

to return weeks later laden with goods and wondrous tales of what his eyes had seen and his ears heard.

The slow approach of the steam railroads gradually reduced the length of these teaming trips, and the completion of the Central Vermont Railroad so far opened the markets not only for produce but for dressed lumber, that at present numerous teams make daily trips to Middlesex or Waterbury.

Of course efforts have been made to secure steam or electric transportation for the valley. The first was in 1875-6 when numerous town meetings were held to secure financial assistance from the town for the Green Mountain Railroad Company, but by close votes the town refused to bond itself to purchase stock in the proposed line. On December 20, 1898, the town voted overwhelmingly (123 to 36) to assist in the construction of an electric road from Montpelier, and in 1907 a corporation was organized to construct a steam road from Montpelier to Rutland, through this valley, but in neither case has actual construction work ever materialized.

## CHAPTER XV.

### AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE AND MANUFACTURES.

The present territory of Waitsfield occupies the major portion of a beautiful basin in the heart of the Green Mountains, and the general conformation would seem to indicate that at some time it was the bed of a considerable pond or lake. It would be difficult, indeed, to find within the state more fertile lands than the intervales along Mad River, while the uplands in many portions of the town, especially along the plateau extending southerly from the Common, lend themselves most readily to the agricultural art. It is, of course, apparent that agriculture has from the beginning been the dominant occupation of our people.

The town is a successful dairying community, and is rendered so not alone by the fertility of the soil, but by the intelligence of her farmers, who have at all times been leaders in the effort to better conditions by the adoption of labor-saving machinery, so far as adapted to the topography, and by improving the strain of their cattle and horses.

In the early days farming meant merely the gratification from one's own acres, of practically all the modest needs of the family, with a small surplus left over to barter for such necessities as were beyond home production. Crops were raised in far greater variety than at the present day. Wheat, rye, barley, corn, oats, flax, buckwheat, potatoes and hay not only furnished food and clothing for the family and sustenance for the live-stock, and paid the taxes, the minister, the school-teacher and the publisher, but with butter, cheese, ashes and salts of lye, were readily bartered at the local store for cotton goods, crockery, salt, tea, cured fish, rum and other spirituous liquors, iron, steel and sugar, the latter in limited amounts for state occasions, as the sugar maple and the big kettle furnished sufficient for all ordinary use. Sheep were raised in far larger and cattle in far smaller numbers than at present.\* This was made necessary not only by the large home consumption of woolen cloth,

\*The grand list for 1803 shows that there were 679 sheep and 165 cows and three-year-olds in town, and in 1826 the numbers were 3,212 and 550, respectively, while in 1906 there were 113 sheep and 1,843 cows and young stock.

but by the fact that wool was a far less perishable and hence more surely marketable product than butter or even cheese, which in the early days was made in considerable quantities by nearly every housewife. Indeed, until 1804 there was a statute on the books "to encourage the increase of sheep" by which every tax-payer was entitled to a deduction of one dollar from his rateable estate for each sheep (his own property) shorn by him between May 10 and June 20.

Nor must we forget to mention the old-time drover who gathered up the surplus of the flocks and herds and drove them two hundred miles to market. Daniel Thayer was best known in this capacity, and before his day General Wait, until age forbade, regularly drove his purchases to Boston and then swung out to Brookfield to see the old home and try conclusions with his eldest brother at driving nails with bullets from the trusty rifle.

To secure the little actual money absolutely necessary for the conduct of business was a difficult matter, but ashes produced from clearing the farm and from the household fires were readily salable or barterable at a low price at the potash works, of which there were several in town, and the salts produced by leeching the ashes and boiling the lye, commonly called pearl ash and potash, according to quality, were in turn salable at from four to five dollars per hundred-weight, and produced a small money income.

The development of the country and the growth of transportation facilities have, however, made themselves felt here as elsewhere, and, as in other callings, the farmer specializes in that form of production for which his farm may be best fitted, and in which he can successfully compete with the broader acres of the West. As has been said, dairying, with the production of hogs and poultry as by-products, is now the main business of the town, and especial attention has been given to winter dairying. The grade of cattle has been vastly improved over the early days by breeding to blooded stock, and the appearance of the creamery has greatly increased efficiency. In 1893 Jesse B. Norton and Solomon Fitch began the operation of a creamery in the village, and were succeeded by Charles F. Eddy, who in turn was followed by Harry W. Belden, the present proprietor. In 1897 a number of farmers organized the Waitsfield Cooperative Creamery, and erected buildings on the main

road in lot 125, with several skimming stations in distant portions of the town. This creamery also has conducted a successful business.

Many fine horses have been raised upon the farms of Waitsfield. Indeed for many years the raising of good Morgan stock was a very appreciable part of our agricultural business, but with the decline of that breed and the decrease of horse values in the early "nineties" this business was in large measure abandoned, and has not been renewed.

The earliest record of an agricultural association is a passing reference to a Mad River Valley Agricultural Fair which was held on the meadows north of the village on September 22, 1858. Occasional fairs were held here during the "sixties," but not until 1872 was there a definite organization.

In 1871 an informal association of the owners and lovers of horses raised funds for the grading of a half mile track on the terrace near Stoddard Bridge in lot 139. On September 20 and 24, 1872, meetings were held at the hotel of Robert J. Coffey and the Mad River Valley Agricultural Society was organized with a constitution which stated its object as "the improvement of our people in the theory and practice of agricultural and mechanic arts." It was voted to hold a fair on the newly opened trotting grounds, and officers were elected as follows:

President, Ira Richardson.  
 Vice President, Elijah W. Bisbee.  
 Secretary, Robert J. Coffey.  
 Treasurer, Edward A. Fisk.  
 Auditor, Chester S. Dana.

A board of directors consisting of three members from each of the following towns was elected: Waitsfield, Warren, Fayston, Moretown, Duxbury, Middlesex, Waterbury and Granville.

The first fair was held October 16 and 17, 1872, and although the weather was unpropitious the fair was a success. It was apparent, however, that the grounds were not suited to this purpose, and in May, 1873, a committee chosen at an earlier meeting reported in favor of holding future fairs on the grounds subsequently laid out on the farm of Capt. Orcas C. Wilder in the northerly part of the town (lot 122). A half mile track was constructed, and a floral hall, cattle pens, and other necessary

structures were erected in time for the fair on September 24 and 25, 1873.

For some years the society was active and annual fairs were held until 1886, when interest seemed to wane and for a period of ten years nothing was done. In 1896, however, a reorganization was effected, and successful fairs were held for two or three years, but since 1899 the society has been in a quiescent state.

So far as can now be ascertained there were no stores in town prior to 1801. On July 19, 1802, Gen. Wait sold to Samuel Chandler, of Worcester, Mass., and Levi Mower, of Royalton, Vt., a site for a store just beyond the ledge northerly of his house, to which reference has been made elsewhere, but the early tax lists show conclusively that this firm were operating a store at least a year earlier. Two months later Levi Mower sold out his share of the enterprise to Henry Mower of Woodstock, Vt., and in 1806 John Bement of Royalton was a partner. These men, with the exception of the latter for a few years, were never residents of Waitsfield, their store here being but one of many which they operated in connection with a trading business large for the times. A potash was operated in connection with this store and it is probable that it was started as early as 1800, indeed it is possible that the store had a beginning in that year.

Joseph Lyon was the first local representative of the new firm, but a year later John Bement had charge of the store. He very soon returned to Royalton and Edmund Rice assumed the duties, although he was but a youth. The firm also conducted a nursery on the east side of the river in lot 135, although they sold it out to Jonas Holden in 1806. They continued to operate the store until December 12, 1807, when they sold to Thomas Wait and Edmund Rice. This partnership continued less than a year, having been dissolved October 11, 1808. The store was then sold to Joseph B. Collom and Joseph Wait, who continued the business until 1810, when it again came into Edmund Rice's hands, and was probably conducted by him until his death in 1829, although he sold part of the land to Ralph Turner and Jesse Carpenter in 1813, on which they erected a cordwainers' establishment.

By 1814 Samuel Hebard of Bethel, Vt., James Baldwin and Erastus Woodward were conducting a store just to the

north of the first store on the old road, and continued in trade until 1824. This building is not now standing, but the dim outlines of its cellar may be seen on the west side of the road, just a few rods southerly of the old Garinter Hastings tavern (now the Walter C. Joslyn place). These men also purchased from Edmund Rice the potash works that stood just back or west of the ledge, near the little brook from which the necessary water was obtained.

About 1806 Roderick Richardson settled on lot 108 and in its southeast corner, on the northerly side of the Common built his store, while nearby he erected a potash to care for ashes taken in trade. Some years later he sold this store and constructed one on the present village square, elsewhere referred to. During the "twenties," his son Roderick, jr., became a partner, and for a time the business was conducted under the name of Roderick Richardson & Son. About 1830 the Brick Store, so-called, was erected, and a few years later the business was taken over by a partnership composed of Roderick Richardson, jr., Cyrus Skinner and James M. Richardson. About 1845 this store building burned and the firm dissolved. Roderick Richardson, jr., erected the present structure, of which James M. Richardson occupied the upper portion, while Mr. Skinner occupied the basement with an independent line, although he removed after a few years (1849) to the so-called "Tinshop" block. A "Protective Union Store" of which Timothy Reed was for a time president, occupied the quarters which Mr. Skinner vacated from 1854 to 1857. James M. Richardson continued in business until April 1, 1858, when the firm of Gleason and Hastings (Richardson James Gleason and Jonathan Hammond Hastings) purchased the building and established itself in trade. Four years later this firm removed to the adjoining building, and there continued until June, 1864, when the partnership dissolved, the business continuing to the present time under the proprietorship of Mr. Gleason. On April 1, 1862, Jacob Boyce leased the Brick Store, and not long afterwards became its purchaser. Here he conducted a successful general business until his death, when he was succeeded by his son, Francis A., upon whose death in 1903 the present firm of C. J. Greene & Co., was formed to continue the business.

Another early place of business was that of George Frederick Kidder, who occupied the building known in later years as the

Prentis house, and now occupied by Arthur Poland. Only the wooden part of the building was then standing, but this must have been occupied as a store not far from 1820, and nearby Mr. Kidder had a potash. He removed to Illinois about 1835, and his brother-in-law, Lewis Holden, was the proprietor for five or six years, and after a few years the building was remodeled into a dwelling.

As early as 1832 Amlias Blake, of Chelsea, Moses L. Hart, of Middlesex and Zebina C. Sleeper were engaged in trade in Waitsfield under the name of Blake, Hart & Sleeper, but they dissolved in a few years and about 1835 (perhaps a little earlier) Blake and Roswell Morris erected a two-story brick structure just across the street from the Kidder place and occupied it as a store, but their partnership was short-lived. The store was leased in May, 1840, to Jonathan Morse and James L. Chapman and after their removal in 1845 it was sold to James T. Phelps who continued in trade until 1850. For a short time thereafter the store stood vacant and after brief occupancy by Jonathan Campbell and Moses Johnson beginning in 1851 it was partially torn down and remodeled into a blacksmith shop, but that business did not thrive, and in the "eighties" the building was completely razed.

Still another early store was that of Elias Taylor, jr., which stood on the old North Road in the southerly part of the town and has been remodeled into the comfortable farmhouse of Orrin Hubbard Joslin. Mr. Taylor operated a potash which stood near his store, but the whole business seems to have been closed out in 1829 or thereabouts.

These early merchants depended almost wholly upon barter for the conduct of their trade. The scarcity of legal tender in the country towns is well illustrated by the advertisement of a Montpelier merchant of the time, who says that he will sell his stock of goods "for good clear salts of lye, ashes, beef cattle, butter, cheese (or even Good Bank Bills) and almost every kind of Country Produce."

The stock of merchandise came chiefly from Boston and included only those things that could not be produced upon the farm—India cottons; broadcloths in blue, black and drab; a few of the finer flannels in black, green, yellow and white; pelisce cloths and bombasetts in "lalack," fawn, drab, scarlet and other colors; tea in the varying grades of hyson, young

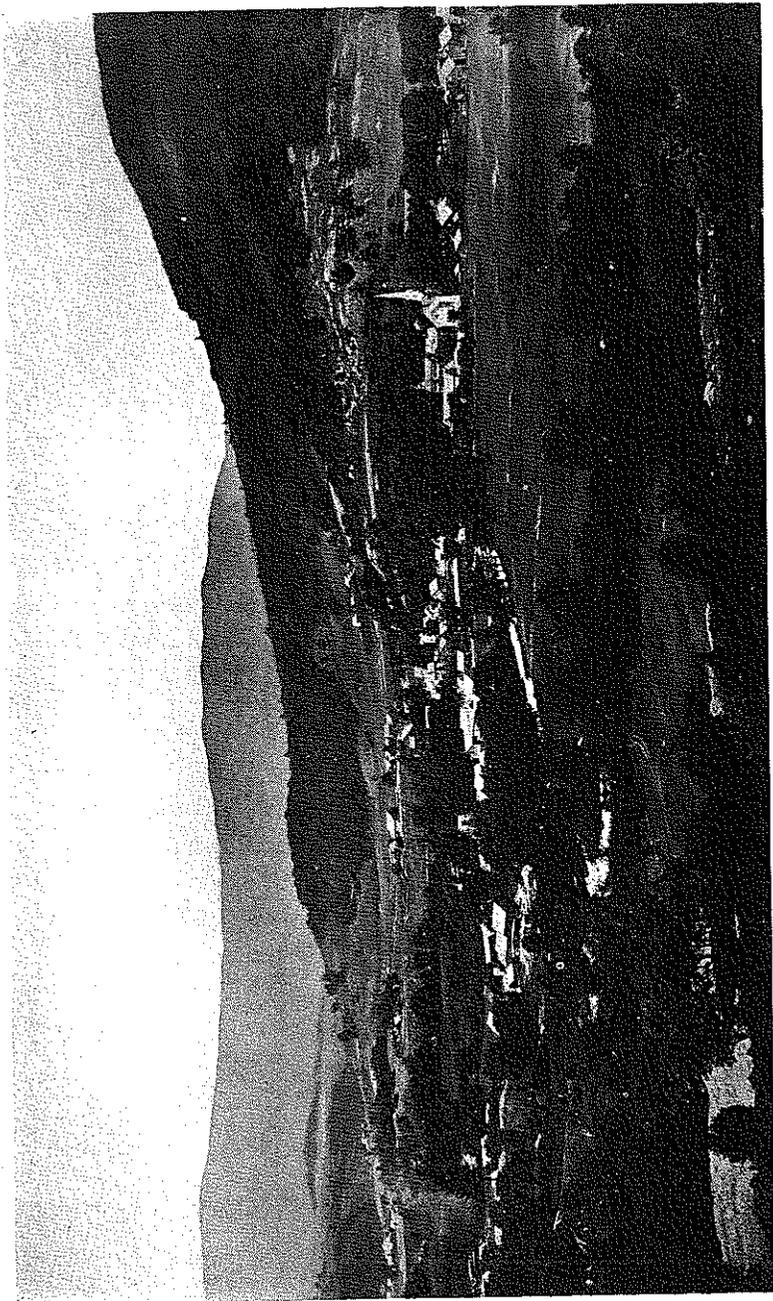
hyson, hyson skin, souchong and bohea; crockery; codfish; rice; loaf and brown sugar; West India molasses and its product New England rum; iron and steel; raisins; pepper; Turks Island salt; indigo; logwood, and other dye stuffs. Prices of those days also are not without interest. Salt was \$3 a bushel, loaf sugar 42 cents a pound, and brown sugar 17 to 20 cents, molasses \$1.17 per gallon, green tea \$2 the pound, pepper, 75 cents, broadcloth \$8 to \$10 per yard, calico 50 to 75 cents per yard, and rum cheapest of all at \$2 the gallon.

Soon after 1850 Oliver Carlisle Campbell built a shoe-shop in the village, on land owned by Roderick Richardson. This was purchased in 1855 by Matthias Stone Jones, jr., and his brother, Loren Washburn Jones, and remodeled. They opened a general store and continued the business until the death of the senior partner in 1859, and from that date the junior member conducted the business until 1869 (during 1865-7 as Jones & Ward), when he sold it to a firm composed of Dr. Walter Alonzo Jones, Hiram Edgar Jones and George H. Goodrich. The withdrawal of the last two in 1871 left Dr. Jones the sole proprietor. He so continued until his death in 1892, when his son Walter Edwin Jones, took over and has since conducted the business.

The so-called "Tinshop" building was erected by W. Jasper Walton in 1848 and has been devoted chiefly to the hardware, plumbing and tin-smithing business. Of the proprietors we note Hastings S. Campbell, 1855-67, George J. Ainsworth, Winfield S. Rich, Orville M. Eaton, Oscar G. Eaton and Julius D. Davis. Frederick Richardson, jr., was proprietor of a tin-smithing and hardware business for some years prior to 1850.

Soon after 1880 Lewis R. Joslin erected a store building on his farm at the northerly end of the village and conducted there a general business until his death, since which date the building has been remodeled for other uses. George H. Fullerton, who was for some years associated with Mr. Joslin, established a grocery and feed business in the Hastings Block, which had a few years previous furnished quarters for the store of Hastings Stafford Campbell, and the business has been continued since Mr. Fullerton's death in 1906 by George N. Billings. For some years, beginning in 1860, Henry and James K. Fullerton were proprietors of a shoe store.

At the Mill Village or Irasville no store was established until 1852 when Ira Richardson opened the general store later



WAITSFIELD VILLAGE LOOKING WEST TO LINCOLN MOUNTAIN.

HISTORY  
OF THE  
TOWN OF  
WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

1782 - 1908

WITH FAMILY GENEALOGIES

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BY  
MATT BUSHNELL JONES

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