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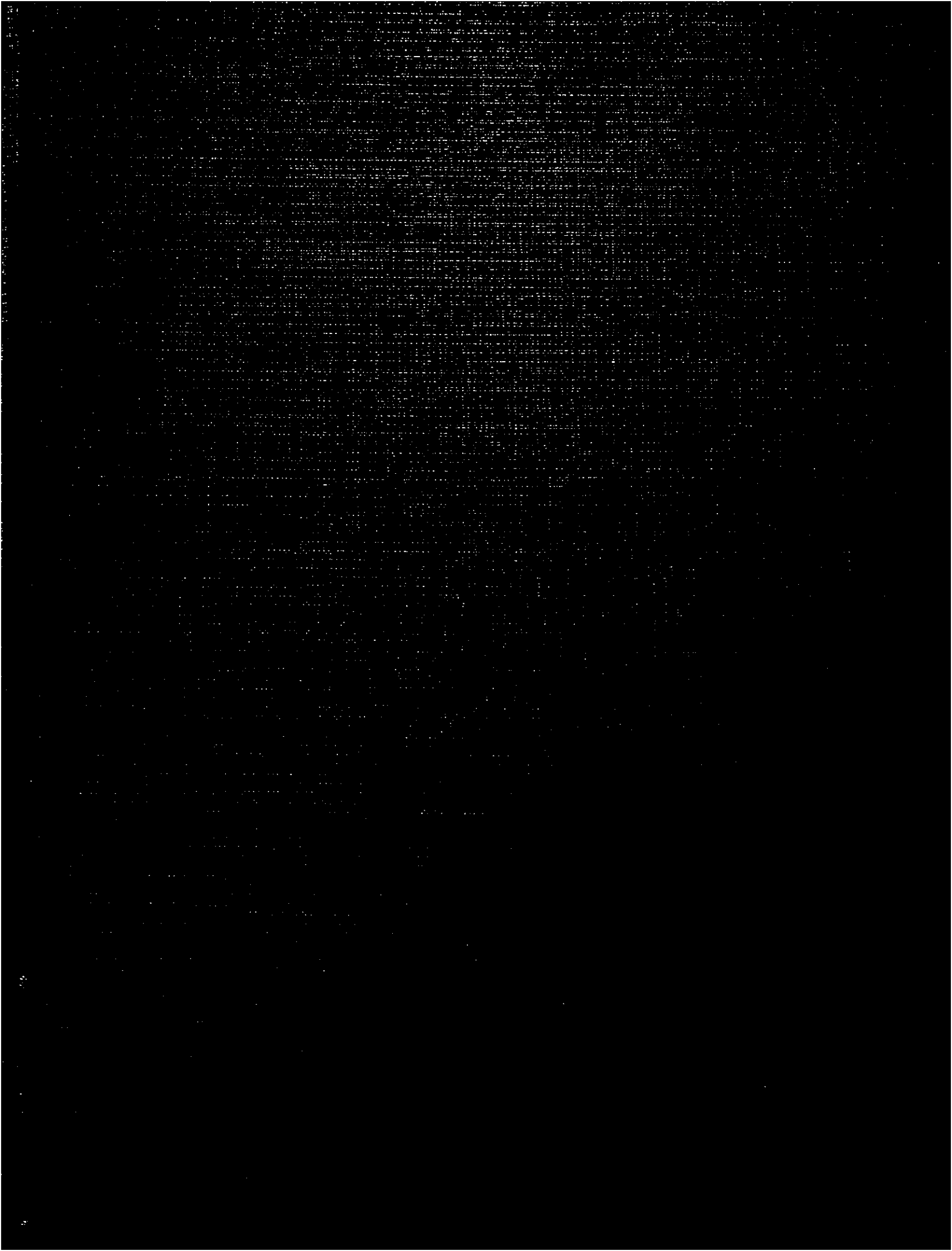
Changes in the Religious and Social Standards and Customs of a Massachusetts Town

C. Lisle Percy



CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL STANDARDS AND CUSTOMS OF A MASSACHUSETTS TOWN.

by

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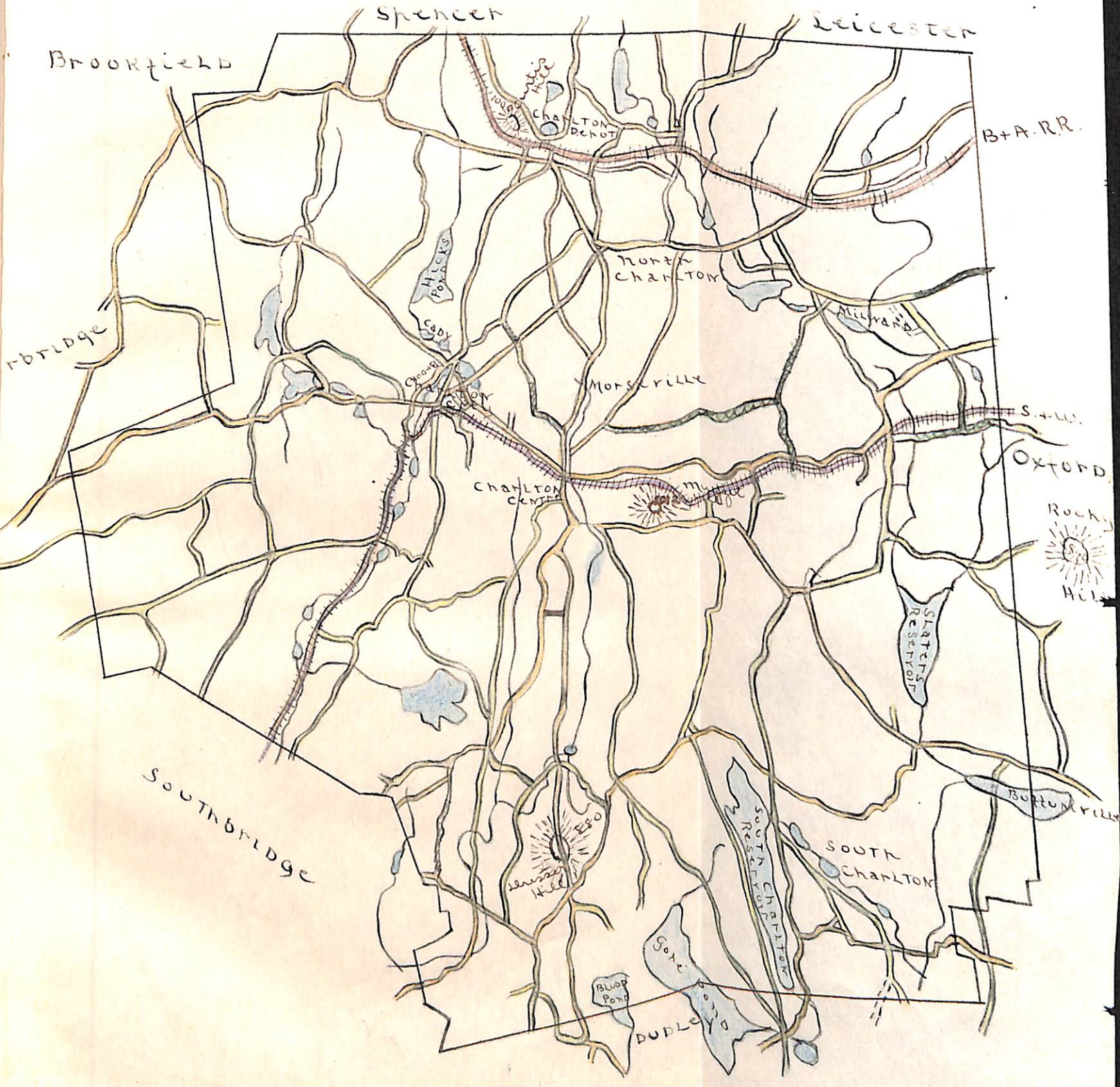
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Leicester
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Southbridge
B+A.R.R.
Charlton Depot
North Charlton
Hicks Pond
Lady
Morseville
Millyard
S.+U.
Oxford
Charlton Center
Rocky Hill
Slaters Reservoir
South Charlton Reservoir
South Charlton
Burton Hill
Gore Road
Blood Pond
Dudley
= B & A. R.R.
= Electric Road.
= Roads.
= Blocked Roads.

CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL STANDARDS AND CUSTOMS OF A MASSACHUSETTS TOWN.

by

C. Lisle Percy.

> There are certain regions of the United States where the historical factor plays an imperative part in determining what the community shall be. This is notably the case in the older regions, as among the New England hills, where custom is so strong that old ways are kept up in the face of advantageous inventions and processes.

This statement (#10) is probably true for some towns, but may be questioned in the case of the town now under consideration. We have a political division of a commonwealth bounded rather arbitrarily, in a physical sense. There is grouped within it a mass of people who have been thus brought together by the early customs of New England communities. We have for data, the records of the town from the time the people of the district first held a meeting to the present time; also the records of the various religious organizations, two of which may be traced back to the original town church. There are two or three historical addresses which have been delivered at various celebrations held in the town; also two short historical accounts published in histories of this county. The more recent by the father of a family of four illustrious sons, one an ex-mayor of Worcester and a prominent lawyer of that city, another a member of the bar, practising in the same city, still another a member of a prominent printing company and

the fourth, one of the largest land owners in his native town. No other records are available if we except the vital records which give only the slightest hint as to the moral status of those who are married in the town. All other information contained in this paper has been gleaned from the recollections of present citizens of the town and personal observations of the author.

There is no attempt made to indicate all the changes that have taken place, only those which have a special bearing upon Social and Religious Conditions.

- TOPOGRAPHY -

It seems necessary first of all to say just a general word about the topography of the town. It was thought, when the proposal was first made, that the western district of Oxford, should be made a separate town, that the land was little adapted for settlement. It has, however, far surpassed the original town from which it was taken and stands fourth among the agricultural towns of the county.

The soil has always been rich and well watered. There are no large level fields or broad valleys for the whole township appears to be one large field of drumlins. Twenty or more such formations, well defined, can be

counted from the largest, known as Mashymugget.

The general slope of the land is southerly, the valleys and ridges extending North and South. There are no large streams or lakes. Cady's brook in the west part of town, flowing southwest and emptying into the Quinebaog river, is the largest. Two reservoirs in the southeast and one in the northwest above the village known as the City, are the only bodies of water of any size wholly within the limits of the town. With its natural advantages for agriculture and lack of advantages for manufacturing, it would seem that the principal interest would center around the economic, agricultural and the religious social conditions.

- ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TOWN -

As is the case in many of our New England towns, a number of inhabitants, dwelling in the far western section of the town of Oxford, found it very inconvenient to travel so far to attend the established church, which they were obliged to support. They, therefore, petitioned the General Court to set them off as a separate town. The first petition made in 1750 was not granted, but another presented in 1754 met with better success. In 1756, a large strip of territory on the northern boundary

six miles long, one mile wide on the east line and three on the west, was added through a petition signed by thirty-four inhabitants of the previous grant and thirteen inhabitants of the Gore as it was called. At this time there were fifty-nine voters in the township and thirty-nine in the Gore Humbly.

In 1792, a small section of land on the west was set off to the adjoining town and in 1816, another section of about 3000 acres, containing the most important water privileges on the Quineboag river, were taken to form the town of Southbridge. This district was known at that time as Honest Town. This left about 28000 acres, the present size of the town.

The manner in which the land was held may account for the fact that it was long in being settled. All the land belonging to the town of Oxford had been granted in 1683 to Daniel Cox and others.

> The first record of a sale of land to settlers, however, was the transaction in October 1753 in which Ebenezer McIntire of Lynn and Obadiah McIntire of Salem bought two of the one hundred acre lots into which Edward Kitchen of Salem had divided the 1700 acres of the original grant he had purchased. These men were probably the first settlers of the town. Two other McIntires purchased Kitchen land soon after. In 1735, Richard Dresser bought land in the south part of town. He was soon joined by his brother

and their name now designates the hill where they settled, although none of their name are now to be found within the present town limits. Isaiah, Richard and Nathaniel Blood soon purchased land south of Dresser hill and the farms purchased at that time are still owned by descendants of the family and name.(#8)

- POPULATION -

Little if anything is known of the character of these early settlers except that they took a prominent part in town affairs for many years, as their names appear on the town records. Settlement continued on all available land and many "squatters" settled on land that was not in the market. An attempt was made by these latter to retain the land by virtue of long residence. A lawsuit resulted in a victory for the heirs owning the land and the squatters were compelled to pay for their land and improvements made on it, as well.

Although many in town bear the names of original settlers only five may be said to occupy land handed down to them by their ancestors from the time of the original settlers. The settlers were Richard Blood, Ebenezer Foskett, Jonathan Tucker, Ebenezer Hammond and a direct descendant of Jonathan Denis.

Some idea may be gathered of the change going on in population when we know that of the twenty houses at

the Center which were occupied twenty years ago, only two are now occupied by the same families. The Center is generally considered the least subject to change of any village of the town. The change is not as evident on the farms although taking ten farms in any direction we discover that more than one half are not occupied by the same families as twenty-five years ago. In the other villages, Millward, Lelandville, Depot and City, the changes have been much more rapid, due to change in manufacturing interest, which will be evident from our discussion of the economic life of the town.

TABLE OF POPULATION.

1776	1310	1860	2047
1790	1965	1865	1925
1800	2120	1870	1878
1810	2180	1880	1900
1820	2134	1885	1823
1830	2173	1895	1887
1840	2117	1900	2000
1850	2015	1910	2032
1855	2059		

The total population of the town reached its height in 1810 when it was 2180. The lowest number since that time was 1823 in 1885. The present population is about 2032. Although the total population has varied comparatively little in the last hundred years, the individual families have changed very noticeably. Only three or four of the largest farms have been sold to those outside of town. Two of these have become capitalistic farms, one given principally to the poultry business and the other to experimenting with various classes of stock. The last experiment conducted was in swine. Many changes have been wrought within the farming population. Some farmers have retired from large active operations because of old age and now occupy houses or small places in the villages. Others who began in the more remote parts of the town have sold their small holdings and bought larger farms nearer the centers of population. Those who have moved from the farms for the purpose of entering factories have moved out of town. This is probably due to the fact that there is a tendency to look down upon those who work in the factory. This feeling of aristocracy is not noticeable as between farmers of wealth and those of little or no wealth.

The town has not received a very great influx of

foreign population. The present population is made up of on third foreign and two thirds native, Italian, Jewish, Swedish and Irish are represented but by far the majority are Canadian French who are attracted by work in the mills. The Italians are employed by the railroads while those of other nationalities have settled on the farms. The first to come and to the mind of the older inhabitants the least desirable, were the Irish.

* MORALITY *

The moral tone of the town is not what would be called high. The church records show many instances of excommunication for unchristian conduct, but what this unchristian conduct was varied somewhat with the time. Consulting the vital records we discover one illegitimate birth for every five years. A closer inspection of the records of those who were married and settled in town show eleven births under six months after marriage from 1800-1810; eighteen from 1810-1820; three from 1830-1850; none from 1860-1870 and fourteen from 1900 to 1912.

Judging from the above and allowing for the greater accuracy of recent records, we conclude that this phase of immorality is not increasing very perceptibly. The records also show that illegitimacy is not confined to any

given class or family.

There has been a comparatively small amount of pauperism in the town if the records are to be trusted. The first evidence that we have is in 1766 when it was voted to allow 2s 2d 2f for a pair of mittens and footing a pair of stockings. July of the same year £ 4 14s 6d was voted for the board of James Butler.

The first vote for building a workhouse for the poor was passed in 1769. This vote was not executed until 1836 when a farm of over two hundred acres was purchased in Millward, where the poor have since been made comfortable. At first the poor were boarded in homes by special arrangement of the selectmen, later they were auctioned off to the lowest bidder.

On several occasions money was voted to pay constables for warning families out of town, lest they gain a residence. At one time a widow who had in her possession a negro boy was deported to an adjoining town. Another instance is given where twenty-eight families and three single persons were warned out, as not having a rightful residence.

Until 1904, when the Poor Farm Association, including eight other towns, was formed, (to which two or three more have since been added,) the farm was conducted by

the overseers of the poor. Each year, until a law was passed by the state forbidding it, a certain amount of money was appropriated for the feeding of tramps. They were fed first at the Depot and later at the poor farm. It has been necessary each year to appropriate money for outside relief. The total amount appropriated for this purpose last year was $1300, of which amount only about one half was expended within the limits of the town. Aside from this, three hundred and thirty dollars has been paid into the Poor Farm Association for the board of the town's poor. In view of the fact that the population of the town is about 100 less than when the poor farm was established and the appropriation much greater, we are led to conclude that the town has greatly increased in the number of its dependent peoples.

- OCCUPATIONS -

The occupations of the early inhabitants are designated in some cases, but as those men were principally occupied in clearing land for cultivation, not much is said of previous occupation.

We have said that the streams in town were small and of little consequence, but the early inhabitants made the most of them all. In fact it is evident that the

banks of streams were a favorite spot for locating the early homes. In many districts of the town, (by 1800, they were fifteen in number) there were from one to three mills which were built principally for sawing lumber and grinding grain. The very earliest known inhabitant owned and operated a mill on his property. That he was a man of some means is evident from the fact that he acted as money lender to his fellow townsmen. Some of the inhabitants came to him at one time and asked a loan. He replied that he hadn't a cent in the world, but if they were willing to bear the expense, he thought he could obtain it in Old Salem, At the end of a certain period of time, he appeared with the funds. The explanation given is that there were two chests in his house, one of which was marked "The World" and the other "Old Salem". By this means he was able to quiet his conscience and still obtain a large interest on money loaned. Another story equally interesting is that of his daughter who visiting a neighbor's home, saw the children playing with a silver dollar. When she returned home she was heard to say that she wished she had a silver dollar with which to play. Her father locked himself in with his chests for a few minutes and then came out with a peck measure full of silver dollars

and asked if that would be enough to play with.

- INDUSTRIES -

From the very beginning what were known as "Ash factories" were very numerous. Not only what we know as potash was made but pearl ash or baking soda as well.

In 1790, scythes were manufactured at north side and about the same time in the southeast below Lelandsville. Before 1770, a tannery was established at north side. The records show that the business changed hands frequently, but was continued for many years. Distilling of gin was also extensively carried on.

In 1828 land and water power was bought in the southeast part of town and the manufacture of cotton thread was carried on in a stone mill, until it was burned in 1849.

There was a mill in the easterly part of town and one at the City where the cloth woven in nearly all of the homes was finished. This latter property was later sold and the buyer built a mill for the manufacture of woolen goods. In 1848, the manufacture of satinet was begun. At one time (1887-90) there were as many as five different men or companies manufacturing this goods with a total output of 120000 yards per month and the employ-

ment of one hundred and sixty workmen. At present only one company is in business, that owned a business at that time. With this exception, all of the mills have changed hands many times. The present output is probably some less than that of 1890 while the number of employees is larger. This may be due to two causes (viz) the employment of a greater number of women and children or the more rapid change of workers.

About 1815, Harvey Dresser, a descendant of the original settler, began a quite extensive manufacture of furniture, carriages, harnesses and farming implements on Dresser Hill. This business was continued until his death in 1835.

In 1843, the Leland Brothers began the manufacture of bits and augers in the section which has since borne their name. This business was continued until 1861 when they began the manufacture of ramrods for the government. In 1865 the shops were sold to the linen works of Dudley and some part of that business was carried on for several years. Finally, however, the shops fell into decay, due principally to the distance from railroads and the decrease in water power.

Another industry in this section was started before

1800. The quarrying of granite on "Rockey Hill". As late as 1889, there were twenty men employed, but again poor transportation facilities have caused the giving up of business. Carriages were manufactured at the City about 1831. The sash and blind business was started in the west part of town about this time and later at the City.

Another industry, the manufacture of shoes, entered the town in 1850 and was established at Morseville. Large shops and dwelling houses for employees were built by the owner of business. Several natives of the town were associated at various times with the firm. These shops were destroyed by fire in 1884. This industry was also carried on quite extensively at North Side from 1850-61. In 1867, a company was formed and started business at the Depot. The first shop was burned in 1871, but was rebuilt and work begun again by 1875. In 1890, the shop afforded employment for thirty hands and produced two hundred pairs of fine shoes daily. These shops were deserted about 1900 owing principally to the general trend of the time toward the centralization of manufacturing.

This occupation gives us an example of the transition from the family to the factory system. Many farm

houses had a shop attached in which all the members of the family labored on such parts of the shoe as could be done outside the factory. Many homes not able to build the special room did this work in the kitchen. A team from the factory delivered the materials and collected the finished work once or twice each week. This business has disappeared from the town entirely, taking with it many of those who had learned all or a part of the trade.

- LUMBER INDUSTRIES -

Another industry associated with the above, lumber sawing, together with box manufacturing, was carried on by several men in different shops, but now only by one man. This business has been in the family for upwards of sixty years. The present owner has had the control for about twenty years. Although greatly handicapped by the disappearance of suitable lumber near at hand and distance from railway facilities, he employs thirty-five men, most of whom are natives of the town and small land owners. They receive from one to two dollars per day the greater part of the year taking some time off to cultivate their land. About two and one-half to three million feet of lumber are used by this mill each year. Probably the most noticeable fact about this business to

us is that many of the men now employed, began work here at fourteen or fifteen years of age. Some have worked continuously for thirty years or more.

The probable reason for the disappearance of nearly all other saw mills, in addition to the lack of lumber, is the coming of the portable mill which can be placed on the lot to be cut over and thus save the expense of hauling the logs. The men employed have come with the mill for temporary employment and have gone with it. Those, who were employed in the permanent mills, were obliged to move away when the mills closed up. This has a decidedly depressing effect upon the population, A few wealthy individuals in town have bought the lots, hired a portable mill from out of town and sold the lumber outside.

In marked contrast to the long continued employment of those working in the box factory noted above, is the changeability of those employed in mills at the City. They live almost wholly in rented houses. None have been employed by the same company, more than fifteen years and most of them not more than five.

One other industry which has had its place in the life of the town attracts our attention - the wire mills. This business was started in 1865 at Berry's Corner. A

partnership was soon formed and business continued until 1871. The partner then withdrew and built the mills and cottages which are still standing above the City, in perfect repair. The largest output was about 160 tons of fine card wire per year. The Berry mill did not continue business long after 1871 and has now entirely disappeared. The principal reasons for the disappearance of wire manufacturing were the long team haul necessary to get all the material to the shops and the finished product to the railroad; the increase in rate of wages and the increasing age of the owners.

Several minor industries like brick making, were carried on for a short time and then disappeared. There are possibly a half dozen brick houses in town, built of home made brick.

Several things are indicated by the changes which we have observed in the manufacturing which has been carried on in the town. In the very early days, the industries were almost entirely carried on by individual families, father and sons working together even after the sons were married and had homes of their own. We may call this the period of home industry.

Many of the mills which at first were used for sawing logs or grinding corn were changed into iron working

or cloth mills. It is at this point that daily wages were first paid in money. This transition was more rapid and began earlier in some industries than in others. The next stage in this developement is the centralization, under one management, of industries carried on in local shops. The final stage may be designated as that of decay. All small shops disappear and the larger ones which are far from railway facilities, cease to do business.

As manufacturing is largely dependent on means and methods of transportation so likewise with agriculture. It may be well for us then to look briefly at the routes of travel passing through the town.

- ROUTES OF TRAVEL -

Two towns, near Charlton, were settled first and were of considerable more importance, for many years. One, Oxford, lying to the southeast, the other, Brookfield, to the northwest. This caused one of the most important roads in the township to be constructed from northwest to south-east through Charlton Center and Charlton City. Another important route of travel bears the name of an important Connecticutt town - The Stafford Turnpike - running north-east to southwest through North Side, the City and Honest Town. Before the coming of the steam road both of these

roads were important stage routes.

At this time, before the appearance of the electric line, practically every farmer kept at least a pair of oxen or horses, sometimes both and a driving horse or two. Thus, the annual or bi-annual drive to the county town, now a large and prosperous city, was greatly enjoyed by the younger members of the household, one or another of whom was allowed to go each time. This especially before 1860 was the great outing of the year and one long remembered and talked about.

These two lines of communication may be said to have governed to some extent the direction of travel in the early days. A still greater effect, however, was produced by the coming of the railroads - steam and electric -. The former, which came in 1838, affected both passenger and freight traffic, while the later, built in 1901 between Worcester and Southbridge and especially the continuation, built in 1906 from Southbridge to Palmer as a connecting link in the electric line from Boston to New York, affected more especially the passenger service. Not until the present year was a franchise granted for carrying freight-express. These lines of communication had a tendency to make still more of the travel pass from south to north, since the Depot

is situated within a half mile of the northern boundary. one of the most important influences to bring this about was the demand which Boston placed upon the rural sections of the State for milk.

In 1909, the electric company put on a milk car which, passing through the center of the town, gathered up much of the milk not taken to the steam road and drew away, at least one third of that taken to the depot.

The coming of this form of milk business had two noticeable affects. It lightened quite perceptibly the work of those in the home as the milk is now cared for entirely by the men. It also brought into the hands of the farmer a more or less regular cash income, whereas previously, the amount of cash on hand been irregular, dependent on the sale of some crop, like apples or potatoes.

In many Massachusetts towns, creameries have been established, but none ever invaded this. In fact none of the neighboring towns had them, except Oxford, which did not draw very largely from Charlton and then, only for a short time.

From the time Honest Town developed into the large manufacturing town of Southbridge until 1900, a large share of the trading had been done there, but

since the coming of the electric road, it is just as easy and nearly as economical to go to the neighboring city of Worcester, with all its excellent stores. This has resulted in the monthly trading, in place of the former yearly trading and many who never went, even yearly before, visit the city twice or three times a year.

Another important effect of the coming of the railroads is seen in the occupations of the people. Many of those owning property, through which the steam road passed, received good prices for their land and were employed in the construction of the railroad. The highest point on the railroad between Worcester and Springfield, two of the largest inland cities of Massachusetts, lies about one half mile east of the depot. This made the Depot the natural point for a watering station and shifting of engines, necessitating more extended yard facilities and the employment of extra men, who settled in town.

In later years the reduction in fare has made it profitable to seek employment in Worcester and still live in the home town. Although the electrics are generally considered the more economical, it is found to be cheaper by one half, to ride on the steam cars.

The electric line, which came in 1901, brought even

greater changes than did the steam road. The most advantageous position on the line, available for a power station and carbarn, was found to be at Charlton City. This road gives employment to about seventy-five men. Two thirds of this number have homes at the City, while many others own places along the route. Aside from the employment given by the electric company, the coming of this line was a means of carrying many, especially of the young people, to Southbridge where they find employment in the optical works. These have homes in the central or western part of town. Likewise, a large number who owned places in the eastern part, go on the cars daily to and from work and many others, desiring to get away from the city, have bought small pieces of land and built houses.

The automobile has made its demands for better roads and we see about eight miles of macadam completed with one mile under construction. When two miles more have been completed the macadam will exceed the mileage of the electric line. The two miles first constructed between the City and the Depot have meant a great deal of saving in the transportation of materials used in the factories. Not only these roads already referred to, but roads every where in town have been largely inproved, although there

still remains a large margin for improvements.

- DESERTED FARMS -

Much has been made of late by writers on rural problems, regarding abandoned farms and tenant farmers, as a cause for decline in rural communities. If we were to take this as a typical one, which it is in many respects, we should be obliged to conclude that too much had been made of their factors. Strictly speaking, there are no abandoned farms in town today. There are several abandoned houses which are a sad sight to the older inhabitants, but the farms have been joined to other farms and cultivation goes on, though not as carefully as in the old days. The number of tenant farmers could easily be counted on the fingers of one hand. Nor do we find as in many towns a large number of mortgaged farms.

Added to the deserted houses, which number half a dozen, are possibly a dozen or more houses, (one or two of which are rented,) dilapidated and unsightly in appearance, which add to the general idea of desertion. Of the 500 or more dwelling houses in town, one half would profit greatly by a good coat of paint, but not more than one fourth are suffering from lack of it. If we were to seek the causes, we would find that lack of paint is not due

to scarcity of wealth, but more to procrastination. The "do it now" spirit is not as prevalent throughout the town as it ought to be.

Another line of investigation is necessary in a study of this kind although it yields comparatively little in change from the ideals that prevailed in the early days - that is the educational ideals -

- EDUCATION -

As early as 1755 it was voted to hold two schools. One probably in the vicinity of Dresser Hill and the other south of what is now the Center. The next year a vote was passed to have school in three places. A school committee was named in 1757 and from that time on, for a hundred years, each district had a member on the school board. Nearly all of the fifteen districts into which the town was once divided, were obliged to provide their own school houses.

The amount assessed for schools in 1757 was £14 14s, 1d, 1p. In 1760, the amount voted was £15. A vote was also passed to build school-houses. The increase in appropriation from this time until 1803 when $1000 was appropriated, was gradual, with the exception of the time during the revolution when money was so

depreciated that, in 1779 2500 was voted. The amount appropriated in 1803 was continued practically unchanged until after the Civil War. From 1865 up to the present time the increase has been gradual and has practically becom $5000 for elementary schools and fifteen hundred for the high school.

In 1836, the number of school districts was reduced from fifteen to thirteen by combining two at the center and two in the northeast part of town. Since this time, the schools in session have varied from ten to thirteen. The two schools combined at the Center illustrate somewhat the attitude of other parts of the town toward the Center. It was said that the aristocrats attended the north school and the rest of the pupils the other. It has generally been felt and is today, that the Center people are aristocratic and feel above the people in other districts.

In 1854, the method of distributing the school funds was changed so that each district received a certain proportion regardless of the amount of taxes paid. The district system was abolished in 1869 and the town has since owned the school-houses, although the district method of designation has remained as the most convenient method of indicating any place of residence. The old

feeling of rivalry can still be traced in some activities, as in road building.

Today one of the most difficult problems faced by the town is its schools. Even the most liberal are sceptical regarding consolidation and the majority are absolutely opposed to it. The chief objection is the distance to be traveled to the center of the town, six miles from the farthest home. The shape of the town is such as to lend itself readily to a triple division:- South Section - North Side and City. At present one district has as few as nine or ten scholars while one adjoining contains 36-40 pupils, to be accommodated in a room, but little larger than the other with only nine or ten. The result of these circumstances are that no inspiration is felt by those in the small schools and absences are very common; that the town cannot afford to pay the teacher a living salary, which leads to the employment of high school graduates or teachers seeking experience who soon seek positions elsewhere, with larger salary and greater conveniences for social life. This constant change of teachers, sometimes two or three in a year, can only have the worst possible effect upon the moral tone of the school and is another noticeable reason for non-attendance. This constant change also annuls

much of the work of the expert superintendent who is employed to superintend the schools of this and an adjoining town.

The teacher should be a unifying social force in each district, but this is impossible under the present condition of affairs. Some have argued that to take the school out of the district would also remove its socializing influence, but the author's claim is that it would only be enlarging the district and giving the children the opportunity of meeting and contending with a larger number of their fellows which would mean, greater effort on the part of the individual, and more team work in the group. This latter would mean much in the moral life of the pupil. At present the boys spend their time in carving or drawing pictures suggestive of immorality. Such signs and words of kindred meaning may be found in all of the closets at each school building. There is great need, therefore, of larger groups which will give zest to play; interest in competition and knowledge of team work.

In the early days, suit was brought against the town for not establishing a Grammar School. Men were employed to defend the town, who evidently won their case as we do not read of a Grammar School being estab-

lished. This attitude toward higher education has continued, even up to the present time. The high school was not established until 1905 when a State law compelling each town having 500 or more families, to provide a high school, became effective upon Charlton. The attendance at the high school is very small, owing to the fact that those who have plenty of money send their children to Southbridge or Worcester, while the dullest pupils try a term or two and drop out. Unless some new pupils enter for the two upper classes, there will be no graduating classes in 1914 - 1915.

This attitude toward higher education is seen in the fact that less than a half dozen young men have ever gone to college from the town and none have ever returned to use their education here. None of these have ever attended an agricultural college. A few young women have taken business courses, only to find employment elsewhere.

The Public Library may also render us some light on the attitude toward higher education. Only one member of the board of trustees is a college graduate and one of the remaining two is very much opposed to the high school. The library has received a yearly appropriation from the town of $200 which was one of the conditions on which the Young Men's Library was given to the town. When William

H. Dexter of Worcester, built the new town hall and gave it to the town in 1904, he provided a room for the library.

In the librarian's report February 1, 1913, we find reported 5183 books, of which 4182 are in circulation, 102 books were added during the year. There were 3536 books taken out during the year, of which 2914 were fiction; 428 were juvenile; 44 were history; 14 were on religion and only two on agriculture. Six magazines are subscribed for and four given, of which none deal with agriculture. Of the books purchased in 1912, 73 were fiction which indicates quite fairly the reading of the townspeople.

-RELIGION -

It was stated above that one of the principal causes for the founding of this town was the distance of the inhabitants from the established church which they were compelled to support and attend. It was left to Obidiah McIntire to test the power of their compulsory law, by refusing to support or attend the church, giving as his excuse, the distance he was compelled to travel. It was undoubtedly his attitude which gave courage to the settlers to seek a charter for a separate town.

In 1757, £14 14s. was voted for schools and only

one half that amount for the "support of the gospel." In January of the next year, after considerable controversy, the place for locating the meeting house was settled upon and at the March meeting £100 was voted to build a meeting house fifty feet long and forty feet wide. This was not accomplished at once, as we read that in the September meeting of the following year, a committee was appointed to see to the proper provision of food and drink for the raising. The "support of the Gospel" was provided for by taxation until 1782, when it was voted to support it by voluntary contribution. It is evident from the records that there has ever been a constant struggle to maintain public worship with the funds contributed, even in the golden age to which constant reference is made in all our churches.

The next change in the church life occurred in 1825, when it was discovered that the majority of the church members were dissenters from the orthodox creed and desired a more liberal one. The meeting house was bought by the town in this year, but was sold in the next to certain individuals of the more liberal wing and thus passed into the hands of the Unitarians. Only one pastor of this persuasion ever resided in town.

In 1838, a combination was formed with the

Universalists, who had held services at North Side since 1825. This was called the First Union Society. In 1851 the name was changed to the First Universalist Society which it bears today.

The Orthodox members together with other citizens of the town organized the First Calvinistic Congregational Society and held meetings in a hall until the present church was finished and dedicated in June 1827.

From the very earliest days there were those who held Baptist principles and in 1760 about twenty had deposited certificates of their beliefs and were exempted from taxation to support the church of the standing order. It is not known exactly when their church was built, but probably in 1779 at North Side. The membership which increased quite rapidly for some time, was made up largely from the surrounding towns. The discipline of this church was evidently quite strict as we read of one member being excommunicated, as early as 1779, for holding Universalist doctrines. In 1796, three others, were dropped for the same reason, and in 1783 one member was dropped for holding free will doctrines. It was voted in 1769 that women had no right to vote or talk in meeting and this among other reasons was the cause of one member's excommunication. Another member was severely taken to

task for attending the funeral of a neighbor when a Universalist minister was the speaker.

This denomination gradually declined from 1825 on, and soon after the death of their last pastor in 1837, letters of dismission were granted to all members. The decline of this society is attributed to the departure of many of its members and the nearness of others to churches established in surrounding towns.

The Adventists began holding meetings in the south part of town in 1865. The charter members who helped to organize this society the following year when a chapel was built, were eighteen in number and the greatest membership at any time was forty-two. There has never been a resident pastor, the services being conducted by workers from Worcester or local preachers. This work reached its highest point in 1890, when services were held at North Side and district number four.

It is said that the Methodists held meetings in Honest Town from 1792 until 1810. About 1850, meetings were begun on Dresser Hill. An organization was affected and a church built at the City in 1853.

The Roman Catholics held meetings at the Depot several years prior to 1887, at which time they bought a building at the City where they now have a flourishing

mission with resident priest.

About fifteen years or more ago, a number of the residents in Millward and North Side formed a committee and built a union chapel at Dodge where services have been maintained more or less regularly by workers from Worcester and nearby churches.

At present four churches have resident pastors in town - two at the City and two at the Center- all of which are supported by invested funds and missionary aid as well as by voluntary contributions. The chapels mentioned above are still used although there are very few of the original workers still alive. The work is conducted by a local committee under the general supervision of the pastor of the Congregational church, nearby preachers being asked to speak on each Sunday when the pastor cannot be present.

The changes in religious life have in general followed the changes prevalent the country over. First the established church loses its support by taxation; then the more liberal element becomes predominant, affecting the split in 1825. In about ten years the entrance of the Universalists causes a second change, and the Baptists for some reason lose their hold. The Methodists and Adventists enter the town in the revival period of American

Christianity, 1848-60. The Period of decline set in about 1885-90. The Congregational church has undoubtedly been the best able to hold its own.

- SOCIAL LIFE -

There are no records extant which give us much of an idea as to the social life of the community. "Raisings" were occasions of some social importance, if we may judge by the amount of drink always provided for such occasions, even in church building. (This custom of drinking was carried on to a rather late date.) Tales are told even today of the ministers who occasionally imbibed too freely to the detriment of the afternoon service, for in the early days people came to church in the morning, heard a sermon and attended the Sunday School. After the lunch, brought from home, had been eaten, they heard a sermon in the afternoon and reached home in time for chores in the evening. Aside from the workmen hired to build a house or barn, it was customary for the neighbors to come together on an appointed day and assist in the raising of the framework. It was, therefore, necessary to provide considerable food for such occasions and the housewives came along to help prepare the dinner.

"Bees of various kinds were indulged in by old and young alike, as a husking or an apple paring. On such occasions the barn floor or kitchen was cleared and the local "fiddler" installed as master of ceremonies for a Virginia reel and other old time dances.

Other social gatherings of a more intellectual nature were the "spelling match," singing school" and "lyceum". The two latter met quite regularly in the winter months and were the scenes of some extremely exciting contests, as were the former, held only occasionally at the close of a school term. These social events were held some of them as late as 1900. Outside of the above mentioned gatherings, there were no social events which included a large number of the people until the coming of reunion day in 1896. Yearly since this date on Labor Day, attempts have been made to gather the old inhabitants from out of town and those in town for a day of genuine old time enjoyment and visiting.

The attitude of the churches toward these various forms of social life has been one of the chief causes contributing to her weakness. The position of the evangelical churches has been one of bitter opposition to all forms of dancing, card playing and light amusements. The position of the liberal church gives absolute freedom of

choice and even encourages such things among their young people. Both attitudes have been alike fatal to the highest interests of the churches. The former, because of the severity of the opposition and the latter, because there is no distinction between members and outsiders and, therefore, no inducement to undertake responsibility of church membership.

Ladies sewing circles had their origin in the early days. Sewing was done, when occasion demanded, for those who were in need and at other times for those who could pay the money into the treasury. The smallness of their beginnings, indicated by the early name of one society - "The Ladies Cent Society", does not show the importance which they have attained in the financial affairs of the churches. These societies have been and are today, largely responsible for the interest taken in the church life by the women. The men not having the social life which such societies made possible for the women, have lost interest in the work of the church.

Previous to the coming of the telephone and the trolley lines much more interest was shown in neighborly visits. It was customary until twenty years ago for families to hitch up the team in the afternoon and drive to a friend's or neighbor's two or three miles distant,

spend the afternoon, stay to supper and drive home late in the evening. The housewife always kept a cake or pie on hand for just such emergencies. One can well imagine the consternation and consequent ill feeling that would result if such an attempt should be made today. It is no longer customary, even for the minister to do this without a special invitation.

The social mind of the community was manifested not long ago when two families lost their homes and all the furnishings by fire. The ladies societies in three of the communities raised large funds to help them. In one case over three hundred dollars was contributed aside from clothing given for immediate needs.

Here is also given to us an illustration of the difference of methods used today and seventy-five or one hundred years ago. At that time the men would have turned out with oxen, axe and saw to build a new home, while the women would have robbed their chests to supply clothes. This would have meant a personal interest, while today, money is made to serve the purpose and is largely obtained by suppers. The modern man must see something material for his money or he keeps it in his pocket. This is manifested on all sides of the social life. The church in order to get funds to support its

work, privides entertainments and suppers. In the grange and Village Improvement Society the same methods are used.

The author believes that the last work in this study should be a call to co-operation for

> The father of co-operation is the efficient and slow one of economic and social organization. (#10)

First of all then, co-operation must be felt in the economis life. Lying within driving distance of a large city and a good market, only one farmer raises produce for market. It is evident that he has made money in this way, since he has purchased land from time to time, until today he pays taxes on over 300 acres. Again,take the milk producers. Each one makes his own bargain with the wholesaler who will give him the largest price per can for his milk. There are about 300 cans of milk shipped daily. With proper co-operation the farmers could demand and receive an increase of five cents per can.

Likewise this same principle must manifest itself in the school problem, for co-operation must be taught first of all to the children.

That people cannot be united in religion until they are united in their social economy is illustrated in this town. (#22) Attempts have been made several times to

unite the Methodist and Congregationist churches, but without success. Many feel, however, that one strong church with a well salaried, capable pastor would be of much more benefit to the community.

Jealousy arising between the villages has made efforts at co-operation in civic improvement a decided failure, the only known instance of co-operation being brought about by those whose lots border on the common. The lack of co-operation is well illustrated by the defeat of those who attempted to keep the saloon from returning after a year of prohibition. Another result is seen in the fact that a man of admittedly inferior moral character is returned as selectman.

CONCLUSIONS

These conclusions are not drawn at haphazard, but are the evident results obtained from a careful study of the changes which have manifested themselves in the life of the town. It was lack of co-operation that caused the divisions in church life and appears to be the one quality lacking in all social life. Co-operation is not expected to be a panacea for all the ills of the community, but will greatly help to remedy a large number of them.

Standing side by side and shoulder to shoulder in the economic and educational relations cannot help but lead to closer contact in the social and religious activities of the community, they in turn, leading to the up-building of all phases of the town life.

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