

THE HISTORY OF DAYTON, MAINE

The story of the early beginning of Dayton is closely interwoven with that of the two adjoining towns of Biddeford and Hollis. Capt. Richard Vines, trusted agent of Sir Ferdinand Gorges, came to Biddeford in 1630 and made the first permanent settlement there. His grant extended four miles on the ocean and reached back eight miles into the country.

He found the Sokokis or Saco Indians living' near the mouth of the Saco River, fishing there and hunting game in the nearby forests. Their Sagamore camped on Indian Island, now known as Factory Island, above the lower falls. They ranged up and down the river from Saco to Fryeburg. The Sokokis Trail or Highway Route 5, which passes through our town roughly, follows their paths.

The Indian wigwams stood neighbor to the whitemen's cabins and for forty-five years there was absolute peace between them. It was not until 1675 that Indian trouble began here. The Legend of Squando's Curse helps explain the hard feelings then. When once the hatchet had been raised, all the horrors and sufferings of savage warfare were experienced.

This first Indian War was the only one directly between the Indians and the early settlers. All the later wars were part of the European feuds between England and France. Also it was the only war concluded by a treaty, in 1678, in which all the settlers along the coast from Kittery to the Kennebec agreed to pay the Indians "One peck of corn annually for each family by way of acknowledgement to the Indians for the possession of their lands." Captain Richard Vines remained here for 15 years before moving to Barbados, West Indies

MAJOR WILLIAM PHILLIPS

It was not until 15 years later that another man came to Biddeford, to occupy as high a position in the community as Vines. This man was Major William Phillips, who in 1659 purchased the land formerly owned by Richard Vines. He moved here from Boston the next year. He was a man of wealth interested in the lumber industry, it being in great demand in England.

His son-in-law, Capt. John Alden, who was the son of the famous John Alden and Priscilla, built a saw mill for Major Phillips on the river bank where the Pepperell Mills now stand.

The good relations with the Indians established by Vines, continued for fifteen years after Major Phillips came. Although the settlement had been established for a generation, Phillips was careful to purchase from various Indian Chiefs all titles to the lands he desired to obtain.

Two of these tracts comprised what was first known as Little Falls Plantation. The second of them purchased in 1664 from Mogg Megone or Mogg Heigon, Sagamore of the Saco, contained roughly the present town of Dayton. The deed was witnessed by John and Mary Wakefield and may be seen at Alfred.

Before 1670, Major Phillips sold several large tracts lying within his patent. This second tract which was to become Dayton, was sold to three different men, namely: the southern most tract of 1,500 acres to Edward Tyng, next to this a lot of 2,000 acres was sold to Richard Russell of Charleston, adjoining this tract, an area three miles square was purchased by Major General John Leverett.

Little Falls Plantation originally included the territory now covered by Hollis, Dayton, and that part of Limington south of Little Ossippe River.

of 94. His grave is on the land he once cleared near the Buzzell Road, formerly owned by a Mr. Moore, now owned by Carleton Waterhouse.

His brother, Andrew, settled on the land now owned by the Landrys on the Gordon Road. On November 16, 1770, John and his brother Andrew each received a tract of 160 acres of land by deed from their father. Both tracts had their first bounds on the Saco River and extended backwards. Andrew was killed by a falling tree in 1802.

John and Edward Smith settled near the Landing on the Russell Lot around 1760. A John Smith built the house previously owned by Onville Fogg, now owned by Clement Meserve, which tradition says is the oldest house in town.

Another John Smith of Biddeford, grandfather of Noah Smith, lived near the fort on the "Cook Right" in 1762. Nathaniel Buzzell settled on the Buzzell Road near Mr. Gordon's place. Robert Cleaves came with his family in 1795 and settled a mile south of Boiling Spring. His uncle, Israel Cleaves, had already settled half a mile south of Boiling Spring.

Hezekiah Drew settled near the southwest of the Buzzell Road, where there was a large body of natural meadow, which has been cultivated through the years. The Mullets now own it.

John Clark, an early settler, lived on the road to Clarks Mills. Many additional settlers came about 1787 in the Gordon neighborhood and about Goodwin's Mill.

The first Goodwin's Mill was built in 1782 by Nathaniel Goodwin in a heavy growth of white pine on Swan Brook, where there was a falls of thirty-three feet. A few feet below this was a sixteen foot falls. Goodwin's Mills was the first and leading business place at the southern end of the Plantation

OCCUPATIONS of the EARLY SETTLERS

Settlers were early attracted to Little Falls Plantation, part of which later became Dayton, because of the abundance of fine timber that covered the area. Trees were cut and rolled down the banks of the Saco River, thence to Saco, or lumber was hauled by oxen to Portland and Kennebunk Landing after the roads were built.

When years of hard labor had been spent chopping and stumping the great trees, the clearings gradually emerged where fruit trees were planted and small patches of field crops were cultivated. Stones of many sizes were sometimes found scattered throughout the fields. The settlers soon found a good use for them, when they piled them up to make stone wall fences.

If stones were not plentiful, old stumps were sometimes set up with their roots clawing the air to keep the cattle within proper bounds. . But even the best made fences will sometimes fail, so that the Plantation meeting elected "Field Drivers" to round up the straying feet, a "Pound Keeper" to keep them confined until claimed by their owner, and "Fence Viewers" to settle disputes in regard to maintaining the fences properly.

Each family that could afford it, had a cow to supply the family with milk, cheese and butter. There was a "Tan House" at Union Falls and at Goodwin's Mills to prepare the hides for the "cow hide boots" and other articles made of leather. A small flock of sheep produced the wool to be spun on the old spinning wheels into yarn, to be knitted into socks and mittens for the whole family. The sheep also supplied tallow with which to make candles. Even the "homespun cloth" could be woven on the old looms. The pigs, in addition to the meat, supplied grease to make the soap. A flock of chickens or ducks could keep the eggs coming and occasionally make a good dinner when the minister came to call. Soft feather beds and pillows were also made at home. A yoke of oxen was indispensable to pioneers clearing the land and planting crops.

Indian maize, or corn, was one of the most important food crops of the early settlers. Most of their bread was made of corn meal, as were many other tasty dishes. Crows must have bothered the corn, as a bounty of twenty cents each was offered at one time.

1837, when they were all swept away as were all the bridges across the Saco River.

At one time as many as 20 buildings, including mills, stores, schoolhouses and homes clustered around Union Falls. Probably around 1845, a tannery run by William Perry was situated on Runnell's Brook. In 1861, Jesse Harmon had a store located at the end of the old covered bridge. Later he built a new store on the road leading to the brick schoolhouse. He also had a blacksmith shop near his store. Samuel Babb did business in this store in 1866, followed by William Patterson, who had the last store there, about 1890. At one time, William Knights, a shoemaker, was also a resident of this community, so it seems it could boast of several industries. Mr. Jesse Harmon also served as postmaster for several years around 1872. The

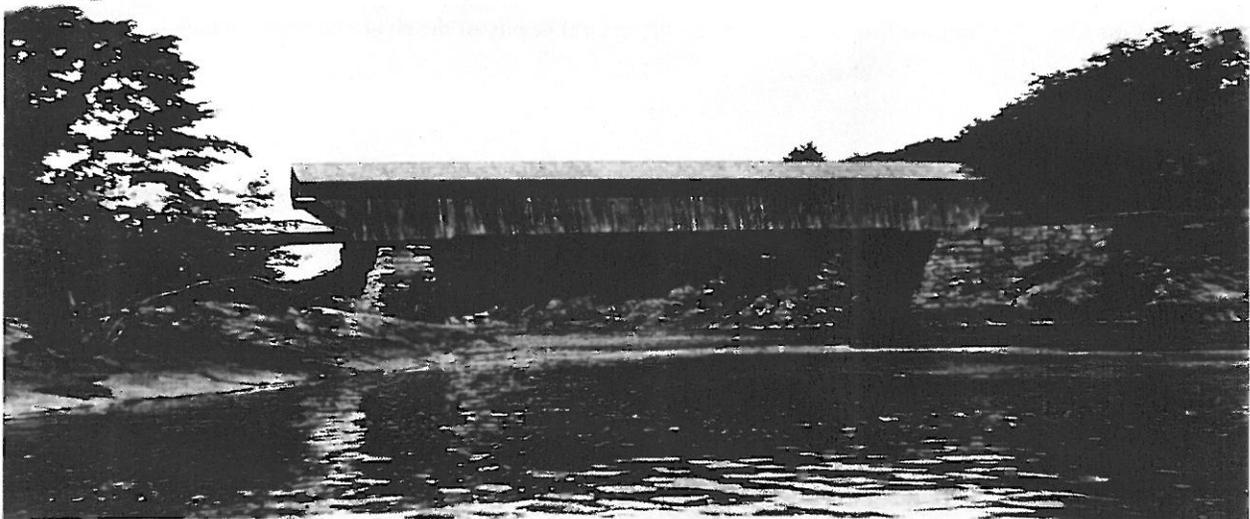
Biddeford and Saco Water Co. purchased the water privilege in 1856. Once there were several houses and a schoolhouse on the road that went across Runnell's Brook to High Landing and came out behind Andersen's farm. This road was inundated when the Skelton Dam was built.

Now, in 1954, there is only one house in sight of the dam.

Although in 1851 it was voted that the town of Hollis cooperate with Buxton in rebuilding Union Falls Bridge that present season, the vote was not carried out.

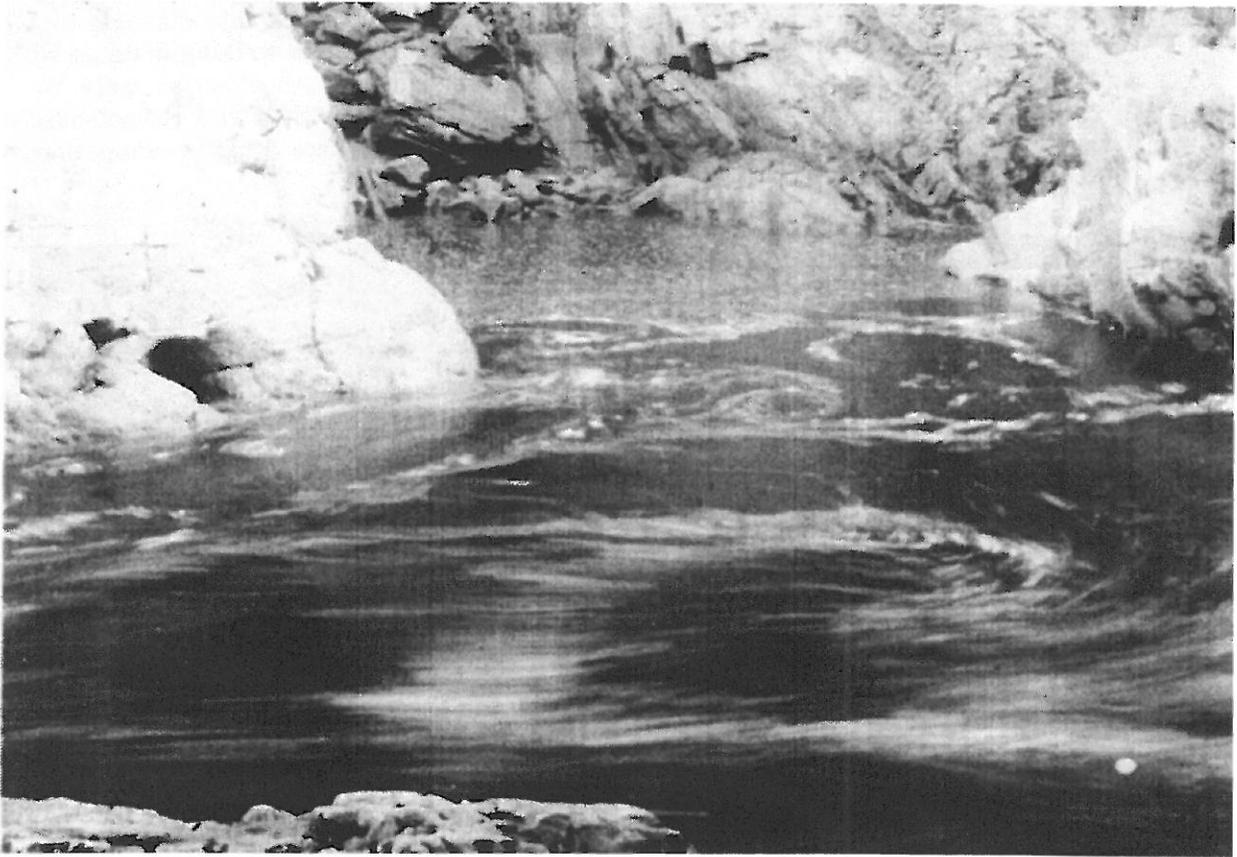
In 1860, after becoming a town by itself, Dayton voted to build a covered bridge across the Saco River at Union Falls, providing it could be built for \$1,000, the cost to be shared equally with Buxton paying \$500.00 the same as Dayton.

The Covered Bridge was constructed at the narrowest point in the river a short distance below the dam. It was 112 feet long and 18 feet wide of the suspension type of construction on two stone abutments. During the winter someone was hired to spread snow inside the bridge to make it easier for the horses to pull the sleds and sleighs.



This picturesque old bridge was used for many years until the two span iron bridge was built in 1917-18, a little way down stream by the Clark Power Co. It was voted that the town contribute \$1,500 towards its construction. The Old Covered Bridge was blown up in 1921 by the Clark Power Co. in keeping with plans for power development in that area. Representatives of the old Pine Tree Moving Picture Corporation of Portland, with which former Governor Carl E. Milliken was associated, were on hand to film the event in connection with a film then being prepared. The heroine galloped across the bridge on a beautiful white horse with the villain in pursuit with a horse and buggy. Soon after she had reached safety on the other side, the bridge was blown up. When the dynamite and powder exploded, the bridge rose a foot or so in the air and then dropped into the water below. Gasoline and tar paper were spread on the remains and then set afire. By 3:00 P.M. the bridge was all but a memory, having

The deep scenic gorge between Salmon Falls and Union Falls, where the current hurled itself against the opposing ledges and rushed on past the Devil's Eel Pot and Indian Cellar with such torrential force, has given way to a tranquil stream, taking its time now, to reach its predestined rendezvous with the wheels of industry, and hiding from human eyes the grandeur that was below Salmon Falls on the Saco.



Indian Cellar and Devils Eel Pot

THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG INCORPORATED

In 1797, a petition was made by the settlers that lived in the southern part of Little Falls Plantation, asking that the part south of Cooks Brook be set apart as a separate plantation. This petition was denied. The following year, in 1798, the whole area was incorporated as the town of Phillipsburg, in honor of its first white proprietor, Major William Phillips of Biddeford. To be eligible to vote in the town meetings, a person had to be a male inhabitant of the town for one year, have a freehold estate, with an annual income of three pounds, or have any estate to the value of sixty pounds.

The town meetings were at Stephen Hopkinson's house until he moved out of the town. From 1799-1808 most of the town meetings were held at John Dennett's home.

and the Winter Term, when the big boys attended with the younger ones.

A man teacher was usually needed to handle these older boys and to teach such advanced subjects as French, Algebra, Latin, Astronomy, Natural Philosophy, and Chemistry. If eager to learn, a young person could master the equivalent of a high school education, with the help of an efficient teacher, in these one room schools.

The three points of Character in which the pupils were graded were: Punctuality, Deportment, and Improvement.

In 1856 there were 294 residents of school age (between 4 and 21) in Dayton. The average wages paid teachers exclusive of board was: Male \$21.20 per month, Female - \$1.73 per week.

Some of the older teachers were Samuel Dow, Nellie Rumery, Martha Buzzell Cleaves,

William R. Buzzell.

Each district chose its own agent, whose duty it was to hire competent teachers, make needed repairs, and see to the construction of new schoolhouses. The School Committee was elected at town meetings. Its job was to visit each school at the beginning of the term and again near its close to check the accomplishments of all, usually by oral examinations, and to make a written report to the townspeople at the end of the year.

The Dow School House was built in 1873. The Lincoln School House at Clay Brook was built in 1883. In 1922 a new Union School House was built at Pike's Corner to replace the old brick one sold to Clark Power Co., in 1917. The Clark School had been closed a short time because of the small number of pupils, when destroyed by the forest fire in 1947.

CHURCHES

The first minister in town, Rev. Somon Locke, came in 1782, but because of the sparseness of the settlement, left to become pastor of a church in Lyman. The first meetings were probably held in the school house previously mentioned on the Buck place. After a number of years it was replaced by Rev. Timothy Hodgdon's Lower Meeting House.

The town purchased the land and the meeting house was built by subscription and sale of pews, in 1802-03. It was located on what is now Route 5, below the place presently owned by Mr. Robert Taylor. Rev. Timothy Hodgdon lived in a two story house that was opposite the Onville Fogg house. Each year \$200 was raised in town meeting



THE ADVENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

PHILLIPSBURG BECOMES HOLLIS

For twelve years 1798-1810, the town developed under the name of Phillipsburg. The inhabitants came to consider the name a stumbling block, saying it was "too long to write and too hard for the young ones to pronounce. A committee brought forward the name of "Hollis" for the town, which was accepted by the people.

One of the recurring questions that had to be decided annually, pertained to the "poor" of the town. Until 1851, the "poor" were "set up at auction and struck off to the lowest bidders". In that year a town farm was purchased on which the "poor" were to be supported. It was located in the upper part of the town.

In 1817 when the question came before the town to see if the town should be divided into two parts, there were 38 votes in favor of and 71 votes against a division.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

When the first settlers came into the Plantation wilderness to live, there were paths and spotted trees for the course of travel. Their provisions were brought on horseback or up the river by boat. They tried to build their homes near a spring or brook to insure a good water supply. Therefore some of the oldest homes were quite a distance from the roads laid out when the country became settled. But the town was not stingy with the highways and eventually the road came to each of them. When the Gordon Road was opened in 1816, it was voted that the Selectmen furnish the rum at the town's expense.

To have a new road built, a petition bearing the names of ten freeholders had to be approved by the Selectmen. Then a surveyor laid out the course, which had to be accepted at a town meeting.

Several Surveyors of Highways were elected each year to attend to the roads under the supervision of the Selectmen.

The first tax mentioned in the early plantation meetings was for the "High way".

Each man in a highway district had the privilege of working out his tax on the roads. In 1797, men were allowed 67¢ a day. For a yoke of oxen 60¢ was paid. In 1867, a yoke of oxen and cart were paid \$1.50. A horse and cart were given \$1.00 a day. A plough earned 50¢.

In 1917 rates increased for road work to \$2.00 for a man, a team of horses \$4.00-\$5.00.

If the landowner was anxious to have a road go over his land, he would sometimes donate the land for it. If not, the town had to pay damages for the land. Some of the original deeds contained a "Reserve" for roads in them. In that case the town would not have to pay for the road going through.

Down through the years much money has been laid out on highways. Some of the first roads made have long since been discontinued, and even their courses forgotten by the present generation. Others have had the low places filled, the hills have been lowered, and the crooked places made straight in the cause of safety.

In 1910 it was voted to post notices limiting the speed of automobiles to 15 miles per hour. Six constables were elected to enforce this law.

The roads are still a large item in the town's expenses. Each year more are improved and hard surfaces applied. Good highways are needed to carry the farmer's produce to market and also to provide a safe means of transportation for those who work in nearby cities, and for the School Bus as well.

Dayton had 33½ miles of highways in 1870.

HIGHT'S LANDING

In historical accounts of our town, we find several references to a "landing on the Saco River". The "Atlas of York County" says, "The landing originally called the Russell Lot was settled by John and Edward Smith about 1760". "The History of York County" says, "Previous to the War of 1812, Little Falls Landing, about a mile from the Biddeford line, was the center of a thriving

Boiling Spring, an early landmark near the center of the town, is quite a curiosity. It is several rods in circumference with a bottom of quicksand. Through this the water boils ceaselessly, first in one place, then in another. The period of greatest activity seems to be around noon. It is situated on the farm of Ernest R. Hill. The early settlers visited Boiling Spring often and used its squeaking sands to scour their floors. Hill's Brook, its outlet, flows south and finally empties into Swan Pond Creek in Biddeford.

There were four water privileges listed on Hill's Brook. At one of these a dam was built and a grist mill with a water wheel did business for a number of years until washed away by a freshet. In 1847 John B. Hill owned the mill.

The people of Dayton furnished their quota of men and means for the War of the Rebellion. The Army paid \$12-\$14 per month to the soldiers. In 1863 it was voted to pay each person drafted or his substitute, if he could hire someone to go in his place, a bounty of \$300 when he mustered in. In 1864 it was voted to raise \$400 for the support of soldier's families.

These liberal bounties incurred a war debt of several thousand dollars which was liquidated before seven years had passed. Dayton had twenty-two Civil War soldiers and nine foreign enlistments.

Dayton Post Office was established in 1878 with Mrs. Fannie Rumery as Postmistress. It was in the tavern owned by George Rumery situated near the junction of Route 35 and 5 where Inmans now live. He had rooms for travelers and a hall on the second floor where square dances were sometimes held. Travelers used to stop and water their horses at the well across the road.

In 1878 the hall was leased for 10 years at \$5.00 per year for all town purposes, to be lighted when needed. The first meeting held there was in 1879, but before the ten years had passed fire had leveled the building. It burned one night when the Salvation Army was holding a meeting in the upstairs hall

and the people there had a difficult time getting out. This was around 1885.

Dayton Post Office was again established in 1896, at the home of Samuel Hill, with J. Burton Roberts the Postmaster. The Post-office remained there until the R.F.D. No. 4 Route was started with Daniel Clough, mail-carrier, who did the job faithfully for nearly thirty years. Since that time, 1933, Weston Goldthwaite has been our rural mail carrier.

When Dayton became incorporated, the town government had to return again to the Brick School House on the hill. The next move was to hire W. Henry Dow's hall for town meetings, in 1836, with a room for the Selectmen and a janitor to keep the hall warm for \$15.00 a year. This was situated on the other side of the road from the Brick School House, near Mr. Dow's house.

This yellow two and a half story building was quite old. It was built with a piazza on the front, held up by wide pillars. For years previously it had been owned by Col. John M. Goodwin. He conducted a general store there and used it as the headquarters of a shirt factory, being agent for a Boston firm, at times furnishing employment for as many as 600 women.

The so-called "Sale work" was cut and passed around to the women of the town who sewed them in their homes and were paid by the piece. During the Civil War they made blue woolen Army shirts for the Union soldiers.

After Col. Goodwin sold his place in Dayton, he lived on Wentworth Street in Biddeford and did auctioneering. While living in Dayton, he was always ready to give of his time and effort in furthering any cause that he believed to be of benefit to the town. He served in nearly every town office while residing here.

Mr. W. Henry Dow took the stairs that ran through the middle of the hall and put them to one side so the young people could dance on both sides of the lower hall. At one time he had an orchestra made up of a piano played by Mrs. Herbert Smith, a cornet play-

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT DAYTON IN 1870

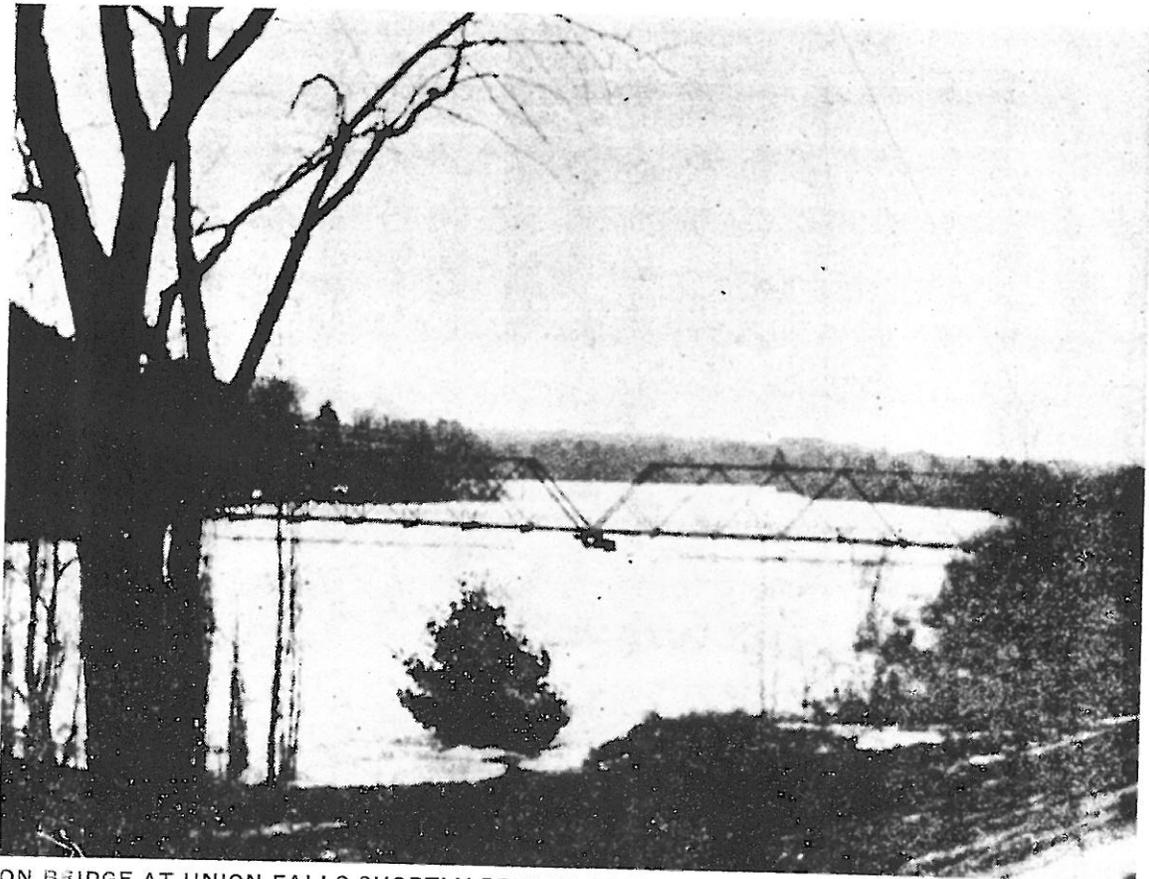
There were 141 dwellings, 147 families, 126 working oxen, 375 milch cows, and 140 horses. 947 pounds of wool were produced and 16,455 pounds of butter. 7,000 gallons of milk were sold, and 1,939 bushels of orchard products. 1,973 tons of hay, 1,706 bushels of oats, 3,645 bushels of corn, 9,185 bushels of potatoes, 204 bushels of barley.

The population of Dayton in 1870 was 612, in 1890 - 500, in 1900 - 473, in 1910 - 395, in 1920 - 391, in 1930 - 379, in 1940 - 454, in 1950 - 502.

In 1884 Dr. George Sylvester was voted to be town physician. In 1905 the Telephone Company was permitted to erect and maintain poles and wires along the highways in Dayton.

Mr. Cecil Clark leased the water power rights including the dam from Saco Water Power Company in 1910 and in 1912 received permission to erect and maintain poles and wires for electricity through Dayton. He built a 650 kilowatt power station at Union Falls.

The Central Maine Power Company bought out Clark Power Company in 1930.



IRON BRIDGE AT UNION FALLS SHORTLY BEFORE IT WAS CARRIED AWAY BY THE FRESHET

In 1936 Spring brought another freshet in the Saco River. The flooding waters swept away the power station at Union Falls. The two span iron bridge believed to have been built too high for any water to touch, was

broken up by the huge cakes of ice that swept across it and washed it from its foundations.

The bridge has never been replaced, so that by its loss, the distance to Buxton increased quite a few miles.

Being again without a Town Hall after the forest fire, the town meetings were held at Lincoln school. Nearly everyone recognized the need for an up-to-date school and everyone knew that we needed a Town Hall, it was voted to borrow the money on a long term loan to build a consolidated school and Town Hall combined. The following citizens were chosen to serve on the Building Committee: Robert Cole, Joseph Mullett, Robert Anderson, Dorothy Hill and Marjorie Proctor Pierce. The building was completed in November 1950 costing around \$65,000.

The opening of the new Dayton Consolidated School was an important milestone in the educational progress of the town. The new building provides four classrooms, a kitchen where hot lunches are served, a teachers room, Selectmen's office, and auditorium Town Hall.

There is plenty of room in front of the building for a nice lawn, where shrubbery and trees can be planted and behind it plenty of space for playgrounds and ball field.

The old schoolhouses have been disposed of as follows: Union School was sold, Lincoln school reverted to the Huston heirs, Franklin school was transferred to the local American Legion Post for a nominal sum.

Dayton has no High School, but pays the tuition of pupils to attend the High School of their choice in neighboring cities.

On January 9, 1951, the Community Club was organized. It is so named because anyone in the community who is interested in helping the school promoting good relations between home and school, and improving conditions in the community, are invited to join. The Club is assisting in the hot lunch program, bought the stage curtain, provided blackout curtains for the auditorium, and completed other smaller projects.

Upon learning that this year marks the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of our town, the Community Club felt that the date should not pass unnoticed, so decided to sponsor a celebration of the event on July 31.

As a part of the celebration the Club has financed, with the help of neighboring businessmen, the printing of our town's history, and the erecting of signs designating the roads in town named for the early settlers, thus trying to perpetuate their memory for years to come.

Compiled by the Historical Committee
Sadie Roberts
Margaret Ligertwood
Edith Littlefield

SOURCES OF MATERIAL

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