

## CHAPTER III.

### SURVEYS, DIVISIONS, ROADS AND BRIDGES.

Although, as we have seen, the town was chartered early in the year 1782, the state surveyors were unable, for pressure of business, to run the town lines until the summer of 1787, and this accounts for certain references and dates found in the description of the town set out in the charter that would otherwise occasion some surprise.

The first meeting of the Proprietors, who were in large measure residents of Windsor County, was held at the dwelling house of Capt. Alexander Parmalee in Windsor, Vt., on August 28, 1788. General Roger Enos served as moderator and the other officers chosen were: Stephen Maine, clerk; Isaac Maine, treasurer; Zebulon Lee, collector. It was voted that the township be lotted "into two divisions of 150 acres each," the usual allowance for highways included, and a committee of five was chosen to direct the survey, which was to be completed by the first day of November following.

The work was undertaken by William Strong, and proceeded at once. Supposed to contain 23030 acres, it was found that there were actually within the limits of the town, 23850 acres. The report of the surveyor has already been referred to. It, together with the plan of the lots, was submitted to the Proprietors at a meeting held at the dwelling house of Capt. Timothy Lull in Hartland, Vt., on the fourth day of November, 1788, on which occasion 65 $\frac{1}{2}$  ds. was voted as compensation for the work. It is stated by the surveyor in his notes that his chain did not agree with the survey of the state officials and his work was, in fact, extremely inaccurate, although tradition has it that the fault lay not so much in the surveyor's chain as in the contents of sundry jugs that formed a portion of his impedimenta.

The ranges of lots varied greatly in width. Some lots contained as many as two hundred acres and others as few as one hundred and fifteen, a situation that caused some trouble in later times, especially with land drawn on the public rights,

a portion of which was later leased out by town officials for a term that was to extend "so long as grass grows and water runs."

The survey was also incomplete in that certain undivided land in the form of gores was left along the easterly and southerly lines of the town and it was not until May 9, 1795, that Stephen Maine lotted this common land into seventy-five small lots containing thirty-six acres each.

At the meeting of November 4, the lots of the first division were drawn by the proprietors and in June, 1795, the lots of the second division were drawn in the same manner. The result of these drawings appears in the following table:

	First Division Lots	Second Division Lots
Roger Enos . . . . .	132 & 84	29
Benjamin Wait . . . . .	56 & 148	64
Joel Matthews . . . . .	8 & 99	67
Daniel Matthews . . . . .	16 & 120	44
James Matthews . . . . .	22 & 149	66
Ephraim Edey . . . . .	49 & 113	10
Nathan Edey . . . . .	50 & 53	6
Barnabas Strong . . . . .	89 & 109	1
Aaron Whipple . . . . .	30 & 61	12
Ezekiel Rooks . . . . .	32 & 101	37
Charles Nelson . . . . .	115 & 46	49
Daniel Brown . . . . .	116 & 34	43
Amasa Brown . . . . .	24 & 43	35
William Lothrop . . . . .	59 & 141	2
Luther Richards . . . . .	26 & 126	25
Sanford Kingsbury . . . . .	139 & 134	3
Charles Kingsbury . . . . .	69 & 18	18
Reuben Spencer . . . . .	19 & 29	16
Barnabas Spencer . . . . .	95 & 57	4
John W. Dana . . . . .	67 & 97	38
Ebenezer Brown . . . . .	111 & 79	31
Samuel Harris . . . . .	1 & 31	14
Samuel Treat . . . . .	80 & 28	45
Edward Whitman . . . . .	128 & 140	13
Ezra Jones . . . . .	58 & 106	52
Joseph York . . . . .	117 & 110	8
Gideon Lewis . . . . .	147 & 44	53
Moses Levet . . . . .	45 & 87	20
Christopher York . . . . .	114 & 131	34
Enoch Emerson . . . . .	66 & 124	24
John Benjamin . . . . .	150 & 64	51
John Strong . . . . .	86 & 129	30
Theophilus Clark . . . . .	76 & 96	58

	First Division Lots	Second Division Lots
Andrew Spaulding . . . . .	143 & 144	22
Ammi Currier . . . . .	73 & 36	21
Solomon Burk . . . . .	9 & 63	7
Benjamin Burch . . . . .	5 & 21	72
Benajah Strong . . . . .	47 & 104	28
William Strong . . . . .	15 & 103	23
Stephen Jacobs . . . . .	12 & 142	27
Joseph Farnsworth . . . . .	125 & 6	39
Ephraim Smith . . . . .	118 & 135	32
Beriah Green . . . . .	119 & 51	65
Stephen Tilden . . . . .	40 & 100	40
John Marsh . . . . .	138 & 23	73
Solomon Strong . . . . .	108 & 68	57
Isaac Dana . . . . .	38 & 55	50
Charles Killam, jr. . . . .	146 & 25	62
John Hodges . . . . .	17 & 41	9
Gilbert Hodges . . . . .	7 & 60	46
Amos Bignal . . . . .	75 & 123	33
Roger Enos, jr. . . . .	42 & 98	68
Isaac Maine . . . . .	11 & 14	41
Stephen Maine . . . . .	71 & 81	71
George Denison . . . . .	2 & 52	61
Zebulon Lee . . . . .	88 & 27	56
Paschal P. Enos . . . . .	48 & 78	19
Noadiah Bissell . . . . .	33 & 107	48
John Barret . . . . .	20 & 77	15
Daniel King . . . . .	72 & 37	74
Stephen Keyes . . . . .	10 & 13	75
Gilbert Wait . . . . .	136 & 83	11
Joseph Fay . . . . .	3 & 90	55
Ezra Wait . . . . .	91 & 74	54
James Hawley . . . . .	121 & 94	70
John Beane . . . . .	65 & 62	26
Dearing Spear . . . . .	93 & 133	5
Josiah Averill . . . . .	54 & 82	63
John Fay . . . . .	105 & 85	59
Eli Willard . . . . .	137 & 122	17
College Right . . . . .	39 & 145	60
Grammar School . . . . .	35 & 70	42
Minister Right . . . . .	102 & 112	36
Ministry Right . . . . .	92 & 127	47
Town School . . . . .	130 & 4	69

A formal plan of the town had not been prepared at the date of the first drawing, but at a meeting of the proprietors held at the Court House in Woodstock, June 2, 1789, a plan was presented and accepted. So far as appears, this was the last

proprietors' meeting held outside the town, for, on September 23, 1789, a vendue of land of delinquent proprietors was held at the house of Benjamin Wait in Waitsfield.

Many proprietors, especially those who had ill fortune in the drawings, became weary of their bargain and allowed their rights to lapse. 1£, 10s. was the prevailing price at this vendue for a proprietor's right, which carried two lots of 150 acres each. A large number of these shares were bid off by General Wait, who became, from that time, the controlling factor among the Proprietors, who beyond occasional vendue sales and the meeting in 1795 to provide for the survey of the second division, seem never to have taken further action as a body.

As the town developed it became clear that the mountain range which traversed it from northeast to southwest formed a practical barrier to business and political union between the two sections. At the March meeting in 1815 it was voted "That the land on the east side of the mountain be set off as a separate township, provided the legislature will pass an act for that purpose." This, so far as can be ascertained, was the first consideration of the question, and resulted in the passage of an act by the General Assembly of Vermont on November 7, 1822, by which three tiers of lots of the original division, and all of the second division lots that lay along the eastern boundary, were set off to Northfield. This act proving faulty, another was passed November 3, 1823, under the terms of which four tiers of lots on the easterly side of the town, including one tier of the small lots, and all the small lots on the southerly side lying east of lot 150, were annexed to Northfield.

This was only a half-way measure, and it occasions no surprise to find that fourteen years later at the March meeting in 1846 it was voted: "the convenience and accommodation of the occupants and owners of land lying east of the mountain range require that those lots, 16 in number, and being Lots 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 66 and 38, should be annexed to Northfield." The selectmen were instructed to cooperate with the selectmen of Northfield to bring this about, and on October 26, 1846, the Legislature passed the necessary act.

That portion of the town east of the mountains was slow in development, and had so little in common with the remaining section that only occasional reference will be made to it and its early settlers in the following pages.

At an early day the annexation of Fayston was agitated and on January 24, 1804, at a town meeting called "To see if the town will agree to join with the Proprietors of Fayston to Pétition the General Assembly next to be holden at Winsor in January 1804 to have Fayston Annexed to Waitsfield by the name of Waitsfield to enjoy the Privileges as though they were separate," it was voted 41 to 39 to agree in the proposed action. The opposition was determined, however, and no actual steps to bring about the union seem to have been taken.

One who is unfamiliar with old records, especially those of our small country towns, can scarcely appreciate the difficulty of determining therefrom with any degree of exactness the boundaries of any given lot of land or the course of any given highway. At first it might appear to be a mere question of mathematics, but when one finds the survey of a highway "beginning near the south corner of Thomas Green's cornfield" he soon realizes that the uncertainties of life extend even to the surveyor's art.

In general, however, one may trace the courses of early surveys, and to the local historian it is a matter of no small interest to follow the development of a town as shown by the laying out of its roads and the construction of its bridges.

The first road—if it may be termed a road—which traversed our valley was doubtless an Indian trail following the river; but that certainly did not avail to accommodate the settlers, for at the second meeting of Proprietors, on November 4, 1788, we find that William Strong, the surveyor, was allowed 3£ for clearing a road to Waitsfield. This can have been hardly more than a bridle path, and probably only a footpath down the valley from Kingston. That it was but temporary appears from the fact that the same meeting made choice of Sanford Kingsbury, Esq., Lieut. David Currier and Mr. William Sweetser as a committee "to look a road into Waitsfield." This committee was assisted by General Wait, and reported, on June 2, 1789: "we have looked three ways that we were directed, and found the way through Warren Hollow will accommodate the settle of the town best. We find there may be a road to Northfield that will accommodate the settlement of the east part of the town. The road through Warren will strike Waitsfield south line near the fifth range line, from Fayston, thence keeping on that line through said town to the north line, and then turning

down to the river. We find that there will be another wanting to leave the above road on lot No. 90 or 88, and turn down to the river, to strike what is called the Great Eddy, from thence down the river to Moretown line."

In October, 1790, a tax of two pence per acre was voted, one-half of which was to be expended for roads and bridges, and although no elaborate roads were then surveyed, it is certain that bridle paths, at least, were constructed substantially in accordance with the above vote, except that the first road was not extended to the Moretown line, but turned down to the river near the north line of lot 123, where a small bridge was constructed on or near the site of the present bridge on the Wilder farm, to communicate with the road on the west side of the river. A bridge was also constructed at the "Great Eddy," on the site of the present bridge in the village—at least a bridge had been constructed there prior to the first formal survey of a highway in 1796.

There must also have been an early road running southerly from a point not far west of the "Great Eddy" to Heaton's Mills, and thence over the brook and up Dana Hill. In fact, the earliest recorded reference to a bridge is found in the town records under date of August 25, 1796, when Henry and Foster Dana were instructed "to cover the bridge over the Mill Pond," an act that was accomplished by them at an expense of \$25.83.

The first survey of a highway within the town limits is dated March 11, 1796. This road entered the town on the Moretown line in lot 119, substantially as at present, and came up the west side of the river. Indeed there seems to have been little variation from the present highway location until it reached the foot of the ledge near Gen. Wait's house, where, instead of taking the present turn to the south, it kept straight on to a point at the foot of the terrace in the rear of the present Methodist Meeting-house, whence it swung over the easterly edge of the terrace, across the present site of the Methodist parsonage, until it struck the upper edge of the open square in the village. Here it took a sharp turn to the left and ran as now laid out to the bridge at the "Great Eddy" and beyond to the top of the present "Mill Hill." Thence, with probably no great variation from the present layout, it ran through lots 135, 102, 99, 97, 92, 91, 46, and the gore lands, to the Warren line, a distance



A BIT OF THE VILLAGE SQUARE.

of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles. This was known as the Roxbury Road, and was so used for many years, although travel to that point now goes by way of East Warren, which is reached by the so-called Kingston Road that was surveyed March 12, 1796. This road began at the last described highway in lot 91, at the top of the hill to the south of Fay's Brook, and ran in substantially its present course to the Warren line, whence it continued through the wilderness (Warren was then unsettled) to Kingston, now called Granville, and the settled communities to the south.

On the same date the surveyor laid out the old north and south road, which started at the Roxbury Road, in the southerly part of lot 90, near the present School-house No. 4, and continued thence with little variation from its present location through lots 90, 88, 86 and 84 to the northwest corner of lot 103, a little easterly of the present School-house No. 3, where instead of running up the hill to the Common as it now does, it took a sharp turn to the northwest, along the northerly line of lot 103, for some rods, and continued thence through lot 105 to the Common.

The next year (June, 1797) the road along the north line of 103 was extended westerly to the road running from the "Great Eddy" to the Common, and easterly to Palmer Hill, while ten years later the early road across lot 105 was discontinued and the present highway was built directly from the northwest corner of lot 103 to the Common.

From the Common the old road continued northerly on the line between lots 107 and 108, and thence through lots 110 and 112, to the northwest corner of lot 114, where it took a sharp turn to the west, as at present, and crossed the river to the road on the west side by the bridge already mentioned. It was not until March, 1797, that it was laid out through lots 116, 118 and 119 to the Moretown line, as contemplated in the original vote of the Proprietors.

Ten years later (1807) the Mad River Turnpike was surveyed, beginning at the mouth of Mad River in Moretown, thence up the river to Waitsfield line from which point it followed the North Road over the Common to the Warren line and thence through Warren and Granville to the bridge over the White River, near Lord's Tavern on the Centre Turnpike in Hancock; but so far as can be ascertained nothing further was done in the matter.

In January, 1797, the road from the "Great Eddy" to the Common was laid out. It did not run as now located, but branched from the Roxbury Road at a point near the present gristmill, some 36 rods east of the bridge, and ran through the present mill-yard to the top of the terrace along Clay (then Sherman's) Brook in a course that may now be easily followed. Thence it followed the edge of this terrace to a point a little below or northerly of the present bridge across Clay Brook, where it crossed the gorge upon a rude structure and proceeded through the woodland to the old James Joslin place, in the northeast corner of lot 103, from which point to the Common, and thence easterly through lots 107, 109, 78, 76 and 74, to Amasa Skinner's buildings in lot 72, its course did not differ materially from the present location. In 1803 this road was extended through lots 72 and 70 to the Moretown line, but the extension was abandoned in 1822. In 1808 the location along Clay Brook was abandoned and the road constructed as now laid out from the bridge over the brook to the Roxbury Road, at the present junction in lot 133.

The next main artery of travel to receive attention was the road leading southwesterly to the mills and thence up Dana Hill to the homes of the Dana family on lots 143 and 144. Here we find material change from the present location. The highway was laid out January, 1797, and commenced at a point on the Roxbury Road near Ezra Wait's house just at the foot of the terrace back of the Methodist Meeting-house. Bearing thence westerly, it hugged the ledges until it pitched down through the present sugar orchard on lot 136, in the rear of Newcomb's shop. Crossing the brook at a point southwest of the little mill pond it bore to the south, and near the southerly line of the lot struck and followed the edge of the terrace above the river to a point near the cemetery of today, where it swung down into the valley of Mill Brook and turning westerly again to the mills bore directly up Dana Hill.

Soon after this the river road along the south side of lot 138, and thence through 139, 96, 94, and the gore lands, to the Warren line, was laid out.

These were the main lines of travel in the present township. Business centered on the Common, on the south road in lot 88, and on the ledges northeast of General Wait's house. In the present village there were no houses, and not for many years was

our main street laid out. On September 20, 1820, the road to Green's Mills was relocated northerly from Jeduthan Wait's buildings to a point in the present village near where the house of Hiram Freeman Stoddard stands, and on April 16, 1833, it was extended to a junction with the old Roxbury Road at the present village square.

In that year the question was first agitated of a road leading from this point northerly through the meadows. In 1835 it was surveyed  $3\frac{1}{2}$  rods wide from the "Brick Store" N. 44 East 96 rods, then N.  $23\frac{1}{2}$  West 48 rods, then N. 31 East 20 rods to the old Roxbury Road, but not until 1837 was it actually laid out, and not until July, 1838, was the old road leading from Jeduthan Wait's to General Wait's house discontinued.

In 1848 the meadow road, so-called, extending from a point near the present village school-house to another junction with the old road in lot 130 was laid out by commissioners who reported that it should be constructed through the land of Dan Richardson, George B. Carroll and Daniel Nourse to the land of Orson Skinner, and thence through his land to the road leading from Waitsfield to Middlesex. Even then the town would not proceed with the construction of the road until Orson Skinner, Samuel Chipman, Ira Richardson, James M. Richardson, John Walton and Calvin Fullerton offered to give bond that they would build it for 50 cents a rod and construct all necessary culverts, the road "to be built one rod wide from the centre of the ditches and well built and turnpiked."

Just when the upper and lower bridges, as they were called, were thrown across the river we cannot say, but doubtless very early, as they are spoken of in the surveys of 1796. In the fall of 1798 they were carried away, and were rebuilt at a cost of \$200.38. A tax was levied to cover this expense payable in wheat at 83 cents a bushel and corn at 50 cents a bushel.

In 1802 the bridge near Heaton's (then called Green's) Mills, was moved, probably to its present location, and in the same year a bridge was constructed across the river near Dr. Simeon Stoddard's—a matter that the worthy doctor had agitated since 1799.

The report of the committee chosen to view the proposed site was that a bridge might be built against the ledge on the west side of the river 15 or 20 rods south of the Stoddard house "with two pair of Trustles Posts, one on each side of the stream,

and that an abutment ought also to be built on the east side of said river about 40 feet from the Trustles Posts about 5 or 7 feet in height, and that the Bridge ought to be so high as to be laid from said abutment to the top of said Rocks."

We have already noted the hesitation with which the town obligated itself to construct new bridges, especially where but few residents were materially accommodated thereby. In case the pressure became strong it was customary for the town to vote a specific sum toward the building of a bridge, as, for example, in September, 1819, when it was voted to appropriate \$35 toward building a bridge over Pine Brook, near Joel Skinner's sawmill, provided any individual should care to erect it to the satisfaction of the selectmen. Elsewhere it appears that Ezra Jones had assumed the obligation to construct and maintain a bridge over the river, and in May, 1829, a vote was passed relieving him of the obligation to maintain it in the future if he would release the town from any claim for the construction of the bridge.

In 1806 all the bridges on the river seem to have been severely damaged by floods, as John Burdick, Salah Smith and Phineas Rider were chosen a committee to repair or rebuild them, if necessary. Repairs were at first made, but in 1807 the bridge at the "Great Eddy" in the village was rebuilt, and in the following year the bridge over Mill Brook at Green's Mills was renewed.

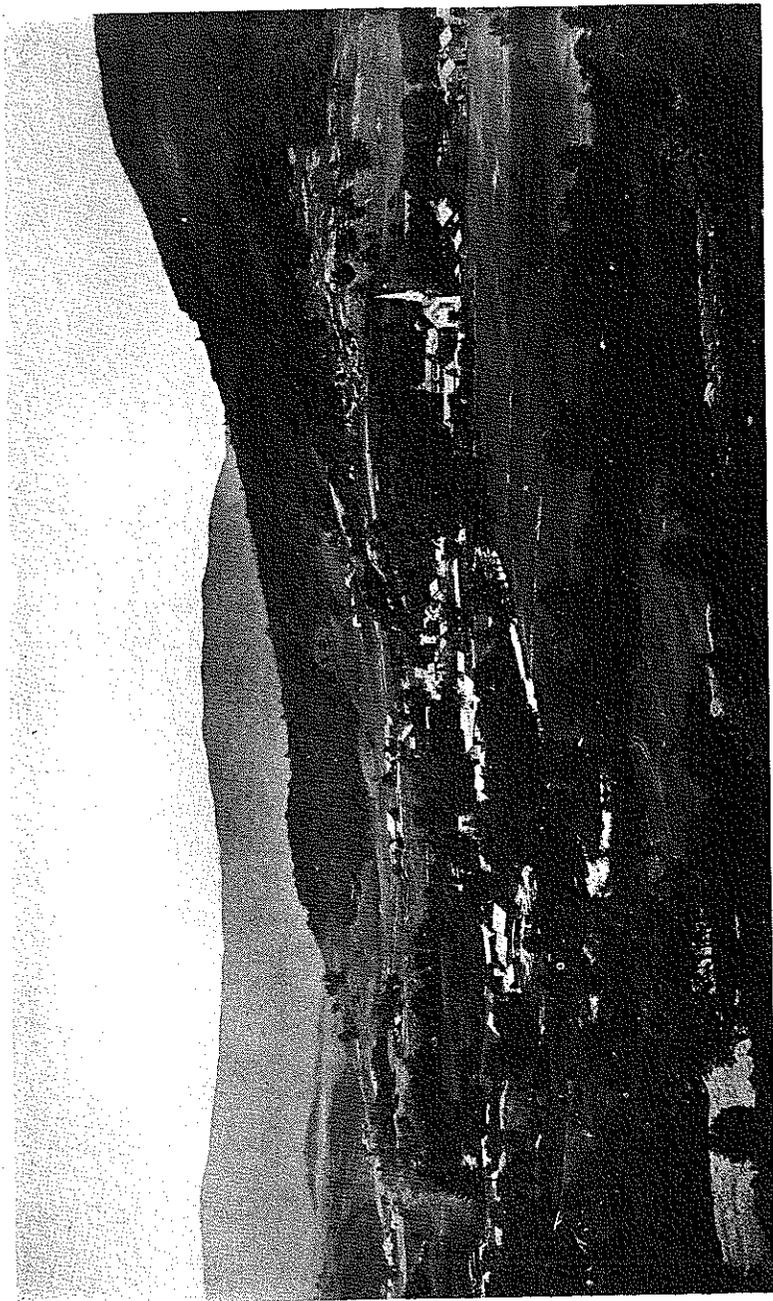
Cheaply constructed, these bridges were an easy prey to floods. In fact, no tax was levied more regularly than that to rebuild and repair bridges. In April, 1814, the bridge in the village and the Stoddard bridge were again destroyed, but the town felt poor and refused to rebuild the latter until late in 1815.

In 1816 the lower bridge over the river was condemned and rebuilt, and in 1824 every bridge on the stream was carried away, while in 1830 the same catastrophe occurred again, and, in addition, one bridge over Shepherd's Brook, one over Fay's Brook, and two over Mill Brook had to be rebuilt.

These frequent losses from floods brought home to the voters the necessity of more permanent structures, and in 1830 provision was made for erecting the present covered bridge at the "Great Eddy," a work that was completed in 1833, the tax therefor being payable in labor at 8 cents an hour for "good common labor."

In the same year the erection of the mills at the village made it necessary to construct a bridge over the canal, a matter that resulted in a controversy with the mill company, but was finally adjusted to the satisfaction of the town.

The present bridge over Clay Brook, known as the "high bridge," was constructed about 1855, and the "lower bridge" was made permanent in 1852. The bridge across the river in lot 129 dates from 1855, there having been no bridge at that point until the connection between the old north road and the river road was constructed in the year named.



WAITFIELD 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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