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SETTLERS FROM OTHER LANDS

From the early settling of our Town, the Puritan influence was strongly felt, particularly in that part south of the Souhegan River. Those people were of English Puritan ancestry; while that part north of the River, later granted, being of Scotch Irish. They were descendants largely from the Scotch Irish of Londonderry, who were the early settlers of Bedford, and probably were very much disappointed when in 1750, at which time Bedford was incorporated, they were not placed in that Township.

They refused to consider themselves a part of the new town of Merrimack and it took them several years to overcome this prejudice. The Puritans were of dogged disposition and the Scotch Irish clannish; and it was not until 1784 or thereabout that we read for the first time in the Bedford Town Warrant "that a part of Merrimack" is left out in a call for a Town meeting, so it shows they must have been expected to attend Bedford Town Meeting and to vote. Matthew Thornton was a representative from both Towns in 1776. This feeling of enmity had existed between them from their earliest association. It had been present across the ocean among their parents, and in this Country naturally descended to their children. As the years went on this feeling of resentment gradually disappeared.

The early settlers of Merrimack, as the rest of New England, came to be known as Yankees, probably because they were called "Yantse" by the [Native Americans] which sounded very much like the word English. It was at first used as a bit of derision but came to be accepted by the "Yankee" himself as meaning an inhabitant of New England not of pure British stock, but usually a mixture of Scotch Irish and English as many an old New England family traces out. The British regard any one from the States as a "Yankee." While the South applies it only to those north of the Mason and Dixon Line.

After the Civil War a marked drift began from other countries to New Hampshire -- first the Irish with his rugged body, deep religious devotion, honesty and industry. With the growth and development of the mills in Manchester, the people came in from Canada, not only in families but also by whole trainloads. In 1872 we had a decided immigration of English people. Many families coming directly from England to work at Reeds Ferry at the cooerage -- several families of Watkins, Burgess, Owens, Harrison and others.

Later came Germans and Italians, and in 1897 the Greeks, Austrians, Poles and others of Slavic descent. About 25 years ago at the time of the political upheaval in Russia, those people began coming and soon after the Syrians and Turks. These people came to the industrial plants of Massachusetts and Nashua.

Because of her geographical position between these two cities, the type of her manufacturers, we find people from both these cities moving to Merrimack to live. Each of these peoples has brought their own heritage, traditions, and natural abilities.

And today in this Town we count the Yankee only about 40% of its original British stock. When these peoples from other countries first came to this Town there were some who regretted what they considered the "diluting" of this early stock, but for the most part we find that early resentment has been dissipated. These new people have proven their adaptability by their acceptance of our ideals, by their intelligence, industry and integrity, and have come to be valuable citizens.

The Italians and Greeks have done much of our construction, both road and bridges. The French and Irish have developed our large industrial plants. The Russians and Poles coming here in many instances because of the small size of the farms in their homeland have brought farms, which we could not cultivate with a financial profit, and in a few years have brought these same farms into a high state of cultivation; have educated their families, and in many instances have brought the buildings up-to-date or built new ones.

We have found the Greeks have a fine culture and have just as high a regard and love for it as we have ever held for our own. That boys of Italian and Polish parentage are as adept at baseball as those of longer establishment. The French, although they keep their own culture, traditions and home ways longer than some others, cook and serve baked beans and brown bread on Saturday night with the rest of us "Old New Englanders."

The children of these people sit side by side in the day school with out own, attend college and in case of War, enlist fight and die with as much bravery and with the same spirit of devotion. We fine in many instances their names in highest places in our City and County Government. Holding many high political and judicial positions. The Irish particularly hold many high positions in our Executive Dept.

Maybe only 40% of the people in this Town are of the original British stock and that in 50 years not a vestige of the Old New Hampshire blood will be left. Be that as it may, we feel sure 100 years hence the people of this Town will be every bit as prosperous and enterprising as they are today; and that this may in part be due to the enrichment from the people of other lands who have settled here.