plan of Lloyd Hills purported to have been made in 1774 by W. Coleman. The survey is as follows:

Samuel Holland's map, made before 1784, gives evidence that Bethlehem's first name was Lloyd Hills.

"Province of New Hampshire

"Portsmouth 3d January, 1774

"This certifies that this plan, beginning at a Beech Tree, standing in the northeasterly line of Gunthwaite, which is the southwesterly corner of Aporthorp [thence running south fifty-seven and one half degrees east, two miles and fifty-six rods, to a spruce Tree, which is the northeasterly corner of Gunthwaite:] thence south fifty-eight degrees east, three miles and two hundred sixty-four rods, to a Birch Tree; thence north fifty-six degrees east, five miles and one hundred sixty-two rods, to Bretton Woods, so called; thence by said Bretton Woods, north one mile and twenty-five rods, to a stake; thence north fifty-eight degrees west, five miles and ten rods, to a Fir Tree; thence south fifty-six degrees west, six miles and one half, to the bound began at, containing twenty-two thousand seven hundred and sixty acres, is known by an original plan or survey of said tract or township as returned to me by Dudley Coleman Dep Surveyor."

To that survey Governor Wentworth attached the following statement:

"Attest Is: Rindge S. G."

"It is hereby certified that the within described land in the Province of New Hampshire was surveyed to Joseph Loring and others by authority of Government, parte by His Majesty's mandamus and parte on conditions of settlement and cultivation; and that the grant of said lands was called in council according to the usual forms; also that an order was issued to the secretary of the said Province, for engrossing the patent, but I cannot recollect whether the patent was perfected, although the said tract of land was actually granted, and I do remember that about twenty thousand acres was property of Mr. Loring and that the township was called or named Lloyd Hills.

"Hammersmith 15 June 1783.

"J. Wentworth."

If all of these documents are true, it would indicate Joshua Loring was the major proprietor of Lloyd Hills. At the time of ex-Governor Wentworth's statement, Commodore Loring was living in Berkshire, England. His father-in-law, Dr. James Lloyd, however, was

living in Boston. Since both the Lloyds and Lorings lost considerable property as a result of the Revolutionary War, one might speculate that Governor Wentworth's statement contained some hidden motives. These documents also leave with us the uncomfortable thought that one of our town's original proprietors was not only a Tory but an individual who was guilty of excessive cruelty to American prisoners of war.

Because of the lack of a charter, the State of New Hampshire appropriated rights to all the lands contained in Lloyd Hills. Residents living on the land had to acquire new titles to their land, which meant they had to buy their property twice—once under the royal grant

and later under the new American government.

As the settlements advanced up the Connecticut Valley and around the mountains, the virgin wilderness of present day Bethlehem caught the eye of our hearty forefathers. Because its higher altitude produced a shorter growing season, it was less desirable for farm sites. However, the demand for virgin land drove the valley settlements closer and closer to the big barrier—the White Mountains. The very year our constitution was placed before the American people for their ratification, 1787, the first settlers began to arrive in Lloyd Hills.



The Lot Woodbury home of 1794, now the oldest house in Bethlehem, stands at the corner of Lewis Hill Road and South Road.

## “THE FIRST TO AWAKEN SLUMBERING ECHOES”

In the words of Bethlehem's first and most loquacious historian, the Rev. Simeon Bolles, “The first to awaken slumbering echoes by establishing permanent houses mid the grandeur of primeval beauty were Benjamin Brown and Jonas Warren from Massachusetts.” The Browns and the Warrens came to Lloyd Hills in 1787 or 1788 and were the only families in the town at that time except for one other person or family whose name or origin cannot now be ascertained. The Warrens located their farm in the general area of Lewis Hill Road. They had four children: Otis, Betsy, Jonas and Anna. Mr. Brown settled on a farm site which in the 1880's was known as the James place. Located at the corner of Lewis Hill Road and South Road there stands today a structure dating back to the original Brown settlement. The Browns had 11 children: Abigail, Frances, Marcus, Benjamin, Ida, Cynthia, Anna, Susannah, Triphena, Oliver and Mahala. The first child to be born in Lloyd Hills was Abigail Brown. The first male child was Otis Brown.

James Turner, the third person to make a permanent settlement in Lloyd Hills, arrived in the Spring of 1789. He was the son of Samuel Turner, a soldier of the French and Indian Wars and the Revolutionary War, and later a resident of Bethlehem. James Turner was born in Bernardston, Massachusetts, in 1762 and moved to Lloyd Hills at the age of 27 with the hope of creating a profitable farm. His efforts were quite successful, for his original estate has been passed down through the decades to George T. Noyes, a direct descendant. James Turner married Mercy Smith Parker

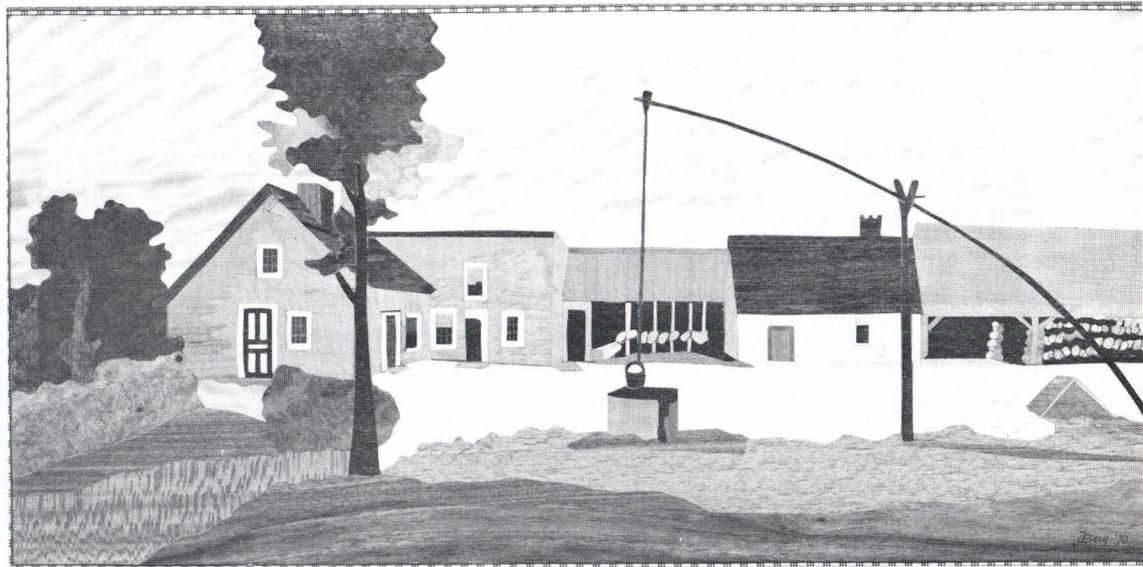
of Hanover, who gave birth to three children: Esther, Mary and Timothy.

Mrs. Turner became the town's first doctor, and though not a trained physician the quality and spirit of her work is reflected in the Bolles' history: “By daylight and in darkness, in sunshine and storm, she hovered like an angel of mercy about the bed of the suffering.” In addition to her medical practice she helped her husband run an inn which they opened in 1803. That inn stayed in the family until 1945 and is currently managed by another family as the Mid-Mountain Motor Inn.

Timothy Turner, the son of James and

Mercy, married Priscilla Bullock in 1818, and she had nine children, one of whom was James N., born in 1824. During the Civil War Timothy served as town clerk, was captain of the militia, justice of the peace, and represented the town in the Legislature. It was to James N's credit that he expanded the inn started by his grandfather to attract tourists to Bethlehem. By the late 1860's they could accommodate 75 guests. In 1857 James N. married Mary Ann Hall, who had three children. The eldest son of James N. was George H., who married Susan White.

George led an active civic life, for he was



The early homestead of James N. Turner, the third settler of Bethlehem, as copied by John Beck from an old painting. Mr. Beck's inlaid wood art, known as marquetry, has delighted generations of Bethlehemites.



George T. Noyes, a descendant of the third settler in Bethlehem.

county treasurer, a town selectman and a member of the board of education. He and his wife had four children: Mary, Helen, James and Gertrude. George Noyes, the present owner of the original Turner estate, is the direct descendant of Mary Turner. Mr. Noyes, following an active family tradition, has been an outstanding member of the Bethlehem community.

The only other current residents of Bethlehem who claim their descendants were among the first settlers of Bethlehem are the descendants of Jonathan Blandin. The first official record of Blandins in Bethlehem dates from the census of 1800 which lists Jonathan Blandin as head of a household, with five boys under 15 years of age, two teenage girls and a wife. However, an interesting oral tradition has been passed down through the decades which indicates a Blandin, probably Jonathan, was the first white person to visit Lloyd Hills. The oral legend relates that this Blandin, unsatisfied with his farm, began to explore other sites. He supposedly came to Lloyd Hills before the Browns and Warrens had built their homes. During his inspection of the area the weather became bad and he climbed under a rock, on the present Valley View property, where he passed the night.

This legend might well be true, for Jonathan Blandin's family settled in the Landaff-Easton-Bath area in the late 1700's. The original ancestors came from England and France in 1632. Certainly if one was living in Landaff, Easton or Bath, it is reasonable to assume he may have visited an area that was less than a day's travel by horse.

After the Browns, Warrens and Turners, the next families which can be documented as coming to Lloyd Hills is gathered from information provided by "Sir" Issac Newton Gay, who in the 1870's and 80's amused sum-

mer tourists with his celebrated museum of curios. He came to Bethlehem as an infant in 1797 and provided from memory information concerning the first eight settlers which was published in the 1886 *Child's Grafton County Gazetteer*.

This information is as follows:

First, Nathaniel Snow, a land surveyor, who had six children—Nathaniel, Jr., Asa, Jerusha (Mrs. Dea. Thomas Hale), Mrs. Moses Eastman, Mahala (Mrs. Major Amos Wheeler), and one other. One lived where the rose bushes now are on top of Phillip's hill. Nathaniel lived in the two-story house opposite the Robbins place. Asa lived on the Lindsey Whitcomb place. Deacon Hale lived on the South road. Moses Eastman lived at the Amy place, and Major Wheeler on the opposite side of the road and across the brook.

Second, Simeon Burt had six children—Levi, Simeon, Jr., John, Lydia (Mrs. Dea. Willis Wilder), Mrs. William Sawyer, and Mrs. Oliver Sawyer.

Third, Jonas Warren, had two children—Mrs. Benjamin Brown, and Mrs. Lot Woodbury, Sr. Mr. Warren lived and began the settlement on the William Kelso place, and was the first man buried in Bethlehem cemetery.

Fourth, James Crane lived in a small frame house near the house of Reuben Baker, built a saw-mill there, had two children—Polly, and a boy, who died young. Crane soon moved away.

Fifth, Benjamin Brown, began where his son Marcus has lived many years and had ten children—Marcus, Benjamin, Jr., Oliver, Abigail, Fanny, Tryphena, Juda, Mahala, Ada and Anna.

Sixth, John Giles, began on what is called the Bray place.

Seventh, Isaac Batchellor, began on what has since been called the Batchellor place, near the Kelso place, and had six children—Isaac, Jr., Silas, Nehemiah, Stillman, Mary (married John Burt), and Betsey.

Eighth, Peter Shattuck, began at the top of the hill near where the Asa Phillips house now stands, and had four children—Stephen, Peter, Jr., Abigail and Ruth. None but Stephen lived in Bethlehem. Mr. Gay and his mother (Martha Breed), came with this family, Mrs. Peter Shattuck's maiden name being Rebecca Breed.



Contemporary Blandins shivering in the cold near the rock where their ancestor, one of Bethlehem's first settlers, spent a chilly night in the late 1700's. Shown left to right: Donna Wysocki Lavoie, John Stevenson, Stephanie Blandin (on top of rock), Sheryl Blandin (to right of Stephanie), Marjorie Blandin Wysocki (to right of John), Walter Blandin, Michael Blandin, Scott Stevenson, Rose Blandin Whitcomb, Donald Lavoie, Lorraine Lavoie, Doris Blandin Stevenson.

Other early family information gathered in the 1886 *Gazetteer* includes:

Lot Woodbury came to Bethlehem, from Royals-ton, Mass., in 1795, traveling by marked trees, and bringing with him his family, household effects and two yoke of steers. He located upon a portion of the farm where his grandson, H. W. Wilder, now lives, cleared a farm and reared four children. He kept a hotel for about fifty years, opposite the place where Horace W. Wilder now lives. The latter has the old hotel sign now in his possession. Mr. Woodbury took an active part in town affairs, represented the town, served as selectman, and as justice of the peace. His daughter Eliza became the wife of Joseph Wilder, and the mother of H. W. Wilder, of this town.

Willis Wilder came to Bethlehem, from Templeton, Mass., in 1796, and settled where the Maplewood Hotel now stands, where he cleared a farm. He reared a family of eight children, nearly all of whom located in this town, and all are now dead. He took an active part in town affairs, and held most of the town offices. His son Joseph was born in town in 1800, and always resided here. He died while on a journey south, in New Orleans, of yellow fever. Two of his children now reside in town. His son Horace W. is proprietor of the Centennial House, served as town representative in 1865-66, and was town clerk twenty-four years.

Joel Winch was born in Framingham, Mass., and when a young man spent several years in Boston, where he married Sarah Sessions. They came to Bethlehem about 1808 or '09, bought the farm on which the widow and children of his grandson, Richard H. Wilder, now live, and spent their lives in town. He was an honest, hard working farmer, a leader in the early Free Will Baptist church, reared to lives of honor and usefulness seven sons and one daughter, and died at the age of ninety-six years. His eldest son, Joel, now resides in Columbus, Wis.; Minot F., George F. and John C. are successful business men in New York; Dr. Albert was a physician in Whitefield, where he died; Franklin and Sewell F. were respected citizens of Bethlehem and died here.

Joseph Barrett came to Bethlehem, from Winchendon, Mass., about 1798, and located on road 18, where he cleared a farm. He had born to him five children, who lived to maturity, of whom, Joseph K. resides in this town, James J. resided in Littleton until his death, in 1885, and Mrs. Sally Bowles also lives in Littleton. Mr. Barrett died in 1858.

Jesse Phillips came to Bethlehem from the southern part of the State, and located in the western part of

the town, on the farm where Artemas S. Phillips now lives. He reared a family of nine children, two of whom are living, Reuben and Jeremiah, who reside in Littleton. Mr. Phillips died in Richmond, while on a visit to that place, about 1828, but was buried in town. His son Moses was born here, and lived in this town until his death, in 1874. He was a farmer, and reared nine children, five of whom are living, viz: Mrs. Amanda Taylor and Mrs. Martha B. Jesseman, of Bethlehem, Frank B. and Dennis, of Littleton, and Willie B. of Lisbon. George W., a resident of Bethlehem, died in June, 1885.

Noah Swett came to Bethlehem, from Gilmanton, N.H., when there were only nine families in the town, and settled near where the Maplewood Hotel now is. He was a shoemaker and farmer, and reared a family of eight children, four of whom are now living. His death occurred in 1869, aged seventy-six years, and his wife, Sarah, died within twenty-four hours after, both being buried in the same casket. His son Elisha has held every office in town, except that of town representative.

Samuel Morrison came to Bethlehem, from Gilmanton, about 1800, settled on Gilmanton Hill and cleared the farm where his son William M. now lives. He was a farmer, and died in this town about 1867. Of his six children, John C. and Gillman K. reside in Littleton, Mrs. David Oaks lives in Lisbon, and William M. resides on the homestead.

Samuel F. Gilman came to Bethlehem, from Gilmanton, about 1823, and located upon the farm where his son Albert now lives. He reared a family of nine children, two of whom are living, Mrs. George C. Cheeny and Albert. Mr. Gilman died about 1857. David, brother of Samuel, came about the same time, lived for a while with his brother, and afterwards bought him out. He died in Laconia, N.H. The Gilman family, consisting of three brothers, originally came from England, settled in Gilmanton, and from them that town derived its name.

Lindsey Whitcomb came to Bethlehem, from Easton, about 1831, and located on the farm where his son now lives, on road 23. He was a farmer and a lumberman, and died in 1883. Two of his sons, C. L. and H. E., reside in town.

Noah Burnham came to Bethlehem, from Gilmanton, about 1806, and located about half a mile from where his son now lives. In 1820 he removed to the farm, where his son Benjamin now resides, and lived there until his death, in 1855. He reared a family of nine children, only one of whom is now living, Benjamin, who resides on the homestead.

Samuel Burnham came to Bethlehem, from Gil-

manton, and located in the western part of the town, on what is known as Gilmanton hill. He died about 1844. Two of his children are living, Mrs. Joanna Phillips and Mrs. Elizabeth Richardson, of this town.

Dudley F. Ladd came to this town, from Gilmanton, N.H., about 1840, and located on road 15, on Gilmanton hill. He afterwards removed to Gilmanton, where he died. His children are Lorenzo S., Plummer B., Mrs. Daniel Crane, Josiah M. and Mrs. Morrison.

John Wesley, a native of Kent, England located in Bethlehem about 1843. He was a farmer, and died in 1869. Of his children, Mrs. C. C. Shattuck and John L. reside here, and Mrs. G. B. Merrell and Mrs. Frank Blake live in Warren.

Philip Hoyt, son of Samuel, a Revolutionary soldier, moved to Piermont, from Littleton, at an early day, and resided there for many years. His son, Wells P., now lives in this town, and has resided in the same neighborhood for forty-two years.

Caleb Baker, a native of Rhode Island, was a surveyor. He located in Franconia at an early day, and in 1815 came to this town, locating in the southern part. He was selectman in Franconia, did some legal business, and also kept the only store at that time in town, drawing his goods with an ox-team from Concord. He reared eleven children, three of whom are now living. Reuben, the only one residing in this town, was born in Franconia in 1797, was eighteen years of age when he came to Bethlehem, and has resided here since.

Cyrus E. Bunker was born in Barnstead, N.H., in 1823, came to Bethlehem in 1853, and was one of the first to engage in the boarding-house business. He built the Mt. Agassiz House, now owned by H. Nye, and in 1878 built and still conducts the Howard House, erected on the site of a house named after ex-Governor Howard, of Rhode Island, which was destroyed by fire in 1874.

Allen Thompson was born in Woodstock, Vt., in January, 1814. He studied surveying, and, in 1835, came to Bethlehem to reside, though at first he came here to hunt, and has killed one hundred deer in this section in the course of a single year. He surveyed much of the town, in the employ of individual owners, but for the past forty years has also acted as guide to sportsmen in the White mountains and among the lakes of Maine and Canada. He married, first, Lucinda Barrett, of Bethlehem, who bore him eight children, of whom Mary P., Luella A., Ellen E., and Frances, are living, and second, Harriet (Chase) Phillips.

Daniel Wilcomb was born in Atkinson, Mass., July 28, 1783. He married twice, first, Betsey Page, January 23, 1812, who died October 25, 1815; and second,

Hannah Eaton, February 21, 1816. Six children were born to him, three by each wife, only two of whom are living—Daniel P. Wilcomb, in St. Johnsbury, Vt., and Moses K., in this town. Daniel Wilcomb moved to this town in 1812, locating on the farm now owned and occupied by Moses K. He represented the town in the legislature in 1840-41. He died September 7, 1862.

Nathaniel Noyes was an early settler of Landaff. Only two of his large family of children, Rufus and John, located in that town. Rufus died there and John moved to Bethlehem, and resided with his son, M. C., where he died. Nathaniel's grandfather, with two brothers, came from England at a very early date, and subsequently settled in Newburyport, N.H.

James M. Kidder, born in Weathersfield, Vt., came to Bethlehem in 1845, where he purchased and cleared wild land. In 1867 he engaged in the manufacture of lumber, in company with W. A. McGregory, and also the manufacture of potato starch, at Dalton and East Concord, Vt. They also built up most of the present Congress street, Bethlehem. Mr. Kidder has held various town offices, including selectman in 1871-72, and representative in 1872-73. He married Lucy L. Houghton, of Bradford, Vt., and has three children—William H., of Lowell, Mass., Cynthia A. and Josie F.



## EARLY LIFE

During the town's early years, life was neither prosperous nor comfortable. It was particularly hard on the women, who worked long hard hours, bore children, and then suffered the heartbreak of high infant mortality because of primitive living conditions. The census of 1800 reveals some interesting information. The town consisted of 171 souls: 91 males and 80 females. Of the 171, 57 were 10 years old or younger, and 24 were between the ages of 11-15 years old. Thus, almost 50% of the town in 1800 was under 15 years old. There was an almost equal ratio of males to females in every age category except one — the years 26 to 44. In this bracket there were 27 men for 17 women. This graphic evidence of the high mortality rate of early women settlers shows how they suffered from the excessive problems of raising a family in the wilderness. Mrs. Lydia Whipple was the first death in the township on March 17, 1795. Denied the sweet pleasure of the summer's warming airs that quickly blew in after her death, her tombstone still stands in the old cemetery as a symbol of early sufferings and hardships.

Several sources of the town's history indicate residents faced starvation during the early years. The struggle to sustain life was a weary problem that faced all of them. Bear, deer, raccoon, and migratory birds formed a substantial part of the early diet. Root crops such as potatoes, beets and carrots were stored through the winter. Wheat and corn were stored for meal and food for cattle, but during the early years the closest mill for grinding grains was in Bath. The 25-mile trip to the mill had to be made on foot or horseback, as roads were far too primitive to accommodate wagons.



The town cemetery presents evidence of the suffering of our early settlers.

Cows, sheep and goats provided wool, milk, butter and cheese for those fortunate enough to own them. Fish from the rivers were more plentiful then than now. Another valuable product was the apple. Both the Baldwin and the Newton apple grew well in New Hampshire, and from these people made cider and vinegar, in addition to preparing the fruit in many ways. It should not be forgotten, however, that the food was as plain and as simple as the wearing apparel and homes of the pioneers. Everything had to be utilized. For example, the meat of the bear was eaten, his fur made into clothes and blankets, and the fat and grease used for external medication, the remaining scraps were fed to the hogs and other domestic animals.

The greatest suffering came in the early spring when game disappeared into the deep woods and food supplies from the previous year were at their lowest. To help during this period, the settlers turned to the Abenaki Indians who occasionally wandered through town following their ancient trails. They taught the newcomers the plants such as green chocolate roots, the young milkweed and fiddle-head ferns, etc., which could be eaten. The Indians also taught the settlers the art of acquiring maple sugar, although this was taught years before people came to Lloyd Hills. The early records indicate that if it were not for the Indians' kindness in passing on this natural lore, many of our forefathers would have died from hunger. During the winter and spring the new settlers would also clear land, burn the trees and collect huge piles of ashes. These ashes were boiled down in water for their salts which were then sold to the more developed towns in the south.

A Bethlehem goat on Ron Smith's farm near Mt. Agassiz



As the town grew and mills were established, the general prosperity of our people increased. Desirous of bringing greater organization to the town, certain members formed a committee to encourage the state to grant the town a charter. In a letter to the legislature requesting an act of incorporation, the town's people noted: "that we some time past went on and made improvements under Franconia but we find the same not to be within their limits . . ."

The last line of the letter read: "Dated at Bethlehem May 25th A.D. 1798." This is interesting for several reasons. First, this indicates the town was known as Bethlehem before its official incorporation. Previously it was generally believed the town was given the name of Bethlehem on December 25, 1799, the day of its incorporation. Furthermore the letter suggests that for several years Bethlehem was politically a part of Franconia. At least communal jobs such as road repairs, bridge building and other improvements were probably done in conjunction with Franconia.

It is also interesting to note that the first American census taken in 1790 shows no listing for Lloyd Hills or Bethlehem. However, many of the first settlers of Bethlehem are listed under the town of Franconia, while other records clearly show they were living in what is now Bethlehem.

During the 1880's and 1890's the nationally famous poet, Will Carleton, made Bethlehem his summer home. The cover of his *Farm Ballads*, a collection of his poems, shows us what Bethlehem may have looked like in the 1820's.



In November of 1798 a formal act for the incorporation of Bethlehem was drawn up which read:

To the Honourable Senate & House of Representatives to be Convened at Concord on the third Wednesday of November A.D. 1798.

The Petition of the Inhabitants of a Place called Bethlehem in the County of Grafton in the State of New Hampshire *Humbly Sheweth*, that whereas the said inhabitants are settled on a tract of land Formerly Belonging to said State and lately sold by order of said State for the Purpose of making and Repairing the Road From Conway to the upper Coos and down ammonusick River to Littleton, and that the Number of Settlers being increased to more than Forty it becomes highly Necessary for the Peace and Good Order and Prosperity of the said inhabitants that they be vested with Lawful authority to Govern themselves and transact such Business as Respects them as a People which is Nearly impossible to be done without—Therefore the said People of Bethlehem from the above Considerations Sincerely Pray the Honourable Court that so much of the aforesaid Land be Formed into a Town and incorporated by the Name of Bethlehem as lies between the following Towns and adjoining the said tract of State land Littleton on the west Whitefield on the North Britton Woods on the East Franconia & Concord on the South Containing about 27000 acres; and as in duty bound will ever pray.

Nathaniel Snow  
Amos Wheeler  
Stephen Houghton  
Committee for Bethlehem

On December 1, 1798 a hearing was set for the document for the next session and public notice concerning the bill was given. At its next session, one year later, the Senate passed the act of incorporation on December 25, 1799. The official papers were signed December 27, 1799.

The following spring the residents of Bethlehem met in the home of Amos Wheeler and held the first town meeting on March 4, 1800. The following list of officers was elected: Moses Eastman, moderator and town clerk; Moses Eastman, Nathaniel Snow and Amos

Wheeler, selectmen; Edward Oakes, constable and collector; Simeon Burt, John Gile and Edward Oakes, highway surveyors; Lot Woodbury, fence-viewer; Amos Wheeler, sealer of weights and measures; James Noyes, tithingman; (either a peace officer, tax collector or church official), and John Russell and Edward Oakes, hogreeves.

A month later they gathered again and made their first financial appropriations. It is revealing to note that the very first appropriation made by the town of Bethlehem was \$24 for the education of its youth. (For the history of the Bethlehem schools, see the articles by Margaret Cyr, Melody Brown and Joseph May.) Other appropriations included \$4 to defray town costs, \$60 to be worked out on the road, and \$12 to defray town charges. The townspeople met again on May 8th and voted Lot Woodbury as moderator; \$390 to repair highways and bridges, voted to allow eight cents per hour for each man and six cents per hour for each yoke of oxen, made choices of Lot Woodbury, Amos Wheeler, Isaac Batchellor, Simeon Burt and Nathaniel Snow as a committee to look out a place to build a bridge over the Ammonoosuc River above William Houghton's mills and voted that each man shall appear on the burying ground on Wednesday the fourth of June to clear and fence said ground.

It was a busy spring for the townspeople, but their work during the town meetings indicated a sense of pride and purpose. At that first town meeting they set a dignified style that was to continue through the decades.

In 1800 the first year of the new century and the year of the first town meeting, there were 33 families in town. The town's one industry was agriculture. The area was still a wilderness and travel was quite slow. A trip from Bethlehem to the coast at Portland, Maine, took 22 days. In 1803 a state lottery

was raised to build a turnpike through Crawford Notch from Bartlett to Lancaster. When completed, the same trip to Portland took eight days. The residents of our town knew their future depended on good roads and quick travel and this is why one of the first proposals at the town meeting was for the erection of a bridge across the Ammonoosuc River in the area of the present Bethlehem Hollow.

The settlers brought social and cultural institutions from their previous homes and thus the town quickly developed into a real community. A Baptist Church was formed in 1800, a Congregational Church in 1802, and a Free Will Baptist Church in 1813. While life was hard on our forefathers, they knew the importance of a balanced moral life. There must have been a great sense of excitement, living in Bethlehem during the first few decades of 1800. While they had all the social amenities of a developed society they were, in effect, a primitive isolated community. Without telephones, telegraph or decent roads, they were days away from communicating with their friends and relatives in their previous homes.

In 1853 Robert Sears wrote in *A Pictorial Description of the U.S.*: "a large part of the territory (Bethlehem and surrounding towns) is rendered useless by lofty, wild, barren and almost inaccessible mountains. The surface, soil and climate there discourage almost any attempt at cultivation and in many places entirely refuse a spot for the habitation of man." The pioneer spirit, however, prevailed and they built schools, churches, and roads. By communal efforts, they established a town cemetery and helped one another in the building of barns and homes. They cleared the land and explored the entire White Mountain region. Descriptions sent back to friends began to reach the general public. People in this area were interested in encouraging visitors.

In 1805 the Old Man of the Mountains was discovered and in 1819 a path to the summit of Mt. Washington was hacked out. Located in an ideal spot for White Mountain visits, Bethlehem did have visitors during the summer months in these early years. David Thoreau, for one, came to see the grandeur of the White Mountains in 1831 and is believed to have spent time in Bethlehem. The total number of visitors during this time was however, quite small. Today many of us dread to see additional families moving into town, for we fear it will mark the demise of our village into a city-like suburb.

In 1800 each new family in town was welcomed cheerfully. Additional people in town meant more hands to work on communal projects and a subsequent increase in jobs and markets for goods produced. Mills could not be built until there were sufficient people to use them, if not to build them. The first grist mill in Bethlehem was built by Stephen Houghton in McGregory Hollow or the present Bethlehem Hollow. This mill was a great help to Bethlehem residents, for previous to it the closest mill was Bath. The date of the Houghton mill has not been ascertained but records indicate it was in operation before 1800. Charles A. Sinclair's grist mill appears to be the second mill in town. Built in 1844 and operated by Allen Peabody, it had three stones and provided several types of grinding. The mill was in operation as late as 1886.

The long winters, a time of relative inactivity for farmers, provided Bethlehemites an opportunity to increase their income by working in the forest wilderness. Surrounded by millions of trees, they developed a lumber economy which gave employment to any who desired to exchange the sweat and pounding pain of chopping down the virgin trees for high profit. America was growing on all its frontiers, and the demand for lumber was



The Presby Tavern which burned down in 1856 served transients who passed through town carrying business from the Connecticut River to the coast at Portland, Maine. Because the Connecticut River was so important as an avenue of travel, the State of Maine financed the building of roads through northern New Hampshire. This photo, taken about 1840, when the science of photography was still an infant, is the oldest known picture of Bethlehem. Seated on top of the stage are Mr. and Mrs. Presby and holding the reins are Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Abbott.



overwhelming. The 1859 *White Mountain Guide Book* by Edson Eastman noted Bethlehem had five large saw mills and two extensive starch factories. Eastman, however, failed to note an industry that Joel Winch noted in the *White Mountain Echo* of 1878:

“One of our earliest industries was starch, which was manufactured in large quantities during the early days of the settlement, and we derived a large revenue from its sale. We also used to make considerable quantities of potato whiskey, and we used to drink considerable quantities, too. Everybody used to drink then. Sometime after my settling here a quarterly meeting of Free Will Baptists was held in Bethlehem and I was baptized. Why sir, one of the features of the preparations to receive those ministers was the laying in of a good stock of well made good old potato whiskey and the parsons were mighty good judges, too, let me tell you! If the whiskey was in any way inferior they would tell you pretty quick.”

An early spring morning on the Chester Wallace farm at the top of Wallace Hill on Route 302, now the home of Gerald Davidson and known as the Wallace Lodge.

In 1847 John Pierce built the first big saw mill on the east side of town near Pierce Bridge or Bethlehem Junction. His mill gave form to a settlement that was named for him and grew as a separate village through the years. Later they had their own post office, school and railroad station. His mill employed 35 men and cut 200,000 feet of lumber per year. In 1860 M. C. Noyes purchased a saw mill that was already operating in Bethlehem and with seven men cut 200,000 feet of coarse lumber, 150,000 feet of clapboards and 200,000 shingles.

In 1859 John Sinclair developed a logging community on the Gale River. His colony consisted of several homes, a school house, a store and the saw mill which was known as the Gale River Settlement. By 1906 the lumber camp was a ghost town and its buildings were either removed or collapsed. In its day, however, it produced huge quantities of lumber and like most lumber colonies had various legends.

One such story is the Scannell murder in 1859. On Thanksgiving day the mills were closed so the families could go to neighboring towns for the holiday. John Scannell, his wife and a family by the name of Miller stayed at the camp and apparently spent the day "giving thanks" with excessive feasting and drinking. Somehow during the day or evening, Mrs. Scannell was killed. The death sobered the others and, desperate to blot out what had happened, they took the body in the late hours of the night during a snow storm and buried it in the deep snow at a spot known as the ox pasture. When the other families returned and asked where Mrs. Scannell was, they were told she had gone out on Thanksgiving Day and hadn't returned. Search parties were sent out but no trace of her was found. Early in April, Allen Thompson, Asa Swasey, Jack Howland,

and a Whitcomb discovered the body of Mrs. Scannell, uncovered by the spring sun.

John Scannell and the Millers were arrested and several hearings were held by the court but because of lack of evidence they were all freed. John Scannell lived in Bethlehem many years after the incident and married again. His second wife, however, left him when she heard of the incident at Gale River. She continued to work at various places in town, including Turner's Tavern. Scannell died at the County Farm.

Probably the biggest lumbering operation in town was the "Waumbek" steam saw mill

on the Ammonoosuc River, built in 1868-69. Waumbek Lumber Co. operated the mill until 1877 when it was acquired by William Mowry. By 1886 the mill employed 35 men and annually converted about 3,500,000 logs into various kinds of lumber. Another lumber mill in town was H. C. Libbey's saw mill built in 1877. It employed 40 men and cut 300,000 feet of coarse lumber, 100,000 feet of clapboards, 300,000 of lath, and a large number of shingles per year. Aside from the grist and lumber mills there was not much other industry in Bethlehem.



The Gale River Settlement, circa 1906.



The F. A. Haskell Carriage Shop about 1880.

There was a factory on the Littleton Road on Bean Brook where farmers took their "long john" potatoes, (so called because of their length and peculiar shape), and had them converted to starch. As a young boy, F. H. Abbott, later the owner of the Upland Terrace Hotel, worked a 12-hour shift in the factory. Near this operation there was also: a mill for grinding provender (dry food for domestic animals), a threshing machine run by water power, and a blacksmith shop. There was a chair factory near Maplewood, and a wool carding mill at Bethlehem Hollow. F. A. Haskell built a carriage shop in 1879, making about 22 vehicles per year. Another product of interest was a cider mill built by Cortes Bolles in 1884. He manufactured over 350 barrels of cider per year.

By far the most important industry, apart from agriculture, was lumber. In 1874 the *Statistics and Gazetteer of New Hampshire* noted, "Over 1,300,000 clapboards, 1,975,000 shingles and 8,800,000 feet of boards and dimension timber were annually sawed; and gave employment to over 100 men in its manufacture." The *Gazetteer* also noted the following interesting statistics: "Resources. Productions of the soil, \$137,602; mechanical labor \$68,300; money at interest \$22,500; stock in trade \$50,425; deposits in saving bank, \$1,598; from summer tourists, estimate \$160,000."

The year 1800 opened with 40 families, no industry, no roads and primitive dwellings. By hard work the town grew and prospered. In 1850 it grew to a population of 950. Ten years later, 1860, there was a small decline to 896, but the growth continued upward and in 1870, 998 people lived in Bethlehem. The 1974 population is 1500. With the 1870's, a new industry was firmly rooted in our town, one that remains with us to this day; it was tourism. That development, however, was preceded by the American Civil War.

## CIVIL WAR HISTORY

The farmer of northern New Hampshire had little knowledge or appreciation of the plantation farmer of southern America. Even in colonial days, white indentured labor and black slaves were not evident in New Hampshire. Like all wars, the Civil War was unpopular, misunderstood and essentially stupid. The South was foolish to strike the first blow, the North was wrong to slam back. The South saw the war as a strike for independence from a government that was becoming too strong, too centralized and too bureaucratic, with a disregard for local states' rights. The North, on the other hand, saw the war as the only way to preserve the Union and force the end to the immoral practice of slavery. Both were right and both were wrong.

The town of Bethlehem responded to a true service of patriotism when President Lincoln made his draft calls. Eighty-seven men left the chilly mountain air of Bethlehem to endure the weary marches under hot suns in southern fields. Our town bore the very high loss rate of 30 men who were killed in or died from the effects of the War. Bethlehem men were involved from the first and saw some of the fiercest fighting. They served in the 6th, 12th, 13th and 15th regiments of the New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry. They saw action in 17 different states and participated in the battles of the second Bull Run, Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg and the occupation of Richmond. The 12th Regiment of the New Hampshire Volunteers had one of the highest loss rates of any troop in the entire war. While Bethlehem did not have any generals or high officers, the individual valor of its men brought fame and deserved praise.



The Jefferson Spooner House about the time of the Civil War. The Colonial Theatre is now on the site of the Spooner House.

One Bethlehem man, Leonard Eudy, born in Bethlehem in 1843, was mustered into the service as a private in Company C of the 15th N.H. Regiment in the fall of 1862. When he was released in 1865, he returned to Bethlehem but the horrors of war haunted his mind. He sought a career to heal the horrors he witnessed and thus adopted the profession of medicine. After his studies at the Harvard Medical School, he located in Littleton and later moved to Bartlett, Vermont. In 1877, when an epidemic of smallpox broke out in a nearby lumber camp, Dr. Eudy assumed charge of the camp but contracted the disease and died. Another surgeon, Dr. George Beebe, born in Somerset, England in 1828, served in both the Mexican and Civil War. After the war he entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, serving in areas throughout New Hampshire, including Bethlehem. He died in Littleton in 1877.

Ms. Delphin Baker made perhaps the largest contribution to the Civil War. Born in

Bethlehem in 1828, she worked before the war to advance the rights of women on both a political and social level. Her lectures on equality carried her throughout the nation and gained her many friends for her later work. After the Civil War she was disheartened to see the sufferings of war veterans who were unable to care for themselves. Accordingly, she wrote a Federal bill creating homes for disabled veterans and got Congress to enact it. These homes might rightfully be called the forerunner of the contemporary V.A. hospitals and veteran pension programs.

The losses incurred in this war were to be felt for generations. They developed in our people a sense of pride and patriotism both in our town and our national government. Unlike many towns, we did not in the post civil war years erect a pretentious statue to the union dead. Today, however, the names of those who served may be found on a plaque in the entrance of the town hall.