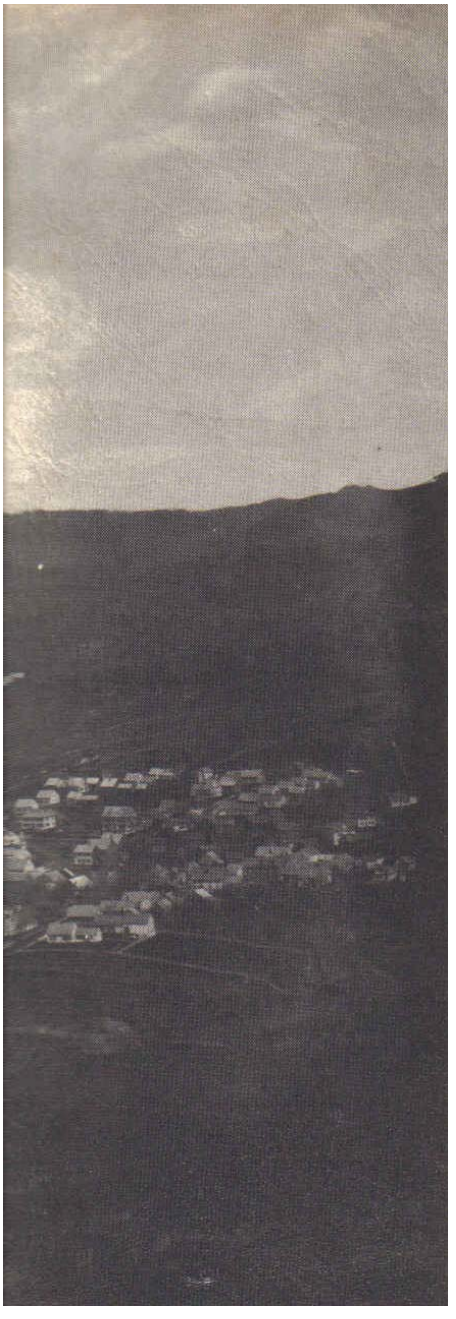


1764 - 1964

CITY OF CLAREMONT
INCORPORATED 1764
CITY ESTABLISHED
JAN. 1, 1948
NEW HAMPSHIRE

CLAREMONT N. H. BICENTENNIAL

CLAREMONT, N.H.

BICENTENNIAL

1764 - 1964

We Honor Our Heritage

Much research has gone into the making of this brochure, designed to summarize past events in Claremont's history and to preserve fact and legend in printed form for posterity. To all those who have aided in any way, the Claremont Bicentennial Committee is profoundly grateful.

Despite best efforts of the editors and their aides, errors of various sorts are unavoidable. It is urgently requested that readers who come upon errors of fact which should be corrected, write these facts correctly and submit them in letter form to the committee. Such corrections will be made an integral part of the bicentennial brochure when it is placed on file in Fiske Free Library for future study and consultation. -- The Editors.

CLAREMONT'S HISTORY

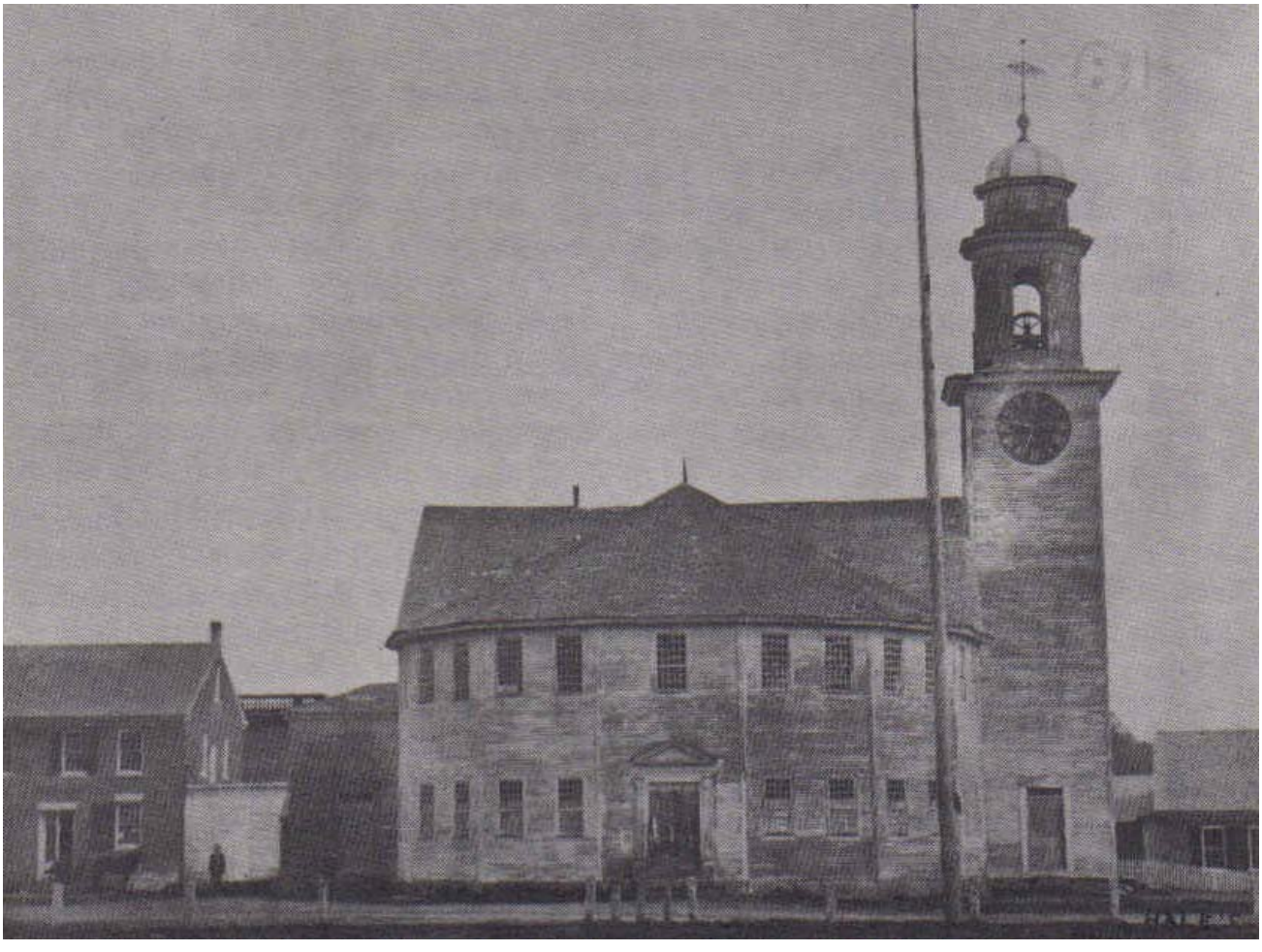
On October 26, 1764, when Gov. Benning Wentworth signed the grant chartered by George III of England establishing the town of Claremont, this six-mile square town was the largest in New Hampshire.

There had been settlers here before Claremont existed. One of them, Moses Spafford, a year before the town was chartered, fathered a son, born in a log cabin, and named him Elijah—the first white child born in Claremont.

In 1767 an 18-year-old boy, Ambrose Cossit, came to Claremont from Granby, Conn.; he was to establish a store at the corner of Broad and Chestnut Sts. And to hold many positions of trust in the community.

In the same year Thomas Warner, born in 1748 in Connecticut, was living in West Claremont when Benjamin Tyler arrived with his family from Farmington, Conn., and settled along the Sugar River. They had scarcely arrived before the ice went out and spring flooding compelled the Tylers to take refuge for a time with the Warners.

Barnabas Ellis, aged 22, came also in this year from Hebron, Conn.; his marriage to Elizabeth Spencer in 1769 was the first wedding in Claremont. There was no minister in the town at the time, and the Rev. Bulkley Olcott of Charlestown was guided through the woods by the bridegrooms brother. The ceremony, history says, was performed in the largest log cabin then available—three rooms and a ladder of spruce poles leading to a loft chamber. The guests were



Old Town Hall

seated on benches, stools, and wooden blocks, and the ceremony was performed before a stand on which a bible, a hymn book, and a full tumbler of rum had been placed. A log and active life was granted this early Claremont settler. A Lieutenant with Ethan Allen's expedition against For Ticonderoga and Crown Point in 1775, he served two years later in the Battle of Bennington. His home was on Town Hill, and he was 93 years of age when he died June 26, 1838.

Jeremiah Spencer saw action as a non-commissioned officer both at Ticonderoga and at Saratoga; when his daughter and Ellis were married, he had been a selectman.

Here are some other early settlers:

John Thomas, who came here in 1768 from Connecticut and settled on Red Water Brook; he died May 24, 1798 aged 86 years.

Elihu Stevens, born in 1731 in Guilford, Conn., came in 1768, died in 1814.

Dr. William Sumner, who came here in 1768 from Hebron and owned what is Sumner Tavern, now the Cupola Farm, where he died March 4, 1778.

Timothy Grannis, who came in 1769 fro North Haven, Conn., and later married a daughter of Dr. Sumner; Joseph Taylor, a selectman in 1770, married another of the Sumner girls.

On March 8, 1768, Claremont's first town meeting was held at the home of Capt. Benjamin Brooks, who was chosen moderator and was also elected selectman, along with Ebenezer Skinner, Tyler, Thomas Jones and Amos York. Joseph Ives was town clerk, Benedick Roys and Josiah Rich were named deer reeves.

At an adjourned meeting, $13.33 was raised to defray town charges, and two acres were set aside as a burying ground.

Benjamin Tyler, who had stayed with the Warners while the Sugar River was in flood, wasted no time in damming the river at West Claremont and erecting both a gristmill and a sawmill. There had been a gristmill at Charlestown, built in 1764, but the Tyler mill was the first on the Sugar River.

From 1768 to 1770, we read, the crops were almost a failure. Fish or game became the principal food, and a porridge of beans, peas or milk was common fare. Though some folks were fortunate enough to have pewter or tinware, bowls, dishes and plates were usually made of wood.

In 1769, despite the hard times, the settlement of the town had so far progressed that husbands who had provided cabins sent for their wives and children, and single men began to consider the subject of matrimony.

By 1775 it was the general belief that war with Great Britain was inevitable. The following year 16 Claremonters were serving in the Continental Army. During the Revolution, no favor was shown to Tories, either real or suspected, who were in imminent danger of the loss of liberty and even of life itself.

A committee of Safety was set up to act against those who had refused to pledge themselves to the American cause. In April, 1777, it acted against three Claremonters—Benjamin Sumner, Samuel Cole and the Rev. Ranna Cossit—ordering them to remain within town limits and to refrain from being "seen conversant together" under penalty of jail sentences.

When the notorious "Tory Hole," near Sugar River about a mile below Claremont village was finally discovered, its occupants were routed; it had for some time served as a Royalist rendezvous.

At the initial discovery, two Tories made their escape from the posse which had sought to surround the place. The men swam the Connecticut, fled to the top of Ascutney Mountain, and were overtaken sleeping there. Since they were armed, they could not be rated as spies, so were taken in custody as prisoners of war.

The Hon. George B. Upham, Valley historical authority who wrote numerous descriptive sketches of the early days in Claremont and up and down the valley, later dramatized on of the Tory trials held here during the Revolutionary period.

The Upham recreation of the event, presented in an open air setting with authentic period costumes and furnishings, was produced in August, 1928.

With Upham himself as trial chairman and Mrs. Upham in a minor role, the cast comprised also Mabel Freeman, Lucia Ferguson, Allan and Arthur Hutcheon, John and Albert Leahy, Clarence Parker, William Kinney, Herbert Kimball, Kenneth Jarvis Jr., Howard Hamlin, Gordon Colby, Lyle Ewing, Harry Lloyd, Kenneth Whipple, Cecil Perkins, George Stoughton and Melvin Colby.

Claremont's first highway was laid out over Town Hill, so-called, connecting the early settlement as West Claremont with Claremont village itself. Later a road to Newport was provided, and a road to Windsor also.

Originally settled primarily as a farming community, Claremont turned to manufacturing also as it moved on into the nineteenth century. Water power for early industry was provided by Sugar River, with its total fall of 223 feet in Claremont and 150 feet within the town limits, and with its 13 "mill privileges," eagerly sought in the days before other sources made water power a minimal inducement to industry.

Just before the turn of the century, the town's leading manufactories were the Monadnock Mills, Sugar River Paper Mill Co., Sullivan Machinery Co., Freeman & O'Neil Manufacturing Co. There were also paper mills at both Claremont and West Claremont, saw and grist mill, a shoe shop, a slipper factory—even a staircase factory.

Today Claremont's big Monadnock Mills is no more; but other industries, old and new, keep community economy healthy.

The town's two paper mills, now the Claremont Paper on Sullivan St. and the Coy Paper at West Claremont, are still going strong. The Sullivan Machinery Co. has been absorbed by the Joy Manufacturing Co.; the old Roberts woolen mill has given way to the Dartmouth; Montclare Shoe is operating in the old International factory; Claremont Woven Label is using a portion of the old Monadnock; also there are others, Claremont Flock Corp. and the newer Peterson Plastics, Tampax, Inc., etc.

And the Goddard Realty & Bakery Co., which started as a small retail outlet just 50 years ago, has become a major wholesale bakery in addition to its real estate holdings.

Of Claremont's three banks, the Claremont National was in operation as early as 1826, the Peoples National was organized in 1892, the Claremont Savings in 1907. All three are thriving financial institutions, and two have recently moved into larger and more modern quarters.

Claremont's transportation history is as complicated as the history of railroads in general during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. Service north and south through Claremont Junction was made available by the Sullivan Railroad as early as 1849; service to Concord, due to legendary political maneuvering, didn't come until 1872, when the Concord & Claremont line was completed. Today the service to Concord is gone, the service north and south is skeletal, and bus and van lines take up the slack from the moribund Iron Horse.

This town, like practically every other town, had its experience with street railways, extending over nearly three decades, from the inauguration of service in 1903 to its final abandonment in 1930.

The ecclesiastical history of early-day Claremont followed no set pattern. The prevailing theological system, here as elsewhere in New England, was Congregational, and originally Claremonters were taxed for the support of this majority denomination, though they might personally adhere to another religion.

Claremont has always been a churchly community, despite intolerance which showed itself in an earlier era by dissensions, excommunications, lawsuits, persecutions and other manifestations of bigotry. Three denominations—Methodists, Baptists and Universalists—built jointly at the outset

of the 19th century, a union meeting house on Broad Street, through this amicable arrangement was later abandoned.

Six Claremont denominations—Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Catholic, Episcopalian and Universalist—have church histories extending back for more than a century, most of them for a century and a half or more. The Catholic denomination is represented both by old St. Mary's of West Claremont, built in 1825, and by the newer St. Mary Church on Central St., started in 1870.

Most of the others have moved up from the humble beginnings into modernized and commodious church edifices. Trinity Episcopal Church, an offshoot of West Claremont's Union Church, which is the second oldest Protestant Church in New Hampshire, erected it's own building in 1843.

More recent comers to the local religious field include: Assembly of God Church, 1917; Calvary baptist, 1950; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1955; Church of the Nazarene, 1953; first Church of Christ, Scientist, 1907; Jehovah's Witnesses, 1939; Prince of Peace Lutheran, 1963; Resurrection Russian Orthodox, 1914; St. Joseph, 1920; Seventh Day Adventists, 1920; and Temple Meyer-David, 1905.

Prior to 1778, and until about the close of the Revolutionary War, there were but two schoolhouses in town—one on Town Hill and the other near Union Church. The Whigs sent their children to the former, and the Tories sent theirs to the latter.

Two hundred years has made an appreciable difference. Following an extended period of building "little red schoolhouses" in district after district, school officials started to cut their rural holdings and consolidate pupils in urban buildings, most of which were completely rebuilt or modernized.

Today Claremont public school pupils attend Bluff, Way, West Claremont, Terrace, North or the new building on Maple Ave. Junior high pupils go to the new Junior High School; senior high pupils to a Stevens High School building enlarged to embody refinements and facilities of which its original donor, Paran Stevens, could never have dreamed.

Parochial school pupils have their own elementary classrooms on Central St., plus the recently erected St. Mary High School on Hanorver St., together with modern gymnasium facilities on Main St.

The Claremont General Hospital, enlarged and modernized in 1960, is a far cry from the old Cottage Hospital, adapted from a dwelling, which originally served the town and the area. The Claremont General, brought up to date through a community finance campaign in 1923, had during the next quarter century created demand for more rooms and better facilities; a second drive brought an equally generous response and an institution which today is the pride of the community.

The Eagle, now widely accepted as the Valley's daily newspaper, is the sole survivor of seven journalistic efforts here.

There was the Claremont Spectator, founded in 1823 by Cyrus Barton, and the Argus, founded in 1833 by Edmund Burke. Both of these, subsequently removed to Newport, were merged into the Argus and Spectator, later to become the Newport Argus, now the Argus-Champion. There was the Independent Advocate (1833), the Impartialist (1832), the Compendium (1870) and the Northern Advocate (1849), purchased by and merged with this newspaper in 1941.

And there was the National Eagle, established in October, 1834, under the direction of a committee appointed at a Whig convention in Sullivan County, which this year could have marked its 130th anniversary.

Another October anniversary is that of the Daily Eagle, founded in 1914 by Anson Wood Belding; the weekly was published also for a number of years before its discontinuance. Successive ownerships were those of Welch & Woodward, Lincoln O'Brien, John McLane Clark,

Rhoda Shaw Clark and the present publisher, Edward J. Bennett, who bought the paper March 1, 1962.

O'Brien, in the post-World War II years, briefly pioneered FM radio. The nucleus of his experiment—the radio tower atop Green Mtn—still remains as an integral part of the broadcasting system of AM-FM Radio Station WTSV on Washington St.

The city of Claremont is widely noted for its recreational programs and facilities. With a Community Center and both indoor and outdoor swimming pools, plus parks and playgrounds in all sectors of the community, plus use of facilities of the old armory for basketball and other sports, the Twin State City has a year-round program of planned recreation and diversion for all ages from sub-teens to Senior Citizens.

Claremont has grown immeasurably in these and other directions, during its first 200 years of existence. It looks forward, eagerly and confidently, to the challenges of the next two centuries—and beyond.

Kenneth D. Whipple

Dog Hollow? Cat Hole? Piggery Hill?

Claremont, in common practically with every other community, has a wide assort-ment of place names, many of them dating back to the town's early days. These, in general, range from serious to frivolous. Furthermore, in some instances, there are at least two explanations of their origin.

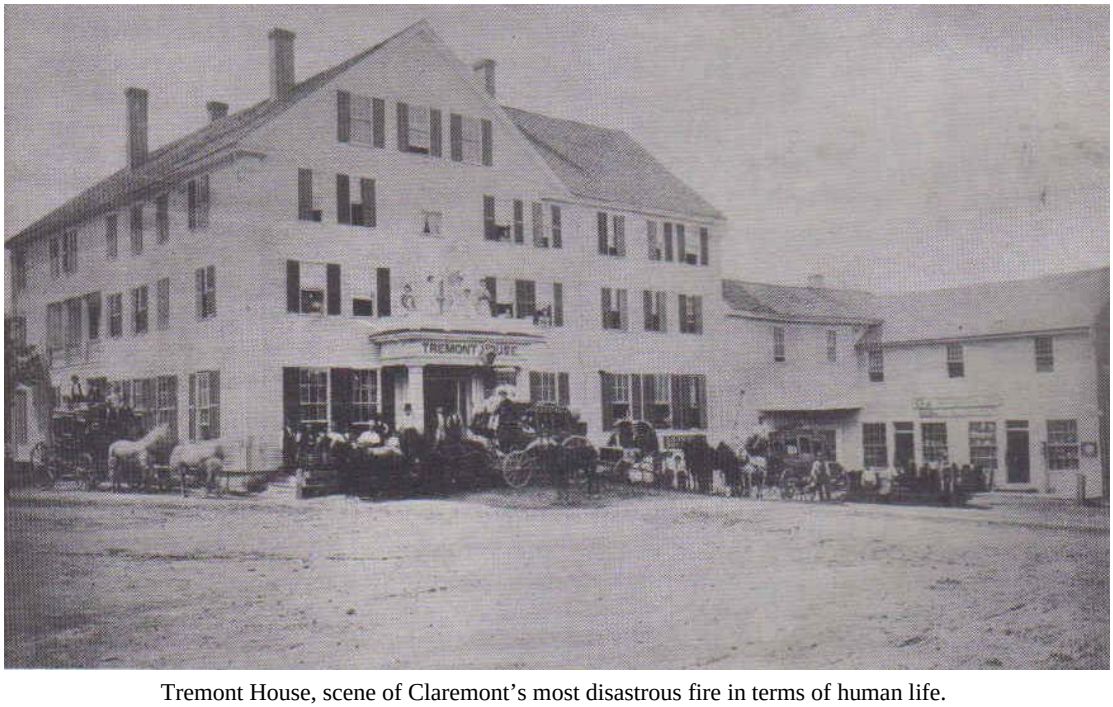
For instance, there's Twistback, as it is now known. One early spelling has it "Tris-back," the origin of which is obscure. As for Twistback itself, one school of thought says that it was so named because of its distinctive twisted appearance. Another cites a legend pertaining to an early traveler who slept on the mountain that night and awoke with a back so sadly twisted that his subsequent lamentations established the name firmly in local history.

Then there's Bible Hill. The most sensible explanation, and probably the true one, is that it was, in early days, an outstandingly religious area. Less believable, although more entertaining, is the tale that an early hilltop resident, finding the icy slope a deterrent to his descent to church services in the village, sat down on his Bible and coasted all the way into Claremont.

There are other explanations, more believable but equally dubious. One is that a visitor, eyeing the green-clad eminence, opined that this must have been one of the hills mentioned in the Bible. Another is that the first printed Bible was owned by a Bible Hill resident. This same source explains that the first New Testament was the property of a resident of "Testament Hollow," at the foot of Bible Hill's western slope.

There's Red Water Brook, with water, it's claimed, easily distinguishable in color from its neighbor, White Water Brook. But legend gives a plausible explanation for this difference. It's tinged with the blood of an Indian.

Early history plays up the story of Tousa, a red man violent in his opposition to the white settlers, who in turn feared him exceedingly. Tousa slept beside a brook one night and a white man took the opportunity to shoot him dead as he slumbered. But the murderer, conscience-stricken, saw (or imagined) that the blood of his victim tinged the waters of the brook crimson. Hence The name.



Tremont House, scene of Claremont's most disastrous fire in terms of human life.
Four, perhaps, five people died when it burned in March, 1879.

Two mid-city names which still persist, despite the passage of years, are Dog Hollow and Stink Street, nowadays respectively (and respectfully) named Tremont Street and Crescent Street. (Actually, and accurately, the "hollow" was at the intersection of Tremont and Broad; but the name has clung to the former street rather thatn the latter.)

Dog Hollow, so-called, was a popular rendezvous for dogs, the fact being explained by the presence there of the town's only meat market, run by Philemon Tolles. Stink Street, running parallel to Dog Hollow (pardon us, Tremont St.), was made odoriferous by the presence of piggeries, stables and outhouses at the rear of Tremont Street residences.

Pigs, or piggeries, or both, also figured in the naming of the extreme end of North Street just before it joins Main. The hollow at the foot of Pig Hill was practically given over to pig-raising, and children of that era went "sliding on piggery." The pigs are long gone, but the name persists.

Green Mountain, we are told, derived its name from its evergreen slopes; Flat Rock, from its distinctive appearance. The Fordway, between Puckershire and Washington St., was in the early days fordable by team, and many crossings were made of Sugar River here to avoid the long way around into town and out again.

Puckershire itself rates mention also. Best explanation appears to be that it was named for "Pucker" Alden, so called because of a distinct facial peculiarity. Allegedly he was a descendant also of John (Why-Don't-You-Speak-for-Yourself) Alden of Puritan fame, but this fact was generally forgotten at the sight of his twisted visage. Another version has it that Alden's "pucker" occurred when he was showing pupils how to sing, and that small boys had given him the nickname. Two other colorful names that survive are those of Cat Hole and Slab City.

The Cat Hole district, in the Green Mountain foothills west of North Newport, was in the early days infested by bobcats. Slab City, more or less adjacent, had an early sawmill and an

Ruins of the Tremont House, looking west toward Twistback and Ascutney.

early carpenter shop—enough activity to justify its nickname.

Also in Claremont's suburbs, so to speak, was the Borough, or Hemp Yard, a distance up Red Water Brook (stained with Tousa's blood) from the old Red Water Brook school house. Hemp Yar—partly in Claremont, partly in Corbin park—drew its name from the nature of the crop raised there.

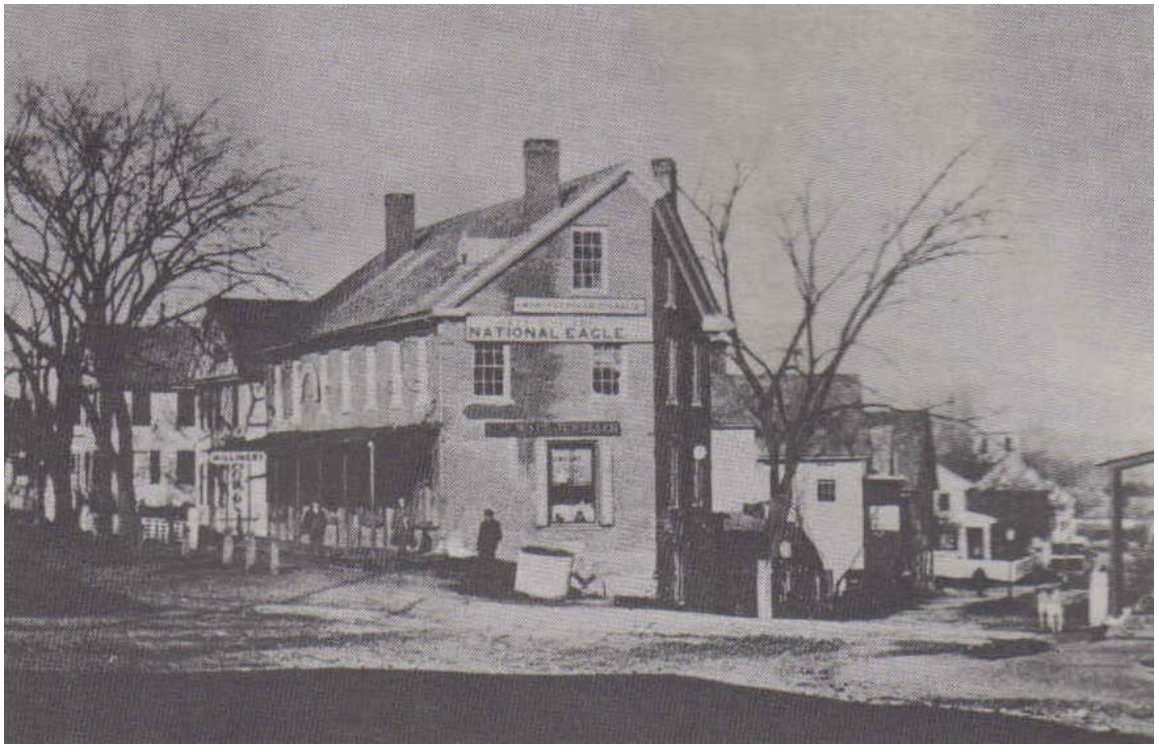
Some urban place names are still used, though their origin has in general long been forgotten. Dexter Hill, the north end of Broad Street, was named after David Dexter, who lived in the "Fitchburg" and owned much of the land there.

Severenceville, in the South Street area, came justly by its name. Three early Claremonters, Ben, George and Lucien Severance, not only lived there but built many of the Severanceville houses.

Draper Corner—which is at the intersection of Pleasant Street, Mulberry Street and Maple Avenue, not at West Pleasant—was named for two other early prominent Claremonters, Eli and Harvey Draper.

Tory Hole, off the West Claremont Road, was a cave of sorts which in pre-Revolutionary days served as an "underground" by which Royalists, or Tories, cam and went undetected for a considerable time. But the place was finally discovered and its two occupants chased across the Connecticut and eventually captured.

Also in the West Claremont area is Lottery Bridge, across the Sugar River just east of the Connecticut, derives its name from the fact that it was the last public work done in New Hamp-



Looking west and northwest on Sullivan and Main Streets. Foreground is Fiske Block, now the VFW Home.

shire by funds raised by a lottery. Those who named it had no intimation that 1964 would see the Granite State again in the lottery business.

Claremont's streets, we read, were formally named by a special town committee in 1825; a list of these names would be interesting. No community would be complete without a Spring, a Summer and a Winter Street (why no Fall? Why no Autumn?) No community would be complete without such tree named streets as Elm, Maple (two of these) and Chestnut, not to mention such allied titles as Myrtle, Bay, Fern, Laurel, Forest, Grove and others. And, traditionally, there are also streets named for the four points of the compass.

Pine Street was named, whether by the committee or not, for "four young fir balsams which shortly died." Mulberry Street derived its name from Ephraim Tyler's grove of mulberry trees through which it passed. Bond Street was named for a Bond Family which occupied almost the only house on the street at the time. Tyler Street was named for the Tyler family of early settlers.

Winter Street was once known as Henniker Lane, for reasons too obscure to explain here. Pine Street's earlier nickname, variously given as Scrap Alley or Strap Alley, derived from the fact that its narrow thoroughfare was partly filled with scraps of leather tossed out by the busy shoemaker in the Farwell shoe shop.

Joy's Crossing on the West Claremont road has nothing to do with the Joy Manufacturing Co. The father of the late Frank E. Joy built the house still standing there; hence the name.

Summersville was the name given earlier to that section of West Claremont centering about Sumner's Tavern. It is reported that the area also once had a Slumpshire—not to be confused with Charlestown's Snumshire. Poor Farm Hill, nowadays known as Airport Hill, acquired its name logically enough; it adjoined the town of poor farm.

Earlier we mentioned the fact that place name origins have more than one explanation. This holds true also of our own Sugar River.

It's generally conceded that the river wasn't named for the sugar maples which once grew thickly along its banks.

Instead, its original name as "Shuhgah" river or "Heron" river, for the large number of herons along its course. Cited are two lines from Longfellow's "Hiawatha":

"Where the heron, the Shuh-shuhgah
Feeds along the reed and rushes."

But there was also a Heron tribe of Indians. Did this tribe live hereabouts, or didn't it?

One account says that the Shuhgah Indians' last camping place was on the old Solomon Hubbard farm, later in the Rush Chellis farm, on Washington St. Ext. Another researcher is skeptical whether the tribe ever did live in this area. Take your choice.

We might close by raising the question of our Twin State City's own name—Claremont.

For a time, earlier this year, it seemed that belief that Claremont was named after the country estate of Lord Clive in England might be insecurely founded. Further investigation, however, has reaffirmed the original story.

But Claremont, it seems, was not always Claremont. Historians tell how once upon a time part of Claremont (all of it, another source says) was in Buckingham, a township of paper which existed but briefly.

Historian George B. Upham states positively that Claremont was once known (mistakenly, but definitely) as Ashley. It's Ashley on an old French map published in Paris in 1779; the map locates it near "Petite Sugar R." It's Ashley on an English map published the same year, which shows no settlements east of the Connecticut River but Charlestown; a similar map put out the following year shows Ashley also.

"The London geographers," commented Upham, "would not have marked this place Ashley on their maps had they not been reliably informed that it was thus called by people living in or near it."

And, finally:

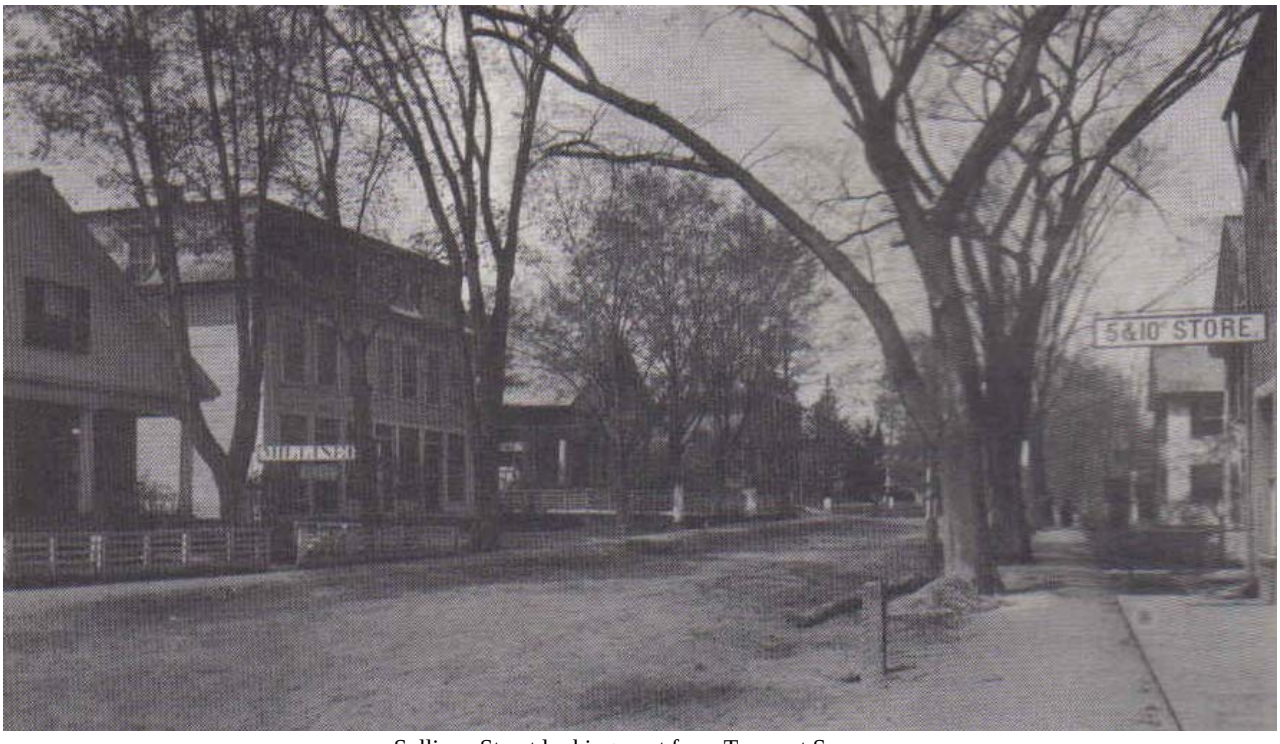
Did you think that Claremont has always been in New Hampshire? Well, it hasn't.

From April, 1781, to February 1782, Claremont and 34 other western New Hampshire towns, seceding from their rightful allegiance, officially joined Vermont, sending representatives to one Vermont General Assembly held at Windsor and to another Vermont General Assembly held later at Charlestown.

There's even an old property deed which describes Claremont as "in the State of New Hampshire alias Vermont."

It's not every town that, in the first two decades of its existence, has been in two different states.

Claremont's old two-towered Town hall, demolished to make way for the Opera House.



Sullivan Street looking west from Tremont Square.

HURRICANES AND FLOODS

"Devastation and destruction beyond the memory of the oldest inhabitant swept the town of Claremont last night on the wings of a tropical hurricane which struck shortly before dusk, continued with increasing intensity for more than two hours, and departed northward after wreaking unprecedented and widespread damage."

In these words the Daily Eagle of Sept. 22, 1938, described what was unquestionably the worst natural disaster suffered by our Twin State City in its two centuries of existance.

Though Claremont was fortunate in suffering no fatalities, this was not true elsewhere. New England's death toll was close to 500, its property damage in the millions.

Locally, streets were block by huge trees; telephone service was knocked out in many areas, power service likewise. But Claremont was lucky that it wasn't hit harder. As the same issue of the Eagle noted:

"The element of good fortune was multiplied more than a hundredfold throughout the storm, with almost every instance of serious damage offset by scores of instances in which huge trees fell away from homes, missed others by inches, or failed to topple before the blast despite the fact that almost every other growing thing in the vicinity had been swept away."

It's impossible to detail the progress of the work of rehabilitation, which went on for days and for weeks before normalcy came to Claremont. It may be safely said, however, that no one who lived through the hurricane of September, 1938 is likely ever to forget it. There have been other high winds which caused widespread damage; but there has been only one hurricane.

Claremont, in the past half century, has been

hit by three major disasters. The first, chronologically, was the flood of November 4, 1927.

Again, Claremont was more fortunate than the rest of the Valley, where damage mounted into millions and where such towns as Windsor Springfield and Bellows Falls were hard hit. Though the Sugar River ran high also, the Connecticut River, swollen by a sudden flash flood from northern Vermont, did the real damage in this area. Death toll mounted close to 200, including many Vermonters. The Eagle sparked a relief fund which went past the $3,000 mark, raised both for Windsor and for Vermont in general. The Eagle also put out a 5 a.m. "extra" on Saturday and distributed hundreds of copies to Bellows Falls and Windsor, bringing those two towns the first news of the extent of the disaster. Both had been completely cut off from the outside world by highway, telephone, telegraph or mail; radio and TV were not then operational.

Locally, flood waters submerged the main highway at West Claremont, trapping several vehicles; shut down factories for lack of power; curtailed train service; washed out dozens of rural highways. It was, indeed, a flood to remember. But actual damage in Claremont, as compared to that elsewhere, could rate as negligible.

The flood of March, 1936, was a double-barreled affair. It started on the 12th of the month, abated briefly two days later, and surged back with renewed fury on the 18th. By the following day the Eagle's headlines read: WORST FLOOD IN HISTORY OF EAST CAUSING WIDE-SPREAD DEVASTATION.

By this day the Connecticut had risen past the 1927 flood mark at West Claremont; it was to create, at one northern point, a stream nearly two miles wide. The Sugar was up also—washing away Beauregard Village bridge, inundating the Claremont Paper Co. and the Dartmouth Woolen Mill, blocking traffic on highways in most directions.

Bellows Falls was an island; Windsor was terrified by a false report of the collapse of Wilder dam; long distance phone lines were dead; Cornish toll bridge was closed; rainfall totaled nearly four inches, not counting water from melting snow. In short, things were a real mess.

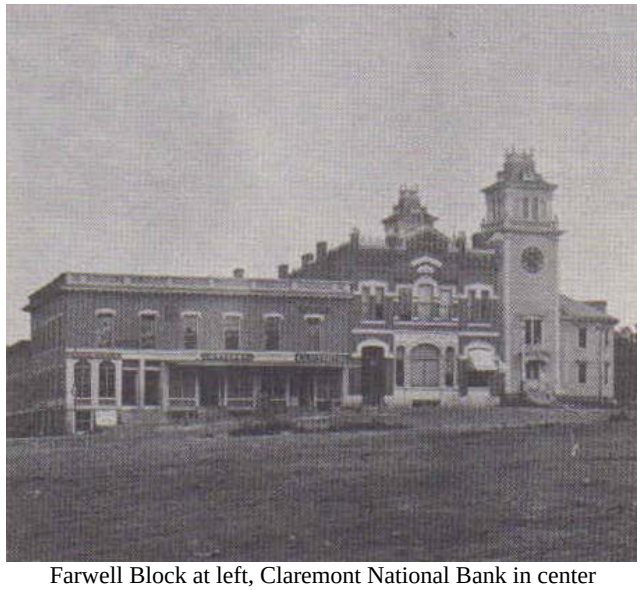
As before, Claremont escaped the full effects of the flood, though conditions here were far from ideal. But Concord was without light, power or gas; 20,000 were homeless at Springfield, Mass.; southern New England was particularly hard hit as flood waters pushed toward the Sound; high water did heavy damage in Ohio and Pennsylvania; the nation's storm and death toll reached 198.

The first north-south train since March 17 ran between Springfield, Mass.k and White River Junction on March 28. The Claremont & Concord division of the Boston & Maine, even harder hit, tried to discontinue rail service for good, but was ordered to make repairs and restore service, which it didn't do until August.

Claremont's worst flood in history, prior to 1927, came in February, 1866, following a long thaw.

The Connecticut River, though several feed below its flood stage of 1927, swept away the toll bridge at Windsor. As the span swept down-stream it took with it the Sullivan Railroad bridge and the two struck the Claremont toll bridge, carrying away a portion of it.

The Cupola Farm and the adjacent farm of John Lovell were flooded and badly damaged; Fred Dunsmore, at the Cupola Farm, lost 164 sheep by drowning.



Farwell Block at left, Claremont National Bank in center Town Hall at right.

CLAREMONT'S OTHER CELEBRATIONS

What has Claremont done, over the years, in the matter of anniversary celebrations?

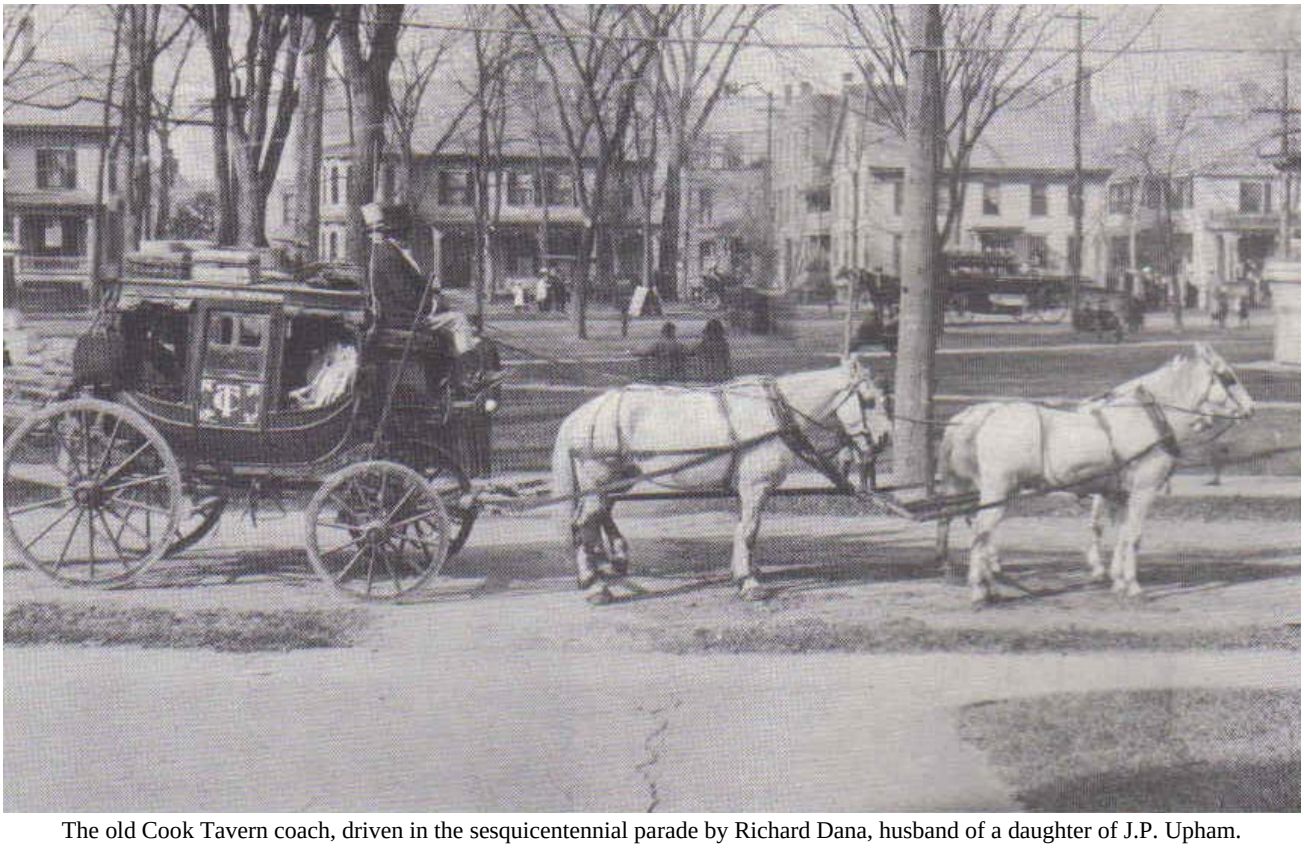
We can state positively that nothing was done about Claremont's centenary, which occurred Oct. 26, 1864. The town and the nation, then in the closing months of the Civil War, had neither time nor interest to devote to anniversaries.

By coincidence, however, that night was marked here by a "Union Republican Mass Meeting at the Town House, to ratify the nomination of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, and to discuss the affairs of the nation."

Since this seems to be the best we can do in the way of a centenary celebration, let's excerpt liberally from the National Eagle of a century ago, retaining the flamboyant language without which no news article of that era would have been complete:

"The preliminary arrangements for this gathering of the yeomanry of Sullivan County were judiciously made, and admirably and spiritedly carried out. The speaker's stand was erected at the lower end of the park, affording an ample space between it and the Town Hall to accommodate the ten thousand citizens who were in attendance. The Ensign of Liberty, the dear old Flag of our Union, was flung to the breeze from some twenty different staffs in sight of the platform. . .

"At 10 1-2 a.m. a cavalcade of about 125 mounted citizens, under the direction of A.H. Danforth, Esq., Chief Marshal, assisted by E.W. Tolles, E.J. Tenny, C.E. Bingham, F.A. Briggs, J. Goodwing and M.R. Emerson, proceeded to escort into the viallage the procession from Windsor, and other towns in Vermont, coming in from the west, in which was counted some 24 two-horse, and 75 one-horse carriages. Then they performed the same office for a procession of about 120 one-horse, 13 two-horse, and 4 four-horse carriages from Newport, and a much larger procession than



The old Cook Tavern coach, driven in the sesquicentennial parade by Richard Dana, husband of a daughter of J.P. Upham. Passengers were three descendants of Mr. Cook, Mrs. C.H. Long, Mrs. George F. Cook, Miss M.E. Partridge and Miss Charlotte B. Long, granddaughter of George Hubbard, who bought part of the "Governor's Farm" from Capt. Joseph Waite, first settler thereon.

either of these from Cornish, Meriden, Lebanon and the North.

"Assistant Marshal Emerson, with an escort of 12 horsemen, escorted the Governor and his suit (sic), and other distinguished personages, who were conducted from the depot in a carriage drawn by eight white horses, in time to join the grand united processions . . .

"Processions were also in from Unity, Charlestown, and other towns, till the aggregate . . . Was estimated to exceed that of any former collection in the vally of the Connecticut, above the north line of Massachusetts.

"Bands of music from Hartford, Windsor and Springfield, Vt., and from Newport and Paper Mill Village, N.H., did escort duty for the processions from their respective sections.

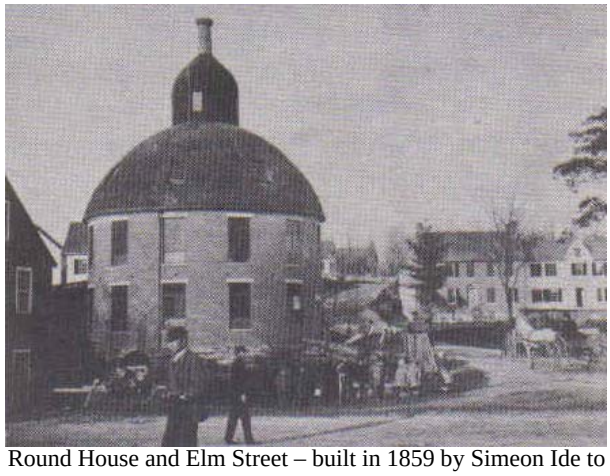
"A collation at the Tremont House was provided by our townsment for invited guests from abroad, after partaking of which the Windsor band escorted them to the Speaker's Stand in the Park, in front of the Town Hall.

"Among the distinguished persons present were Gov. Gilmore and staff, Hon. J.W. Patterson, Ex-Gov. Colby, Col. Frank E. Howe, Dr. William C. Doane, Medical Inspector W.W. Sturwort, U.S. Ad. Gen. head, Col. C.H. Long, W.S. Kimball of New York and others.

"At half past one, O.F.R. Wate, Esq. (who wrote *Claremont's first history*.—Ed.), in behalf of the Committee of Arrangements, nominated the following gentlemen as officers of the day, who were unanimously elected:

"Pres., C.M. Bingham, Esq., of Claremont.

"Vice Pres.—Chapin K. Brooks, Acworth; William McCrea and Harvey Abbott, Charlestown; G.N. Farwell, C.F. Long, Rene Bowman, Horace Dean, J.W. Hammond, William Ellis, Enoch Johnson, Claremont; William Balloch, Henry Gould, Cornish; Daniel B. hall, Croydon; Stephen B. Cofran, Goshen; Joseph P. Fowler, Grantham; Leland J. Graves, Langdon; Alden B. Sabin, Lempster; David B. Chapin, Francis Boardman, Newport; Samuel B. Duncan, Plainfield; Richard Sanborn, Springfield; John Young Jr., Sunapee; Solomon E. Jones, Washington; Michael Bailey, Unity; Ryland Fletcher and John F. Dean, Cavendish, Vt.; B.F. Dana, Springfield, Vt.; A.G. Hatch, Windsor, Vt.; Bailey Bartlett, Robert Breck and William Sheldon, Weathersfield, Vt.



Round House and Elm Street – built in 1859 by Simeon Ide to house his printing presses and other machinery.

"Secretaries—M.M. Warner, Acworth; John W. Jewett and Charles A. Carlton, Claremont; Frank A. Rawson, Newport."

We won't attempt even to summarize the remarks of the various speakers, dealing chiefly with national topics and the preservation of the Union. We can't resist however, quoting the story's final paragraph:

"No accident or disturbance of any kind occurred so far as we have been informed, to mar the gratification attendant upon this spontaneous uprising of the people, so significant of their devotion to the cause of Constitutional Liberty and good Government, in this hour of imminent peril to both."

SESQUICENTENNIAL

The town of Claremont went all out for its sesquicentennial celebration, a three-day affair extending from Sunday, Oct. 25 through Tuesday, Oct. 27.

On Sunday morning there were historical sermons in the several churches. That afternoon there was a special service at old Union Church in West Claremont, and that evening a union service in the Opera House.

Participating in this were the Reverends F.M. Swaffield, J.P. Garfield and John A. Belford. Winston Churchill, Cornish, author, delivered the evening's address, and Henry C. Hawkins

and Melvin F. Colby were soloists, together with a choir and orchestra.

Immediately after the union service, Nevers' Second Regiment Band of Concord played a concert in the park, featuring such numbers as "The Palms," the sextet from "Lucia" and selections from Lohengrin."

Monday was the day of the big parade, which assembled on Broad St. at 9:30 and got under way an hour later, with a reviewing stand at Pine St. for the governor and staff.

The parade consisted of police, marshals, the Claremont band, the governor's group, Company M of the First Infantry NHNG, 15 historical floates, orders and societies with bands, fire department, individual and manufacturers' floats.

At noon there was a governor's reception at the reviewing stand, after which the Gaurdsmen pitched their camp on the east side of Broad St. and prepared their midday meal, giving an exhibition of their field service outfit and equipment.

Participating in the 2 p.m. program at the Opera House were the Reverends W.E. Patterson and Daniel C. Babcock; Hon. H.W. Parker, president of the day; His Excellency Samuel D. Felker, governor of New Hampshire; and the Honorable Henry H. Metcalf, state historian, who delivered the historical address.

Immediately after these exercises, the motion picture drama "Victory" and "The Sinking of the Maine" was presented in the opera house, repeating again in the evening. Also Monday evening was an exhibition of poultry and farm products in the town hall.

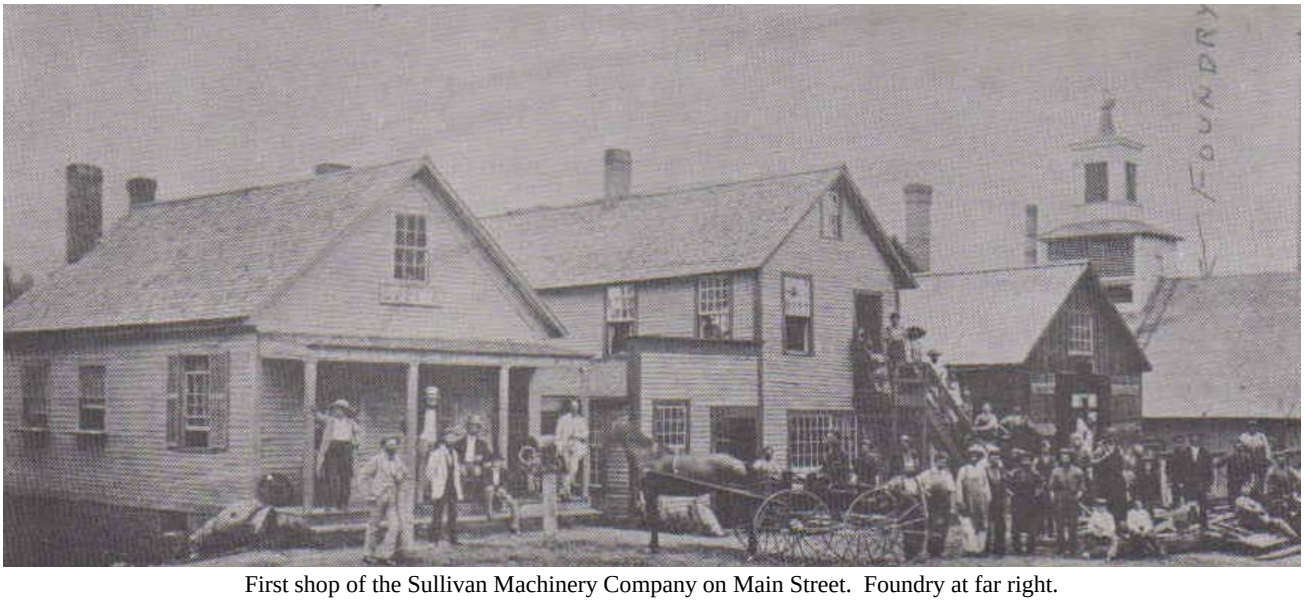
Tuesday morning was held another parade, bigger and better, with following participants:

Historical Floats—1750, Shugah Indians; 1762, First Settler on Horseback; 1762, First Settler and Ox Team; 1764, Granting of Charter; 1767, First Industry; 1771, Union Church; 1776, The Revolution; 1800, Cook Tavern Coach; 1823, Roman Catholic Church; 1824, Reception to General Lafayette; 1835, Paran Stevens Road Wagon; Old District School; Modern Public School; St. Mary's School; Stevens High School.

Organizations and others showing floats included:

Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, Knights of Pythias, GAR, USWV, WRC, Daughters of Veterans, WCTU, Grange, AOH, Ancient Order of United Workmen, La Societe St. Jean Baptiste, Societe L'Union Canadienne-Francais, Canado Lodge, Catholic Order of Foresters, Villa Marcia, IORM, NPOE, U.S. Postal Clerks, Claremont General Hospital, Knights of Malta, Camp Fire Girls, Claremont Bird Club, LOOM, Claremont Fire Dept., F.A. Billings, S.H. Maxwell, Monadnock Mills, Claremont Gas Co., Sullivan Machinery Co.

On Monday and Tuesday also, a special exhibit of maps, prints and other historical



First shop of the Sullivan Machinery Company on Main Street. Foundry at far right.

Trains and the trolley at Claremont Junction.

objects were on display at Fiske Free Library.

Claremont's 175th anniversary, which fell in 1939 on a Thursday, sparked a four-day observance preceded by special religious services on the prior Sunday. Sites of the services were at Union Church and Old St. Mary's, both at West Claremont and both representing Claremont's earliest religious edifices. At Union Church its recotr, the Rev. Louis C. Reed of Charlestown, conducted a prayer service, while just across the way the Rev. Edouard Lessard formally dedicated a bronze tablet in honor of Virgil H. Barber, first pastor of St. Mary's Church.

The midweek observance opened Thursday evening with an open house at the opera house at which Gov. Francis P. Murphy, formerly of Claremont, brought greetings from the state. Prof. John W. Dow of the Stevens faculty also spoke, the mayor of Claremont, Calif., sent a congratulatory message, and chairman Benjamin C. Sweet introduced the notables.

Melvin F. Colby directed a double male quartet, with his daughter, Elinor as accompanist, and Stanley W. Norwood, school music supervisor, conducted the orchestra.

Friday night, at the state armory, was the anniversary ball, with Edward Cleary as master of ceremonies, Joseph Collette as chairman, and the Yacht Club Orchestra for music. Local talent, both dancers and singers, provided a floor show.

Eben Farnsworth was chairman of Saturday afternoon's street parade, marching in six sections. Units, both afoot and motorized, included veterans, lodges, clubs, industrial representations, schools, and commercial entries, together with musical groups.

Final event of the celebration was Sunday evening's service of instruction, thanksgiving and worship at the opera house with Rabbie B.D. Cohon of New York as speaker.

Other participants were the Reverends Clarence B. Estler, Robert and Charles Dunn, Edward A. Durham, Harold L. Hanson, M.W. Blumberg, P. Gracheff and L.C. Reed. The Russian Choir from the Church of the Resurrection sang two anthems, and Robert Blondin of Windsor was heard to organ selections.

LOOKING BACK A CENTURY OR SO

What was Claremont like a century or so ago?

It's not often that an accurate summation is available. This is an exception.

In 1924 Charles A. Fisher of 46 Washington St., veteran town official, took a look back over the years to 1860, when Claremont's population stood at 4,025 and when its modern improvements were meager indeed.

At that time, Fisher wrote in an article contributed to the Eagle, "the locomotive whistle had not been heard by the dwellers of the Valley." Not until a dozen years later, with completion of the Concord & Claremont Railroad, Did the Iron Horse arrive.

Meanwhile, he continues, "the old time six horse teams, with covered wagons, were on the road, loaded with freight, for that was the only way of transportation other than coach to Newport and return twice daily."

Just what did Claremont have in 1860? Rather, what didn't it have! Here's the score-board for our community at the century mark, with another century still ahead of it.

In 1860 Claremont had:

No Stevens High School, merely the old Academy, corner of Sullivan & Walnut Streets.

No Fiske Free Library.

No Central Fire Station.

No fire alarm, other than the ringing of the town bell.

No Opera House.

No Public Square; two-thirds of the space occupied by the present square was filled by the Tremont House and outbuildings, destroyed by fire in 1879.

No general hospital.

No graded schools.

No water system. Every house had a well for water; now and then an aqueduct.

No coal. In the spring every yard had several cords of wood, a year's supply. There was no other fuel.

Not a tree around the Park.

No street lights, though the town had voted $50 for that purpose.

No blocks on Pleasant Street; the same board fence from Stowell's corner that had been there for years.

No Sugar River Paper Mill until a few years later.

No shoe factory. Long-legged boots were then the style, as well as tallow candles for lights; for kerosene was a new light at 67 cents a gallon.

No electric road. There had been a stage line to the Junction since the opening of the Sullivan road in '49.

No Hotel Moody, for there was no public square. Brown's Block was built in the year of which write. Perry's Hall, now the Masonic, was the better hall for entertainment (seldom any but local).

No foreign element like the present.

No policemen.

No town debt.

The site of the Sullivan Machinery plant was for the most part a cow pasture.

Two saw mills within the village limits were always a business center. Every spring their yards were piled high with logs.

The Post Office remained on Dodge's corner, its location for many years.

The Fire Department had an eviable record, Company No. 3 having won the prize of $150 from 16 companies at Keene's firemen's muster.

Town Meeting usually lasted two or three days, prolonged in part by arguments pertaining to the economic interests of the town.

Fourth of July was remembered by the ringing of all the bells at sunrise.

The ringing of the town bell at nine o'clock was a warning home, and all must be off the streets at no later hour.

Two milkmen, Winthrop Sargent of Bible Hill and Hiram Long of the River Road, furnished all the milk wanted at four cents a quart.

FAMOUS BLIZZARD OF '88

Many Claremonters and Valleyites have heard references to the March Blizzard of 1888, a storm by which all other winter snowfalls have since been measured. It's doubtful, old-timers have told us, if even today's highly mechanized highway departments could have coped with it. Seventy-six years ago, with nothing but shovels, plows and teams available, things were really rough.

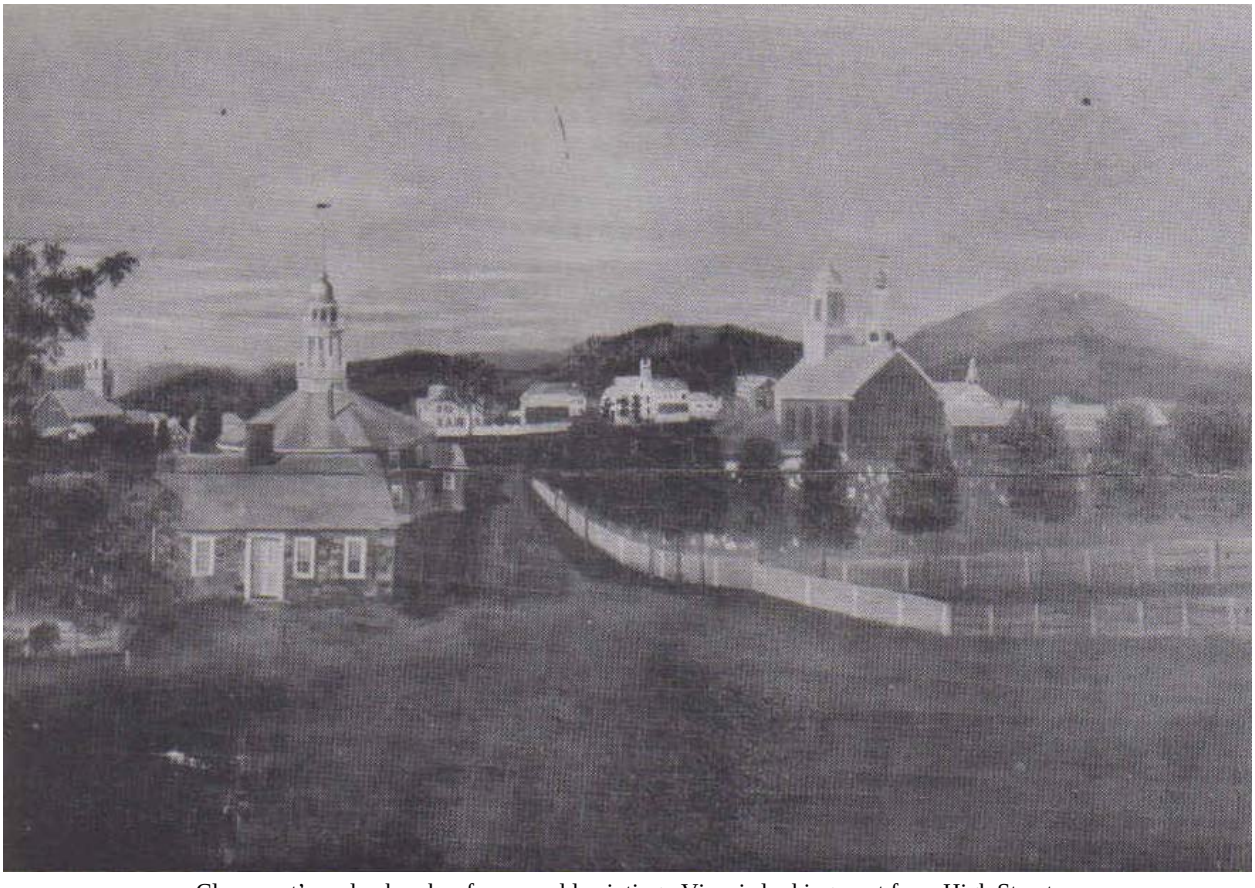
The National Eagle of March 17, 1888, carried an extensive description of the blizzard under the headline "BURIED DEEP." For the benefit of readers who know of the March storm only by hearsay, we'll condense the lengthy story and extract its highlights.

No one who looked out upon the world Monday morning, had the faintest conception of the fearful storm that was to rage for the following thirty-six hours, not only in Claremont, but over an extent of country as yet unknown, for the telegraph wires have all been down south of New York since Sunday.

Monday morning about six inches of snow had fallen, and there was but little wind . . . By the middle of the forenoon, the occasional flurries had changed to a steady, blinding snow storm, and the wind had increased almost to a gale . . .

All the afternoon the storm increased, and snow fell in blinding sheets, while roads and fields alike were being filled with insurmountable drifts. The streets became almost deserted, and the big teams from Monadnock and Sugar River Mills that carried home the help in the early part of the evening, were the last that were seen upon our streets for many hours.

The dry goods and grocery stores closed by



Claremont's early churches from an old painting. View is looking west from High Street.

seven o'clock, and the drug stores were not open a great while longer . . . Many who lingered up street till evening, staid all night, and saloons and hotels were well patronized for stews and lodgings. No trains or mails had arrived in Claremont since early afternoon . . .

All Monday night the storm raged with unabated fury, and when daylight came Tuesday, the aspect was little changed, only the snow as deeper and the drifts bigger; the storm was surging heavily from the north . . . Down Tremont Street, the entire length, ran a drift fully ten feed deep, that completely hid the stores from either side of the street. The yard at the Sullivan House was piled full, and the top of McCullogh & Nichols' stables was all that could be seen. A drift in Dr. Cummings' yard extended from Broad Street clear to the top of his front porch, checking exit most effectually.

Tuesday noon the passion of the elements seemed to have been appeased, and with the exception of two or three terrific squalls . . . the weather cleared . . .

Gangs of men with shovels, plows and teams at once went to work breaking out the streets. During Tuesday, no mild sleighs made their rounds, and the village delivery teams alike were obliged to lie still.

The Monadnock Mills, Shoe Shop, Slipper Factory, Bailey's and Balcom's Mills were shut down all day, as it was impossible for the help to get to them. The high school was not in session either Tuesday or Wednesday, as Wednesday morning only seventeen scholars and two teachers put in an appearance.

Wednesday the work of plowing out progressed rapidly; teams arrived from the West Part and the roads generally were opened. In the meantime a large force was at work attempting to break out the road to Claremont Junction, as a number of people and some mail were there waiting transfer to the village. The road, however, was not open to teams till Wednesday night.

Thursday, farmers and others who live out side began to come into town, railroads were opened, mails arrived, and the blockade, which can well go down in history as "the great storm of '88," was broken. People from the outside districts report the roads as never so bad, and Mr. Erastus Bailey, who lives but two miles out, says it is the first time in his experience that he was over one day in getting to the village on account of snow. It is without doubt, the worst storm that ever visited this section. . .

The railroads throughout New England were completely disabled on account of the snow, and the January blockade cannot be compared to this one. The last train to pass over the C&C road was the one that leaves Concord at 7:40 a.m. All further attempt to move trains was fruitless.

The 11 a.m. train east out of Concord, Tuesday, and a pay train with Supt. Todd, Cashier Burleigh and others on board, were both stalled at Newbury, while the afternoon train out of Concord got no further than Bradford.

Road Master Perkins left Claremont Monday and did not return until three o'clock Thursday morning, when the train with snow plow and six engines reached this station. They were three hours in coming from Newport.

About 20 passengers were on the train which left Concord on Monday, among whom were several ladies and children who were compelled to remain in the car from Monday to Thursday morning. They improvised such sleeping accommodations as they could with cushions etc., while the man managed to forage supplies for them.

That the storm south of us has been fully as bad as here, is evident from the fact that no mail has been received here from New York since Saturday night, up to Thursday night. It is estimated that three feet of snow fell.

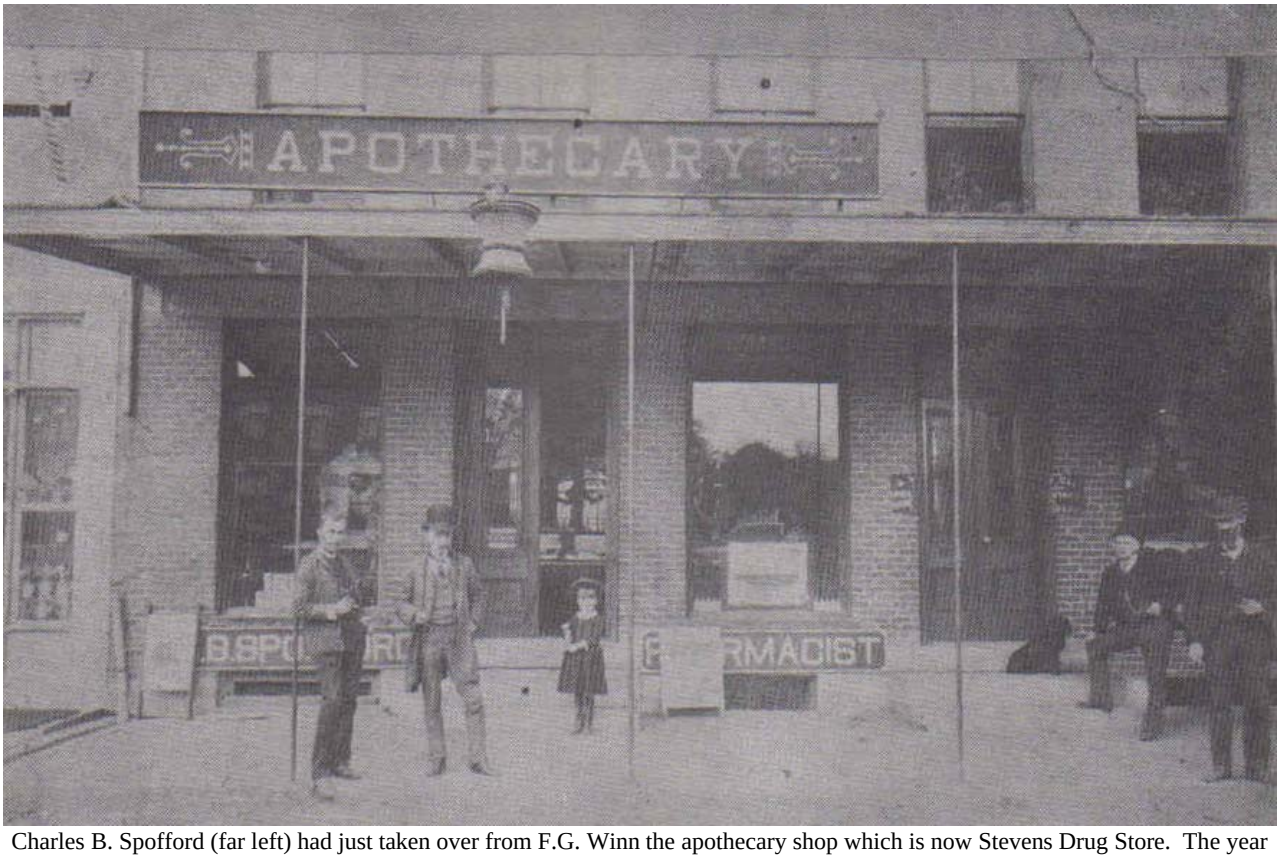
Car 3 of the street railway at Claremont Junction – railroad station at rear

"BY YE NAME OF CLAREMONT"

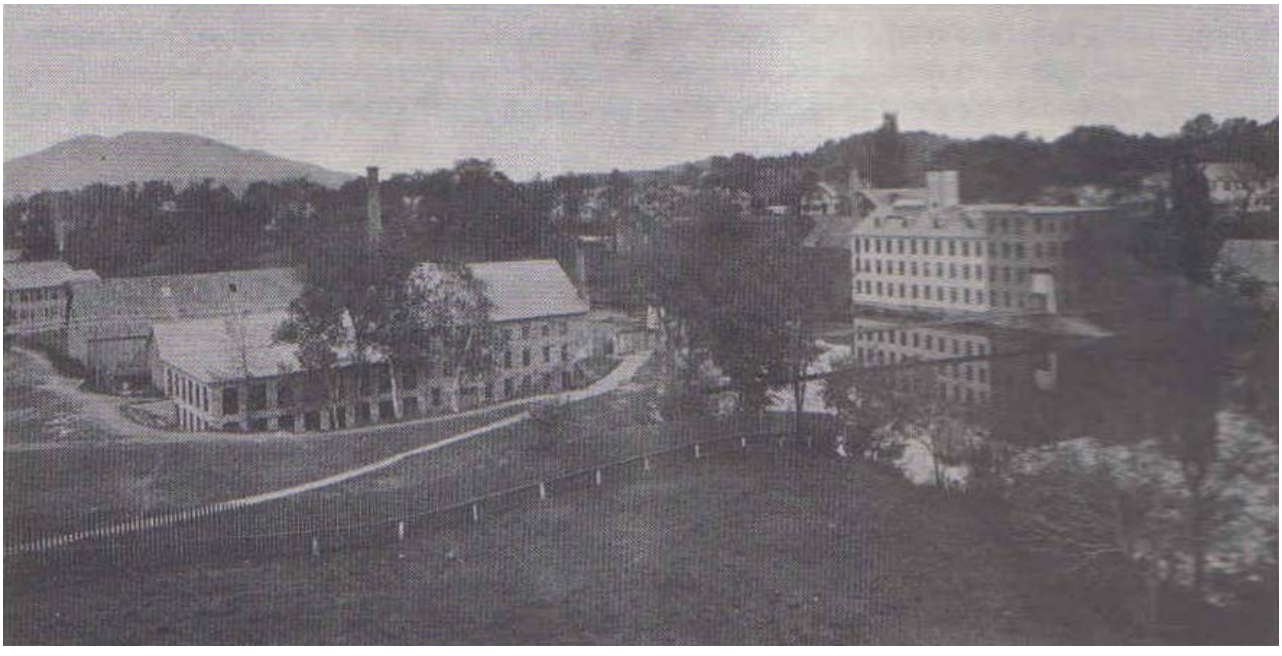
Our city charter says, after describing all the boundaries of the town, that the land is, I quote, "incorporated into the township by ye name of Claremont." In September, 1963, I began to wonder where the name Claremont came from and why it was given to this place. I decided to do some research on the subject and I think I've learned some interesting things.

In eleven books, histories, gazeteers and encyclopedias, I have found a statement that we were named after an estate in England. Of course this really proves nothing, as the books might have copied each other. The earliest book carrying that statement, that I have seen, is dated 1823. Today only a written statement by Gov. Benning Wentworth himself would be actual proof. A librarian at the State Library in Concord suggested that such a statement might exist in the Governor's papers, but Mr. Elmer Hunt of Salisbury, N.H., who has been doing name derivation research for fifteen years, has written me that he has seen all of the available Wentworth papers and in only one case is information given about the name of a town and that one is not Claremont. It seemed to me that next obtaining actual proof (and that apparently does not exist), the best thing one can do is to assemble the available historical facts and try to draw a reasonable conclusion. My conclusion is that we were named after an English estate and this is why I think so.

In the early days of New Hampshire, there were so few settlers that the state was governed by the Governor of massachusetts. A lieutenant governor was usually appointed to assist the Massachusetts governor regarding New Hampshire affairs. One of the early lieutenant governors was a man named John Wentworth who had a son Benning. Benning Wentworth grew up to be a capable and prosperous merchant in Portsmouth, N.H. I think he might also be classified as a "social climber." He liked the way wealthy people did things and he admired the socially and politically important



Charles B. Spofford (far left) had just taken over from F.G. Winn the apothecary shop which is now Stevens Drug Store. The year was 1885. Austin Gee's undertaking establishment was on the second floor.



Old Maynard Factory, both sides of Lower Sugar River, linked by footbridge. Claremont Manufacturing Company at left.

members of the English nobility. He had traveled to both England and Spain, and while in Spain he made a deal with a man in the Royal Court to sell him a shipload of oak timbers. Mr. Wentworth came home, borrowed money in London to purchase the timbers and sailed to Spain with the oak, probably expecting to reap a good profit. Unfortunately, upon reaching Spain, he learned that the man to whom he had sold the oak had been replaed in the government and the new chap had no interest in oak timbers—in fact declined to pay for them. So Mr. Wentworth had to turn his boat around and sail for home. There was more bad luck ahead of him, for on the return trip the ship sank and he, with the crew, was saved in a small boat. These misfortunes reduced him to a state of bankruptcy.

He went back again to Spain and tried with the help of the British Minister to get his pay, but with no success. Next he went to England and laid the matter before the British Court. The British Court decided in his favor, but just at that date England and Spain declared war on each other and that ruined any hope of payment. Looking about for some way to recoup his finances, Mr. Wentworth went to see a man named Capt. John Thomlinson. Capt. Thomlinson, a merchant of London, was well known and liked in New Hampshire. I thin he was involved in some of the earliest land grants in the state and acted as business agent in London for New Hampshire people. Capt. Thomlinson felt that with the increase in settlers in New Hampshire, the time was ripe for us to have a separate Governor, and he had been looking around for a possible candidate for the job. Apparently he saw possibilities in Benning Wentworth and he arranged an interview for him with King George II's Prime Minister, the Duke of Newcastle.

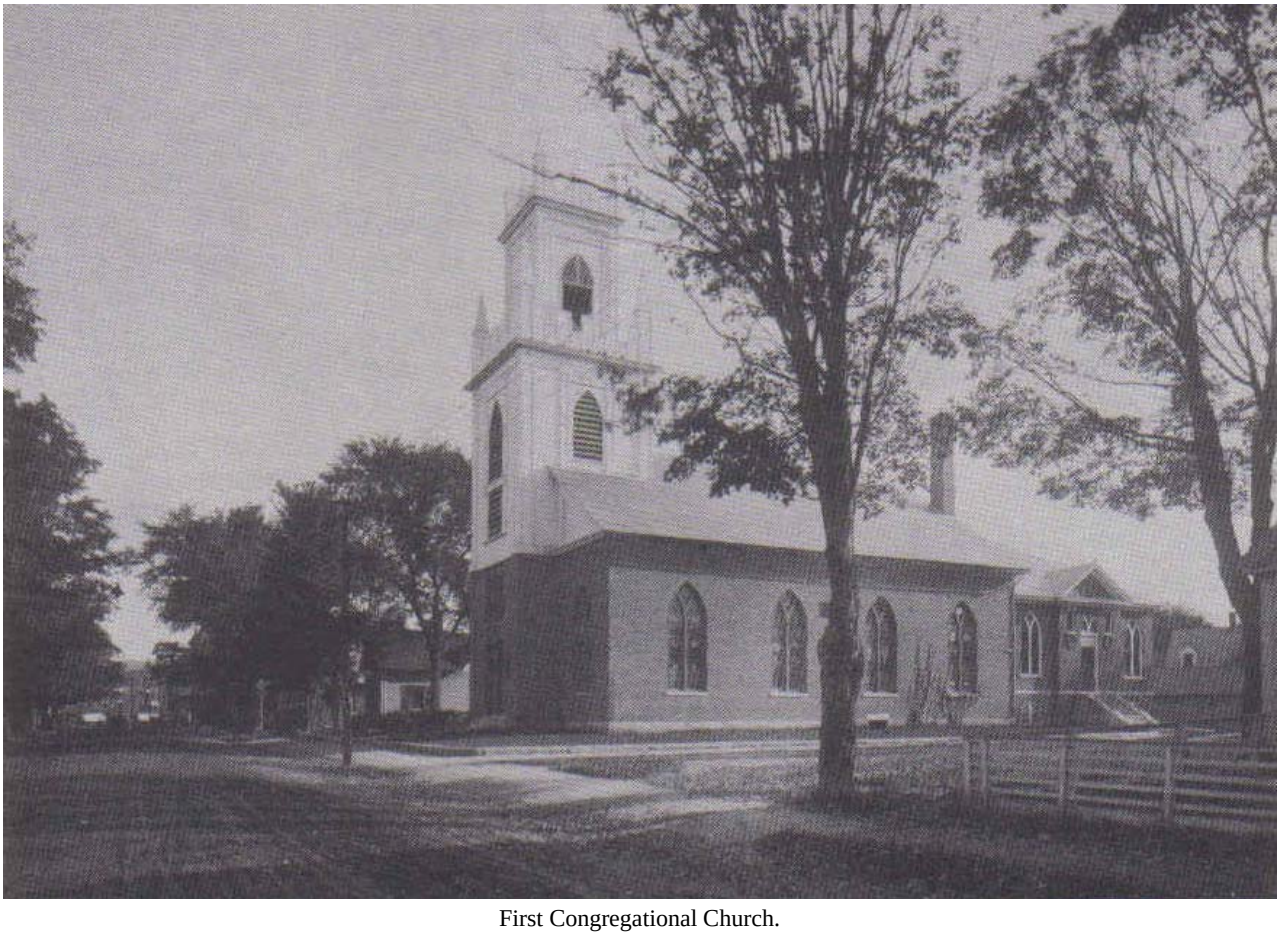
The Duke promised Mr. Wentworth that when New Hampshire should be put under a separate governor, he should have the commission, and he kept his promise and Benning Wentworth was our first royal governor and held the position for twenty-five years.

Whether Mr. Wentworth put any pressure on the duke because of the Wentworth name we don't know. It is a fact that the duke had a cousin, on his mother's side, named Arebella Holles who had married one Thomas Wentworth. Thomas Wentworth belonged to a branch of the English Wentworth family that was politically very important at that time. In fact he himself was known as Lord Strafford, Governor of Ireland. The duke may have

remembered that Wentworth was a name in his family. Some folks believe that the American Wentworths considered themselves related to these politically important English Wentworths. I have found no evidence that they were related, but I suspect that Benning Wentworth decided that it was politically expedient to encourage this idea of relationship (even though it was no nearer than about a fourteenth cousin!).

About twenty years later in 1760, George the Second died and his grandson became King George the Third. He made some changes and tossed out the Duke of Newcastle as prime minister in 1762. It must have been quite a shock to the duke, as he had been in the government for over thirty years. Two years after that, complaints were made in England that some of the American governors, including Gov. Wentworth, were marking money illegally on land grants. Various other charges were made against Gov. Wentworth and evidently the King's Ministry believed the charges to be true.

In August, 1764, the king published a warning to the colonies, threatening such persons with removal from office. In fact, the ministry did pass a resolution to remove Gov. Wentworth, but the agitation over the Stamp Act delayed the action being taken. In the meantime Gov. Wentworth's nephew, John Wentworth and another young man went to England to try to soften the conditions of the Stamp Act. They didn't get very far in that direction, but John Wentworth looked up the Marquis of Rockingham, who had become Prime Minister for George the Third. This marquis was a great, great grandson of Arabella—the Duke's cousin, and so a Wentworth. The young men became good friends and John Wentworth persuaded the marguis to use his influence to allow Uncle Benning to resign in favor of his newphew—instead of being thrown out. And that is what happened and we had Nephew John for our second governor for ten years until 1776 when



First Congregational Church.

we decided to pick our own governors.

While this was being arranged, Gov. Benning kept right on the job turning out charters for new towns, and it was in October of that year 1764 that he wrote our charter.

Names for the new towns were sometimes chosen by the grantees, after already settled towns in Massachusetts and Connecticut. In other cases the Governor himself chose names of politically important people in England. As far as we can learn, we were the first Claremont to be so named in America. Hence we did not derive the name from an American source. At that time there was a famous estate in England called Claremont. It was the country home of the Duke of Newcastle (formerly the prime minister) and it was located at the village of Esher, in Surrey, about fifteen miles from London. We do not know if Gov. Wentworth ever visited the duke's home, but he certainly knew about it for it was one of the "show places" of England at that time.

Mr. Hunt of Salisbury thinks Gov. Wentworth named us after the duke's home because he cared enough about history to want to preserve the name. The governor certainly did not so name us for political favor, as the duke was out of the ministry by that date.

I think Gov. Wentworth remembered that it was the duke who obtained for him the position that he had held for nearly twenty-five years, and perhaps he also recalled that the duke had been removed from office a few years past – an experience that he himself was liable to undergo soon. And so I draw the conclusion that we received our name as a friendly gesture of gratitude from a governor to a duke.

(Sources of information: "The History of New Hampshire," by jeremy Belknap, A.M. vol. 11, pub. 1791; "The History of Esher," by Ian G. Anderson, pub. 1948; "The Wentworth Genealogy-English and American," by John Wentworth L.L.D. pub. 1878; and personal letters from Elmer Hunt to the writer.)

Claremont "Hello Girls" at the switchboard of an early telephone exchange.

SMALL WERE THE EXCUSES FOR DRINKING RUM

The prominent part played by rum in the early days of Claremont, as elsewhere throughout New England, was vividly described in an article appearing in a long-ago issue of the National Eagle.

Author of the article was Bela Chapin, Newport native who in his spare time did much writing. Chapin, at various times associated with the Eagle, at one time was college printer at Hanover as owner of the Dartmouth Press printing establishment and bookbindery.

From his long-ago description of "Bygone Times in Claremont" we reprint the following:

New England rum for many years made sad havoc among the town's people. The first or early settlers were temperate in the use of ardent spirits, but the next generation of inhabitants were carried away and made miserable, many of them, by intemperate habits. It was a fault of the times.

It was customary and fashionable to drink rum, brandy, and other kinds of fire-water upon all occasions and in everyday life. The preachers of the gospel drank rum, the deacons drank it, and almost every one, male and female, the aged, the middle-aged, and those in tender years, drank intoxicating drink. Not all were excessive drinkers, most drank moderately.

On extra occasions, such as ordinations, weddings, funerals, family and friendly reunions, husking, the raising of buildings, bear hunts, musters, and on all occasions of merriment, much liquor was used, and often many became drunk or much beside themselves.

Rum-drinking was a cause of much trouble, poverty and unhappines. It made men quarrel with each other and spend their money foolishly. One old man, in his latter days, used to boast that he had had a dozen lawsuits and had beaten every time.

This manner of life continued until about 1828, when Dr. Reuben Muzzy, of Dartmouth College, came about delivering his noted lecture, entitled "Rum—its history, its uses and abuses."

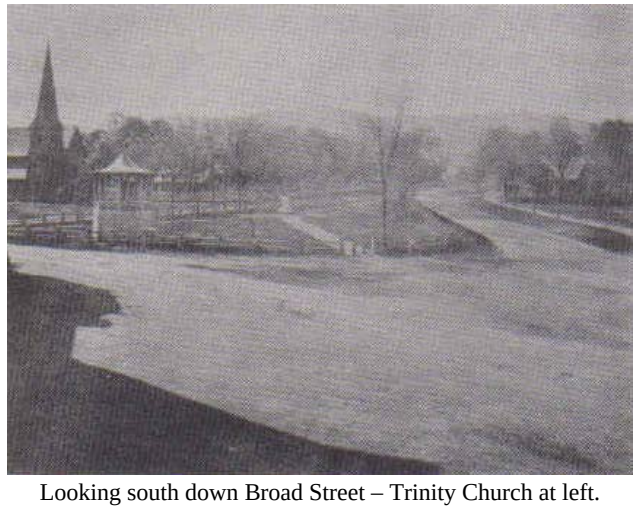
This lecture had immediate effect. All the good people, almost without exception, signed a pledge of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, and from that day to the present time the cause of temperance reform has continued its onward progress among our people.

Still rum was sold and used in town. When laws were enacted to prevent sale, sellers were licensed to sell it.

We remember one noted rum seller in town (Luther Farwell). He had a general assortment store in Dog Hollow. He was licensed to sell from year to year, but sometimes there were gaps when he had no license. Before the expiration of his legal time of selling he would advertise his stock so as to reduce it by a more rapid sale. One year the following was a part of his advertisement:

The appointed time is hastening on
To prosecute for selling rum.
Bring in your things, glass, wood, and stone.
The time is coming when you'll get none
For selling rum is just and right
Till 12 o-clock next Saturday Night

Small were the excuses for drinking rum. A friend of mine tells me of his first visit one winter morning, long ago, at the house of two maiden sisters, neighbors of his, who lived about a mile from the village. He called at the house, and after some talk, the lady there asked: "Are you going to the village?" He told her he was going there, and she then said: "You see, my sister has to do the chores at the



Looking south down Broad Street – Trinity Church at left.

barn, and she very much needs something to keep the cold from her lungs. Would you get her a gallon of rum?"

He answered yes. Going then to the barn he found the other lady cleaning the stable, and after some talk, she asked: "Are you going to the village?" He replied in the affirmative, and she continued: "You know my sister in the house is not very well, and she needs something to strengthen her. Would you be so kind as to get her a gallon of rum?"

He said he would, and on his return he brought them their rum.

After the era of licensing had gone by, the people of the town elected a rum-seller to furnish fire-water to all who wanted it for medicinal and mechanical uses.

Then there appeared to be much sickness in town. Men bought liquors for all kinds of complaints, and many bought it as a preventative of sickness.

Much was sold for mechanical purposes. Farmers bought it for the purpose of making their scythes swing easily in hay time.

We once heard of a man from a neighboring town who called at the agency to buy rum for the purpose of pickling cucumbers. After getting his large jug filled, and having paid for it all, he took a solid drink.

Said the agent: "Hold on, sir; you bought that for pickles."

"So I did," said the man, "and want first to pickle the cucumbers I had for breakfast."

CLAREMONT'S HUGE OX AND HIS TRIP ABROAD

The old timers who farmed in Claremont over a hundred years ago may not have had the latest feeding formulas for their cattle, but they knew how to grow prize-winning stock. There was no better way for a farmer to gain fame and fortune than to be envied by his neighbors as a "good cattle man."

So it was with Isaac Hubbard who owned the farm now known as the "Decker Place" on the River Road. Always interested in choice cattle, particularly neat stock, his prowess was indelibly marked in the memory of the agricultural fraternity for several generations. According to historians he raised an ox of the "Shorthorn-Durham" breed that reached remarkable proportions.

Noted for his great size, beauty of proportions and color. Olympus, as he was called, grew to a weight of 3370 pounds in April of 1838. He was such an admirable beast that he won recognition far and wide as a show animal and in the fall of 1838 he was taken to England by a Mr. Niles of Boston. On the other side of the Atlantic he was renamed Brother Jonathan.

At seven years of age he weighed 4000 pounds or as he was advertized "500 stone," beautiful proportions and dappled gray. He was transported under heavy bond to Her Majesty's customs and exhibited at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, London. During the seven weeks he was on display, he was visited by some 22,368 persons, including the Royal Family and leading agricultural gentry of the time. Later he was exhibited through the contryside to show the English farmers what could be done by Americans.

Later Brother Jonathan was taken to France for exhibition and returned to England, where he was later slaughtered. Recorded measurements indicate the ox measured eleven feed, ten inches from nose to rump and was five foot eleven inches in height over the fore shoulder. He had a girth of ten feet, six inches. At the brisket he was only one foot, eleven inches from the ground. Few owners could brag of less "daylight under their beef cattle.

OLD ST. MARY'S CHURCH

The city of Claremont has the distinction of having within its borders the oldest Catholic church in New Hampshire. This church is Old St. Mary's, on the so-called Plains Rd. near West Claremont, which this year informally marks its 140th year of existence.

The oft-told history of its founding is chiefly the story of Virgil H. Barber, the son of an Episcopal clergyman, the Rev. Daniel Barber, and himself an ordained Episcopal priest. Converted to Catholicism, as were the members of his family, he was ordained a Catholic priest by Bishop John Cheverus in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on December 3, 1822.

Shortly after his ordination he came to Claremont and said mass in the Barber homestead. During the winter of 1823 he went to Canada and was successful in raising funds for the erection of the small brick church, which was completed in March 1824.

Father Barber ministered to his flock, which numbered about 150, until January, 1827, when he was recalled by his superiors of the Jesuit order at Georgetown. After serving in the Indian missions in Maine he returned to Claremont for two short visits, and then went to Georgetown to teach. He died in 1847.

Helping toward the support of the church was the Claremont Catholic Seminary, which was founded by Father Barber and conducted in the larger of the two rooms above the church auditorium.

The first student to enroll was William Tyler, who became the first bishop of the See of Hartford (Connecticut). Other pupils included Josiah Sweet, afterward and Episcopalian minister; J.C. Woolson, journalist and father of Constance Fenimore Woolson. The father of the late Dr. Leonard Jarvis also attended school here.

Board and tuition was only one dollar a week. The students lived in the home of Daniel Barber, a large two-story wooden structure which was connected with the church and which was razed about a half century ago.

Scholars had to provide their own bedding, washing, candles, and books. The students' day started at 5:30 in the morning and concluded at 9 o'clock at night. Greek, Latin, French and religion were taught in addition to the more common branches. Latin was the ordinary language of the school and was spoken at all times by the students.

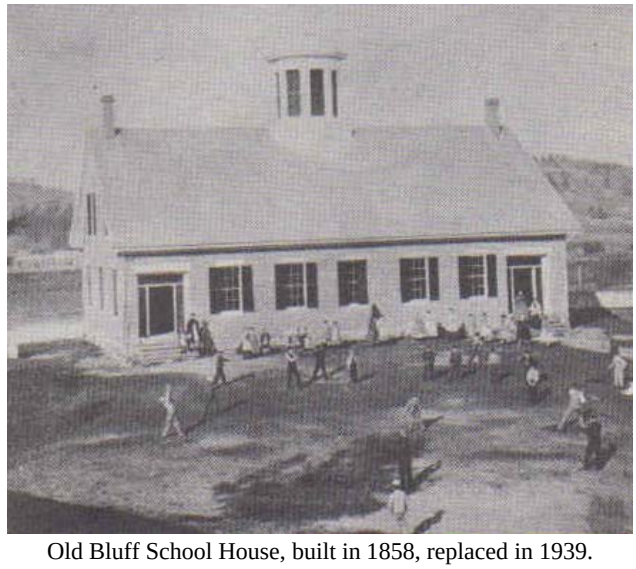
Old St. Mary's Church, for many years maintained chiefly as a memorial edifice, was the center of a statewide interest in April, 1931, when members of the state Catholic Daughters, in convention here, made a pilgrimage to the church for a brief religious program.

On October 22, 1939, a memorial tablet was unveiled and dedicated, with ceremonies in charge of the Rev. Edouard Lessard, then St. Mary pastor, and with over 100 dignitaries and parishioners present.

The tablet read: "In lasting memory of Rev. Virgil A. Barber, S.J., who built in 1823-24 this benerable 'Old St. Mary's,' New Hampshire's first Catholic Church, and the adjoining Claremont Catholic Seminary. New England's oldest Catholic School of higher learning. The N.H. State Council, Knights of Columbus, erected this table 1939."

(The tablet erroneously gives Father Barber's middle initial as A, whereas it was H.)

Within two years—in the spring of 1941—the old church was the scene of a Memorial Day mass, said by a visiting priest from LaSalette Seminary at Enfield.



Old Bluff School House, built in 1858, replaced in 1939.

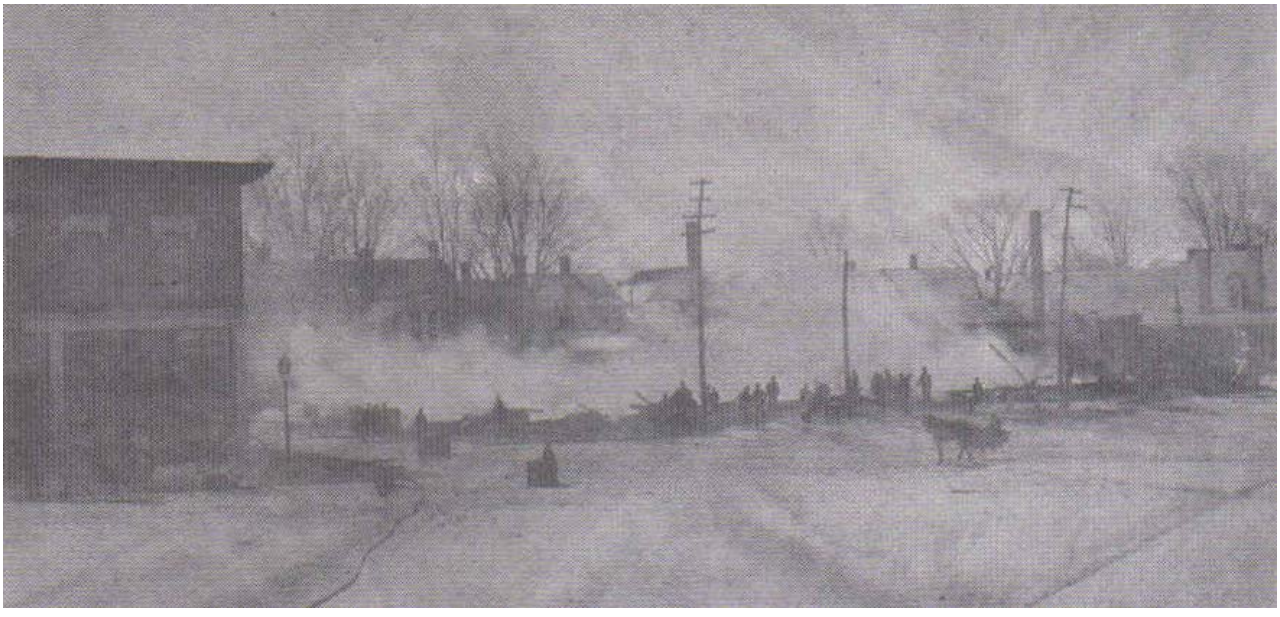
This special service took the form of a remembrance for deceased Catholic service men. It also gave members of the Catholic faith the opportunity to see the restoration work carried on here under the leadership of Father Cote Council, K. of C. Council members installed new pews, the gift of an anonymous donor, and roof repairs were also made.

Restoration and modernization of the ancient religious edifice continued in May, 1945, when an altar donated by Mrs. Margaret Nichols and Miss Ann Shea was used at a special Memorial Day morning mass. Floors and walls had been refinished and redecorated also for this occasion.

The altar is designed in the style prevalent in the American colonies during the early 1800s, the period in which Old St. mary's was erected, and the tabernacle and reredos are of the same design.

Latest improvements at the site, now going forward, are being financed by a $30,000 fund contributed by the New Hampshire Fourth Degree Assembly. Replacement of foundations is the chief aim of this project, together with other needed repairs.

Ashley's Ferry, which operated for nearly a century and a half between Weathersfield, Vermont, and the east bank of the Connecticut River south of Claremont Junction.



Smouldering ruins of "Brown's Wooden Block," corner Pleasant and Sullivan Streets, destoryed by fire March 25, 1887.

MIRANDA STEELE: ON THE JOB 70 YEARS

What must it be like to work in the same factory, on pretty much the same type of job, for 70 consecutive years?

An old-time Claremonter, Miss Miranda R. Steele, knew the answer.

Miss Steele, an intimate part of the Claremont legend, came here in 1853 to go to work in the old Monadnock Mills. Seventy years later she quit her job there after settling a record for continuous employment beyond anything known in New England, if not the nation.

When young Miss Steele went to work at the Monadnock, there was only one mill; the second was just being built. She began as weaver on cotton cloth, then ran a dresser, later wove spreads, and still later began card cutting. Each day for 10 hours she would sit facing a sheet of fine ruled paper with the pattern in red ink, watching every minute square and punching a hole to correspond.

When she first went to work she was paid a dollar a day for a ten-hour day. When she entered the card room her pay was boosted to $1.50. Sixty years after she took her first job she was getting paid more than $20 a week. The minimum wage law was still far in the future.

Her father and mother, both invalids, and her sister came with her from their native Vermont. One sister did the housework for the invalids; the other went into the mills to support the family.

Miss Steele lost little time from the job by illness, or for any reason. She was more than 80 years of age when, after one of the big blizzards of the early 1920s, she waded through deep snow to show up at work at 7 a.m. though over half the other employees remained at home.

Her devotion to duty, and to her family, left little room in her life for outside activities, though she was a regular attendant at the Methodist Church. In her later years, with parents and sister dead, she occupied a cosy home at 16 Washington St., with its attractive garden and grounds as her hobby.

Miranda Steele was 87 years of age when she terminated her employment at the Monadnock Mills. Two years later—in November, 1925—she died here in her 90th year, leaving to Claremont and to the world her unsurpassed record of service.

THE SPY WHO FELL THROUGH THE CEILING

Ever hear about the woman spy who fell through the ceiling at a Masonic meeting?

This tale, an integral part of Claremont's folklore, is worthy of narration here.

The Ralston Tavern on Jarvis Hill at West Claremont, a famous stopover for travelers on the King's Highway from Massachusetts to Montreal, was build in 1784 by Alexander Ralston and was patronized for many years by the daily six-horse stage, canvas-covered freight wagons, and pleasure travelers.

It was also the site of Claremont's first and subsequent Masonic meetings, held in the tavern's large upstairs hall.

On the occasion of one of these meetings, Mrs. Ralston's curiosity to know the secrets of the order led her to go quietly to the unfinished attic over the hall to listen to the proceedings. A large, heavy woman, she by mischance stepped on the lathing, her feet went through the ceiling, and she was relived of her embarrassing position by the help of her husband and his brother Masons.

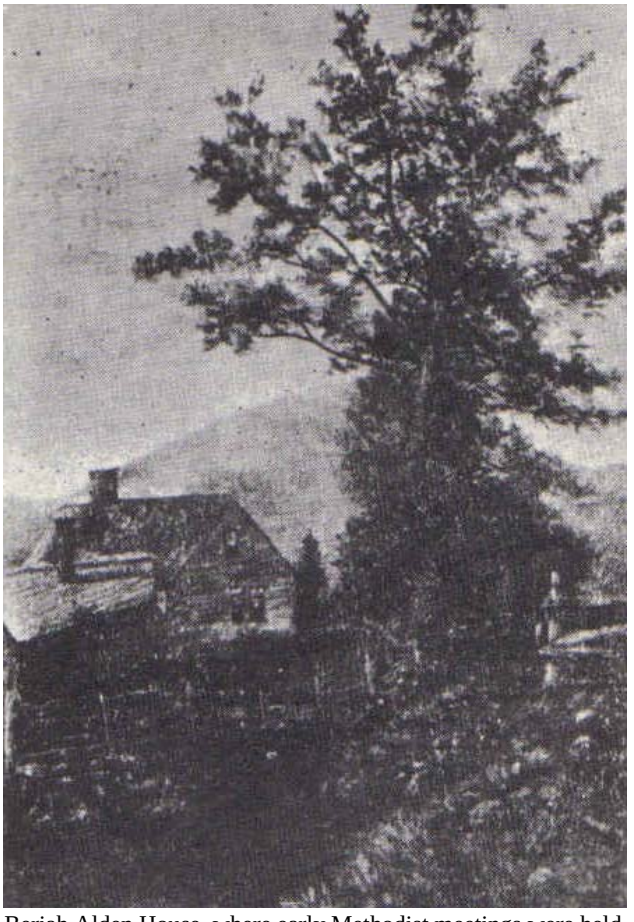
The evidence of this adventure remained in the ceiling until the house was renovated in 1887.

From 1795 to 1806, itinerant Methodist preachers also held their meetings in this hall. In 1815 the tavern business was discontinued, having passed through many owners, and the property was sold to Danforth Parmelee.

Subsequent history of this historic property is easily traceable, if less entertainig. In 1850 it was taken over by Gordon Way and subsequently by his son, Dr. Osmon B. Way, later passing to a Mr. Messer, still later to Charles Bailey, from whom Martin Pedersen bought in 1909.

In 1942 William bought from his father, and after extensive remodeling he and Mrs. Pederson went there to live in 1947. In 1955 the old Fitch place was added to the Pederson holdings, now operated as a dairy farm with Roland Choquette as manager and a herd of 85 Holstein cattle. Extensive soil conservation work has been done there in recent years under the guidance of Guy Wheelock and Theodore Bonneau of the Soil Conservation Service of Sullivan County, of which Pederson is an active member. The farm won the Goodyear soil conservation award for1962.

But nobody has fallen through the ceiling there for nearly 200 years.



Beriah Alden House, where early Methodist meetings were held. It stood on the right-hand side of Bible Hill road into North Charlestown, just before the old brick house now owned by the Eserskys—the house in Charlestown, the barn in Claremont.

Old Stone Watering Trough on the road to West Claremont.

DRAPER CORNER'S RUM AND CODFISH

Draper Corner isn't where most present-day Claremonters believe it to be.

Draper Corner (or Draper's Corner) isn't at the intersection of Maple Ave. and West Pleasant Street.

Instead, as a matter of historical fact, it's at the junction of Pleasant and Mulberry Streets with Maple Ave.

Authority for this statement is 93-year-old Chester Ordway of 125 Broad Street, this year honored as Claremont's oldest male resident, who as a youth lived in the original Draper house at 3 Maple Ave.

He recalls clearly seeing scratched on one of the tiny window panes of the house the name and date: "Eli Draper, 1842." The old-fashioned windows, he said, have long since been replaced.

There was never a dwelling at 1 Maple Ave. The old Arthur Wolcott house stood next to Draper's. Then beyond the brook, was the Draper Corner schoolhouse, so-called, now a private dwelling. From the name of this schoolhouse, apparently, stems the general belief that this spot was Draper Corner.

It wasn't.

Draper Corner was the corner where Eli Draper lived. On this same property stood also the store of Asa Densmore, a contemporary, reputedly known throughout the village for the excellence of its rum and codfish.

Diagonally across the intersection, legend says, stood a blacksmith shop, on what was later the Wilkins property.

What more natural than that, while waiting for their horses to be shod, visitors to the village should drop across the street to "Draper Corner" for a little rum and codfish?

Both Draper and Densmore, it might be noted, figure briefly in Waite's old history of Claremont. Draper, in 1826, was appointed to a committee of three to obtain funds for building a Methodist meeting-house in Claremont. Subsequently both he and Densmore were named trustees of the new project.

1887: WHEN THE POST OFFICE BURNED

To Claremonters whose memories go back only three decades or so, the city's federal building on Broad Street seems to be pretty much a permanent fixture. But to historians who have followed its travels down through the years, the post office has been a movable affair indeed.

Unfortunately, there are no known records which establish the original site of that office, opened in 1802 under the postmastership of Josiah Stevens, first appointee. A quarter of a century later an office was established in Sumnerville, now West Claremont, and in 1891 similar service was extended to Claremont Junction.

Local historians pick up the story in the 1880s, when the central post office occupied quarters in Brown's Wooden Block (now Union Block). It was in 1887 that the block burned flat and all mail and records were destroyed.

Postmaster George W. Paul set up temporary quarters in the selectmen's office. Next came a detached post office building, also of a temporary nature; it appears in old photographs showing the north side of Tremont Square.

When Hotel Claremont (now Moody) was completed in 1891, replacing the burned Tremont House, Postmaster Henry C. Sanders obtained space on its ground floor. Four years later the post office crossed the Square and moved a short distance up Pleasant Street, where it took up quarters in the Belmont Block.

This was its last move for nearly 40 years, despite continuing efforts to obtain the federal building which Claremont had so long and so unsuccessfully sought. It was no until 1929 that Washington finally provided the funds. It was not until July 1, 1932, in the regime of Postmaster William P. Nolin, that the present post office at 140 Broad Street was formally dedicated and opened.

First Baptist Church.

Old Union Church at West Claremont; it plans its own bicentennial in 1971.

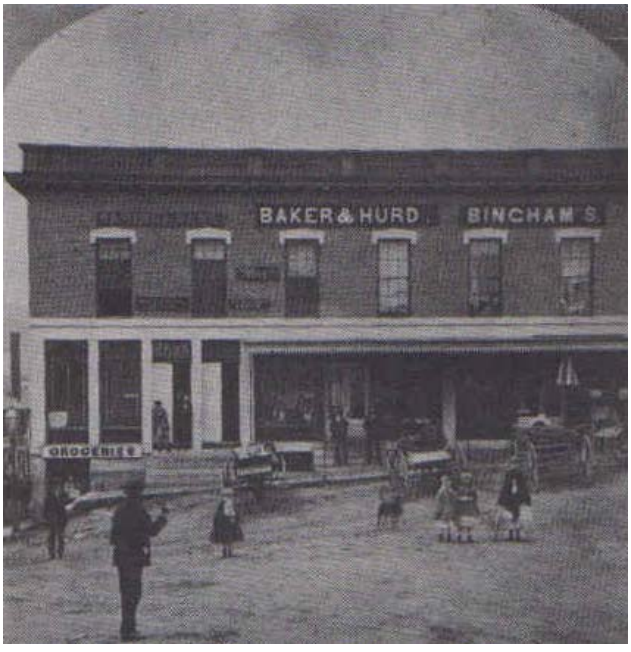
CLAREMONT'S ACTIVE MUSICAL GROUP

The Claremont Music Club, formed in 1902 and federated in 1910, was an active musical group here for something like a quarter of a century. Affiliated with the national and state federations of music clubs, it presented diversified monthly programs, chiefly at the homes of members, with occasional public musicals.

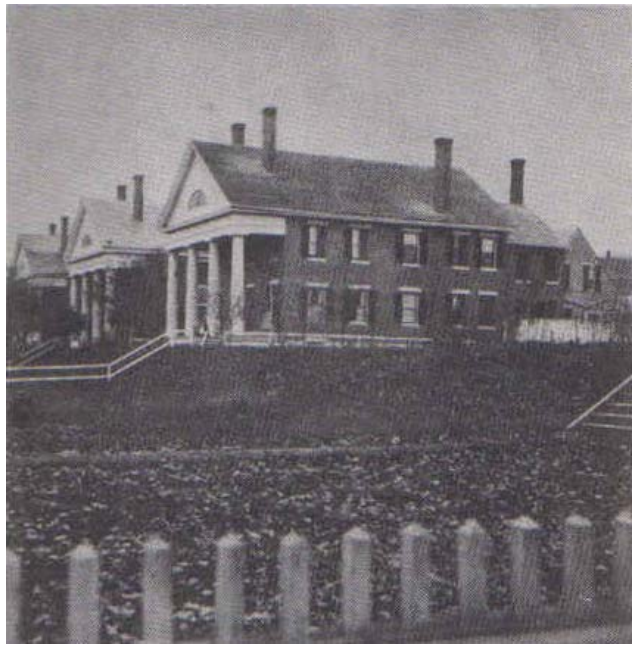
Active members at the outset included such Claremont musicians as the Mmes. Robert H. Brooks, Ira G. Colby, Frank H. Foster, Morris M. Freeman, Thomas W. Fry, William P. Prescott, Samuel R. Upham and the Misses Florence Bailey, Susan Dow and Anne Forsyth.

Some of these later became honorary members, while added to the active list were the Mmes. Edward A. Rice, Perley White, Morris Holmes, Bert Jewett, Helen Gober, the Misses May Cushman, Eleanor Foster, Mary Maynard, Miriam and Anna Dell Quimby and others. Mrs. Holmes and Mrs. Rice were at one time officers of the state federation.

Programs were given on "The Development of the Planofote," "The Development of Vocal Music," "Church Music," "Russian Composers," "Beethoven," "MacDowell" and others. The club in 1914 sponsored a public lecture-recital by Mrs. Edward MacDowell.



Looking east across Tremont Square to Farwell Block.


Early Central Street residences later acquired by St. Mary Parish.

WHAT HOTEL CLAREMONT SERVED IN 1892

"From soup to nuts" is an old-fashioned expression denoting a full meal. It may properly be used to describe the menu for the opening day of Hotel Claremont on June 27, 1892.

Proprietor Fred C. Camp had provided an eight-course repast. Unfortunately, the menu doesn't state the price, though a dollar dinner in that era was pretty much of an extravagance.

Whatever it might have cost, it was undoubtedly worth it, since three-quarters of a century ago few folks were apt to bother with diets and/or calories. Most diners at their way happily "from soup to nuts"-- just how, we just don't know.

Here come the eight courses:

Soup – Consomme Royal, Chicken.

Fish – Boiled Penobscot River Salmon, Hollandaise Sauce; Radishes, Cucumbers.

Removes – Roast Sirloin of Beet, Dish Gravy; Roast Spring Lamb, Mint Sauce; Roast Turkey, Giblet Sauce; Boiled Leg of Lamb, Caper Sauce.

Entrees – Roast Fillet of Beef with Mushrooms; Sweet Breads larded with French peas; Banana Fritters Glace au Cognac

Lemon Sherbet

Vegetables – Mashed Potatoes, Boiled New Potatoes, Green Peas, Bermuda Onions, Stewed Tomatoes.

Pastry and Dessert – White Mountain Pudding Sherry Sauce; Apple Pie, Custard Pie, Chocolate Cream Pie, Strawberry Whips, Vanilla Ice Cream, Sponge Cake, Cocoanut Cake, Fruit cake, Nuts and Raisins, Crackers and Cheese.

Tea, Coffee.

STATELY CLAREMONT HOMES OF AN EARLIER ERA

Stately Claremont residences of an earlier era are represented pictorially and textually in "New Hampshire Homes," published in Concord in 1895 by James A. Wood. The volume, loaned by F.W. Haubrich of 98 Myrtle St., was presented to him by his uncle Col. William H. Tutherly, early Claremont notable.

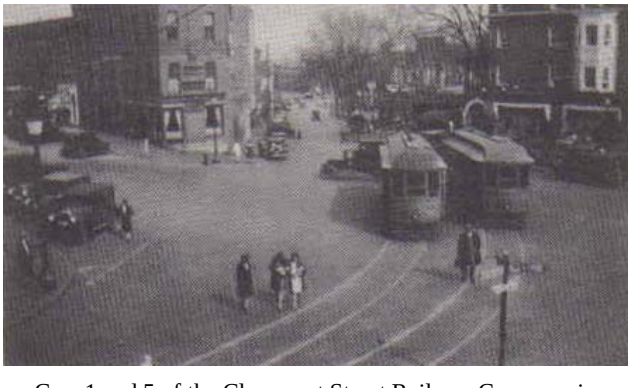
Pictured and described are the homes of:

Hon. George H. Balcom; William H.H. Moody and his Highland View stock farm; Frank P. Maynard; Osmon B. Way, M.D. (misspelled "Osman"), on Sullivan St.; Pascal P. Coburn, Esq., also on Sullivan St.; Hon. Hosea W. Parker, on Broad St.; Hon. George H. Stowell, at 69 Pleasant St.; Charles N. Washburn and Harvey B. Glidden, both on Bond St.

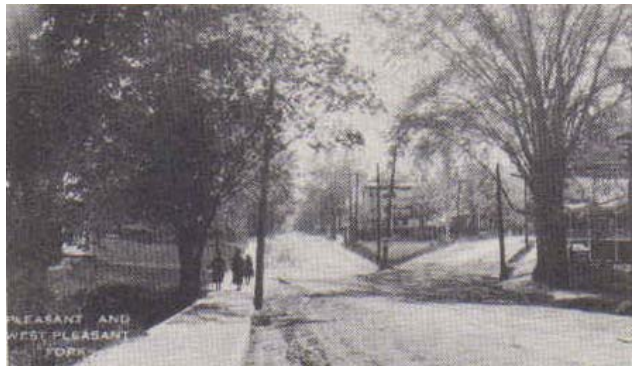
The book, carrying nearly 300 illustrations, includes practically all the notable Granite State homes of the era, including residences in Newport, Lebanon, Charlestown, New London, Enfield, Canaan and other Valley area communities.

A separate section, titled "Leading Hotels in New Hampshire," pictures Hotel Claremont (now Hotel Moody), with the following typically ornate text:

"HOTEL CLAREMONT, now owned by William H.H. Moody, is one of the finest public houses in New England, and was erected a few years since at a cost of $83,000. Since coming into the possession of the present owner, $5,000 has been expended in repairs and improvements, and at present, under the management of Fred C. Camp, the house stands in the front rank of New England hostelries. It contains every modern convenience, and being situated as it is upon the route of tally ho parties from Lenox to the White Mountains, it has entertained members of the highest American Society."



Cars 1 and 5 of the Claremont Street Railway Company in Tremont Square on the morning at may 2, 1930, at 8:30 a.m.



Intersection of Pleasant and West Pleasant Streets.

WARD SEVEN: CLAREMONT'S TOUGHEST DISTRICT

The city of Claremont, since Jan. 1, 1948, has been divided into three legal wards for voting purposes.

The town of Claremont, some three-quarters of a century ago, had one completely illegal ward, known throughout the community as "Ward 7."

One hears this designation today but rarely, and then only from older residents. But at the turn of the century there wasn't a Claremonter who didn't know where "Ward 7" was.

Its boundaries were never clearly defined, though its center was the Lower Village, with its mills, its businesses and its dwellings. To most residents of that area it was a name proudly pronounced; to many other Claremonters it was a name said with a sneer which might mask a trifle of envy.

For Ward 7, with its notorious "Hoodlum Gang" of juveniles and near-juveniles, enjoyed the reputation in that era as the toughesst district in Claremont.

Several theories have been advanced as to why and how the Lower Village acquired its appellation.

About 90 years ago, that part of Claremont retained its orginal name, Twenty years later it had become Ward 7. Somewhere between in those two decades came the transition.

One oldster, queried a quarter century ago, offered the opinion that Ward 7 received its name from a group of pugnacious Boston ball players who hailed from the seventh ward in that city.

Another thought that the town of Claremont once got so far toward the adoption of city government that the town was laid out in wards. Before the town fathers had progressed farther thatn laying out the Lower Village as the seventh section, however, the plan fell through. The disappointed residents clung to the name as the only remembrance of their incorporation in the then non-existent city of Claremont.

Yet another source offered the suggestion seventh ward of Brooklyn, N.Y., a district which reputedly controlled the city's yearly elections. Lower Villagers, realizing a golden opportunity for sectional publicity, snatched at the chance to call there area Ward 7.

One old-timer once recalled that the late Hartley L. Brooks, proprietor of the Lower Village's drug store for many years and an active participant in local politics, was long known as the "Mayor of Ward 7." There was another saying, current at that time, that "as Ward 7 went, so went the city."

Lower Villagers who lived there when the Ward 7 nickname came into existence are gone, never to return. Those who remain have only legend and folklore to solve the mystery.

RARE TUNE

A man who, 65 years ago, rode a bicycle to Boston in a single day, can remember back a long ways. He's Walter B. Fletcher, Claremont contractor who over a period of years put up as many buildings here as anyone else—probably more.

Among his reminiscences:

"The land back of Stan's Super Market on Maple Ave. was the old Fair Grounds, and people came from near and far for the three-day agricultural fair.

"In the spring of the year, Tremont Square was a mud hole. (So were the streets.—Ed.)

"When a young man, I worked for the old Sullivan Machinery Company as a carpenter. Ben Harlow was boss carpenter then. One day along came a carpenter from Unity and asked Harlow for a job.

"Yes." said Ben, "I'll hire you, but we pay only $1.50 per day."

"But Mr. Harlow," said the man. "I ask only $1.25 per day."