

## ACQUISITION OF THE LAND & FIRST SETTLERS

Previous to 1635, the only white settlers in Connecticut were the Dutch from New Amsterdam who maintained a trading post (House of Good Hope) at the site of present Hartford. In 1635 emigrants from the vicinity of Boston settled on the Connecticut River at Wethersfield, Windsor and Hartford. After the Indian War of 1637, those who pursued the fleeing Pequots toward the west saw for the first time the lands of Long Island Sound west of the mouth of the Connecticut.

In 1638, a colony from Boston established headquarters on New Haven Bay. One of the New Haven companies went further west and settled Milford in 1639. For a long time the rest of the state was a wilderness. The enemies were the Indians, the wolves, bears and snakes and the French, the Dutch, and the devil.

The English settlers were careful to purchase and obtain what they considered as legal deeds from the roving Indians who had no permanent settlements. In some cases the same land had to be bought from several chiefs who demanded payment, and in most cases they reserved hunting and fishing rights. The Indians had no conception of private property. Judging the Colonists by themselves they supposed the settlers would cultivate a little land and support themselves by trading, fishing and hunting. The Indian was slowly disposed and quietly disappeared to the west. Had they known what was in store for them, they would have paid the wampum tributes of the Pequots and joined in the scalping parties of the Five Nations. The white settlers were so kind, and peaceful yet so destructive of the Indian resources, and in turn the new settlers did not know how soon the Indian would melt away before the glow and heat of Christian Civilization.

In 1675, the twelve families residing at Paugasset, were granted the privilege of a plantation which the Court named Derby and which became a separate town in 1675.

Oxford Parish (north farmers of Derby) completed their organization on June 30, 1741 after considerable opposition from the mother parish of Derby. The Town of Oxford was incorporated in 1798, out of the town of Derby.

Bethany Parish was formed out of Woodbridge Parish in 1762 and was incorporated as a Town in 1832. In 1839 Oxford gave up to Bethany the southern portion of its territory east of the Naugatuck River making Oxford's eastern boundary the Naugatuck River.

In 1844 Oxford gave up to the new Town of Naugatuck a tract of land lying west of the Naugatuck down to Spruce Creek.

In 1854 a small portion of Oxford was annexed to Seymour. Seymour was incorporated out of Derby in 1850.

Beacon Falls was originally a part of Naugatuck, Seymour, Bethany and Oxford, which originally was a part of the Town of Derby, and in turn Derby was an outgrowth of Milford.

The earliest record of a settlement in the Oxford District appears to be that of Ensign Samuel Riggs, to whom a Derby Town meeting held January 14, 1678 granted liberty to take up 20 acres of land at or near Rock Rimmon, in what is now Seymour on the west side of the Naugatuck River. During that year, Major Ebenezer Johnson, Jeremiah Johnson and a few others also purchased small tracts of land at Rock Rimmon, near what is now called Pinesbridge.

The white settlers had no trouble with the Indians. They were known as the Paugasucks or Paugassetts, a large tribe, occupying considerable property on both sides of the Housatonic River, extending from Oyster River, which separates Orange from Milford all the way to Fairfield. On the west side of the Housatonic River, the Paugasucks claimed all the Territory now comprised in the Towns of Stratford, Bridgeport, Trumbull, Huntington and Monroe. On the east side of the Housatonic they claimed as far north as Beacon Hill Brook, which overlapped the hunting grounds of the Tunxis as the Indians of Farmington were known. Beacon Hill Brook later became the boundary between Waterbury and Derby and later Naugatuck and Beacon Falls.

One of the chief seats of the Paugasucks was at the Great Neck between the Housatonic and the Naugatuck Rivers in the vicinity of what later became known as "Baldwin's Corners". There was a large open field at this place, frequently referred to as "Indian Field". The proprietorship of the land around Derby seems to have been divided between the Pootatucks and the Paugasucks, the land of the Pootatucks extending on the west and south of the Housatonic and those of the Paugasucks east and north of that River. From 1665 onward, the Paugasucks sold land, piece by piece to the Derby people until the town bounds reached Waterbury and Woodbury on the north sometimes prior to 1680.

The Naugatuck River was, at one time, called the Paugasuck.

The Town of Beacon Falls was so named from Beacon Hill, and from

which a small but beautiful water fall descended. When the town was named there was considerable desire to call the new district Home after the Home Woolen Mill.

Beacon Falls is one of the smallest towns in the New Haven County and next to Ansonia is the youngest. It lies on both sides of the Naugatuck River, south of Beacon Hill Brook, and from that locality the name was derived. Bounding it are the towns from which it was formed, in 1871, namely: Naugatuck on the north, Bethany on the east, and southeast, Seymour on the south and Oxford on the west. The greater part of the surface is mountainous, but along the brooks are some pleasantly located and fertile lands. On the east side is Hockanum Brook, flowing south into Lebanon Brook, a mile east of the point where the latter empties into the Naugatuck River, in the southeastern part of the town. On the opposite side of the river are Sherman's Brook, in the northwest, and Hemp Swamp Brook in the southwestern part of the town.

The principal elevations on the west side are Rimmon Hill, in the southwest, and Toby's mountain in the northwest, one of whose spurs is High Rock. This approximates 500 feet in height. Opposite Rimmon Hill and separated from it by the river is a bold, craggy and almost cone-shaped mound, more than 400 feet high, called Rimmon Rock. The name of the hill and the rock may have been derived from the fact that these bore, in the olden times, relative to the country beyond, a resemblance to the scriptural Rimmon. The plain beyond their northern bases was early called Lopus or Loper's, but for what reason has not been clearly determined. The western and northern boundaries of this plain are the rocks of Toby's mountain, so called from once having been the property of the Indian named Toby or Tobie, who for twelve years was a slave in the family of the Captain Ebenezer Johnson, one of Derby's prominent men and the principal land holder in this town. He secured him in New London in 1676, when the Indian was a boy, and freed him in 1688. In 1693, through the influence of Major Johnson and for the consideration of 10 pounds and a barrel of cider, the Paugasuck Indians, who were the owners of this region sold to Toby a large tract of land, mostly mountainous, lying in the northwestern part of the town. This was legally confirmed to him in 1713. Here he lived until his death in 1734, when by the terms of his will, the land became the property of white men: Timothy Wooster, Peter Johnson, Ebenezer Johnson and Timothy Johnson, all but the first being sons of Colonel Johnson, his former master.

It appears singular that another Indian slave of Colonel Johnson should be connected with a land purchase in Beacon Falls, but such is the fact. One of his maid-servants was a young squaw Sarah, who was desired by an Indian for his wife, and she was sold to him in 1709. This dusky lover was named Chetrenasut, and he secured his bride for a consideration of 3 pounds, ten shilling of money and that tract of land "lying in a place called Nayumps, bounded northerly with Beacon Hill river, easterly with Milford, westerly with the Naugatuck River, and southerly with Lebanon river. This region was afterwards called "Nyumps" and was the northwestern part of Bethany, set off to Beacon Falls when the town was formed. It includes the main part of the town, and on which are now its most costly improvements.

South of Toby's land and the Nyumph purchase, earlier purchase had been made by Captain Ebenezer Johnson, in 1678, the same being in three small parcels, at or near Rock Rimmon, running up to Lebanon Brook. On the west side of the river, south of Toby's land and running down to lands in the present town of Seymour, purchased by David Wooster, in 1692. Major Ebenezer Johnson and Ensign Samuel Riggs purchased Indian lands in 1700, and eight years later they divided their interests. Ensign Riggs took the land on the west side of the Naugatuck, lying south of the brook at Pinesbridge, and Major Johnson took the lands north of the brook and those on the east side of the river. These lands at Pinesbridge Colonel Johnson divided between his sons, Charles and Timothy, in 1721 speaking of the same as "my farm at Rimmon". Before this time, in December, 1708, Ensign Samuel Riggs, of Derby, had given to his son, Ebenezer Riggs, 200 acres of the choicest lands "with houses and all appurtenances thereunto pertaining." On these lands Ebenezer Riggs settled soon after, but died in 1712, when but little more than thirty years of age.

It is supposed that some of the children of Colonel Ebenezer Johnson settled on their father's land soon after the settlement of Ebenezer Riggs, and that they lived west and southwest of Rock Rimmon. At a latter day Timothy Johnson, who was married to Abigail Brewster, in 1725, settled on the Naugatuck a short distance below Pines Bridge. In the same locality lived their son, Alexander, who was born in 1730 and died in 1817, aged 87 years. This Captain Alexander Johnson had a son Elijah, who occupied the homestead until his death, in 1847, at the age of 75. Sharpe, in his "History of Seymour", states that Timothy Johnson was at first much annoyed "by wild animals, especially bears, which

came from Rock Rimmon and destroyed his crops''. This locality, and in fact other parts of town, particularly Nyumph, were also much troubled by snakes, which came out from the crevices of the rocks and often crawled into the houses of the early settlers. The Johnsons were for many years numerous at Pines Bridge and around Rock Rimmon, and what is now Beacon Falls and Seymour. In the latter town Benajah Johnson last lived, until 1763, in the locality called Skokarat. A daughter, Zeviah, born in 1739, married Abiel Fairchild, who settled not quite a mile northwest from Pines Bridge. Fairchild was reputed a most excellent man, and was greatly esteemed by his neighbors.

Nearer Pinesbridge, on the Lopus Plains, the first settlers were Zadoc Sanford and Hezekiah Clark. The latter was the ancestor of Sheldon Clark, the benefactor of Yale College, and who left also a bequest for the maintenance of Pines Bridge.

In the Nyumph section, Samuel Wheeler probably put up the first house. His brothers, Moses, David, and James settled in the same locality, but Simeon lived nearer Rimmon. They were the sons of Captain James Wheeler, who lived on Turkey Hill, in Derby. Their descendants became numerous and prominent in Bethany and Oxford. In Nyumph also lived as a pioneer, David French and other members of that family, Moses Clark settling there later. In the course of years the population decreased, and in 1880 all the inhabitants numbered only 379.

## INCORPORATION OF BEACON FALLS

Early in 1871, John Wolfe and others petitioned the Assembly for the creation of a new town, Beacon Falls, out of portions of Bethany, Naugatuck, Seymour and Oxford. On June 1, 1871, the Seymour Record reported that "last week representatives of Oxford together with the Selectman of Seymour appeared before the legislative committee and testified that in their judgement it would in no way be injurious to Oxford to lose that portion of it, which is asked for. The Assembly approved this action June 30, 1871, and by this action

### Incorporation of Beacon Falls.

Upon the petition of John Wolfe and others praying for the incorporation of a new Town to be erected out of portions of the Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Seymour and Oxford as per petition on file which has been duly served and returned.

Resolved by this Assembly:

**Section 1.** That all those parts of the Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Seymour and Oxford lying within the following described limits and boundaries, viz: beginning at a point on an old highway known as Blackberry Hill Road, in the Town of Bethany, which is intersected by a straight line extended and running on and in the northern boundary line of the homestead farm of Norman Peck, in Seymour, which boundary line is marked by a stone wall in part; thence running northerly in said old highway to a point about forty rods east of the dwelling house known as the Edward Buckingham house, thence north fourteen degrees east one hundred and eighty one and one half rods to a heap of stones on Perkins land ( so called ); thence north three and one half degrees east four hundred and twenty rods; thence north twenty nine degrees west to a point on Beacon Hill Brook, opposite the saw mill of Amos Hotchkiss, to a heap of stones; thence following said brook westerly to the Naugatuck River; thence following the Naugatuck River southerly to the mouth of Spruce Brook on the west bank of the same; thence following the town line northwesterly to a heap of stones which marks the boundary line between Oxford and Naugatuck; thence running southerly to a large oak stump known as Oak Tree Corner about eighty rods north of the dwelling of Stiles Fairchild; thence in a straight line southwest to Hemp Swamp Bridge so called; thence in a straight line to a heap of stones on the east side of Diamond Rock (so called), which marks the boundary between Seymour and Oxford, said last line being the district lines of Rimmon district; thence easterly and

northerly following the Oxford and Seymour Town line to a point on Rock Rimmon in a line with the said home farm of the said Norman Peck; thence following on said line which runs a little south of east in a straight line to the point of the beginning; with all the inhabitants residing within said limits, be and the same is hereby incorporated and erected into a new and separate Town by the name of Beacon Falls with the rights, honors, privileges and immunities and subject to all the duties and liabilities of other Towns in the State, with the right of sending one representative to the General Assembly of the State, and all those parts of the above mentioned Towns embraced in the foregoing limits to be and remain an independent Town with the name of Beacon Falls, by which name it shall hereafter be called, and known.

**Section 2.** And said new Town shall pay its proportion according to the list of 1870 of all state, town and other taxes now levied, and the collectors of said towns are hereby authorized to collect the same, of all debts existing against said Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour, and of all charges and expenses, and of all contracts for which said towns are now or shall be hereafter liable, by force of any contracts or claim now existing, except the expenses incurred by either of the aforesaid towns, in contesting this petition for said new Town.

**Section 3.** The poor of said Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour who were born within the limits hereby incorporated, and who have not by residence or otherwise gained a settlement elsewhere in this state than within said limits, shall be deemed inhabitance of said new town, and shall be maintained by the same, and said new Town shall be liable to maintain all such poor of the Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour as are and may be absent therefrom provided such persons at the time of their departure had a legal settlement in that part of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour hereby incorporated in said new town.

**Section 4.** All rights, property and estate of whatever name, nature, or description except the town house and records of said Towns, now owned by, due, or belonging to the Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour or which may hereafter accrue to said Towns by virtue of any claim, right or title now existing, shall belong to said new Town in proportion to the respective lists according to the grand lists of 1870.

**Section 5.** And the Town deposit fund of said Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour shall belong to, and be divided between said

new Town as hereby incorporated and said Towns in proportion to the number of inhabitants of said Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour, and the inhabitation of the limits of that part taken from said Towns, and the number of paupers belonging to said new Town shall be ascertained and determined by and between the Selectmen of said new and the Selectmen of said Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour and if the Selectmen of said new Town and the Selectmen of said Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour cannot agree after the organization of said new Town, in the distribution of the paupers, funds, deposits funds, property and other matters to be settled between said Town, on, or before the first day of October 1871, then the Selectmen of said new Town of Beacon Falls and said Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour may apply to Lesnan W. Cutler of Watertown, Sidney A. Downs of Derby and in case they do not accept and serve, then in their stead Eli Curtiss of Watertown and Thomas Ellams of Derby, who are hereby authorized and empowered to divide paupers, funds, deposit funds and property and settle all other matters to be settled between said Towns, growing out of this act of incorporation which division whether made by Selectmen or referees shall be final and conclusive on said Towns respectfully, and in case said division shall be made by said referees, the selectmen of said Towns so disagreeing, shall first be duly notified of the time and place when and where said division shall be made, and all expenses of such services if rendered by said referees shall be paid by and between said new Town and said Towns of Bethany, Naugatuck, Oxford and Seymour (the Town or Towns disagreeing) according to the respective lists of said Towns, said lists, being the lists of A.D. 1870.

**Section 6.** Said new Town as hereby incorporated shall belong to and constitute a part of the 5th Senatorial district, and shall also belong to and constitute a part of the probate district of Naugatuck.

**Section 7.** The first town meeting of said new Town shall be held in said Town of Beacon Falls on the first Monday of July 1871 at one o'clock in the afternoon, and Buell Buckingham or in his absence John Coe shall be moderator thereof, and said Buckingham and Coe or either of them shall warn said meeting, and all the inhabitations of the Town of Beacon Falls who are legal voters in Town meeting, to meet at said time and place at some convenient room, by putting up a notice on the public sign post in said new Town, or upon each of the river bridges herein, and at such other places as they or either of them may deem proper, within the limits of said new Town at least 5 days before said meeting, and said new Town,

shall have all powers incidental to other Towns in this State at said first meeting, and full rights to act accordingly, and the Officers elected at such meeting shall hold their respective offices until others are appointed and qualified in their stead, and the justices of the peace, viz, those elected by said Town of Bethany, residing within the limits of said Town of Beacon Falls shall be deemed to be, and shall have the same power to act as fully as though they had been elected by said new Town of Beacon Falls.

**Section 8.** The fund now belonging to the Town of Oxford, for the support of Pines-bridge known as the "Clark Pines Bridge Fund" shall belong to said new Town within which said bridge is situated, and be kept and held by said new Town for the sole support of said bridge according to the object for which said fund was created, and said new Town shall indemnify and save said Oxford harmless from costs, and litigation if any should arise in consequence of this act.

State of Connecticut S. S.  
Office of Secretary of State

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of record in this office. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of said State at Hartford this 30th day of June A.D. 1871.

Hiram Appelman  
Secretary of State

Town of Beacon Falls, June 28, 1871

Notice:

The legal voters, inhabitants of the Town of Beacon Falls, are hereby warned to meet at Beecher Hall (a room so called) in the Town of Beacon Falls on the first Monday of July A.D. 1871, at one o'clock in the afternoon, for the purpose of electing a Town Clerk, Selectmen, Town Treasurer, Assessors, Board of Relief, Grand Jurors, Constables, and other legal and proper officers of said Town for the present year.

Buell Buckingham  
Specially appointed to call said  
meeting.