

Pittsfield on the Seabasticook

Sanger Mills Cook

Chapter I
FRONTIER DAYS
1606—1850

The early history of Pittsfield is not unlike that of many other New England towns. In the immediate area there were no great rivers to be explored by voyagers from abroad, there were no great mountains to entice the adventurous prospectors, there were no rich plains to attract future ranchers. Ours was a simple land, lying between two major picturesque rivers land that in the distant past had been covered with glacial ice that had slowly melted into the sea, leaving long ridges of sand and gravel "horsebacks" and a vast expanse of water. Today, between Pittsfield and Newport, one can find ample evidence of this early evolution on the level acres of stone-walled fields, which will yield "fossil rocks" that for centuries have encased small shell fish and other minute forms of marine life.

The land that is now known as Pittsfield was first known as "Plymouth Gore," a name that goes back to early land grants under the Virginia Charter of 1606 made by King James of England. One of these grants came to the Plymouth Company and extended one hundred miles inland from the Potomac into Maine. Plymouth Gore was in the northeast corner of this grant. In a later grant, made January 13, 1629 and known as the "Kennebec Grant," the new Plymouth Colony received certain trade and fishing concessions in areas on either side of the Kennebec. For a while, trade with the natives flourished and then a gradual decline took place until in 1649, the Plymouth Colony leased the trade for three years for an annual rental of fifty pounds. Dissatisfaction continued until the patent was conveyed on October 27, 1661 to Artepas Bois, Edward Tyng, Thomas Brattle, and John Winslow for four hundred pounds sterling. Plymouth Gore was included in this purchase.

For the next one hundred years the territory of 700 square miles embraced in this patent was permitted to sink into oblivion. Mr. Williamson in his excellent history of Maine comments, "Surely it is to be lamented that the laudable endeavors made more

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than half a century before to plant a colony within the limits of this territory should never have been effectually revived.”

Even though this territory did not appeal to the early white settlers as did the coastal areas of Maine and Nova Scotia, and the trading posts did not flourish as expected, there occurred nevertheless, during those early years, several events of some historical significance in the story of Pittsfield.

In 1615 a civil war broke out among the Abanaki tribes of Maine that was devastating and of far reaching consequences. The Indians in this area became involved; in fact, the Wawenocks at the mouth of the Kennebec were in the middle of the fiercest fighting since it was a rebellion of the native Maine Indians against Bashaba, whose own tribe was the Wawenocks and whose influence extended over most of Maine. Abbott in his History of Maine says it was a war between the Penobscot and Kennebec Indians, but probably it was of even wider inclusion. Some historians say that the Wawenocks were nearly wiped out. We have every reason to believe the Cushnocks at Augusta, the Taconets at Winslow and Norridgewocks were all deeply involved and that there was fierce fighting with the Terratines throughout the area between the Kennebec and the Penobscot. It is certainly logical to assume that much of this hostile action took place along the banks of the Sebesticook, some of it in and around the vicinity of Pittsfield.

The most serious result of this inter-tribal warfare was that the usual summer preparations for winter food were neglected and as a consequence hunger and disease followed. The years of 1616 and 1617 will go down in early Maine history as the years of the great plague probably smallpox when Indians died by the thousands. Whole families were wiped out and their bodies left unburied. Captain Richard Vines and other white explorers tell of finding their bleached bones in all sections of the Maine district.

This area was also involved to quite an extent in the long series of Indian wars which began in 1675. As usual, it was around the mouths of the great rivers that the worst of the massacres and property destruction occurred. However, the Kennebec and the Penobscot rivers were extremely well suited for navigation and the

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scattering settlements along their inland banks became objects of attention by both the French and the English. Both sides wooed the natives to assist them in raids on hostile settlements.

One of the most strategic posts in inland Maine was at Norridgewock. This location on the bend of the Kennebec was particularly important to the French whose forces in Quebec were a constant threat to the English. Without this outpost their ability to reach the English settlements farther down the river would be greatly diminished and the threat of invasion of their own land increased. Furthermore, the friendly Norridgewocks were familiar with the land between the Kennebec and the Penobscot, especially the Sebec valley region where from the headwaters of that quiet stream they could reach with a very short carry the headwaters of the Kenduskeag stream, a tributary of the Penobscot. This was important to the French if they ever decided to attack the Tarratines at Old Town and Orono or the more powerful white settlements near the mouth of the river.

The French outsmarted the English in winning over the Norridgewocks. Their greatest stroke of genius was in sending Father Rasl, to this vital outpost. His Christian concern for the welfare of the Indians won their friendship and within a short time he had established a devoted mission that formed close ties with the French Canadians. As this loyalty and strength grew, the post became a real thorn in the side of the English colonists and several attempts were made to dislodge it, but without success. It was not until 1724 that Captain Moulton led the final expedition to Norridgewock. With two hundred and eight men and three Mohawks he left Fort Richmond on August 18th, and leaving forty men at Taconnet proceeded on foot toward the village. At South Norridgewock they came upon a family of Indians, killed the child, captured the mother, but were not able to capture the father, who proved to be Chief Bomaseen. This well-known chief attempted to warn the village but was shot and killed while fording the river. Today this spot is known as Bomaseen Falls. The Bomaseen scouting headquarters to which Pittsfield sends some of its representative Boy Scouts is named for this famous Indian. The English attackers surprised the river community and as the people

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rushed out of their homes, they were slaughtered. Although Captain Moulton had ordered that Father Rasi, be taken alive, he was shot through the head by one Lieutenant Jacques. Even the old Sagamore Mogg, famous in Whittier's verse and sometimes referred to in legends of Peltoma Point, was killed, but only after he himself had shot one of the Mohawks.

The destruction of the Norridgewock village brought to an end much of the fighting and scouting in this immediate vicinity. From what we gather from the writings of Maine historians, the Sebasticook Valley area was comparatively quiet throughout the remaining years of the Indian wars. No doubt scouting parties used the river, possibly to reach its headwaters and an easy carry to the Penobscot, and also frequently crossed and recrossed on overland routes between the two major rivers. For the most part, however, it was a quiet spot with the natives living and hunting in peace, staying clear of the raids and fighting to the south and west.

An interesting incident occurred during the Revolutionary War that may have touched on our land in a very slight way. In 1779 the British were threatening Biguyduce, now Castine, and their presence so alarmed the American leaders that they decided to fit out an expedition under the command of Commodore Dudley Saltonstall of New London, Connecticut, to drive them out. It proved to be one of the most disastrous naval engagements in all our history. The American fleet consisted of nineteen armed vessels and twenty-four transports. Besides the sailors, there were between three and four hundred marines and soldiers on board, and twelve hundred militiamen and volunteers sailed on the transports. Even one hundred men belong to the battalion of State troops under Lieutenant Colonel Paul Revere boarded at Boston. The supplies listed in Williamson's history gives some idea of the size of the undertaking: 9 tons of flour and bread; 1200 gallons of rum and molasses in equal quantities; 10 tons of rice; ten of salt beef; 500 stands of arms; 50,000 musket cartridges and balls; two 18 pounders with 200 rounds of cartridges; three 9 pounders and 300 rounds; four field pieces; six barrels of gunpowder; and a sufficiency of axes, spades, tent, and camp utensils. The fleet itself carried 344 guns.

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This armada, costing 50,000 pounds to outfit, arrived in the Penobscot July 25th. It was an imposing display of power. Space will not permit a detailed account of what happened, but in brief, everything went wrong from the start. It was a real fiasco. General McLean, who had charge of the British fortifications, was poorly equipped to stand off this powerful invasion and he sent a messenger to Halifax informing them of the situation. The Americans made a few ineffectual attempts to take the fort and in the process lost 100 of the 400 men sent ashore. There was considerable wrangling among the officers as to the strategy, much of it being over the need of keeping a good open point or retreat. According to Mr. Williamson, General Solomon Lovell performed rather gallantly. Having landed and entrenched, he reduced the enemy's outworks and batteries, took several field pieces and approached within fair gun shot of the garrison. It was afterward ascertained that General McLean would have surrendered at this point if pressed, but Commander Saltonstall stubbornly refused to make such demands.

A fortnight went by in bickering and desultory gunfire and then the British appeared from Sandy Hook, near Halifax. There was one large man-of-war, a frigate, two ships, two brigs, and a sloop, commanded by Sir George Collier and carrying 200 guns and 1500 men. One broadside from the British was enough. All became chaos. Most of the transports went up the Penobscot, some as far as the mouth of the Kenduskeag stream where they were blown up or set afire by their own crews. The frigate Warren, 32 guns, under Commodore Saltonstall was destroyed a short distance above Frankfort village; the General Putman and the Vengeance were burned above Hampden. In recent years some of the cannon from this unhappy experience have been found and put on display.

Many of the officers and men, having destroyed their ships took off across country for Fort Western and Fort Halifax on the Kennebec, Paul Revere being one of them, it is supposed. Without his horse, it must have been a rough journey through woods, swamps, and across the Sebesticook. Where they crossed the Sebesticook has never been established, so far as the writer knows,

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but it seems plausible that some of them traveled across our land and followed the Sebesticook to Winslow Falls.

Although this quiet terrain with its small tributary streams, its low hills, and its hardwood growth had offered little to attract the daring early explorers, it did, after the Revolutionary War, have some fascinating for the more practical pioneers. In the summer months, the camping sites along the East and West branches of the Sebesticook lured peaceful Indian families from tribes residing along the Penobscot and the Kennebec. Even now the diligent seeker for Indian relics can find arrowheads and crude cooking devices used on these pleasant summer excursions.

LOVELL FAIRBROTHER

Only on rare occasions did white settlers venture into this area, The first account we have of any kind of an effort to make a permanent home here is found in an article by W. Allen of Norridgewock, dated 1871 and now among the archives of the Maine Historical Society in Portland. It was photocopied for David C. Libby who kindly brought it to my attention. It is a brief history of Somerset County and the section dealing with Sebesticook-Warsaw-Pittsfield reads in part as follows:

“Lovell Fairbrother came to the Kennebec at an early day and explored this river and the Sebesticook; found choice intervals at or near the fork of that river, and abundance of fish in the river and game in the forest. He therefore pitched his tent a big camp near the forks of the river in 1775 and moved his family there being joined by two others and this commenced the settlement in what is now the prosperous town of Pittsfield, then called Sebesticook.

“Soon after he got his family there, he was visited by the Plymouth Patent surveyor, who was surprised to find a man of his intelligence in that secluded place to which there was no road; separated from all other settlements by ponds and swamps and impenetrable forests and he took from his haversack a bottle of rum and instated him as Governor of Sebesticook and treated him and he was then called Governor as long as he lived.

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“The Governor was disappointed in his expectations. Did not enjoy living upon herring and coarse bread made of pounded corn. There being no mill within twenty miles and no road or communication with other places but by water in the summer and ice in the winter. The land being on Plymouth Patent he could get no title to it; and could have a deed of a lot given him if he would settle in Norridgewock.

“He in 1777 transferred his possession at that place to Moses Martin who moved there from Norridgewock with his family and spent his days there to old age.”

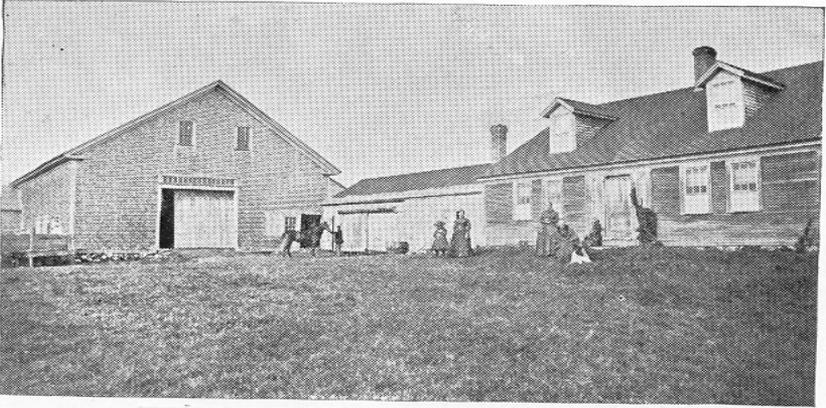
If Mr. Allen’s account is accurate, and I have no reason to believe that it isn’t, “Governor” Fairbrother and his family become the first known white settlers who tried to make a home in this area. However, he couldn’t take the rigors of pioneer life and moved out in a year or two. His greatest contribution to Pittsfield is that he evidently interested Moses Martin in the land and provided us with our first permanent citizen.

MOSES MARTIN (1733-1850)

It was not until 1790 that Moses Martin, a most unusual individual, accompanied a party of Indians from Norridgewock on a hunting expedition up the Sebasticook River and made camp in the vicinity of “Peltoma Point.” He evidently liked what he saw for four years later he returned with his family and built a log cabin near the bend of the river and in 1818 erected a frame house where he and his descendants lived for more than a hundred years. Little has been written of his early settler, but his obituary published in 1850 gives us some idea of his character.

“Moses Martin May 31, 1850. Died in Pittsfield age 90 years. Seventy-eight years ago, 1733, he entered the then untrodden wilds of the upper Kennebec and pursued the miscellaneous calling of the early settler. He was a hardy woodsman and a shrewd trapper; a skillful hunter and fisher, and was much versed in all the perilous accomplishments which were so necessary to the frontier settler. The Indians were glad of his company for he was superior to them where they excelled most. When Norridgewock was incorporated in 1788, Mr. Martin was a citizen, but in

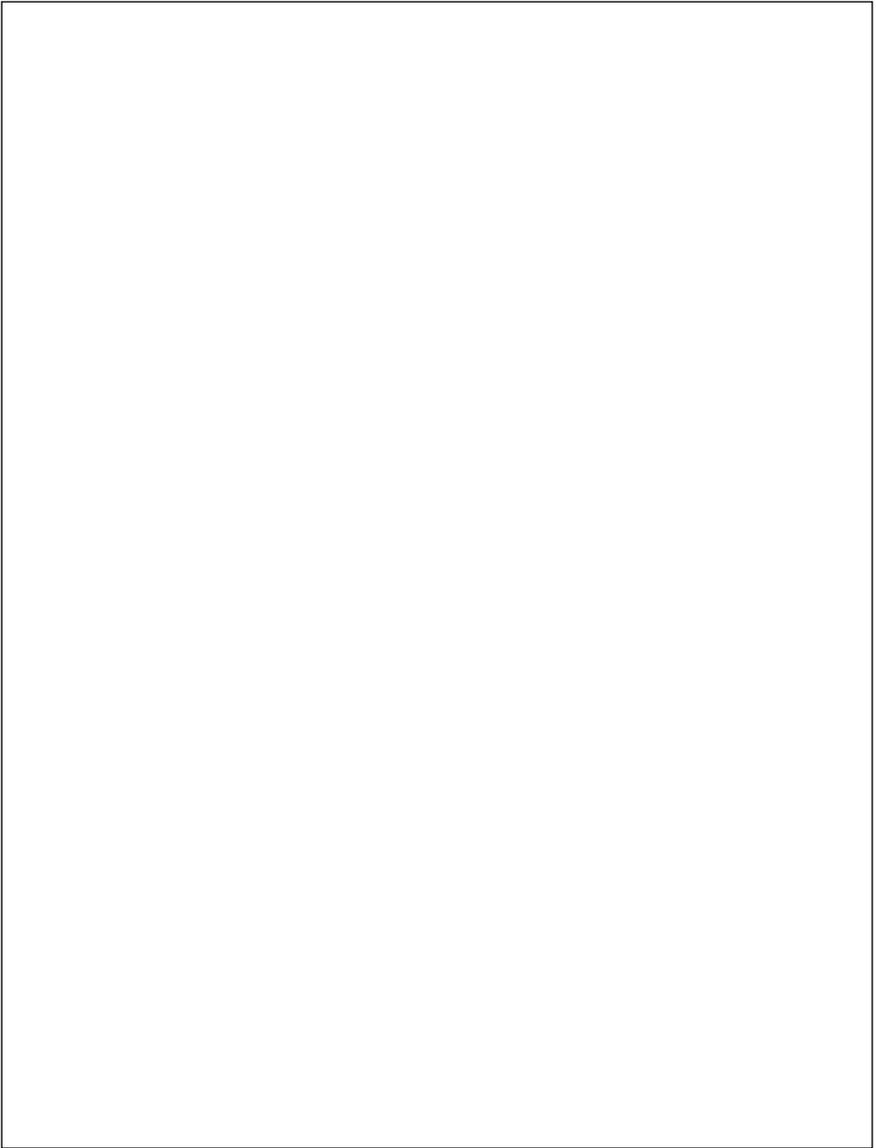
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MARTIN FARM, the first framed house in Pittsfield.

Marker Donated by DAR

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Record of First Town Meeting

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1795 he removed to the Sebesticook, since which time he has occupied a beautiful farm about a mile below Hathorn's mills. In 1786 he married Anna Parker, by whom he had a large and most respectable and influential family. He was always a Universalist and an honest man and he will be remembered long for pure wit and humor of his mind and the excellent traits of his moral and social character. He was, all in all, a noble specimen of the rough, sterling, honest and industrious pioneers who peopled the valley of the Kennebec, and his name deserves to be remembered. May his children and his descendants cherish it, and transmit it to succeeding generation." Bro. Drew.

That he and his wife Anna did transmit to their descendants the sterling qualities of their characters is evident when one traces through five generations the records of their achievements. From this couple came leaders in all walks of life statesmen, jurists, doctors, teachers, and successful businessmen and women.

When Mr. Martin decided to move his family to what is now Pittsfield, there was no road "except a path that had to be cut or bushed out." It must have been a difficult journey even for so sturdy pioneers as Mr. And Mrs. Martin. Their four children, two boys and two girls, were under five years of age and could not have been much help in transporting the family's personal effects. Although little has been written about this historic journey, it is quite likely that at sometime during that summer, Mr. Martin may have moved some of his belongings by canoe down the Kennebec to Winslow and up the Sebesticook to the rich bottom land he had selected for his home.

His cabin was located a mile down the river from the site of the Edwards plant. It was just above the confluence of the east and west branches of the Sebesticook, the very heart of the river valley. That summer must have been a busy one. Once the family was housed, a little land was cleared, a few crops planted and harvested before the onrushing winter. As Brother Drew points out in the above obituary, Moses Martin was skilled in the arts of hunting and fishing and no doubt supplemented the larder with wild game that was in such great abundance all along the banks of the Sebesticook. Even today some of the finest duck shooting in Maine

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can be enjoyed in the very spots that Mr. Martin hunted that first fall.

FIRST SETTLERS (1800-1825)

Shortly after Moses Martin established his home, other families were attracted to the area; but for the most part they were itinerant visitors either on hunting expeditions or studying the country for home sites. Life was made interesting by occasional visits of friendly Indians from Norridgewock who camped on "Peltoma Point" and no doubt enjoyed renewing companionship with their white brother.

It is safe to assume that a few of Mr. Martin's former neighbors in Norridgewock visited him and approved of his decision to live here, for in 1800, nearly five years after he had built his log cabin, a Mr. George Brown from Norridgewock chose a site near what was the old Lancey homestead and what is now a service station at the corner of Easy and Main streets, and built what was probably the first frame house in Pittsfield. Mr.[George] Brown later became quite active in town affairs, serving on the Board of Selectmen seven times, three terms as Chairman.

About the same time William Bradford and a Mr. Wyman arrived from Vassalborough and together with Mr. [George] Brown built the first mill in Pittsfield, a small mill located on property now occupied by the Edwards plant.

In 1804 John Spearing and John Sibley of Fairfield decided to settle here and located farms just east of a lovely little body of water, known today as Sibley Pond.

Between 1806 and 1820 the population of Plymouth Gore increased quite rapidly. Evidently the word had spread that the soil was rich, the game plentiful and the prospects bright. Most of these residents located in the western part of the town so as to be near the stage transportation, which at that time was not adequate in the eastern section. The route through Canaan, Palmyra and on to Bangor had been established and was fairly accessible, but the route south and east of the settlement, running through Unity, Dixmont, and on to Hampden was difficult to reach.

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During these years John Merrick came from Hallowell and settled near the Sibleys.

John McCausland, also from Hallowell, settled east of the village and between his home and that of the Martin's was an old ford where the river was crossed before the bridge was built above the mills.

Ephraim Higgins of Mt. Desert built his home in the westerly part of the town on land that is occupied today by his descendants.

John Webb, coming from Waterville in 1813 with his newly wedded wife, Mary, and his father-in-law, Josiah Jacobs, also located in the western area of the town on land that later was known as the Edgar Johnson farm on the so-called Snake Root Road. Mr. Webb, who took an active interest in town affairs, holds a unique distinction in the history of Pittsfield in that the first town meeting was held at his home. For 14 years following incorporation, the voters met at the Webb home for their official business sessions and then moved to the new school-house in Mr. Webb's district.

In 1814, William Parks came from Richmond and settled across the river from the Martin's, living there until 1830 when he moved to the site of the Parks' homestead on Hartland Avenue. Mr. Parks and his descendants always took a keen interest in the growth and welfare of Pittsfield. Their name appears prominently in the records of MCI, the Universalist Church, and business and fraternal organizations. Their homestead was recently deeded to MCI by Mr. Johnson Parks and is now being used as the center of an ambitious recreational program.

Phillip Powers came to Plymouth Gore from Canaan in 1818 and settled in what is now known as Powers Corner. He had seven children. Two sons, Arba and Phillip, took up land near the homestead. Each had large families and their children became outstanding citizens, contributing importantly to the business, judicial, and political life of the state. Llewellyn Powers, son of Arba, became Governor of Maine. Adam Powers, brother of Arba and Phillip, surveyed many of the early roads of Pittsfield. Herbert Powers, grandson of Phillip, Jr., became Justice of the Supreme Court of Maine.

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In those early days there was one problem that bothered most of the newcomers literacy. Adults shunned reading and writing and when community problems arose that demanded study, there were at a bit of a loss and often had to go to Canaan where formal education seemed to be more advanced. Tax bills and official papers from the Massachusetts Legislature were more than puzzling.

The coming of "Squire" Weymouth helped to solve these embarrassing situations, for he was "an eddicated man." He settled south of the town on the banks of the Seabasticook and almost immediately was called into the official circle of the township. He appears as a clerk of the town for ten successive years and on the Board of Selectmen ten terms, six of them as Chairman. If every education paid off politically it did in the early 1800's.

Squire Weymouth's son, "Elder" Weymouth, became a preacher, beloved by all who knew him. He was active in the founding of MCI and one of the dormitories, Weymouth Hall, is named in his memory. The family burying ground can still be seen on the west bank of the Seabasticook south of the town.

Jesse Connor (1783-1869) is a name that will always be closely linked with the history of Pittsfield. He came from Gardiner in 1814 and built a house on the northwest corner of what is now Park and Main Streets. Later this became the site of the old Hunter-McMaster store and today is a service station operated by the Central Maine Oil Company. Many stories have been told of this energetic character. He opened the first store in the settlement, using a room in the back of the house finished for that purpose, and he frequently made trips on horse back to outside towns, quite often to Gardiner to obtain provisions for his store. Although he did not hold many official positions in town affairs, he was influential in helping to plan and develop his community. He took an active part in the incorporation of the town; he was largely instrumental in getting the first county road built; he purchased the mill property of Mr. Bradford and operated it successfully until 1832 when he sold it to Going Hathorn.

Mr. Connor married Ann Parks (1780-1874) and they brought up a family of four boys and four girls. His son Jesse (1824-1909)

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grew to be one of the most influential and perhaps one of the most controversial figures of his time. He was a trader, a contractor, and at one time, in a moment of great wrath, became a newspaper publisher. He was the central figure in many a hot town meeting debate, always pressing his point vehemently and sometimes in very blunt language. He built several of the Main Street blocks, most of which are still standing. He built two bridges, one of which is presently in use; he was a leading force in the founding of MCI; he was chiefly responsible for raising money to erect the First Baptist Church. He had some part in nearly every progressive business venture, but, strange to say, his name does not appear in any of the lists of major town offices. Evidently Jesse Connor was recognized by his fellow townsmen as a businessman and not as a politician, which might I've some clue to his character.

Another family that left its mark on Pittsfield was that of David Pushor (1782-1880), who settled here in 1816, coming from Fairfield. It is interesting to note how many of these early settlers came from down the river Bowdoinham, Richmond, Gardiner, Hallowell, Augusta, Vassalborough, Fairfield, and farther up the Kennebec, from Norridgewock. It is not unreasonable to suppose that in following the Kennebec they were enticed by the waters of the Sebasticook at Winslow Falls. Captain Pushor, as he was later known, first settled near Sibley Pond; later he moved nearer the village. He served in the war of 1812 and in 1821 was appointed by Governor King as Captain of the state militia which met annually for a muster at Palmyra. There are interesting tales of these musters which were of a somewhat convivial nature. The Pushors were a long-lived group, David going to nearly a hundred and his two sisters to 97 and 98. It is recorded that Pushaw Pond near Bangor is named for a brother Christopher who was killed by the Indians and was buried on a point of land extending into the pond.

The name of Lancey has long been associated with the story of Pittsfield, dating back to 1824 when Col. William Lancey (1775-1836) moved here from Palmyra and shortly was licensed as an innkeeper. According to A. J. Brackett in a paper she delivered before the Tuesday Club in 1898, Col. Lancey moved

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into the house built by Mr. [George] Brown and later developed the property known as the Lancey Homestead. School was held for several years in the front room of his house and was taught by one Daniel Robinson. Upon the death of Col. Lancey, Mrs. Lancey carried on the Inn business and later passed it on to her son, Isaac (1827-1898), who in 1868 built and operated the Lancey House, which over the years has welcomed guests from all parts of the world. Its name has been synonymous with Pittsfield.

Another son, William K. Lancey (1821-1898), went into business and dealt largely in real estate. He married Ann Gould (1819-1910), who at the age of 13, came to live with her Uncle Moses Martin and to teach school. Her first school was in Mr. Martin's home. Later she taught in the vicinity of Pittsfield and at one time in Hampden where she had the children of Hannibal Hamlin for her pupils. She was a most remarkable lady who loved young people and contributed much to the cultural life of Pittsfield. She died at the age of 91 and in speaking with those who remember her she is most often referred to as a "a wonderful woman."

There are other names that should be recalled as having settled in the township previous to 1825, but the details of their lives are fragmentary. Regrettably, therefore, for our records we can only mention them and hope that sometime someone can add to their stories.

Timothy McIntyre and Steven Kendall were prominent in the early affairs of the town, but the date of their arrival is uncertain.

Alfred Tilton, whose father was a settler in Canaan, came to Pittsfield in the 20's and built a log cabin on the Canaan Road.

William Fairbrother, possibly some relative of Lovell, mentioned earlier, came from Skowhegan and then moved to Palmyra and cleared a farm in the vicinity of "The Ell."

Richard Hackett, who had served in the Revolutionary War, moved here sometime before the incorporation of the town.

A Dr. Ruben Norton is mentioned as settling in the west part of the town around 1810.

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David Simons arrived about 1812 from Pownal and located on a farm once owned by Dominic Susi.

James Willis from Milo was an early citizen who once lived on a farm at the foot of "McCarthy Hill." He was the first postmaster of East Pittsfield and used to bring the mail on horseback from Palmyra.

Benjamin Adams was postmaster of West Pittsfield, in 1824 and lived on the stage route from Canaan to Bangor.

Other pioneers settling here previous to 1825 who are mentioned by Mitchell and Dagget in their brief account were John Barry, Samuel Bennett, Eben Burton, Jedediah Fowler, Nathan Burton, Elijah Buzzell, Elisha Dodge, Capt. Benjamin Eaton, Winthrop Eldridge, Jeremiah Gahan, Dominicus Getchell, Rev. William Getchell, John Hart, Joseph Haskell, Henry Libby, Robert McCausland, Barnabas P. Merrick, John Noble, Abraham Pushor, David Runnells, John Runnells, Freeman Rollins, Bryant Tozier, John Towne, Isaac Weeks, Joshua Weeks, William Carr, Oliver, Elizabeth, and Elias Humphrey, and John Wyman.

CIVIC PROBLEMS

So, in the first thirty years following the advent of Moses Martin to Plymouth Gore, we can count between forty and fifty families locating in the area, and naturally their minds soon turned to the problems of living together. It should be remembered that these early settlers arrived only a few years after the American Revolution and at the time there was considerable talk of breaking away from Massachusetts and setting up a state of their own. Then, too, the country was involved in a second war with Great Britain a war that at one time came very close to home, disrupting shipping which was always an important topic of conversation whenever Maine folks got together. Also talk of organization was in the air. Canaan had been organized since 1788; Palmyra was incorporated in 1807; and Newport in 1814.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find several of these early pioneers pressing for some sort of unity in local government. There was considerable neighboring in those days and the custom of exchanging work was common. Out of these associations, bonds of

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friendship and common purpose developed and the idea of incorporation took shape.

The first step was taken in 1816 when on July 4th the following petition was presented to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SENATE AND THE HONOURABLE
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,

Humbly Sheweth:

Your petitioners (Inhabitants of a certain Tract of Land in the county of Somerset, Known by the name of Plymouth Gore or Snake Root Hill) that we labour under many Inconveniences and Disadvantages owing to the want of that order which Incorporated Towns in this Commonwealth enjoy. We therefore humbly petition that your Honours would take our situation into your wise consideration and Incorporate said Township of Land, viz.: Beginning at Canaan South-East Corner, thence Easterly five miles, thence North to the South of Warren Town No. 3 excluding Palmyra Ell, thence Westerly on said line till it extends at right angles with Canaan East line, thence South to Canaan North-East Corner, thence on said Canaan line to the first mentioned bound, with the Inhabitants thereon Into a Town by the name of Perry, and as In Duty Bound will ever Pray.

Plymouth Gore, July 4th, 1816

(Syned)

James Savage
Stevens Kendall
James Church
Thomas Parker
John Sibley, Jr.
John Sibley
Hanson Church
Jeddiah Fowler
John Myrick
John P. Myrick
John Webb

Josiah Jacobs, Jr.
Amos Dushon
Peter Dushon
Daniel Richards
David Runnels
John Rollins
Jonathan Rollins
Freeman Rollins
Franklin Youngs (?)
Valentine Rollins
John Berry

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Nathaniel Sarney(?)
Freman C _ _ _ at (?)
Ephriam Higgins
Nathaniel Cousins
David Parker
Ebenezer Fall (?)
Sanford Noble
Jonathan Ny
Abram Sibley
David Sibley

David Whedon (?)
Thomas Hersom
Danial Wyman
Alven Pres _ _ _ _ _ t (?)
Eben C _ d _ l _ n (?)
Henry Sibley
Alvin Ca _ _ _ _ _ ?
Alven Pres _ _ _ _ _ t, Jr. (?)
Nathan Higin's (?)

*When the (?) is used, the writing is not legible.

The above most interesting document is copied from the June 1882 edition of The Pittsfield Advertiser and was sent to the Editor by John F. Pratt of Chelsea, Massachusetts, May 25, 1882.

Possibly as a result of this petition, that same year the name of the township was changed from Plymouth Gore to Seabasticook Plantation.

However, the plantation type of government did not prove too successful. One of the principal reasons for its failure was that it was difficult to collect taxes. There were other problems involving legal technicalities, and then there was a serious desire on the part of nearly all the inhabitants to provide a better educational program than seemed possible under the plantation setup. The result of all these local problems was that in 1819 the inhabitants petitioned the Massachusetts Legislature to incorporate the township under the name of Warsaw. It is related that the name was selected by Squire Bridge, a large landowner in the district.

On June 19, 1819 the following Act of Incorporation was enacted.

AN ACT OF INCORPORATION WARSAW

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and nineteen.

An Act to incorporate a town by the name of Warsaw. Be it enacted by

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the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, that the tract of land contained within the following described boundaries be, and hereby is incorporated and established as a town by the name of Warsaw: Beginning at the north-east corner of the town of Canaan, thence southerly on the east line of Canaan to Clinton north-east line, thence easterly on the county line between Kennebec and Somerset to the westerly line of the township numbered five, in the second range of townships; thence on the said line to the south line of Palmyra: thence westerly on the L of Palmyra, so-called, to the south-west corner of said L, thence northerly to the said line of the mile and a half strip; thence westerly to the first mentioned bounds. And the inhabitants of the said town of Warsaw, are hereby vested with all corporate powers and privileges, and shall also be subject to the same duties and requisitions as other corporate towns, according to the constitution and laws of the Commonwealth. And any Justice of the Peace for the county of Somerset, is hereby empowered upon application thereof, to issue a warrant directed to a freeholder inhabitant of the said town of Warsaw, requiring him to notify and warn the freeholders and other inhabitants thereof, to meet at such convenient time and place as shall be appointed in the said warrant, for the choice of such officers as the laws are by law required and empowered to choose at their annual town meetings.

In the House of Representatives, June 19th, 1819.

This bill having had three several readings passed to be enacted.

TIMOTHY BIGELOW, Speaker In Senate, June 19, 1819. This Bill having had two several readings, passed to be enacted.

JOHN PHILLIPS, President June 19th, 1819, Approved.

J. BROOKS, Governor A true copy, Attest

A. BRADFORD, Secretary of Commonwealth

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Thus Warsaw became the 234th town to be incorporated. Along with Warsaw, four other towns were incorporated in 1819 all in February Atkinson and Know on the 12th, Newburg on the 13th and Thorndike on the 15th. Only two other towns were incorporated before Maine separated from Massachusetts Hartland on the 7th and Etna on the 15th of February 1820.

Almost immediately after the Act of Incorporation was passed a town meeting was called at the home of John Webb for the purpose of electing officers and organization. At this meeting George Brown was elected Moderator; Stevens Kendal, Clerk; Timothy McIntire, John Brown, and Stevens Kendall, Selectmen; John Webb, Treasurer; David Pushor and Samuel Bennett, Jr., Constables; John Merrick, John Webb, and Jesse Connor, Surveyors of Highways; John Brown, Surveyor of Lumber; Bryant Tozier, Josiah Jacobs, and Jesse Connor, School Agents. It was voted to extend the thanks of the meeting to Joseph Haskell, Esq. of Canaan, Justice of the Peace of Canaan "For his assistance in organizing the town." It was Justice Haskell who issued the Warrant for the meeting.

Before the year was out three other meetings were called to consider town business. At a July 26th meeting a vote of 32 to 0 was recorded in favor of separating from Massachusetts. At this meeting also \$1000 was raised for highways; \$150 for schools; and \$50 for town charges. David Pushor was awarded the privilege of collecting taxes for a 10% fee.

On September 20th, Stevens Kendall was elected delegate to constitutional convention in Portland. After some discussion, it was voted to pay 17 cents per hour for man or oxen for labor on the highways.

At a December 6th meeting, the new state constitution was ratified by a 19-0 vote.

The year of 1820 was an important one statewide. At the April meeting of that year, the citizens of the newly organized Warsaw no doubt took pride in casting 44 votes for Maine's first Governor William King. John Wyman was elected Representative to the general Court and it was voted to raise \$2500 for a highway program, a considerable sum of money for those days. \$800 was voted

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for the construction of Sibley Bridge. Later some strong opposition to this highway program was voiced and several votes were taken in succeeding meetings amending the mount raised. The delay caused by these discussions proved costly for in 1822 the Circuit Court fined the town \$700 for failing to repair its highways satisfactorily.

In 1823, the town was divided into five school districts and an earnest effort was made to secure good teachers for these schools. Even though the salaries paid sound ridiculously low by modern standards 2 and 3 dollars a week the school agents were able to secure qualified and dedicated instructors, who later on, when cash was hard to come by, were willing to accept their emoluments in the equivalents of corn and wheat.

The inhabitants seemed to have trouble finding a suitable name for their community. In 1824 they changed the name for the fourth time this time the name of Pittsfield was chosen in honor of William Pitts, Esq. Of Belgrade who, it is recorded, was a large landholder in this area. So far as the writer knows there has never been another serious attempt to have any other name.

As the town grew, new responsibilities brought on money problems school houses had to be erected, roads laid out and built, teachers paid, and the poor cared for. Taxes became more and more difficult to collect and finally an arrangement was made to pay in corn and wheat. Corn was set at 4 shillings per bushel and wheat at one dollar. These goods were delivered at the Treasurer's office and in the spring each school district drew its proportion of school money in corn and wheat at these prices.

Although times seemed to be a bit hard, there were apparently those who had cash for whiskey and run, for in 1823 a license was granted for retailing spirituous liquors.

In this year, also, Benjamin Eaton was elected the first Representative to the Legislature from the newly named town of Pittsfield.

In 1826, John W. Patten and nineteen others petitioned to annex a tract of land in Palmyra described as the L. The peti-

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tion was granted and today we have L Hill as a reminder of that transaction.

In 1829, the matter of a burying ground came up for considerable discussion. It was finally voted to purchase a piece of land suitable for that purpose, but it was not until 1848 that the order for the purchase was obtained. A lot was bought on land that later was part of the Hathorn estate and now is Hathorn Park, but later it was changed to a location east and south of Union Church or what is now the Universalist Church. In 1854 when the Railroad went through the town, this land contained valuable gravel for the road beds, so once again the location of a cemetery was changed this time to its present site farther down the river. Today if one wishes, he can see where this gravel was removed between the Sebacook and the east side of the properties of the old grammar school, the grange hall, and the east end of Easy Street.

From 1830 to 1850, growth was steady but slow in fact, compared to Detroit and Palmyra, it was almost backward. One old timer in an early edition of *The Advertiser* refers to Pittsfield of that era as "slab city" because so many of the houses were covered with cedar slabs instead of milled shingles. Before the railroad was built, there was no great concentration of homes in any one area. If the reader will study the 1860 map, he will see that even then, four years later, the town was divided into East and West Pittsfield, with a post office in each section.

A grist mill, a saw mill, three or four blacksmith shops, a carriage shop, two or three stores made up most of the industry in Pittsfield in the days before the railroad. In 1838 a Mr. Thurston, representing the Boston Manufacturing Company, tried to start a tanning business, but gave it up after two futile years. Tanning was a fairly popular business in those days, with hemlock bark readily available in most sections of Maine, but for some reason it didn't seem to succeed in Pittsfield. It was much more successful in Detroit.

It was during this period that Going Hathorn (1806-1875) came to Pittsfield. He became a name that had to be reckoned with from the time of his advent in 1832 to his death in 1865. He was born in Woolwich, had lived in Gardiner before he

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decided to move farther inland. His first major transaction was to buy out the mill interests of Jesse Connor and for nearly thirty years he operated this property successfully, sawing lumber for the inhabitants of Pittsfield and the neighboring town and grinding their grain. He owned a store, he traded in real estate; in fact, he catered to most of the needs of his fellow citizens, so long as there was a profit in it.

Because Going Hathorn seems symbolic of the years immediately ahead years that saw the coming of the railroad, a resurgence of community spirit, the beginning of an industrial expansion that was to carry well into the 20th century, we will allow his story to unfold in the pages ahead. His initiative, his business acumen and his interest in civic projects which although usually entered into for profit, contributed much to the growth and prosperity of the town. In the forty-three years of his life in Pittsfield he saw the town evolve from a hamlet of a few scattering homes and small businesses into a vigorous thriving community on the threshold of a prosperity that was to be unique in Maine history.