

CHAPTER I.

SITUATION, NATURAL FEATURES, CHARTER AND FIRST SETTLEMENT, WITH A SKETCH OF GENERAL BENJAMIN WAIT.

"Waitsfield Lieth in the County of Adison Near the Center of the State of Vermont upon Mad River, Latitude $43^{\circ}-55^{\text{m}}$ North. The Sun rises 4 hours & $\frac{1}{4}$ nearly Later than at E Greenwich & 7 minutes than at Boston."

With these words William Strong, "Surveyor of Soil," opened his "Field Book of the Survey of the Town of Waitsfield" in the year 1788.

The town actually lay, however, within the limits of Chittenden County, which had been set off from Addison County about a year previous to this survey (October 22, 1787), and so remained until it became a part of the new county erected in 1810 and called Jefferson until, in 1814, it received its present name of Washington.

William Strong was, without doubt, the earliest chronicler of the natural features of the town, and we will let him continue the narrative in his own words:

"Mad River rises in Kingston (Granville) & falls into Waitsfield 1 mile 11 chains on the southerly line East from the S. W. Corner runs throug a Small Gore then into Lot No. 94 & out at the West line into Lot 143 & Goes on Through 141, 139, 137, 138, 136, 135, 133, 131, 129, 127, 110, 112, then into 125 then into the line between the two last mentioned & continues there about 60 rods then into 125, 123, 121, 119 & then out about 62 chains & fifty links from the N. W. Corner.

"The Brooks of Note are first Warren (now called Fay) that falls in from the East into 94.

"Second Camp Brook (Mill Brook) from the West into 138.

"third Pine from the East into 125.

"fourth North (Shepherd's Brook) from the West falls into 119.

"Either of these Streams are large Enough & very Convenient for all Kinds of Mills.

"the Town in General is Well Watered Some Pine timber & plenty of ash & Hard Timber.

"The Intervels on the river are Large & of an Excellent Quality."

To this description need be added only that the westerly line of the town lies along the foot hills of the main range of the Green Mountains, and that the secondary range traverses the original tract in such manner as to leave rather more than one-third of its acreage to the east of the mountains while the remainder occupies a natural basin between the ranges. This valley lies at an elevation of some 800 feet above sea level, and the highest land within the town is Bald Mountain, which rises on the east to an elevation of about 2500 feet.

Prior to the close of active hostilities in the last French War, Vermont presented few attractions to the peaceful pioneer. From earliest times the beautiful valley of Lake Champlain was the chosen battle ground of Algonquin warriors and their fierce rivals from the Long House of the Iroquois, and when their supremacy had faded, the territory lay exposed between the outposts of the other and mightier rivals who for more than half a century battled for the mastery of the northern continent. Prior to 1761 less than a score of townships had been granted within the present territory of the state, and those actually settled lay wholly along the Connecticut River and could be counted upon the fingers of one's hand.

The very causes of its retarded development led, however, to a widespread knowledge of the advantages of the district, and within the next three years one hundred twenty-nine townships had been granted by the Colonial Governor of New Hampshire; but in 1764 the slumbering controversy between New Hampshire and New York broke into flame, and before the close of that year the Crown had ordered that the Connecticut River should be considered as the boundary between these colonies. The construction placed by the New York authorities upon this decree immediately unsettled land titles in Vermont and precipitated the conflict actively waged by the "Green Mountain Boys," until the outbreak of the Revolution, when the establishing of the independent State of Vermont with a duly constituted government of its own, put an end to active hostilities. The immediate effect of the controversy was, naturally, to retard actual settlement, and this is emphasized no more strongly than by the fact that in the fifteen years succeeding 1763 only five new townships were granted within the territory of the New Hampshire Grants, although several townships granted by Wentworth were re-granted by New York during that period.

But with the close of the Revolution, or, rather, upon the cessation of fighting in the North, activity was renewed, and from 1779 to 1782 some seventy-five townships received their charters from the government of the new republic. Among this number was our little town of Waitsfield, chartered February 25, 1782, as follows:

"The Governor, Council and General Assembly of the State of Vermont.

"To all people to whom these presents shall come Greeting: Know ye that Whereas it has been represented to us by our worthy friends the Honorable Roger Enos, Col. Benjamin Wait and company to the number of seventy, that there is a tract of vacant land within this state, which has not been heretofore granted, which they pray may be granted to them. We have therefore thought fit for the due encouragement of settling a plantation, and other valuable considerations us hereunto moving: Do by these presents in the name and by the authority of the Freemen of the State of Vermont, give and grant unto the said Roger Enos, Benjamin Wait, and the several persons hereafter named, their associates, viz.:

"Joel Matthews, Daniel Matthews, James Matthews, Ephaim Edey, Nathan Edey, Barnabas Strong, Aaron Whipple, Ezekiel Rooks, Charles Nelson, Daniel Brown, Amasa Brown, William Lothrop, Luther Richards, Sanford Kingsbury, Charles Kingsbury, Reuben Spencer, Barnabas Spencer, John W. Dana, Ebenezer Brown, Samuel Harriss, Samuel Treat, Edward Whitman, Ezra Jones, Joseph York, Gideon Lewis, Moses Levet, Christopher York, Enoch Emerson, John Benjamin, John Strong, Theophilus Clark, Andrew Spaulding, Ammi Currier, Solomon Burk, Benjamin Burch, Benajah Strong, William Strong, Stephen Jacobs, Joseph Farnsworth, Ephiam Smith, Beriah Green, Stephen Tilden, John Marsh, Solomon Strong, Isaac Dana, Charles Killam, Jr., John Hodges, Gilbert Hodges, Amos Bignal, Roger Enos, Jr., Isaac Maine, Stephen Maine, George Denison, Zebulun Lee, Paschal P. Enos, Noadiah Bissell, John Barrett, Daniel King, Stephen Keyes, Gilbert Wait, Joseph Fay, Ezra Wait, James Hawley, John Bean, Dearing Spears, Josiah Averill, John Fay, Eli Willard. Together with five equal shares to be appropriated to public uses as follows: (viz.) One share for the use of a seminary or College within this state, one share for the use of Grammar Schools, throughout this state—one share for the first settled minister of the gospel within said town to be disposed of as the inhabitants within said town shall direct—one share for the support of the ministry, to be disposed of in like manner for that purpose, and one share for the use of a school or schools within said Town, to be disposed of for that purpose as aforesaid, the following Tract or Parcel of Land, viz:

"Beginning at a stake and stone in the south-westerly corner of Moretown; thence running south $46^{\circ} 30$ minutes east in the line of Moretown the southeasterly corner thereof—thence south 44° west in the westerly line of Northfield Five miles and twenty-seven chains to a spruce staddle standing in the northerly line of Roxbury or Warren, thence in the northerly line of Warren North 61° west about six miles to a beach tree marked 'June 17th 1787': Thence north 41° east six miles 67 chains and 40 links to the first mentioned bounds, containing twenty-three thousand and thirty acres, and that the same be and is hereby incorporated into a Township by the name of WAITSFIELD, and that the inhabitants that do or shall hereafter inhabit the said Township are declared to be enfranchised and entitled to all the privileges and immunities that other towns within this State do by law exercise and enjoy. To have and to hold, the said granted premises as above expressed with all the privileges and appurtenances to them and their respective heirs and assigns forever upon the following conditions and observations (viz.) That each proprietor of the Township of Waitsfield aforesaid, his heirs or assigns, shall plant and cultivate five acres of Land and build a house at least eighteen feet square on the floor or have one family settled on each respective right or share of land in said township agreeable to the time prefixed by the Legislature of this state on penalty of the forfeiture of his right or share of land in said Township, and the same to revert to the freemen of this state and be by their representatives regranted to such persons as shall appear to settle and cultivate the same.

"In Testimony Whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of this state to be affixed this Twenty-fifth day of February 1782 and in the sixth year of the independence of this State.

By his Excellencys Command

Joseph Fay, Secy.

Thomas Chittenden."

The eastern range of the Green Mountains cleft the town from northeast to southwest, and for miles on every side the wilderness of forest lay unbroken. To the east of this mountain range, the land presented few attractions but to the west a big basin lay between the hills, fertile, well-watered and easily accessible through passes cut by the little river that followed its winding course to the northward.

Benjamin Wait, whose name was given to the town, had early marked this valley for his own, but other duties claimed him for the time and not until the spring of 1789 did he come hither, with his children and his sons' children, to establish a

home in the meadows north of the present village. He was a veteran of two wars, almost, it might be said, a soldier by profession, for the French War, the conflict of the Green Mountain Boys against New York, the Revolution, and, after its close, the active command of forces engaged in the internal conflict that culminated in Shay's Rebellion, had taken more than twenty of the best years of his life. He was a well-to-do and highly respected citizen of the then populous and important town of Windsor. He had for seven years been High Sheriff of Cumberland and Windsor Counties, and had but just resigned the highest military office in the gift of the State that he might free himself for his fresh struggle with the wilderness. He had sat in the convention that adopted the constitution of the new state and had taken high rank among the founders of the little republic that was still knocking ineffectually at the doors of the Union.

He was of the type of pioneer who builded well, and, the impress of his strong character may still be traced in the town of which he became in every sense the first citizen. It is therefore appropriate that at the threshold of this little work, we pause a moment to trace the story of his earlier years.

Benjamin Wait, third son of John and Annah Wait, was born in Sudbury, Mass., February 13, 1736. His mother died when he was but a child, and his father, marrying again, removed to Brookfield, Mass., about 1745. Here he kept a tavern on Foster Hill. His house stood on the old Boston-Albany highway, and as its proprietor was himself a veteran, this hostelry was for years famous among the soldiers of the French Wars, who were wont to linger there upon their journeys. We can picture Benjamin and his brothers lying of a winter evening before the great fireplace in the living room, while in the dim light of the open fire the father and his guests related over the steaming punch bowl, tales of warfare, suffering and Indian barbarity that sent the youngsters shivering to their attic beds.

Environment seldom shows its influence more strongly than upon this family of six boys. John, the eldest son, saw service in the campaign of 1757, and with the Massachusetts troops during the Revolution. Joseph, enlisting in 1754, became the captain of a company of Rogers' Rangers, and was continuously active until 1761. Removing to Claremont, N. H., he became, upon the outbreak of the Revolution, Lieutenant-Colonel in

Bedel's Regiment of New Hampshire troops, and received a mortal wound during the fighting around the foot of Lake Champlain, just previous to the naval battle at Valcour. Richard, next younger than Benjamin, enlisted at the age of seventeen in the French War, and was a captain in Herrick's Rangers at Bennington; while two half-brothers, enlisting in the Massachusetts troops on April 29, 1775, saw practically continuous service in the army under Washington until the close of the war.

The military experiences of Benjamin Wait began with the campaign of 1755, for which he had enlisted at the age of 13. The plan of that campaign involved attacks upon the French at four points simultaneously. Braddock was to advance upon Fort Duquesne. Provincial troops from New England, New York and New Jersey were to seize Crown Point, and another body drawn wholly from New England was to subjugate Acadia, while Shirley was to reduce Niagara with two regiments raised wholly in the provinces but taken into the King's pay and designated as Shirley's and Pepperell's respectively.

These forces with one New Jersey regiment, pushed forward through the wilderness to Oswego; but checkmated by want of provisions and the presence of a strong French force at Frontenac, the little army waited until the approach of winter made further action impossible.

Here, shivering in the chill winds of winter and suffering the pangs of hunger, young Wait saw more than half his regiment die of the attacks of these twin enemies. Reinforcements were started in the spring, but ere they reached the Great Carrying Place between the headwaters of the Hudson and Ontario, the French, under Montcalm, had descended on Oswego and had taken it with its garrison of some fourteen hundred men.

A scene of drunkenness and plunder followed, and several prisoners were butchered by the Indian allies. More would have fallen but for the efforts of Montcalm. Here, or in some preliminary skirmish (on this point only there seems to be some doubt) young Wait was taken prisoner and by his Indian captors compelled to run the gauntlet. Other prisoners had received hard usage, so when his turn came, believing, as stated by a grandson who heard him tell the story, that "spunk would be a good antidote for savage barbarity," he (still in the words of his grandson,) "ran through with clenched fists as vicious as a wild bull, knocking them from one side to the other, and when they see him

approaching they had little time enough to take care of themselves." Rescued from the Indians by a Frenchwoman who hid him under a cask in her cellar, he was turned over to the French, and held some months a prisoner of war. Later, he was sent with other prisoners to France, only to be rescued by a British man-of-war and brought back to his native shores.

Immediately he enlisted under his brother Joseph, then captain of a company of Rogers' Rangers, of whom Parkman has said in one of his matchless descriptive passages:

"The best of them were commonly employed on Lake George; and nothing can surpass the adventurous hardihood of their lives. Summer and winter, day and night, were alike to them. Embarked in whale-boats or birch canoes they glided under the silent moon, or in the languid glare of a breathless August, when islands floated in dreamy haze, and the hot air was thick with odors of the pine, or in the bright October, when the jay screamed from the woods, squirrels gathered their hoard, and congregated blackbirds chattered farewell to their summer haunts; when gay mountains basked in light, maples dropped leaves of rustling gold, sumacs glowed like rubies under the dark green of the unchanging spruce, and mossed rocks with all their painted plumage lay double in the watery mirror; that festal evening of the year when jocund nature disrobes herself, to wake again refreshed in the joy of her undying spring; or in the tomb-like silence of the winter forest, with breath frozen on his beard, the ranger strode on snowshoes over the spotless drifts, and like Durer's Knight, a ghastly death stalked ever at his side."

In the spring of 1758 a powerful force was gathered for the reduction of the French fortress at Louisburg, and placed under the command of the newly created general, Jeffrey Amherst. To this army were assigned several companies of rangers, the only provincial troops in the command.

On June 2 the fleet of Admiral Boscawen sailed into Gabarus Bay, and at daybreak on the 8th the troops attempted a landing. In the division under General Wolf, the future hero of Quebec, which was to make the real attack, were the New England rangers. We cannot enter into details of that conflict; suffice it to say that under heavy fire the boats were driven to the shore, a landing made, and the French batteries captured. Young Wait was, if his own relation of the story is to be credited, in command of one of these boats, and when his men faltered and lay down to screen themselves from the French fire, told them

to stand up to their work or take to the water. After the fall of Louisburg, he returned with those troops which Amherst led immediately to the reinforcement of Abercrombie at Lake George, where he arrived early in October, 1758. Here until the close of the war he was engaged directly under Rogers in the capacity of ensign in his brother's company.

July, 1759, saw a slow advance, with Ticonderoga, Crown Point and Montreal as its objectives. The French successively abandoned Ticonderoga and Crown Point and fell back to the foot of the lake, while Amherst dawdled away the summer. In August he attempted to communicate with Wolfe at Quebec, but the St. Francis Indians, who throughout the war had been the scourge of the New England frontiers, seized the messengers and carried them to Montreal. Rogers was straightway ordered to destroy their village, which lay on the St. Francis River near its junction with the St. Lawrence, a journey of more than two hundred miles through an unbroken wilderness. Taking about 200 of his best men (among them Joseph and Benjamin Wait) he set out in boats on September 13 and on the tenth day reached Missisquoi Bay, his force reduced by accident to 142. Hiding the boats these men struck boldly into the forest, but on the second day two friendly Indians brought the news that a party of French, superior in numbers, were on their track. Rogers, nothing daunted, kept on, out-marched his pursuers for nine days through swamp and forest, fell upon the village, killed 200 Indians, took 20 prisoners, and released 5 English captives with loss of 1 killed and 7 wounded. Then, as his return was blocked, and waiting but an hour for rest, he plunged southward up the St. Francis, intending to return by way of Lake Memphremagog and the Connecticut River. The scanty provisions failed as they reached the lake, and, closely pursued, the men separated into small parties, the better to obtain game. Several were killed or captured, and others perished from starvation. So reduced were they that powder horns and leathern accoutrements were boiled to furnish sustenance. The loss was more than one-third of the total number. It was anticipated that succor would reach them at the mouth of the Ammonoosuck River, to which place Rogers had requested provisions to be sent, but when that point was reached the famished soldiers found only the still warm ashes of the camp fires deserted by their rescuers, who, waiting but two days, had retreated in a panic, taking the provisions with them.

Leaving the others to follow as best they could, Rogers, with three companions, pressed on, and after five days of almost incredible suffering reached No. Four (Charlestown, N. H.) and despatched provisions to the sufferers, many of whom soon returned to service on Lake Champlain.

Meanwhile Quebec had fallen, and in the summer of 1760 the British advanced upon Montreal from east, west and south. The rangers were with Haviland, who advanced down Champlain from Crown Point.

The French fell back upon the St. Lawrence, abandoning St. Johns, and Haviland followed with the rangers leading the way. The various English forces formed their junction at Montreal, and on September 8 Vaudreuil signed the capitulation by which Canada passed to the British Crown. Here Wait saw once more in British hands the colors of his regiment captured by the French at Oswego, four years before.

Four days later Amherst ordered Rogers to proceed westward with Capt. Wait's and Capt. Hazen's companies of rangers to take possession of Detroit, Michilimackinac and other forts in that district. The next day (September 13) they left Montreal in whaleboats, and Rogers' journal follows in detail the movements of the party. Reaching Detroit, Lieut. Butler and Ensign Wait with 20 men were sent westward to bring in the French troops at Forts Miami and Gatenois. This service, performed in dead of winter, made a lasting impression, and in later years Wait related how the men, becoming disheartened and benumbed with cold, would beg of him to shoot them, instead of which he switched their legs with sticks until aroused by anger they resumed their march.

Not until the spring of 1761 did these troops reach New York and not until October were they disbanded, so that at the age of twenty-five, Wait found himself a veteran of six years of constant and exacting warfare, having participated in more than forty skirmishes and battles. Returning to Brookfield, he seems to have interested himself with his brother Joseph in urging forward settlers to the towns along the Connecticut River, but it was not until 1767 that he married and with his girl wife pushed out to the frontier to make himself a home. He chose a farm in Windsor West Parish, and here he remained for more than twenty years, marked from the beginning as one of the leading men of Eastern Vermont.

Windsor was a hotbed of sympathy with the New Hampshire Grants, and her citizens, prominent among whom were Benjamin Wait and his brother Joseph, met the New York authorities with open defiance and not infrequently with actual violence. In May, 1770, Benjamin and his brother Joseph were arrested on a New York warrant but rescued by their friends. Before the end of the month, the New York sheriff, Daniel Whipple, had gathered a posse of some fifteen men and attempted a recapture, but the brothers, having collected a party of friends, gave battle and took the sheriff and his entire party prisoners and held them so for several hours, until better judgment prevailed and they turned the captives loose.

It occasions no surprise that a man of these characteristics was prompt to volunteer upon the outbreak of the Revolution. It has been said that Wait was with Allen at the capture of Ticonderoga but this at best is doubtful. Certain it is, however, that in June, 1775, in spite of his opposition to that colony, he joined with William Williams and Joab Hoisington in a letter to the New York authorities urging that a regiment of "good, active, enterprising soldiers" be raised for the defence of the section, and tendering his services as Lieutenant-Colonel. Two months later he was chosen Major of the upper regiment in Cumberland County, but confirmation was refused—presumably because of his former opposition to New York. Not until October, 1776, was he commissioned, and then received appointment as Captain of the first company of Joab Hoisington's Rangers raised for service on the northern frontiers with headquarters at Newbury. These troops performed a varied and somewhat uncertain service, sometimes acting under and sometimes in open defiance of the New York authorities. In fact the spirit of hostility to New York had become so great that not only were the rangers slow to act under her orders, but when in February, 1777, an attempt was made to enlist a regiment for service at Ticonderoga the recruiting officer was obliged to report "the men are averse to go out under the State of New York; neither do I think it possible for me to raise any more." It may be truly said that after the campaign of 1775 Vermont's position was defensive; she did not fight except to defend her own borders from invasion, and with good reason, for she was an outcast, strained to the utmost, and maintaining her existence as best she might by force or by diplomacy against the foreign enemy upon

the north and the still more bitter opponent on her western border.

Hoisington died early in 1777, and Wait, with rank of captain, took command of the battalion. In May the New York Council of Safety ordered the Rangers to Kingston, but as there were no funds to support the men on the march they refused to go. A month later (June 27), aroused by the advance of Burgoyne, the Council resolved that the Rangers be peremptorily ordered to repair to Kingston, N. Y., and funds were sent to Wait to defray the expense. In obedience to orders he proceeded to Newbury, only to find that his men had marched to Ticonderoga. A few days later the evacuation of that fort dispersed them, and on July 14th he ordered them to proceed to Kingston. The men refused to go, however, on the ground that their own frontiers and families must be protected. This situation Wait reported to the Council, who declared their satisfaction with his conduct, but declined action on the conduct of the Rangers.

Amidst all these activities Wait found time for civil service. Elected on the Standing Committee of Correspondence for the County at the Cumberland Convention at Westminster in February, 1775, he was now called to represent his town in the convention which met at Windsor to adopt a constitution for the new State. In the midst of its deliberations came the news of St. Clair's retreat, and at once confusion reigned, but after a short delay work was resumed and the draft under consideration adopted. Forthwith the newly-organized Council of the State voted to raise a regiment of rangers under Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Herrick. In this regiment many from the older companies of rangers seem to have enlisted and among them were Benjamin Wait and his younger brother Richard with rank of Major and Captain, respectively, Benjamin receiving his commission under date of September 3, 1777.

Three weeks later Col. Brown and Major Wait, with some 500 men, were ordered to the vicinity of Ticonderoga to cut Burgoyne's lines of communication—a service so efficiently performed that Wait was commended for "spirited conduct" by the Council.

In February, 1778, an expedition into Canada was proposed, and Vermont was requested to furnish a regiment of rangers. Herrick and Wait were at once commissioned as Colonel and Lieutenant-Colonel, respectively, but the project was abandoned,

and we know no more of Wait's activities until October 23, 1779, when the Council appointed him as Sheriff of Cumberland County, an office that was then little less than military, and which he continued to hold for seven years, except during his absence on the frontiers. In the same month he became a member of the State's Board of War, of which body he seems to have continued an active member until the close of the Revolution. In 1780 with rank of major, he was in the field at the time of the attacks on Royalton and Newbury, and in January, 1781, he was commissioned Major of the First Regiment of Vermont Militia and immediately detailed for service on the frontiers.

Throughout the war disturbances continued between the partisans of New York, who were particularly numerous in Windham County, and those who sought to uphold the authority of Vermont. In 1783 these dissensions reached their height. Guilford was entirely in control of the New Yorkers, and their resistance to Vermont authority became so determined that Governor Chittenden was driven to adopt stringent measures. In October the Assembly provided for raising "one hundred able and effective men to assist the civil authority in carrying into effect the law in the southern part of the County of Windham," and to Wait was entrusted the command, with rank of colonel.

Negotiations having failed, Wait's regiment and other militia gathered at Brattleboro on January 20, 1784, but after a slight show of resistance the Yorkers fled and the authority of the State was upheld.

Early in November, 1786, a mob led by citizens of Barnard and Hartland gathered to prevent the sitting of the court at Windsor, an outbreak that was but a part of Shay's Rebellion. Wait, as sheriff, read the riot act and dispersed them, but one of the number being tried for riot on November 14, a second mob collected. Wait, acting not only as sheriff but as colonel of the Third Regiment, ordered a company of his men from Weathersfield to come to Windsor. With 40 of these men he set out before light on the 17th, and deceiving the guards by taking a circuitous route, attacked the house in Hartland at which the rioters were assembled. Twenty-seven of the leaders were captured, but not until Wait had received a wound that incapacitated him for nearly a month. This experience lingered in his memory, and in old age he used to lament the fact that after passing through many years of military service without a scratch, he was finally

nearly killed by some of his old companions-in-arms while engaged in the enforcement of the laws.

March 1, 1787, he was elected Brigadier General in command of the Third Brigade of militia, and on the records of the Governor and Council for August 24, 1788, appears this minute:

"A letter received from General Wait resigning his office as Brigadier General being read, the Secretary is directed to inform the General that they are unwilling to discharge him until further consideration, and request his continuance in service."

Here ends a soldiery that covered a period of more than thirty years. It was an honorable service, and marked Wait as an efficient military leader. He was equally a leader in other things, as he was yet to demonstrate.

In 1788 his town of Waitsfield was first surveyed and lotted, and the following spring he made preparation to begin its settlement. Let us consider for a moment his situation. He was fifty-three years old. He was leaving the first home his hands had made, and in which his children had all been born. Poverty did not drive him forth, for he ranked high among the well-to-do citizens of the thriving town of Windsor which then ranked tenth in population in the state. He was not seeking cheap land. His fortune in the drawings had been poor, and he had purchased six hundred acres of the best land that lay within the limits of the town. He was at the head of the military affairs of Vermont, had represented his town for four years in the General Assembly, and was well and favorably known throughout the state. He could look forward with reasonable certainty to an honorable old age spent in such comfort as the times afforded.

Just what reasons urged him to take the step we cannot now know, but it is probable that the welfare of his children was the primary cause. The care with which he settled them around him and endowed them with his lands would seem to show it. He may have been a pioneer by nature, as his children were pioneers after him, but whatever the reason, we may congratulate ourselves that he saw fit to stamp upon our town the impress of his character.

No sooner was he fairly settled here than he began to draw about him old neighbors and companions-in-arms, and one likes to think that his own strong character drew hither the men of sterling qualities so numerous among our early settlers.

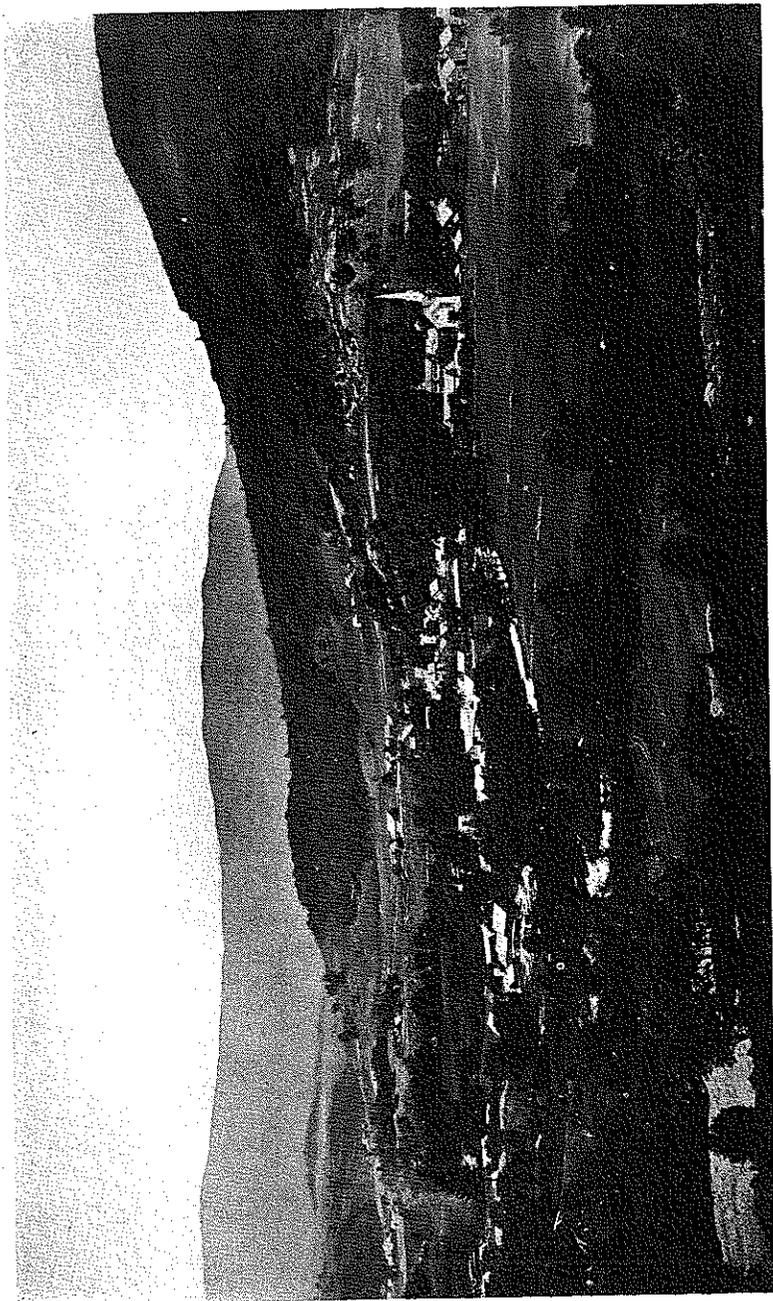
In his former home he was a leader. Here he was *the* leader. At his call the town was organized. He was its first Selectman. He first represented it in the General Assembly of Vermont. In his barn the first church services were held, and in his home the voters of his district provided for the schools. For a full generation he lived and toiled among this people, honored by all who knew him.

To sketch minutely these years of his life is to write the early history of the town, and that shall be the work of other chapters. He rests within a few rods of where he made his first pitch, in the midst of fertile meadows that his own hands cleared and tilled.

For him there is no better epitaph than that spread upon the records of the old church by the hand of his beloved pastor, Amariah Chandler:

"June 28, 1822, General Benjamin Wait, from whom the town was named. He was a distinguished soldier in the last French War, and bore a Colonel's commission in the war of the Revolution. He was the first proprietor and first settler of this town. In early life he made a profession of the religion of Christ. But for many years, was in a state of great backsliding. About ten years before his death his graces seemed to revive. His remaining years he lived lamenting his former lukewarmness, and died in the joyful hope and expectation of a happy resurrection through the abounding mercy of the Great Redeemer.

Obiet June 28, Buried with Masonic honors June 30, 1822, Aet 86 years and 4 months."



WAITFIELD VILLAGE LOOKING WEST TO LINCOLN MOUNTAIN.

HISTORY
OF THE
TOWN OF
WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

1782 - 1908

WITH FAMILY GENEALOGIES

BY

MATT BUSHNELL JONES

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