

**THE HISTORY OF LEOMINSTER; OR, THE  
NORTHERN HALF OF THE LANCASTER  
NEW OR ADDITIONAL GRANT,  
FROM JUNE 26, 1701, THE DATE OF THE  
DEED FROM GEORGE TAHANTO, INDIAN  
SAGAMORE, TO JULY 4, 1852**

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The History of Leominster; Or, The Northern Half of the Lancaster New or Additional Grant, from June 26, 1701, the Date of the Deed from George Tahanto, Indian Sagamore, to July 4, 1852 by David Wilder

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**DAVID WILDER**

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BY DAVID WILDER.

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1853.

## P R E F A C E.

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LEOMINSTER, December 3, 1851.

This day I commence the work of preparing a history of this town from its earliest existence as a purchase from the Indians. And in view of my incompetency to perform a task of so great responsibility, in a manner satisfactory to myself or to others, I am ready to exclaim,

O, that some abler native son  
Had written out what I've begun;  
'Tis too important to be lost,  
And 'tis too late to count the cost.

Submitting myself however, to the disposal of that Almighty Being through whose goodness my life has been spared beyond the common age of man, I would humbly pray for a few months more, and that He will continue my health, and grant me strength, both of body and mind, to complete an undertaking which, as I trust and believe, may not be wholly uninteresting to those who are at present, or who may hereafter be citizens of this town.

DAVID WILDER.

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December 3, 1852.

It is done. My prayers have been answered. My life has been prolonged. My health and strength, both of body and mind, have been preserved. The work which, a year ago, was commenced with doubts and fears has been completed. And while I would be truly grateful for the unmerited favors of the past, I would for the future humbly submit myself to Him who has sustained me through a long and diversified life of difficulties and trials.

I regret exceedingly that the following pages could not have been written by some one whose education is superior to mine; but such as they are I cheerfully submit them to my friends, not doubting but that when they read, instead of criticising the language, they will "put on charity." My business has been principally with the facts. And although no inconsiderable portion of them have been written from memory and oral tradition, yet I have had recourse to the Records of the Church, the town, the County, the State, and the Proprietor's Book. And I have also extracted, and in some instances rather copiously, from the Centennial Discourse preached by the Rev. R. P. Stebbins, in 1843, from the History of Lancaster, by J. Willard, Esq.; that of Sterling, by L. Goodwin, Esq., and some others. So that instead of being a work of mine, the book may with propriety be considered a compilation from the works of others.

And now I would return my thanks to those friends who have kindly furnished me with statistical and other facts concerning the Churches, the Agricultural, the Manufacturing, the Mechanical and other interests of the people here.

I feel myself under particular obligations to the Rev. Amos Smith, and to the Messrs. J. C. Allen, Leonard Burrage, James Boutelle, Charles H. Colburn, Samuel M. Carter, Wm. F. Howe, John Gardner, Amos Haws, Jabez B. Low, J. C. Lane, Luke Lincoln, G. & A. Morse, Josiah and Sewall Richardson, Albert Stratton, of this town; and to Hon. O. B. Morris, of Springfield, Charles G. Prentiss, Esq., of Worcester, Charles W. Lovett, Esq., of Boston, Silas Bruce, Esq., of Townsend, Doctor P. T. Kendall, of Sterling, Mr. S. C. Simonds, of Norwich, Vt., Hon. John Prentiss, of Keene, and Mr. Asa Kendall, of Mount Vernon, N. H., and Hon. Timothy Boutelle, of Waterville, Maine.

If, with their aid, I have been instrumental in preserving such a knowledge of past events as may be interesting and useful to posterity, my reward is ample and sure.

DAVID WILDER.

## HISTORY OF LEOMINSTER.

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In order to render the history of this town the more intelligible, it is proper, and even necessary, to give some account of Lancaster and Sterling, with both of which it has been intimately connected.

Joseph Willard, Esq., in his history published in the Worcester Magazine for September, 1826, says: "The first settlement of Lancaster goes far back in the early history of Massachusetts. It was the tenth town incorporated in the County of Middlesex, and precedes, by many years, every town now within the limits of the County of Worcester. Indeed, no town, so far from the sea coast, excepting Springfield, was incorporated so early. \* \* \* The plantation at Nashaway was undertaken sometime in 1643. The whole territory around was in subjection to Sholan or Shauman, Sachem of the Nashaways, and whose residence was Waushacum, now Sterling. Mr. Thomas King, of Watertown, united with a num-



ber of others, and purchased the land of Sholan, viz: ten miles in length, and eight in breadth; stipulating not to molest the Indians in their hunting, fishing, or planting places. This Deed was sanctioned by the General Court. It covered a considerable portion of the towns of Harvard and Bolton, the whole, or nearly the whole of what is now Clinton, and one half mile in width on the Easterly side of Sterling. But not much progress was made in the settlement for eight or ten years. The Town was incorporated May 18, 1653, (O. S.,) there being then but nine families in it."

"The inhabitants were ordered to take care that a Godly minister be maintained amongst them, that no evil persons, enemies to the laws of this Commonwealth, in judgement or practice, be admitted as inhabitants, and none to have lots confirmed to them, but such as take the oath of fidelity."

The affairs of the town seem to have proceeded with tolerable quiet for more than twenty years from the first settlement, till 1674. The population had increased quite rapidly and was spread over a large part of the township. The Indians were inclined to peace, and, in various ways, were of service to the inhabitants. But this happy state of things was not destined to

continue. The day of deep and long continued distress was at hand. The natives with whom they had lived on terms of mutual good will, were soon to become their bitter enemies: desolation was to spread over the fair inheritance: fire and the tomahawk, torture and death, were soon to be busy in annihilating all the comforts of domestic life. On the 22d day of August, 1675; eight persons were killed, and on the 10th of February following, early in the morning, the forces of several tribes of Indians, led by Phillip, made a desperate attack upon the town in five different places at once. From fifty to fifty-five persons were either killed or taken prisoners. And in about six weeks afterwards all the houses but two were destroyed, the town was deserted, and for more than three years Lancaster remained without an inhabitant. No record exists by which the precise time of the re-settlement took place; but it was probably in the spring of 1680. Some of the first planters, or their children, who were still living, returned, accompanied by others. Of the former were the Prescotts, Houghtons, Sawyers, Wilders, &c. A number of brothers by the name of Carter came in soon afterwards from Woburn, and were the descendants of the first minister of that town.

The civil history of Lancaster from 1680 to 1724, excepting what is preserved by Mr. Harrington, is probably lost; what progress therefore the town made in population and wealth for thirty years after its re-settlement is unknown. It is however certain that during this whole period the Indians continued hostile, and at nine different times made depredations on the inhabitants, killing some, taking others captive, and burning their dwellings and their meeting-house. The first was on the 18th of July, 1692, when a party of the Indians attacked the house of Peter Joslin, and murdered his wife, three children, and a widow by the name of Whitcomb, who resided in the family. Joslin himself, at the time, was at work in the field, and knew nothing of the terrible calamity that had befallen him, till his return home. Elizabeth How, his wife's sister, was taken captive, but was afterwards returned. Another child of his was put to death by the enemy in the wilderness.

Being a lineal descendant from Joslin on my mother's side, I am able, by tradition, to add some particulars to the above account. One of the little boys in the morning requested leave to go into the field with his father, assigning as a reason that he had seen some red men in