

**SOME FACTS ABOUT THE
EARLY HISTORY OF
WHITINGHAM, VERMONT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649754793

Some facts about the early history of Whitingham, Vermont by A. Augustine Butterfield

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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A. AUGUSTINE BUTTERFIELD

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*The Early
History of Whitingham
Vermont*

By

HON. A. AUGUSTINE BUTTERFIELD

BRATTLEBORO
THE VERMONT PRINTING COMPANY
1916

*The Early
History of Whitingham*

COLUMBUS discovered some islands of America in 1492. When he first made known to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain his discovery of land in the West, they were disposed to claim all the territories which might be found in that part of the world; the King of Portugal, however, informed them that he considered even the West Indies, as belonging to his crown, inasmuch as his subjects had first visited the Azores. The question was at last submitted to the Pope, who gravely decided that Portugal should have all the lands and territories that might be discovered within a thousand miles of Europe, and Spain all that should be discovered beyond; but neither England nor Holland nor even France was disposed to consent to this authoritative partition of the newly discovered regions of the West; and these powers subsequently took possession of different parts of

North America, supporting their respective pretensions by long and bloody wars. The claims advanced by England were founded on the discoveries of John Cabot and his son Sabastian, Italian navigators residing in England, who were sent in quest of new countries, with an expedition fitted out by the king, very soon after the discovery of the West Indies by Columbus. John discovered Newfoundland in 1494 and in 1497 Sabastian coasted from the northeastern part of the Continent nearly to the Gulf of Mexico. The French laid claim to Nova Scotia, on the ground of its having been visited and taken possession of in the name of their king, thirty years afterward, by an Italian navigator in his service named Verranzano. The first settlement attempted by them was in 1540 which was unsuccessful. The Dutch claim to the country about the mouth and along the course of the Hudson River was founded on the discoveries made by Hendrick or Henry Hudson who while in the service of the King of England, explored these regions in 1609. During this year and previous to the discoveries of Hudson, Sam-

uel de Champlain went down the west side of the lake which bears his name and was the first white man to see the mountains of Vermont. In 1620 the "Plymouth Council" was incorporated by King James I of England, and in that year the first Pilgrims came over and landed at Plymouth, Mass. Plymouth remained a separate colony until 1692, when it was united with "Massachusetts Bay." In 1628 the Plymouth Council granted the land between the Merrimack and Charles Rivers and three miles north of the Merrimack and south of the Charles, and extending westerly to the "*South Sea*." Just where it was supposed that the South Sea was I cannot tell, but some writers call it the Pacific Ocean, and as the waters from these two rivers flowed into the Atlantic, of course on this theory they must flow from the Pacific Ocean. Mr. Endicott came over with three hundred persons to prepare for a still larger number and established themselves in Salem and Charlestown. At one time New Hampshire and Massachusetts were united under one governor, but in 1741 the line of separation, not having been previously

ascertained, by order of the king in council it was to be run, beginning at a point three miles north of the mouth of the Merrimack and running westerly in a similar curved line to the river and three miles northerly thereof until a point was reached three miles north of the great falls, thence due west until his Majestie's other provinces were reached. Much discussion has been had as to the "Great Falls" intended. Had the northern falls been taken, Brattleboro, Bennington and Whitingham would have belonged to Massachusetts. This survey was run by Richard Hazen, and had he followed his orders—due west from the point he took north of Pawtucket Falls, Colerain and North Adams would have belonged to Vermont now—but Hazen, when at a point three miles north of Pawtucket Falls run a line west 10° north. Vermont at this time was an unknown wilderness, inhabited by savage beasts and still more savage Indians, except a fort or two had previously been builded, and a small settlement around each in the southeast part of the state, then supposed to be in Massa-

chusetts, and along some streams, lakes and ponds where wild grass grew.

In 1741 Benning Wentworth was appointed governor of the Province of New Hampshire. It must not be forgotten that England and France were ancient enemies and had frequent wars: these wars usually disturbed the peace of the American Colonies, as the French were then established in Canada. A war, known as King George's war began in 1744 and ended in 1748.

In January, 1749, Governor Wentworth chartered a town six miles square in the territory now Vermont, in which he never had any right or authority whatever, and named it in honor of himself, Bennington: and the fees and emoluments were such that his cupidity was stirred. In 1750 he chartered Halifax, in 1751 Wilmington and his avarice was such that when he was stopped by the decision of the king in 1764 he had chartered somewhere 130 towns and this, too, in face of the claim of the governor of the Province of New York and his protest thereto.

War was again declared by England against France in 1756, though in fact the English and

French people in America had really begun the war in 1754. This war lasted until 1763, and is known as the French and Indian War, though sometimes one or two of the preceding wars were known by the same title and name. The formal treaty of peace was signed at Paris, February 10, 1763. During this and former wars incursions were made through this territory into Canada and the soil and timber became known to the people of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut. As the army was disbanded there was no further need of many of the officers: these were reduced, and in October, 1763, the king in council ordered that ungranted lands be granted to these reduced officers. At some time, probably under the direction of New Hampshire the township of Cumberland had been surveyed, but we are unable to learn that any charter had ever been granted by that name or lands granted in that territory by that province. Many of these reduced officers petitioned to have their land set out there. A captain seems to have had three thousand acres, a first lieutenant two thousand and a second lieutenant one