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ON THE HISTORY OF THE TOWNS OF CHARLTON
AND SOUTHBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

by
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SOUTHBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

CHARLTON AND SOUTHBRIDGE

About one fifth of the town of Southbridge was once part of the town of Charlton. This paper deals with the common history of the two towns up to the time of the loss of the Charlton territory to Southbridge.

The Oxford grant, which included large parts of the present-day towns of Oxford, Charlton, Dudley, and Southbridge, was authorized by the Massachusetts General Court in 1683. The grantees were told, in effect, to go out into the wilderness and pick out 64 square miles of territory. By 1688 the choice had been made, and the grantees had agreed on how to divide the land among themselves.

1*

The western boundary was a straight line, a part of which still forms part of the boundary between Charlton and Sturbridge. The line continued southward through the Southbridge airport, down across the Quinebaug river, through the site of the old wooden block at the corner of Crane and Hamilton streets, through the site of the Whitford block at the corner of Main and Hamilton, obliquely across Main near the end of Chapin street, through the site of the town hall and onward to a point on Lebanon Hill somewhere near Tipton Rock road (until recently called Crops road). This boundary is frequently referred to as "the old Oxford line".

2

The southern boundary ran in an easterly direction from the point on Lebanon Hill toward the present West Dudley.

In the agreement partitioning the land among the grantees the territory, with the exception of the portion at the east end reserved for the village of Oxford, was divided into several long strips running east and west, with the borders nearly parallel to the borders of the grant. The southern-most strip went to Joseph Dudley, the one next north to John Blackwell, and the next to William Stoughton. Dudley's strip later became part of the town of Dudley, and the other

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4

*The numbers in the margin refer to the notes at the end of the paper.

strips part of Charlton. The present boundary between Charlton and Dudley still follows the line of the old division. This line began a little south of the present Meadowbrook Road in Southbridge and crossed the Quinebaug a little north of the Sandersdale bridge. --Thus, all of Southbridge north of this line and east of the old Oxford line was once part of Charlton.

Although the Oxford grant had been divided up by 1688, there do not appear to have been any settlers in the south-west portion for over forty years afterward. (Most of the history that we read about the part which became Charlton deals with the northern portion. Very little is said about the southern and western portions.) It was not until about the time of the beginning of activity in the territory to the west, now Sturbridge, that settlers began to come into this portion of the Oxford grant.

The grant for Sturbridge, originally called New Medfield, was made in 1729. The first division of land was made in 1730, and settlers began to come in immediately.

In 1732 a young man from Woodstock named Moses Marcy, presumably attracted by the possibility for business in an area where a lot of building was going on, bought land in Oxford next to the Sturbridge boundary and put up a saw mill on the Quinebaug river. The site is just upstream from the present Central street bridge. The land he bought consisted of lots Nos. 2 and 4 (200 acres for £400) in a tract owned by Capt. Peter Papillon, who had bought 3000 acres in this part of Oxford. Marcy built a house nearby and lived there for several years.

In 1733 there was a second division of land in Sturbridge, and Marcy was given 50 acres on condition that he build a grist mill at his saw mill.

Business must have been good, for in 1736 he bought lot No. 6 from the estate of Peter Papillon, adjoining his earlier purchase of Nos. 2 and 4, and in the next few years he bought additional tracts on the Sturbridge side. Thus, he came to own all the land on

both sides of the line in the center of the present town of Southbridge. --After living in his Oxford home several years he built a new house on the Sturbridge side, on the site of the present Notre Dame Church, and lived there the rest of his life.

10

During the next sixty years or so the land seems to have been pretty well taken up by settlers. A few of them, and their property transactions, may be mentioned.

About 1738, John Vinton bought 930 acres and thus established the Vintons in the eastern part of the present Southbridge.

11

In 1744, Moses Marcy sold to Samuel Freeman, a blacksmith from Sturbridge, three parcels of land partly in Sturbridge and partly in Oxford. This was Marcy's first sale of land in what is now the central business district. Freeman built his house and shop on the site of the present fire station on Elm street.

12

In 1747, William Alton bought 60 acres of land from Ebenezer Scott of Oxford for \$138, and on the same day bought another 60 acres from one of the Papillon heirs, Richard Williams of Boston. Four years later he bought another 20 acres from Williams' widow. Alton, it will be remembered, was one of the leaders in getting Charlton incorporated in 1755, and he and his wife are buried on this property.

13

In 1760, Philip Ammidown of Oxford and his son Caleb bought land on the road going north from present Sandersdale. So many of Philip's descendants took up farms in this vicinity that for a while it was known as Ammidown City.

14

The son Caleb became a man of some importance in the area. He was born in 1736. In response to the Lexington alarm he enlisted as sergeant, and later again as sergeant and quartermaster sergeant. In Charlton town meeting he was appointed one of a committee to take measures for enlarging Charlton's quota of soldiers. While a representative to the legislature from Charlton he caused to be passed an act taxing non-resident owners of unimproved lands. This resulted in the sale of a great part of these lands to resident owners, and relieved the

burden on the actual settlers, much to the discomfiture of speculators. For several years he was excise man under the general government. This office included the whole county of Worcester. Its duties required an annual inventory of the groceries sold in the county and the imposition and collection of a specific tax on them. He was known in the region as a surveyor.

Caleb had three sons. The second, Luther, is of special interest to this account. He was born in 1761. In 1796 he bought the William Alton farm from Alton's heirs. However, he was of a mercantile turn of mind, and in 1802 or thereabout bought out, with others, the first store in the Marcy's mills area, which had been started in 1799. From that time he and his sons were closely connected with the commercial and building activities of the area.

Sometime during the years 1773-5 a man named Asa Walker bought land in the present Charlton street area a quarter of a mile or so north of the Charlton street school. He was a son of Nathaniel Walker who in 1743 had settled beside the pond now known as Walker Pond in Sturbridge. Asa was born in 1743, shortly before the family moved to the new property. In 1765 he married, and the next year he bought fifty acres of land on Lebanon Hill, then in Sturbridge. He built a house, and farmed there until he sold out and moved to the Charlton side of the line. In this place he also built a house, and lived there the rest of his life. Shortly after the removal to Charlton the Revolutionary War began. He became a Minute Man, and marched from Charlton to Concord, and on to Cambridge. He also served in the seige of Boston. (One of his descendants, Newell Walker, still lives in Southbridge.)

15

The farm of one settler, Charles Dugar, was probably on land now occupied by the Southbridge airport, near the end of Bearfoot Farm road. It seems odd to find this French name among the predominantly English ones of the time, and his story is an interesting one. It was set down over one hundred thirty years ago by Moses Plimpton in the last of a series of lectures on the history of Southbridge. This is what Plimpton had to say:

16

"The farm of Peter Dugar was first settled by his father, Charles Dugar, who was a son of Daniel Dugar. The latter was a Frenchman, and came to this place from Nova Scotia in the time of the old French War, not wishing to engage in the war, but remaining neutral. In those days it is said that very many foreigners who arrived in this country were in a habit of calling on Col. Marcy as a kind of patron and protector, he being of Irish descent. Daniel Dugar came with his family to Col. Marcy's and lived in a part of his mill for several years. At the termination of hostilities between France and England, in which the latter acquired possession of Canada, the king made a grant of land to all the French who had been neutral during the war. Old Mr. Dugar, preferring the language and society of his own countrymen, returned to Canada with all his family except his son Charles, whom no entreaties, temptations, or threats could induce to return with the family; they even took all his wages he had earned during this season in working for Col. Cheney, and all his clothes excepting those he wore, hoping thereby to induce him to follow them; but he would not go. The fact was he had fallen in love with Miss Sarah Chubb, and as he expressed it, 'I would not leave my Sarah for father, mother, brothers, and sisters'; and he did not. He was married to 'his Sarah' May 14, 1767; and I have no doubt of the truth of this relation, or of his sincere affection for Miss Chubb; for at her funeral I saw the old man bend over her corpse, and for a long time weep and give utterance to his grief and lamentation."

"While the family of old Mr. Dugar lived in Col. Marcy's mills the lads and lassies of that day, the children of Mr. Marcy, Mr. Truman, etc., used to have jolly times in visiting the family of the 'old Frenchman' as he was called; and many a winter evening was passed off with such plays and amusements as were fashionable at that time; and the friendship then contracted was afterwards maintained between these families and Mr. Charles Dugar.

One of the daughters of Col. Marcy, wife of Gen. Newell, always continued her visits to Mr. Dugar's, in some of the earliest of which, to show the custom of those times in comparison with the luxury and refinement of the present day, it may be stated that she occasionally took a social drink with her old friend in the shell of a goose egg, instead of our double flint glass cut tumblers."

"Mr. Dugar had to pay for his land the second time, the first title being not good -- as was the case in many instances in Charlton; yet he by industry and perseverance acquired and paid for a good farm, and was respected and esteemed as a good neighbor, generous to the poor, and always a social companion."

As time went by the people in the southwest corner of Charlton, formerly Oxford, seem to have found themselves associating more closely with their neighbors in Sturbridge and Dudley than with their fellow townsmen to the north and east. It was six or seven miles from Marcy's mills to Charlton Center, and only four to Sturbridge common. It began to appear advantageous to some of them to make the association closer. So in the Charlton records for the town meeting of March 1, 1790 (adjourned to April 5) we find the following: 17

"Red the potition of Benjamin Freeman and others praying that they with their Lands on the West Side of Quinebogue River may have Liberty to Pay to the Town of Sturbridge and (three words illegible) both for the convenience of attending publick worship and Schooling of their Children and

"Voted the Selectmen go and Vue the Land above and Report as Sune as may bee"

Benjamin Freeman was the son of Samuel Freeman, and occupied his father's old place on the site of the present fire station. 18

It is interesting to note that at this time, fourteen years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence and at about the time of the passage of the

Bill of Rights, it was still assumed that one attended and supported the church established in the town of which he was a citizen. The separation of church from the civil government was apparently not yet complete.

In the warrant for the meeting of April 4, 1791 19
is this:

"Item 4: To See if the town will Vote to set off the Inhabitants of the Town of Charlton with their Lands Lying on the Southerly Side of Quinebogue River to be Annexed to the Town of Sturbridge and on what Conditions."

The request had now become one for actual transfer to Sturbridge. Action at the town meeting was as follows:

"4thly) Voted not to Set of the lands 20
on the southerly side of Quinebogue River."

The next spring another try was made. The 21
warrant for the "anuel meeting" for March, 1792 contains the item:

"16thly) To see if the Town will Vote to set of Col. Benjamin Freeman with his Buildings and the Land Whareon they Stand from the Town of Charlton to the Town of Sturbridge."

This item mentions only Freeman and not the others. At the meeting the "Artical" was adjourned to the "First Monday in April next." On April 2, at the adjourned meeting it was

"Voted that the Sixteenth artical in 22
the preceding warrant be pased over."

The next step was taken so quickly that one wonders what happened. Did Freeman and the others ask for a special meeting in the hope that mainly their friends and supporters would be present? Or did they make some concession which would make the transfer more acceptable to the other voters? Perhaps the latter.

In any case, a warrant was issued for a meeting on April 14, less than a month and a half after the previous refusal, which contained the item:

23

"3dly To see if the Town will Vote to Set off Col. Benjamin Freeman and others with their Lands Southwesterly of Quinebogue River to be Annexed to the Town of Sturbridge and if Sett off to Vote on What Conditions."

The action of the meeting was as follows:

24

"Voted to Set off Col. Benjamin Freeman and others with their Lands that lyeth the Southwesterly Side of the Road Leading from said Freemans to the widow Cheneys with the hole of the said Road they to be always holeen with the Same Lands to pay their proportion in Repairing and Rebuilding the bridge over Quinebogue River near Marceys Mills as fully as though they ware never Set off --".

Very likely the stipulation about continuing to pay part of the bridge costs was important in getting the other voters to agree. However, the legislative act of June 26, which made the transfer final, failed to mention the stipulation, though it did contain the provision, usual in such transfers, that the persons being transferred should be liable for all taxes accruing before the transfer.

The portion of the act describing the territory set off is as follows:

25

"Be it enactedthat Benjamin Freeman, Daniel Marcy and Elijah Sebree with all their lands lying on the south side of the road leading from Sturbridge Meeting House to Sarah Cheney's in Dudley, including so much of the road aforesaid as now lies in Charlton, with the dwelling houses and other buildings thereon be, and they hereby are set off from the town of Charlton and annexed to the town of Sturbridge, and shall forever hereafter be considered as making part of the same"

The road referred to was the present Main Street and Old North Woodstock Road from the intersection with the old Oxford line near Chapin Street to the intersection with the Dudley-Charlton line. The other boundaries are not explicitly described in the act, but from Hamant's map of Sturbridge in 1795 it appears that everything between the road and the former border with Dudley was included.

26

Sarah Cheney, incidentally, was the widow of Col. Thomas Cheney for whom Peter Dugar had worked. It is interesting to note that the best description that could be given of what is now Southbridge's main street was that it went from a place in Sturbridge to a place in Dudley.

The desire of Freeman and the others to be annexed to Sturbridge seems to have been an early sign of a movement which developed among the inhabitants of all three towns living in the area near Marcy's mills: to be separated from the mother towns, whose centers of activity were so far away, and to be incorporated into a town of their own with its center more conveniently at hand. Early in 1795 the movement had progressed so far that a meeting was held in Benjamin Freeman's tavern (which he ran in a part of his house). At this meeting a committee of seven men was appointed to look into the matter and to recommend what action should be taken. The Charlton members were Asa Walker and Luther Ammidown.

27

The committee reported at a meeting held February 29, 1796. They had been instructed to deal with five matters.

"The first article of instruction to your committee was to report the most convenient spot for a meeting-house."

"In the public opinion three particular spots have been referred to, at a very moderate distance from each other. Your committee having paid particular attention to each of them, are unanimous in their opinion that the central, which is a rising ground on Captain Marcy's land, north of

Colonel Benjamin Freeman's barn, concentrates convenience, elegance, and beauty."

This site is the location of the Central Baptist Church on Main Street. Captain Marcy was Jedediah Marcy, Jr., 28 the grandson of Moses Marcy, who had come into the ownership of most of his grandfather's property in the vicinity. Benjamin Freeman's barn was across the road, on the present site of the Southbridge Savings Bank and the Worcester County National Bank.

The second article of instruction was to "report the principle upon which said house was to be built", that is, both how it should be financed, and how governed after it was built. It was proposed that enough money be raised by subscription to erect a frame and belfry and complete the outside, and that the pews be sold at public vendue to complete the inside. Every denomination was then to be equally privileged in the house according to its interest therein,

"this clause, however, not to be construed so as to operate against the major part governing, but to confirm the free use of the house to the minority when the majority are not improving the same."

The third instruction was to propose boundaries for the town. This they did by naming the property holders who would be along the edge, noting, however, that an actual survey would be necessary before an act of incorporation could be applied for. The Charlton owners named as being along the proposed boundaries were Eliakim Chamberlain, Jesse Merritt, Paul Rich, Asa Dresser, and Alexander Brown.

The fourth instruction was to provide a plan for the building itself. This seems to have been presented with the report.

"The fifth article and last of the instructions to your committee was to see what number of persons will come forward to assist to build said meeting house."

"Although your committee as yet are not well enough informed to detail the particular disposition of every person, yet from what

information your committee have already obtained the disposition of the people appears to be general in favor of the plan."

"Your committee propose to bring forward subscription papers at the present meeting, which will give that point its fairest decision. All moneys, either by sales of pews or subscription, to be considered as binding whenever an act of incorporation takes place, otherwise to be void and of no effect."

It is noteworthy that of the five articles of instruction, only one had specifically to do with the town as we would now think of it. The other four concerned the meeting house. It is evident that the people felt that the establishment of a meeting house was part of the necessary procedure for setting up a town, just as it had been in colonial days when Dudley, Sturbridge and Charlton were being incorporated.

The survey mentioned in the report was made in the autumn of the year by Caleb Ammidown. The compass he used is still in existence. After his death it was bought by Salem Town, Jr., who had worked under him as a surveyor and who thereafter used it in his own work. Many years afterward Holmes Ammidown, grandson of Caleb and son of Luther Ammidown, bought it back, and later presented it to the Southbridge Library. Some years ago the compass, along with other historical material, was turned over to Old Sturbridge Village. It has been on exhibit there in the Salem Town House.

29

The inhabitants went ahead with the erection of the church and the attempt to get the town incorporated. The former went well. The latter ran into snags. Petitions sent to the older towns asking approval for setting off their territory were turned down repeatedly. Without the approvals the petitioners would stand little chance of favorable actions by the General Court.

30

Previous historians of Southbridge have described the refusals by Sturbridge, but as far as I know no one before now has detailed the treatment by Charlton. The following quotations are from the Charlton town records.

The warrant for the town meeting of November 7, 1796 contains the item:

31

"4thly: To See if the Town will vote that a number of the Inhabitants in the South-westerly Part of the Town of Charlton with their Lands to be Sett of to Join with a number of Inhabitants of the Towns of Sturbridge and Dudley to form a Seperate Town"

The report of the meeting says:

"Voted the 4th artical in the preceding Warrant be dismissed."

32

The second attempt was a year and a half later. The warrant for the meeting of March 5, 1798 says:

"13thly To see if the Town will vote to set off a number of the Inhabitants of the Town of Charlton with their lands Who have a desire to join with a number of persons belonging to the Town of Sturbridge and Dudley who have a desire to form themselves into a Town agreeably to their petition as by the plan of the supposed Town will appear."

33

The meeting was adjourned in part to April 12 and then to the next May meeting day. When action was finally taken it was

"Voted to dismiss the 13th artical in the preceding warrant."

34

After these rebuffs by the mother towns the petitioners seem to have despaired of getting the necessary approvals. Meanwhile the meeting house was being completed, and they seem to have decided that

it would be well at least to get a parish incorporated. This would release them from any requirement for supporting the churches of the older towns and allow them to tax their constituency to support their own. In May of 1800 they prepared a petition to the General Court asking that they be set off as a parish or precinct.

35

As a result the following article appeared in the warrant for the Charlton town meeting of November 3, 1800:

"3dly: To see what Method the Town will take respecting the order of Notice from the General Court why the Prayer of the Petition of Sundry Persons in the Town of Sturbridge, Dudley & Charlton Should not be Granted"

36

The response to this petition was much different from that to the previous requests:

"3dly Voted that the Petitioners that belong to Charlton who have Petitioned to be Set off from Charlton Have leave or liberty to be incorporated into a Poll Parish or Religious society by name agreeable to an Order of Notice from the General Court of this Commonwealth."

37

A few months later, in February 1801, the General Court granted the request and incorporated the parish, under the name of The Second Religious Society in the Town of Charlton, the meeting house being on the Charlton side of the line. The act listed about 90 names, those of the petitioners plus a few more, and these persons "with their present estates" were incorporated into the parish. There were no boundaries as we are accustomed to think of them. A piece of property was in or out depending on whether the owner's name was or was not on the list. Property not in the parish might be completely surrounded by property which was.

38

39

The historians of Southbridge do not say much on the matter, but there is reason to think that many of the inhabitants were uninterested in, or even opposed to the separation. A valuation list prepared

in 1798 when the attempt was still being made to obtain the incorporation of a town gives the names of about 120 property owners in the area from the three towns. Only about half of these lent enough support to cause their names to appear on the petition lists or subscription lists which have come down to us. The number on the Charlton list plus a few more Charlton residents who might have been involved is twenty-seven. Only fourteen of these are listed as having shown active interest, and one of them later changed his mind.

40

As might have been deduced from the wording of the report of the committee in 1796, the parish represented no religious denomination. Members of four denominations, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, and Universalist were among the members, but none of them had an organized local church. Later in 1801, after the organization of the parish, the Congregationalists did organize as the "Second Congregational Church of Charlton." The other denominations did not organize for several years. However, all four provided preaching for the services.

41

The parish authority concerned only the meeting house and related affairs. Other matters, such as schools and roads, remained under the jurisdiction of the three towns. Thus a Charlton school (the Southwest Ward school?) was maintained in the Guelphwood road region.

Despite the limited duties of the parish organization, the minutes of its business meetings show that it furnished a center of activity for those who still wanted to obtain the incorporation of a new town.

42

In 1811 the parishoners began another attempt to be set off as a town. They first asked for the territory in Caleb Ammidown's survey of 1796. Then in 1814 they arranged to obtain "a more correct survey of the parish". This may have meant a survey conforming more closely to the demands of those who wanted to be left outside, for there were some active objectors. In this year also they prepared and presented to the General Court a petition asking for the incorporation, which bore 177 signatures. The Court appointed a special committee to look into the matter, and notices were sent to the three towns.

43

As a result a warrant was issued for a Charlton town meeting on November 7, 1814 containing the article:

44

"2dly To see if the Town will vote to set off a certain part of the said town of Charlton agreeable to a petition presented to the General Court at their May Session Last past."

At the town meeting it was voted to take action to prevent the proposed loss of territory:

"Voted to Not have any part of the town of Charlton set off to honest Town so called as expressed in the warrant. "Voted to Choose a Committee of three to meet the Courts committee for the purpose of setting off honest town so called.

"Voted and chose Genl John Spurr, Genl Salem Town Jr. & Isaiah Rider Esq. for the above committee."

It must be explained here that the territory of the parish had come to be called Honest Town. Whether the name was given in praise or derision, and the time at which it began to be used nobody seems to know, but it was in use for fifteen or twenty years before Southbridge was named.

45

The Court's committee met with representatives of the groups concerned "at the house of Morris Marcy in Sturbridge on Monday, the 14th day of November, 1814", a week after the Charlton town meeting. The committee later reported to the Court the recommendation:

46

"That the prayer of the petitioners be so far granted that the inhabitants, with their estates included within the plan annexed, be incorporated into a town, with a provision in the act of incorporation, giving liberty to those inhabitants residing in the part proposed to be taken from the town of Charlton, of making their own election, whether during their time they

shall continue to reside in that part of said proposed new town, together with their estates, which they now possess, so long as they shall hold and possess the same, shall remain and belong to the said town of Charlton or to the new town, by certifying the same to the town clerk of said Charlton in writing, within one year from the passing of the act for incorporating the new town."

This recommendation was unacceptable to the petitioners from Honest Town. They held a number of meetings and in one on January 3, 1815

47

"The following were appointed a committee to invite the remonstrants against the new town, who reside within the proposed limits, to withdraw their objections: Luther Ammidown, Esq., Major Calvin Ammidown, and Captain John Endicott."

Meanwhile activity was going on in Charlton. A warrant was issued for a town meeting to be held January 16, 1815, containing the following articles:

48

"2dly To See if the Town will Choose a Committee or Committees to Examine the lines as they have been run by the Applicants for a New Town, to Consist of the Towns of Sturbridge, Dudley & Charlton, or Remonstrate against the Incorporation of said Contemplated Town.

"3dly To See if the Town will choose a Surveyor to attend the sd Committee in Examining and altering said lines."

The reaction of the town meeting was vigorous:

49

"Voted to Choose a committee of five for the purposes contemplated in the warrant."

"Voted & chose Salem Town Jr., Maj'r Daniel Williams, Captain Ephraim Willard, Edward Cleveland, Royal Ellis for the above Committee.

"Voted to have the Committee run a New line until it intersects the old line North some where Near Asa Dresser's & procure a plan from honest Town so called for the purpose of shewing what alterations & Exhibit the Same to the Representatives.

"Voted to instruct our Representatives to oppose the Report of the Viewing Committee in favour of the Applicants for a New Town to Consist of Dudley, Sturbridge & Charlton."

"Voted to have the Committee run the lines as they shall think fit and proper."

The dispute dragged along during the rest of the year. In March the petitioners appointed a committee to resurvey the parish "agreeable to direction of the court". In June their representatives obtained an order from the General Court appointing a new viewing committee which included, incidentally, Noah Webster, the author of Webster's spelling books and Webster's Dictionary. The committee was to examine the territory on October 4.

50

Consequently there was issued a warrant for a Charlton town meeting to be held September 18:

51

"To see if the Town will Choose an agent or agents to attend with a Committee appointed by the General Court of this Commonwealth to review Honestown Parish so called together with the Town of Charlton, Sturbridge & Dudley or act thereon as they shall think proper."

At the meeting it was

52

"2dly Voted to have three agents to meet the Courts Committee appointed to Sett off Honest Town so called."

"3dly Voted & Chose John Spurr, Esqr. Isaiah Rider Esqr. and Mr. Edward Cleveland for the above Committee."

"4thly Voted to have the Selectmen directed to give an order to pay the Courts Committee the proportion that will fall for the Town of Charlton to pay."

After the October 4 meeting the Court's committee reported, recommending the incorporation of a town according to a plan annexed to their report. This did not satisfy the petitioners, and on October 25 they authorized still another survey to make a plan showing what lines the parish was willing to accept, and arranged to send representatives to discuss the matter further with the Court's committee.

53

In Charlton a warrant was issued for a meeting on New Year's day, 1816:

54

"2dly To see if the Town will Sanction the doings of their Committee that was appointed to attend with the Courts Committee who were appointed by the General Court to (illegible) Honest Town Parish so called or act thereon as they may think Proper."

"3dly To see if the Town will vote to raise a sum of money to Defray the Expenses of said Courts committee and other Expenses attending said reason."

In the report of the meeting:

55

"Voted to Except the doing of the Committee that was chosen by the Town of Charlton to meet the Courts Committee that was sent out to review the lines of Honest Town Parish so called & agreed to have the lines run as they had agreed."

"Voted to raise the Sum of one hundred & thirty Dollars to Defray the Expenses of the Courts Committee and other Expenses."

From the tone of this meeting it appears that the Town realized that the new town was going to be set off, and the meeting merely confirmed the fact that the representatives had done as well as they could in determining the way the lines would be drawn.

The act incorporating the town of South-bridge was finally passed on February 15, 1816, and the long fight was over.

56

The Charlton representatives probably did fairly well in protecting the people who did not wish to go into the new town. It is known that Jesse Merritt, Royal Ellis and Eliakim Chamberlain were left in Charlton at their own request. How many others there were among the "remonstrants" we have no way of knowing.

57

Eliakim Chamberlain seems originally to have been in favor of the separation; at least he had had enough interest to buy a pew when the meeting house was being constructed. During the next fifteen years or so he seems to have become alienated.

58

One interesting result of his decision to stay out of the new town is found in the southern part of the Charlton-Southbridge boundary. Even today this part of the boundary has an odd shape, but when the act of incorporation was passed it was even more irregular. From the wording of the act it appears to have been laid out along Chamberlain's western boundary. It was a mile or so long and consisted of about eight segments, ranging for 103 rods down to 15 rods in length. Some of the corners are much less than right angles. One wonders how Chamberlain came to have such an odd-shaped line. (A town boundary modification in 1907 took out the most picturesque kinks.)

Others known to have been left in Charlton, though their lands had been mentioned for inclusion in the new town, were B. Douty, Asa Dresser and Royal Ellis.

59

After the separation some adjustments were necessary. For one thing, there had to be a financial settlement. The act of incorporation stated

"Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, That the inhabitants and proprietors of land in the town of Southbridge shall be holden to pay their proportion of all taxes already voted to be raised and shall have been assessed at the time of the passing of this act, by the towns of Sturbridge, Charlton and Dudley, and also to pay their proportion of all public debts due and owing by the said towns of Sturbridge, Charlton and Dudley, at the time of the passing of this act.

"Sec. 3. Be it further enacted, That said town of Southbridge shall be entitled to demand and receive of the said towns of Sturbridge, Charlton and Dudley, its proportion of all the town's public stock of arms, ammunition, legacies and bequests, or any other town property whatsoever the said towns of Sturbridge, Charlton and Dudley were possessed of or entitled to at the time of the passing of this act. Said town of Southbridge is also to be entitled to the benefit of a certain bond given by Jedediah Marcy, deceased, to the inhabitants of the town of Charlton for the purpose of supporting the Marcy bridge, so called, within said town of Southbridge, for a certain time in said bond expressed.

Accordingly in the Charlton town meeting of March, 1816 (adjourned in part to April and then to May) it was

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"Voted to choose a Committee of 3 to make a compromise with a Committee from Southbridge concerning the funds and Poor of Charlton."

"Voted and chose Capt. Ephraim Willard, Isaiah Rider Esqr. & Gen. Salem Town jr. for the above Committee."

The committee reported at the meeting of March, 1817 (adjourned in part to April 7 and then to the first Monday in May. These three sessions, incidentally, were held in the North School House.) The report was as follows.

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"We the Subscriber Committees Chosen by the Town of Charlton & Southbridge to settle the Claims the Town of Southbridge has on the Town of Charlton for their Proportion of Property of said Town of Charlton which belongs to said Southbridge agreeably to their act of incorporation have attended that Service and report as follows (viz)-

"We find in the hands of the Treasurer
of the town of Charlton when last examined
a state Note being

interest at 5 per cent the sume of	529.00
Sundry other notes being interest	104.10
at 6 per cent	
Tax bills in the hands of Collectors	1,479.15
to Collect	
Other Town Stock (viz) Herse,	45.00
Harness & c	
Weights, Measures, Seals & c	<u>22.50</u>
	2,179.75

"We likewise find the Town of
Charlton owes Debts as follows (viz)

Outstanding orders, the Sum of	385.96
The Several School Districts & c	341.96
Due to Sundry Persons for keeping	131.04
the Poor	
Due at Worcester to the overseers	42.00
of the Poor	
Due to Levi Lincoln Jr. Esqr. for	
advising with Frederick W. Bottom	5.00
Esqr	
Extra Necessaries the Poor Huldah Pike	24.50
Referees for setting on a Rule of	15.75
Court at Riders	
Harvey Dresser for Guide Boards	9.25
Taxes abated	5.72
To Lieut Aaron Hammond Town treasurer	5.32
Majr. Samuel Freeman for Surveying	8.75
Royal Ellis for School Money	29.70
Frederick W. Bottom Esqr as per (illegible)	8.70
To the Town of Sturbridge	<u>7.00</u>
	<u>1,020.65</u>

\$1,159.10

"We find a ballance to be divided
between said towns the Sum of
of which sum we find the propor-
tion due to Southbridge the sum
of

\$1,159.10

100.15

Also for 9 lb. of Powder being
their sold to said Charlton the
sum of

4.00

104.15

Said Southbridge took their proportion balls, flints & (illegible) kittles. 10 lb. of balls 10 oz. flints & 2 (illegible) kittles.

"It is agreed by both parties that Each shall bear their proportion of all taxes which may be abated by the Town of Charlton which was due previous to the 15th of February 1816 and it is further agreed by the parties aforesaid that all Errors which may hereafter appear shall be rectified."

"All which is humbly Submitted.

Charlton October 9th 1816

Ephraim Willard	Committee
Isaiah Rider	on the part
Salem Town Jr.	of Charlton

Samuel Fiske	Committee
Calvin Ammidown	on the part of
Gershom Plimpton	Southbridge"

Major Samuel Freeman, mentioned as having some money owed him for surveying, was the surveyor who had done the work during the year 1815 for the petitioners. It may be that he was also employed to lay out the lines as Charlton proposed them. Frederick W. Bottom was a lawyer who had begun practice in Charlton but had moved to "Honest Town" in 1814, and was active in the work of forming a new town. One wonders whether, in spite of this, the services for which Charlton owed him had to do with this matter, or were for something unrelated to it.

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Another necessary adjustment had to do with the school districts. The Southwest Ward had lost territory and even its school house to the new town. Consequently, at the same town meeting at which the committee to settle with Southbridge had been chosen it was

"Voted to Choose a Committee of three to arrange the South ward & a part of the Southwest ward that is not annexed to Southbridge & see if it is Expedient to divide them into two wards or annex them to the South ward or otherwise as they shall

think fit and proper & Report to the Selectmen."

The readjustment of the districts became rather involved. Though interesting, the subject will not be followed further in this paper.

One more matter, a small one to be sure, affected Charlton in the Southbridge acquisition of territory. This matter seems to have escaped the attention of previous historians of the two towns. In the act of incorporation the petitioners had been denied an area of about a thousand acres on the south-east side, lying almost wholly in Dudley. Six years later, when they judged the time was right, they again approached the General Court, and on February 23, 1822 the territory was granted them.

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The act was entitled, "An Act to set off Certain Persons from Dudley, and Annex them to Southbridge in the County of Worcester". It names the seven persons who were to be set off, and then describes the new boundary by courses and distances. If one lays out this boundary and the original one to scale on a map of the three towns, he finds that the transfer actually included about 11 acres of Charlton territory.

While the act was being considered before passage, Dudley was notified by the General Court in the manner usual in such cases, but there seems to be no record that any notification was ever sent to Charlton. Further, an examination of the Charlton town records of the period fails to show any indication that Charlton knew what was going on.

A few years later, in 1831, each town of Massachusetts was required by legislative act to provide the Secretary of the Commonwealth with a map of its territory. By studying the Charlton map carefully it can be seen that there are some curious deficiencies in the corner of town in which this loss of territory took place. The short segment of new boundary between Charlton and Southbridge is omitted, and the map-maker drew the Charlton-Dudley line to the northern-most point of the land transferred by the act. He then omitted to put down the figures for direction and length of the Dudley line, though the letters "S W"

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are present as though he intended to fill in the values later. It looks as though he may have been puzzled because he could not make his distances and angles come out right.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

The following abbreviations are used:

AHC I or AHC II: Volume I or volume II of "Historical Collections", by Holmes Ammidown, second edition, New York, 1877; published by the author. (In the Jacob Edwards Memorial Library, Southbridge. The first edition was a single volume; there is a copy of it in the Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.)

CTR: Charlton town records. The official records of Charlton town meetings etc. from the time of incorporation of the town. Town clerk's office, Charlton town hall. CTR II means Book II, etc.

Plimpton: "History of Southbridge", by Moses Plimpton. "Delivered before the Southbridge, Mass., Lyceum or Literary Association, in three lectures, March, 1836." Southbridge, Journal Steam Book Print, 1882. (In the Jacob Edwards Memorial Library, Southbridge.)

QHSL I, II or III: Volume I, II or III of "Quinebaug Historical Society Leaflets", published by the Society in Southbridge, about 1910 to 1914. (In the Jacob Edwards Memorial Library, Southbridge.)

WRD: Worcester County Registry of Deeds. References are to the locations of deeds recorded at the registry. These references are all, or nearly all, quoted from AHC I or II, and have not been checked by me at the registry.

1. AHC I, 109-135.
2. Chase, Levi B. in Hurd's "History of Worcester County" vol. II, article on Southbridge, pp. 995 et seq. 1889. The part of the description not in this reference is obtained by drawing to scale and by extending present-day remainders of the lines on Geological Survey maps.
3. AHC I, 127-135.
4. See for example QHSL I, Nos. 23 and 24, pp. 283 to 299. It should be noted that Ammidown, in AHC I, 405-407 and perhaps elsewhere gives a wrong impression on this matter.
5. Acts and Resolves of the Province, 1729-30, Chap. 51. See also AHC II, 21-23.
6. AHC II, 357, 358. Also QHSL I, No. 11, "The Marcy Family", pp. 133, 134. --- Ammidown's statement that the west side of the river at this point was in Sturbridge must be incorrect, as the old Oxford line crossed the river three tenths of a mile or so farther up stream. Earlier ownership of Marcy's land by Joseph Dudley is also questionable.
7. AHC II, 358, 580.
8. AHC II, 29, 357. Also QHSL I, No. 11, p. 134.
9. AHC II, 358.
10. QHSL I, No. 11, p. 134. It is possible to tell approximately Marcy's periods of residence in Woodstock, Oxford and Sturbridge by noting the dates of birth of his children in the vital records of those towns.
11. QHSL I, No. 3, p. 37.
12. AHC II, 572, 573. WRD, bk. 29, p. 400.
13. AHC II, 574. The deed from Williams' widow is in WRD, bk. 31, p. 182. --- On the Alton burying place, see AHC I, 568, 569.

14. On the Ammidown history see QHSL III, No. 6, "The Ammidown Family", by Lucius E. Ammidown.
15. AHC II, 67, 68, 573, 576. Also, Walker family records (from Mr. Newell Walker).
16. Plimpton, 42, 43. An 1878 wall map of Southbridge published by "New York Publishing House," (In the Jacob Edwards Memorial Library) shows the "Oakes and Duger places."
17. CTR II, 68.
18. AHC II, 573. Plimpton, 41.
19. CTR II, 81.
20. CTR II, 82.
21. CTR II, 87.
22. CTR II, 91.
23. CTR II, 93.
24. CTR II, 94.
25. Mass. Acts and Laws, 1792, chapter 12. The act is quoted in AHC II, p. 164. In another place, AHC II, 265, 266, Ammidown says that the piece was set off "on the petition of Colonel Thomas Cheney, Widow Seabury and Benjamin Freeman". Very likely this is merely a garbling of the names in the act. Thomas Cheney was dead, and anyway it is hard to understand why he, a resident of Dudley, would be concerned in this matter.
26. AHC II, 265. The map is reproduced in AHC II, facing p. 31.
27. Plimpton, 25-27. AHC II, 229-233. Plimpton, who had the document, says the report was made Feb. 29, 1796. Ammidown, however, quotes the date January 29, 1796 as part of the document. It may have been signed by the committee on the earlier date, and presented to the meeting on the later one.

28. QHSL I, No. 11, p. 36. AHC II, 577. QHSL I, No. 2, p. 14.
29. AHC II, 224, 225, 233.
30. Plimpton, 25, 27. AHC II, 51.
31. CTR II, 152.
32. CTR II, 153.
33. CTR II, 170.
34. CTR II, 176.
35. AHC II, 243, 244 gives the petition in full, and the names of the signers; also the order of the General Court to the petitioners to notify the three towns to show cause "if any they have" why the petition should not be granted.
36. CTR II, 104, second numbering. There is an error of page numbering in this volume. The originally blank pages were numbered by hand. The mistake occurred in writing "199, 100, 101 . . ." instead of "199, 200, 201 . . ." Thus the page number of this reference should have been 204, and the one in the next note, 206.
37. CTR II, 106.
38. AHC II, 245, 246 gives the act in full. See also Plimpton, 28.
39. AHC II, 253.
40. AHC II, 239-242. The petition and subscription lists referred to are the one for purchase of pews, AHC II, 234, 235; the list of petitioners for the parish, AHC II, 243, 244; the nearly identical list of persons named in the act incorporating the parish, AHC II, 245, 246; the list of proprietors of the burying ground, AHC II, 251, and the list of signers of the 1814 petition for incorporation of the town, AHC II, 258, 259.

41. Plimpton, 30, 34, 35; ACH I, 533 et seq.; AHC II, 479 et seq.
42. The book of records of the parish, mentioned by Ammidown in AHC I, 534, is still in the Jacob Edwards Memorial Library, Southbridge.
43. Plimpton, 31. AHC II, 255 et seq.
44. CTR III, 45. The report of the meeting is on the same page.
45. Plimpton, 27, 28. ACH II, 52, 229, 323.
46. AHC II, 260.
47. AHC II, 261.
48. CTR III, 46.
49. CTR III, 47.
50. AHC II, 262, 263. Plimpton, 33.
51. CTR III, 58.
52. CTR III, 59.
53. AHC II, 262, 263.
54. CTR III, 60.
55. CTR III, 61.
56. Mass. Private and Special Statutes, 1815, Chap. 116. The act is quoted in full in AHC II, 268-270.
57. Plimpton, 33.
58. ACH II, 234.
59. From the boundary description in the act of incorporation it is evident that Douty was left in Charlton.
60. CTR III, 72.
61. CTR III, 94 et seq.

62. AHC II, 265, 266, 568, 569.

63. Plimpton, 33. AHC II, 309, 310. The latter gives the act in full.

64. The map is reproduced in AHC II, facing p. 164.