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Compiled and Narrated
by
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for
The Two Hundredth Anniversary
of the
Town of Merrimack NH

EPISODE 4 - Presented by Catholic Mens' Club

Passing over the Charter to the Town

1656 In 1656 when the south part of the Town was chartered to Brenton it had been called Naticook by the Indians and had been inhabited and cultivated by this Tribe.

1664 In 1664 Passaconaway and his son Wonnalancett together with all their possessions submitted themselves to the Royal Govt. of Mass.

1722 In 1722 a real settlement had begun. It was called Souhegannock later Souhegan. The first four known settlers were Usher, Hassell, Blanchard and Chamberlain. We all know the story of the Farwell's skirmish with the Indians, How he sprang from behind a tree, shot, and ran into a thicket. He lost his gun, coat and a sum of money. This took place near Naticook Brook in Thornton's Ferry.

At nearly the same time, Howard, a bachelor (who later married) settled on a farm now owned by William Watkins. He set out the first orchard and his house became a friendly "rendez-vous" for those who liked cider.

1733 In 1773, that part of the Town below the Souhegan River (then a part of Old Dunstable) was incorporated by Gen. Assembly into a Township and was called Rumsford, but was very soon changed to Merrimack, as this section has been called by the Indians. The Old original charter can not be found, but on a copy, now in the State archives in Concord, the date is given as April 7, 1746 when the charter was signed by Theo. Atkinson Sec. and Council for King Geo. and witnessed by Benning Wentworth Provincial Gov. This really was the birth-day of our Town.

Now, for that part of the Township lying north of the Souhegan, It too, has a very interesting early history.

1733 This territory after being returned to the Royal Govt. by Passaconaway and his son, was granted to the soldiers of King Philips War or their heirs. These people were mostly residents of Mass.

1729 A little previous to this it had been given to Joseph Blanchard and others on certain conditions which they failed to fulfill, so it was again returned to the Royal Govt.

June 1733 These soldiers or "Grantees" about 840 in number met on Boston Common in June 1733, for the purpose of drawing up lots for these parcels of land in New Hamp. They formed themselves into seven groups. Each group chose a chairman. The one who chose that part north of the Souhegan

River was represented by people from Boston, Roxbury and Dorchester. The Com. from each group met again by appointment in Oct. The no. of Townships from 1-7 were put into a hat. Col. Thomas Tileston of Dorchester drew No. 5, known as Souhegan East. It embraced all the land in Bedford and that part of the Merrimack north of the Souhegan River.

1750 In 1750 when Bedford sent in her petition for incorporation she did not ask for this section, but asked that her line might begin three miles north of Col. Blanchard's house in the Souhegan River, so this strip was not claimed by any-body.

1750 The same year 1750 the Town of Merrimack petitioned to King George II that this trace be annexed to, and united with said Town with all its inhabitants and buildings. It was granted and the exception that all white pine now growing or shall grown (over 1-1/2 feet in diam) shall be reserved for his Majesty's use; also reserving the right to divide said Town if and when it shall be deemed necessary to us or our successors to do so. It was properly signed June 23 1750.

The people on this land, most of them being of Scotch Irish descent, and having considered themselves a part of Bedford did not take kindly to this change. They refused to acknowledge this new charter, holding their town meetings with Bedford until 1784 when we see for the first time that part of Merrimack north of the Souhegan being left out of Bedfords Warrant and Call to Town Meetings. Long before granting charters the Proprietors had sent out Surveyors to lay out Farm, school and church lots. These were sold to settlers or given to them for some service rendered either civil or military.

All these early meetings of Proprietors and settlers were held at Boston in some Public House or Tavern usually Luke Varney's or the sign of the three flying horses, together with the King's representatives or at the Council of the Royal Court in Boston under supervision of the Royal Govt.