

Harriet (Mrs. Perrin B. Fiske); Eva O. Joslin (Mrs. Clarence J. Allen), and her sister Lucia R. (Mrs. Burton D. Bisbee), who has in later years become an efficient superintendent of schools; Ella Van Deusen (Mrs. Leslie Reed), Mary E. Joslin, Alice M. Bushnell, Laura A. Jones, and many others whose names might well be mentioned.

This chapter cannot be closed, however, without reference to the little woman, who for many years presided over the primary school in Waitsfield village. Sarah M. Thompson was born in Fayston, June 10, 1845, of Scotch-Irish parents. Her early education was obtained in the common schools and in Montpelier Seminary. She showed an especial aptitude for teaching and from the age of fifteen nearly her entire life was devoted to the work. For many years she taught in Fayston, Gaysville, Cambridge and Northfield, Vt., and in Marshalltown, Ia., but in 1882 she came to the primary room in the village and with the exception of a few years spent in the schools of a neighboring town, she stayed here until her death in 1905. Her devotion to her aged parents was exceeded only by her devotion to her beloved profession and to her pupils. Her methods were her own, and within her little realm she was a very autocrat, but no child who came beneath her sway ever failed to build a solid foundation for the later education that she always urged him to acquire. She was the embodiment of the spirit that has fought and conquered in acquiring a sound, sane education with the scanty implements of the country school.

CHAPTER XIV.

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION.

Until the Act of February, 1784, Vermont enjoyed no official postal facilities. That Act created post-offices at Bennington, Rutland, Brattleborough, Windsor and Newbury, and gave to the post riders a monopoly on their respective routes. In addition to postage collected, a subsidy of two pence per mile from the state (increased to three pence per mile on the Bennington-Brattleborough route) was provided, and post riders were required to keep an account of their "profits and emoluments" and exhibit the same to the Governor and Council when requested. Indeed, not until October 13, 1790, was the subsidy withdrawn. By the Act of March 9, 1787, the offices were to be conducted "under such regulations as are established for the government of post-offices in the United States," and provision was made for an additional post route from Rutland into Addison County.

These were the postal facilities of Vermont when Waitsfield was settled, nor were they much improved upon the admission of the state into the Union. For nearly thirty years the town had no postal facilities of its own, and residents on the east side of the mountain were accustomed to receive their mail at Randolph while the larger number on the west side found no post-office nearer than Montpelier. A weekly stage running from Windsor to Burlington *via* the towns named afforded transportation for mail and passengers, and connected at Windsor with the stage lines for Boston. By 1811 the proposals for carrying mail on this route, which followed the valley of the White and Winooski rivers, called for two trips a week, the stage leaving Windsor on Tuesday and Saturday at one P. M., and arriving at Burlington on Wednesday and Sunday at six P. M., thus making the distance in 29 hours.

On January 1, 1818, a post-office was established in Waitsfield, and on July 15 of that year the Department invited proposals for carrying mail, beginning November 16, 1818, on a new route from Montpelier by Middlesex, Moretown, Waitsfield,

and Warren, to Rochester, a distance of forty miles. The stage made two trips a week, and its advent must have marked an epoch in the life of the town.

Erastus Woodward was the first post-master. Of him we know little, except that he was an early merchant with a place of business just beyond the ledges northeast of General Wait's house. He continued in office until George Frederick Kidder became post-master May 17, 1822. The office was then moved to the east side of the river, into the building already spoken of as having been occupied by Mr. Kidder, and later by Lewis Holden, as a store. Mr. Kidder's term was short, as Roderick Richardson was commissioned to the office October 14, 1823. This of course established the post-office in Mr. Richardson's store in the village square, and in that building (now standing) or in its successor, the Brick Store on the corner, it remained during the term of the elder Richardson, that of his son Roderick Richardson, jr., who was appointed September 9, 1829, and that of James M. Richardson, who was appointed July 30, 1844. At some time during this period the mail route ceased to be No. 13, and became No. 406, with Warren as the southern terminus. Trips were then made three times a week, and so continued until daily service was established, July 1, 1864, Waitsfield and Middlesex then becoming the termini of the route. On June 14, 1861, Richardson James Gleason was appointed post-master by the Lincoln administration, and on April 1, 1862, the office was removed to the building adjoining the Brick Store. Mr. Gleason continued to serve as post-master until November 11, 1889, when the present incumbent, Ziba Hamilton McAllister, was appointed, for although the change of administration in 1885 resulted in the successive appointments of Lewis R. Joslin on August 14, 1885, and Henry T. J. Howe, on November 23, 1885, both of those gentlemen declined to serve. Thus it appears that, beginning in 1823, five men have served the town in the capacity of post-master for a period of 85 years.

In 1899 twice-a-day mail service was established, and on July 1, 1903, rural free delivery went into operation from this station.

Among the early stage drivers were Crowell Matthews, then of Rochester, but later a resident of Waitsfield, and Gates Van Deusen, of Warren. In the early "sixties" E. M. Dutton

ran the route, and from 1865 to 1872 William Hudson, now of Middlesex, was the jehu. Then came Benjamin Barrett, and after him (in 1874) Albert Carlie Jones, and still later John J. Kelty, who ran the route for twenty years, or more, until in 1904 Frank L. Eaton received the appointment.

Passengers were regularly carried by the mail route stages, and dependable connection was thus made with stage lines, and later with the railroad service. James Rider for many years made weekly trips on horseback to Montpelier for the purpose of bringing in the weekly papers rather more promptly than the mail could do it, and he also did errands and carried small express.

No telegraph line has ever traversed the valley, but very early in the development of telephony—soon after 1880, in fact—a telephone line was run from the Montpelier exchange to Warren, a popular subscription being taken to encourage the project. About 1900 a local exchange was started, and quickly grew to respectable proportions, covering this town and the south part of Fayston with its lines, and making direct connection with toll lines to all parts of the country. The voluntary association which started the work was incorporated in 1905, under the name of Waitsfield and Fayston Telephone Company.

Transportation of freight stands where it did when roads were first constructed, although the distances to be covered by freight teams are small when compared with the trips direct to Boston a century ago. Trade was barter in those days; merchants went down to Boston by stage, sending their accumulation of butter, wool, cheese, flax, grain and seeds of various kinds, and, in winter, dressed and frozen pork and beef by teams that took many weeks for the round trip. Bartering in his turn, the merchant sent his stock of country staples back by team, and journeyed home again, to meet it upon arrival.

Our older residents can remember well the four, six and eight-horse teams of Oliver Clark, of Duxbury, and others which went regularly to Boston during the early years.

Occasionally in winter when the sleighing was good the desire for a broader market and a sight of the great world beyond the mountains induced the farmer to load his pung with barterable produce and start out for the New England metropolis,

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.

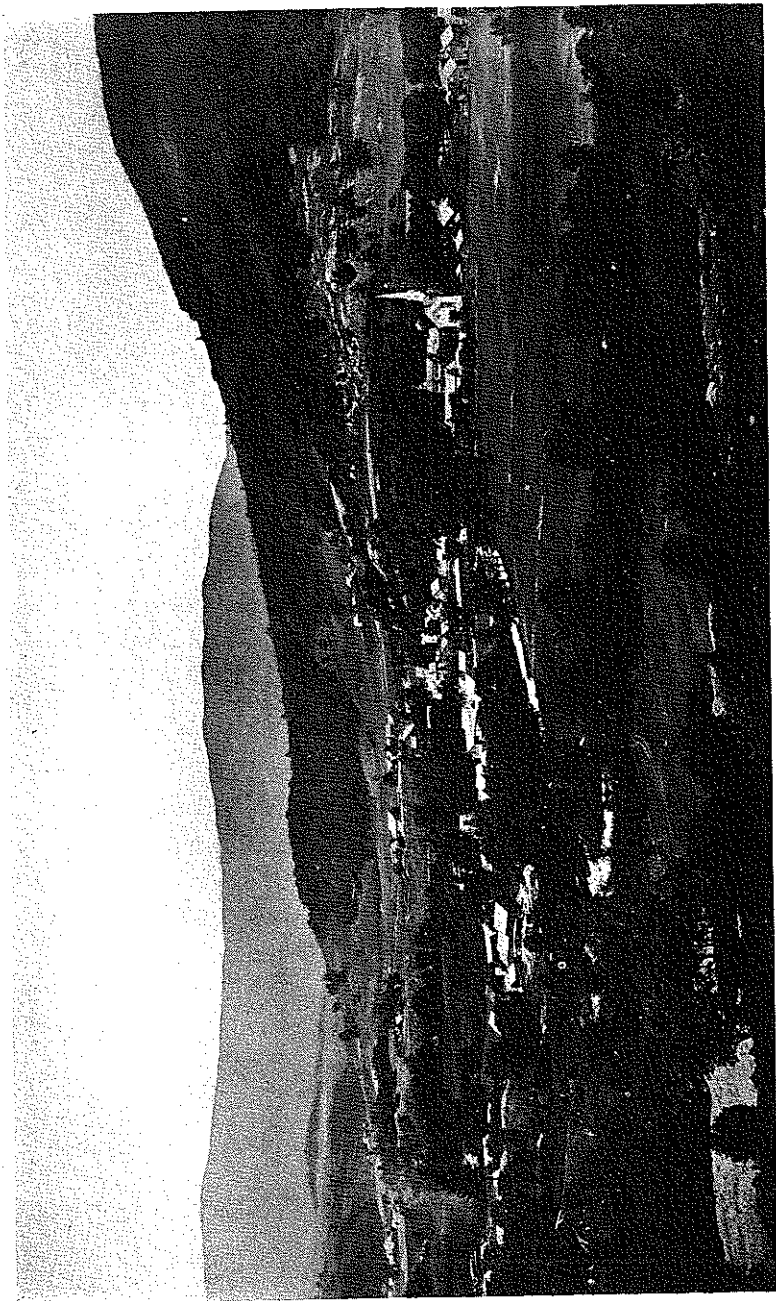
AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE AND MANUFACTURES.

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 intervale 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.



WAITSFIELD VILLAGE LOOKING WEST TO LINCOLN MOUNTAIN.

HISTORY
OF THE
TOWN OF
WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

1782 - 1908

WITH FAMILY GENEALOGIES

BY
MATT BUSHNELL JONES

BOSTON, MASS.:
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