D. Arthur Brown

THE

HISTORY

OF

PENACOOK, N. H.,

FROM

ITS FIRST SETTLEMENT IN 1734
UP TO 1900.

COMPILED BY

DAVID ARTHUR BROWN.

CONCORD, N. H.
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TO

JOHN SULLIVAN BROWN

(BORN 1809),

SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE FIRM OF H. H. & J. S. BROWN, WHO, WITH HIS BROTHERS, VENTURED TO BEGIN THE MANUFACTURING BUSINESS IN 1841, WHICH GAVE TO THE VILLAGE ITS FIRST GREAT IMPETUS TO GROWTH AND PROSPERITY, THIS BOOK IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

The history of the village of Penacook having never been fully recorded, the writer has undertaken to bring together such items of history as could be gleaned from earlier publications and from interviews with the older citizens. It is not expected that this shall be a complete narrative of the early and later days, events and people of the village, as the time that can be given to the work and the sources of information are both limited; but it is hoped that this effort may preserve some facts not before published.

In addition to the articles prepared by the writer there are embodied in this work several articles written by Hon. John C. Linehan and published in the "History and Souvenir" of Penacook, 1899. Also a number of articles in the biographical section have been furnished by Colonel Linehan, and it may be said here that his writings on local history were the incentive to the present effort, and to whom the writer here records his grateful acknowledgment for his assistance. The writer also acknowledges his obligations to John S. Brown, Capt. Nath. Rolfe,* Asa M. Gage, Hon. John Kimball, Col. Abial Rolfe, Charles Abbott,* Geo. Frank Sanborn, Mrs. I. K. Gage,* Miss Harriet Chandler,* Miss Lucy K. Gage, and to all others who have furnished information for this book.

D. ARTHUR BROWN.

PENACOOK, N. H., May 14, 1902.

* Deceased.

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PENACOOK, N. H.

CHAPTER I.

ITS LOCATION, EXTENT, AND GENERAL FEATURES.

The village of Penacook, formerly Fisherville, owes its existence largely to the abundant water power of the Contoocook river, on which the fall is about one hundred feet within the village limits, producing ample power for a large manufacturing community,—the fall from the upper dam at the Borough to the Penacook dam being thirty-five feet; from the Penacook to the Contoocook dam, sixteen feet; from the Contoocook to the lower dam, twenty-seven feet; and from the lower dam to the Merrimack, twenty-two feet.

The village is located partly in the city of Concord and partly in the town of Boscawen, in the county of Merrimack and state of New Hampshire. With the Contoocook river as a central line, the village limits extend about one mile along the west bank of the Merrimack river, and about one and one half miles westward from the Merrimack to the upper falls of the Contoocook river at the Borough; making about one and one half square miles of territory. This location is about equi-distant from the older villages of West Concord on the south and Boscawen Plain on the north. The village is divided by the boundary line of Concord and Boscawen, which runs from the Merrimack river in the same general direction as the Contoocook river, and quite near it, but it does not follow the curves of the river. Quite a controversy over the location of this boundary line arose in 1836 when the Contoocook mill was built, both towns desiring to have the new mill in their own territory. Concord based a claim for ownership or jurisdiction of the mill site on the southern boundary line of Boscawen as fixed by the general court of Massachusetts Bay, May 20, 1733, which was thus described: "Beginning at the middle of the mouth of

"the Contoocook river where it empties itself into the Merrimack, "where it joins the Penny cook Plantation thence running west "15° south adjoining on the Penny cook line four miles to a "white pine tree marked Penny cook corner bounds." This line would run north of the Contoocook mill and so locate that building in Concord.

The Boscawen people based their claim to the mill on a record of the town line, as described June 2, 1797, in a record signed by the selectmen of both towns, as follows: "Begin at a stake and "stones on the southerly side of the Contoocook river nearly "opposite the middle of the main branch where the same empties "into the Merrimack being where a forked white pine formerly "stood, which is the southeasterly corner of Boscawen, running "west 17° and 31′ south by needle four miles &c."

This line would run a little to the south of the mill and so leave the building in Boscawen. The controversy was continued about four years before a settlement of the matter was made. In September, 1837, the selectmen of Concord petitioned the court of common pleas to appoint a committee to examine and establish the line. The court ordered that John Porter, Thomas D. Merrill, and Henry B. Chase be a committee to establish a line between Boscawen and Concord. It appears to have been a slow movement, for it was not until October 9, 1840, that they had a public hearing on the case. The hearing was at the old hotel on the Boscawen side, then kept by Reuben Johnson. Concord was represented by Samuel Fletcher, Esq., and Boscawen by Judge George W. Nesmith and Ichabod Bartlett, Esq. After a full and careful examination of the evidence presented, the committee affirmed the line of 1797, and so ended the controversy with the new Contoocook mill in the town of Boscawen.

Penacook is on the line of the Boston & Maine Railroad, Concord division, it being the first station north of Concord, and about seven miles from the capitol. The population in 1900 is estimated at three thousand. The village contains four church buildings and two chapels; three schoolhouses; three hotels; twelve manufactories, producing goods in the lines of cotton, wool, iron, steel, wood, and stone; also the largest flour and corn mills in the state; some forty stores and shops of various kinds; five

clergymen; five physicians; two lawyers; and one dentist. The village also has one weekly newspaper and several fraternal societies and clubs. The village is connected with the capital city by a street railway (a trolley line), making half-hourly trips during the forenoon and quarter-hour trips in the afternoon, the line being extended up to Contoocook River park at the upper falls, to which point the cars are run during the summer season. The water power, the main spring of commercial activity, has never been fully utilized, and there is still room and power for more manufacturing establishments.

The village is amply supplied with pure water by the Penacook & Boscawen Water Precinct on the north side of the river, and by the Concord Water-Works on the south side. The Penacook Electric Light Co. furnishes street lights on both sides of the river, as well as for factories and dwelling-houses. The village has a good system of sewers and is kept clean and healthy.

The fire departments have apparatus consisting of one steam fire-engine, two chemical engines, two hose wagons, ladders, etc., which, together with the fire pumps at the factories and the hydrants of the water-works, furnish ample protection against destruction of property by fire. There is one hospital located in the village. The streets are particularly well shaded by elm and maple trees, and the buildings, with few exceptions, are neat and attractive. Woodlawn cemetery, on the southern border of the village, is a pleasant, well-kept spot.

FIRST HISTORIC EVENT.

The first historic event which transpired within the village limits was the killing of her Indian captors by Hannah Dustin, on the island, at the mouth of the Contoocook river, which now bears her name, and on which is a granite monument surmounted with a statue of Mrs. Dustin.

The tragic story of Mrs. Dustin and the Indians has been widely known, but it deserves a place in all New Hampshire histories, and as it seems particularly appropriate for this work, it is here given in the words of an earlier historian:

"On March 15, 1697, a party of twenty Indians made a descent on Haverhill, Mass. The first house attacked was that

of Thomas Dustin, who was at work in his field. Hearing the war-whoop of the Indians, he ran into the house, and ordered his children, seven in number, to fly. Mrs. Dustin was sick, having given birth to a child the week previous. Finding it impossible to remove his wife and infant, he left them with the nurse, Mrs. Mary Neff, mounted his horse, and overtook his children. His first thought was to take two or three of them on his horse, and leave the others to their fate. But he could make no choice, all were equally dear, so he resolved to do what he could to save them all. Dismounting from his horse, standing behind the animal, or sheltering himself behind a tree, firing with deliberate aim, he kept the pursuers at bay while the children ran; then springing on his horse, he hastened to overtake his family of little ones. Upon reaching them he again dismounted, loaded his gun, and when the Indians approached fired on them and then galloped away—thus defending his children until they reached a place of safety. While some of the Indians pursued Mr. Dustin and the children, others entered the house, took Mrs. Dustin and Mrs. Neff prisoners, dashed out the brains of the infant against a tree, and fired the house. Nine other houses were set on fire, twenty-seven persons were killed, and eleven besides Mrs. Dustin and Mrs. Neff were captured. In the woods there was still much snow; and yet, with but one shoe, Mrs. Dustin was driven at a quick pace by the savages. Her feet were torn, her footsteps marked with blood. Soon her fellow captives began to tire; but as soon as they lagged behind, a tomahawk was buried in their skulls, the scalping-knife encircled their heads, and their bodies were left by the way. The route taken by the Indians was up the valley of the Merrimack, to their canoes. It is not known where the Indians had deposited them; but the hardships of the march were so great, that, before reaching them, all the Haverhill captives except Mrs. Dustin and Mrs. Neff had perished. They found a boy, Samuel Lannardson of Worcester, who had been more than a year in their hands, still a captive. He had acquired the Indian language. It is probable that on the third day the Indians reached their general rendezvous—the island at the junction of the Merrimack and Contoocook rivers. It appears that after leaving their captives on the island, the Indians, with the

exception of twelve, departed on a second marauding expedition. The thought of being carried captive to Canada, of enduring the hardships of the march, and of the almost certain fate that would await her, aroused all the heroic nature of the woman who had seen her child's brains dashed out against a tree. Death would be preferable to life. She would strike boldly for life and liberty. She laid her plans with deliberation. 'Ask them where they strike when they want to kill a person instantly,' said Mrs. Dustin to the boy Lannardson. 'Strike 'em here,' said one of the savages, placing his finger on his temple. Little did he think that his own hatchet would be buried in his own skull by the keen-eyed woman who was watching his every movement. Then the savage showed the boy how to run a knife around a person's head, and how to strip off the scalp; all of which the resolute woman noticed. She informs Mrs. Neff and the boy of her plot, and stimulates them by her heroic courage. Night comes. There are two men, three women, and seven children, all asleep. No one keeps watch of the captives. There is no danger of their attempting to escape. The birch canoes are drawn up under the alders. The three captives rise softly. Each seizes a tomahawk. Mrs. Dustin and Mrs. Neff stand over the prostrate forms of the men. A signal, and the hatchets descend with almost superhuman strength, crushing through the skulls; then the women and children are dispatched, all except two, who escape in the darkness. The prisoners—prisoners no longer—gather up the provisions, take the guns of the Indians, scuttle all but one canoe, and take their departure down the Merrimack. A thought comes to the heroic woman. Will their friends believe them when they inform them that they have killed the Indians? She will have indisputable evidence. A few strokes of the paddles bring them back to the island. She runs the scalping-knife around the brows of the Indians, takes their scalps, and then starting once more, guides the canoe over the rippling waters at Sewall's Falls, then floating on calmer waters to Garvin's, steering the bark canoe in safety down the rapids, landing and carrying it when they dare not trust themselves amid the whirlpools and sunken rocks, reaching at last her home at Haverhill with her bloody trophies, to the astonishment of her friends."

The general court of Massachusetts voted her a present of fifty pounds, and many private citizens also presented her with testimonials of their appreciation of her heroic conduct.

WHEN SETTLED, AND BY WHOM.

Concord was first settled in 1726, being at first called Penny Cook; one of the original proprietors of the town, Henry Rolfe, acquired land on the south side of the Contoocook extending from the Merrimack river to the Borough, but when the first of the Rolfe family settled on this land can not be determined. Probably some of the sons of the first Henry were the first settlers of this land, as it is recorded in the history of Concord that Benjamin Rolfe came to live on the Rolfe farm in 1758; being then but sixteen years of age, it seems probable that he came to live with some of the older generation who had settled there before that date.

The first settlers of Boscawen (first called Contoocook) came up from Newbury, Mass., in the spring of 1734. One of the first party was Stephen Gerrish, who secured land on the intervale on the east side of the Merrimack river and settled there, as in 1737 the proprietors voted "that Stephen Gerrish shall have six pounds paid him by the proprietors for his building a ferry boat and keeping said boat in good repair, and giving due and constant attendance to ye proprietors to ferry themselves and their creatures over Merrimack, &c." The ferry was located at the bend of the Merrimack, just above the mouth of the Contoocook river, that being the same location as the present bridge.

Another of the first party of Boscawen settlers was William Dagodan, and tradition affirms that he built a cabin at the foot of what is now called Dagody or Dickeatty hill. John Chandler was one of the proprietors of Boscawen, though not one of the first party of settlers. He was grandfather of the John Chandler who built the old tavern, and secured the land on the Boscawen side of the river from the Merrimack back to the vicinity of Hardy's brook. His son John was probably a settler on this land soon after 1734.

At the Borough end of the village the first white settler was Joseph Walker, who built a log hut near the present residence of

George E. Flanders about 1750. He remained but a short time, as the Indians were not desirable neighbors. The next settler in that part of the village was Richard Elliott, who arrived about 1760, and came to stay. Two of his brothers, Jonathan and Benjamin, came in 1768, and Joseph Elliott came in 1778. These families all came from Newton, and their descendants were the principal families at the Borough for three generations.

Mrs. Lydia Elliott, wife of Joseph Elliott who came to settle at the Borough in 1778, had the distinction of being the oldest person that ever lived in this vicinity. She was born January 30, 1753, and died June 24, 1856. For many years the family lived in a log house. On the hundredth anniversary of her birth a religious service was held at the house of her son, David Elliott, with whom she resided. The exercises were conducted by Rev. Asa Tenney of West Concord, and Rev. Dr. Bouton of Concord; many of the prominent citizens of Concord were present, as well as many neighbors. Mrs. Elliott was in good health at the date of this meeting. On the morning of that day she rose in season to breakfast with the family, dressed herself without assistance, and made the bed in which she slept. She was at that time quite deaf, yet possessed her bodily and mental faculties in a remarkable degree. In earlier years she often walked to church at Concord, many times carrying an infant in her arms. She said that she never had a physician in her life except at confinement with her children; never took physic, or an emetic, or had a tooth drawn, or was bled. Mrs. Elliott had eleven children, all of whom reached mature years, and ten were married. Her grandchildren, at the hundredth anniversary, numbered seventy; her great-grandchildren one hundred, and of the fifth generation there were at least eight at that date. She was truly a very remarkable woman.

WHEN THE FIRST MILLS WERE BUILT, AND BY WHOM.

The first mill built within the village limits was a sawmill built by Richard Elliott about 1760, and was located on the south side of the outlet at the Borough, near the present residence of Frank Davis. Elliott was, previous to this, one of Major Rogers's Rangers, in the French and Indian war, and while on a scouting expedition in this vicinity discovered the "outlet," a small stream

branching off from the Contoocook river at the head of the falls, and uniting again about a mile below, this stream being evidently valuable for mill privileges. He came here to utilize the water power soon after the close of the war. He built a dam a few rods below the present bridge, but not quite so far down stream as the Holden dam. The amount of water running in the outlet was then much less than at present, as there was no dam on the main river to turn the water down the outlet. In the dry season of one summer, one of the Walker family of Concord wanted a barn frame sawed at this mill, but as there was not enough water running to saw the frame, a party of men collected a quantity of stones from the adjoining land and placed them in the main Contoocook river, just below the head of the outlet, which raised the water, and gave them power to saw the frame. This, undoubtedly, was the very first attempt to build a dam on the Contoocook river. This first mill site always had the *first right* to the *water* of the outlet, which right has continued to the present day, and is now owned by the Concord Manufacturing Company, whose mills are on the opposite side of the outlet. This first mill was owned in a later generation by the Morrill Brothers, and in the last years of its existence by Jere Fowler.

In 1829 Benjamin Morrill, father of Mrs. George W. Abbott and of Mrs. John B. Dodge, owned this old sawmill, or a part of it, and the farm on which it was located, as an old deed now in the possession of Mrs. Dodge shows that he sold a one-third interest in the mill and farm of one hundred and thirty acres to Hiram Simpson for the sum of six hundred and seventy-five dollars.

The first grist-mill in the village limits was built in 1789 by Abel Baker, on the outlet at the Borough, probably a little above the site of the present sawmill. To this first grist-mill people came from all directions, bringing their corn on their shoulders or on horseback, as there were then no roads between the settlements and wagons were unknown.

Abel Baker, otherwise known as Judge Baker, also built a sawmill near his grist-mill, soon afterwards, and did a considerable amount of business in that line when the water was high in the Contoocook river. At the lower falls of the Contoocook river, Jeremiah Chandler built the first grist-mill about the year 1790.

It was located on the land between the Harris woolen mill and the river dam. The mill was operated by an overshot wheel, built outside of the mill, the water being carried to the wheel in a flume or penstock from the river above the falls. Chandler also built the first sawmill at the lower falls, near his grist-mill, and there begun a lumber business which in later years, in the hands of the Gage family, grew to large proportions.

Another of the first mills which marked the beginning of the woolen manufacturing industry in the village was the carding and cloth finishing mill, built by Richard Kimball and Jeremiah Abbott somewhere about the year 1800. To this mill the farmers brought their wool, which was carded into rolls; the rolls were returned to the farmhouses, where the women of the families spun the rolls into yarn, and wove the yarn into cloth on hand looms; the cloth was then taken to the mill again, and was there put through the process of fulling and finishing, making it ready for use in clothing for the families. This mill was located on the site of the present Harris mill, so that the woolen business has been conducted on the same spot for just about one hundred years. The proprietors of this mill, Kimball & Abbott, together with Reuben Johnson, landlord of the old tavern, proposed to run the rapids of the Contoocook river in a small boat from the Borough to the Merrimack river, but, at the appointed time for the trip, Johnson declined to go. Kimball and Abbott persisted in the attempt, and were both drowned. This occurred on April 23, 1812. Their bodies were recovered at the old bridge, just north of the axle works, and the funeral was held at the house of Nathan Chandler, next east of the old tavern, where Abbott had been boarding, but the bodies were not taken into the house.

The potash works was another of the early mills of the village. This was located near the foot of the hill, just east of the old tavern, and was built by John Chandler. This gave the name "Potash Eddy" to the eddy in the river in front of the residence of George Neller, and this eddy was a favorite place "to go in swimming" by the boys as late as 1850.

In 1825 the first sawmill on the south side of the river at the lower falls was built for Henry Rolfe, the location being where the table factory now stands. This mill was built by a noted mill-

wright, Benjamin Kimball, father of John and Benjamin A. Kimball of Concord, and was for two generations quite an important factor in the business life of the village.

The first attempt to use the water power of the falls, where the Penacook dam is now located, was made in 1824, by George D. Varney of Dover, who bought up a large section of land on both sides of the river, built a dam, and prepared a frame for a sawmill, but proceeded no further with the enterprise, as he became financially embarrassed. The frame of the sawmill was moved up to the Borough and set up in 1831, on the north side of the outlet, by a Captain Stevens of Manchester, at about the location now occupied by the west end of the Holden woolen mill.

The old Borough road crossed the outlet just above this mill and the older mill, on the opposite side of the stream. In 1838 Capt. Jere Fowler built a match factory just across the road from the oldest sawmill, and close beside the bridge over the outlet, and close to the end of the old dam, which furnished water, also, for the two sawmills. The dam was washed away by the freshet of 1852, and the match factory was soon after moved over to the village by Francis Hoit, and used for a stable; it now stands, end to the road, on Main street, next south of the Central house. The Stevens' sawmill on the north side of the outlet was run some years by George F. Sanborn, later was used by a Mr. Cilley as an excelsior factory, and was destroyed by fire in 1865.

In 1831 Benjamin Kimball purchased the land and water power in the centre of the village, formerly owned by George D. Varney, and built the dam and the brick grist-mill that stands beside the old stone mill, and just south of the town line. For this mill Mr. Kimball obtained the stones previously used in the old Chandler grist-mill at the lower falls, the Chandler mill having fallen into disuse before that date. This brick grist-mill has been in continuous service to the present date, a term of sixty-nine years.

FIRST FERRY AND PUBLIC LANDING.

When this village was first settled there were, of course, no bridges over the Merrimack or Contoocook rivers, and it was soon found necessary to establish ferries. The first was established in

1737 by the town of Boscawen, on the Merrimack river near the site of the present iron bridge, and Stephen Gerrish, the first settler on the intervale on the east side of the river, was the first ferryman. Later, towards the close of that century, the ferry at this village was owned by a private corporation known as Blanchard's Ferry, and was doing a large and profitable business as late as 1800. The landing on the west side of the river was just above the freight station, and near the lower railroad bridge. All travel from the south was here carried across to Boscawen and to Canterbury for many years. This ferry continued in business until the first bridge was built across the Merrimack, at which time the stockholders of the bridge bought a controlling interest in the ferry, and the bridge corporation made a suitable contract with the remaining shareholders of Blanchard's Ferry to compensate them for loss of business by reason of opening the bridge for public travel.

PUBLIC LANDING.

In the early days of the present century the land now occupied by the railroad station buildings, and extending from the Merrimack river west to the street running parallel to the tracks, was a public landing, and was used by the lumbermen for depositing logs and sawed lumber before putting it into the river to be floated down to market. Lumber was here made up into rafts of suitable size to be passed through the locks of the Middlesex canal, and so delivered to the Boston market. This lumber business was quite extensive about 1825, and was the leading industry of the village, the business being carried on by the Rolfe and Gage families at the lower falls, and by the Elliott and Morrill families at the Borough. Lumber was also brought to this landing from Hopkinton and Warner, being run down the Contoocook river as far as the upper falls at the Borough, and then taken out of the river and hauled overland down to the public landing, the Merrimack river at that time being the only available way for transporting lumber to the markets in Boston and the other cities of the coast.

BRIDGES OVER THE MERRIMACK RIVER.

The first bridge over the Merrimack river, at the location of the present steel bridge, was built in 1802–'03, and was named "Boscawen Bridge." It was built and owned by a corporation, chartered by act of legislature June 10, 1802. The organization of the company was effected in 1801, and about the first business was the appointment of a committee to purchase a controlling interest in the Blanchard Ferry, which was then doing a lucrative business on that location; this purchase was intended to clear away all opposition to the building of the bridge. Blanchard's Ferry property was held in eighteen shares, and the Bridge Company purchased ten shares; the deed conveyed the property to Isaac Chandler, Timothy Dix, Jr., Stephen Ambrose, and their associates, under date of December 25, 1801. The act of incorporation gave the proprietors of Boscawen bridge the right to erect and maintain a bridge and toll house, and to collect tolls according to a schedule of prices named in the charter.

The capital of the Bridge Company was made up of one hundred shares, and the number of shareholders at the date of organization was seventy-eight, so that very few of the members owned more than one share.

Maj. Enoch Gerrish, Capt. Isaac Chandler, and Mr. Chandler Lovejoy were appointed as a committee to prepare the plans and specifications for the bridge and toll house. The contract for building the bridge was awarded to Capt. Nathaniel Eastman, as he was the lowest bidder, at $2,750. The plan provided for a bridge twenty feet wide, built on five post piers, and abutments at each end; the bridge to be four feet above high water mark of the great freshet of 1785.

The location of the toll house was a matter of controversy, and was decided by the gift of sufficient land and five dollars in money by Capt. Isaac Chandler, which fixed the location on the west side of the river near the end of the bridge. The original purchase of ten shares of the Blanchard Ferry did not appear to close out all opposition from that quarter. The ferry shareholders probably convinced the Bridge Company that the ferry property could not be ruined by the erection of a bridge without creating a valid claim for damages in favor of the ferry share-

holders, for the Bridge Company in May, 1802, appointed a committee consisting of Samuel Gerrish, Maj. Jonathan Hale, and Gen. Michael McClary to fix a just compensation for the use of the ferry for three years from January 1, 1803; also a compensation for the holders of the remaining eight shares of the ferry stock, from January 1, 1806, yearly, so long as the bridge shall be maintained across the ferry.

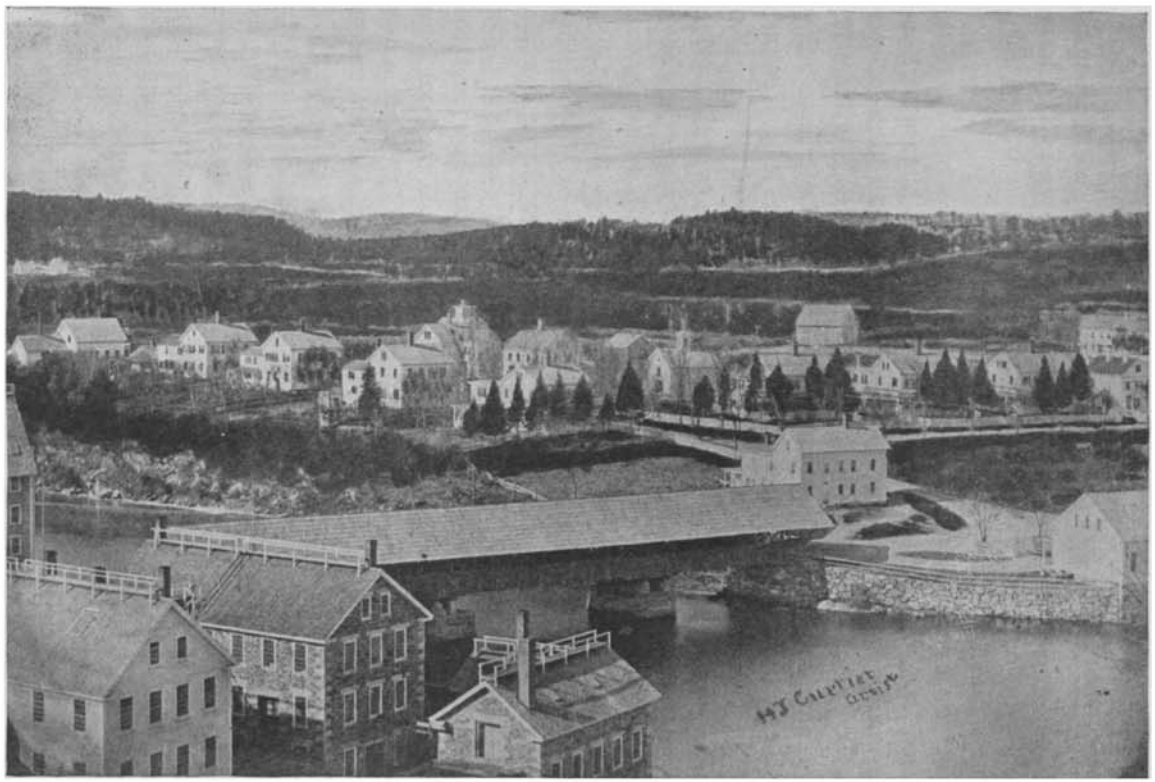
This Boscawen bridge was opened for travel early in 1803, and remained in use over thirty years. Coffin's history of Boscawen states that it was carried away by high water in the winter of 1835, but the clerk of the Bridge Company, Hon. William H. Gage, recorded the date as January, 1839; the latter date being confirmed by George Frank Sanborn and Hon. John Kimball, both of whom saw the bridge when it was carried away. Mr. Kimball states that a citizen of Canterbury came over the bridge in the morning, and when ready to return the bridge was gone; he then drove down to Sewall's Falls, and had but just crossed that bridge when it was also carried away.

After the destruction of the Boscawen bridge in 1839, a ferry was again established. This was called a chain ferry; a chain being stretched across the river and fastened at each shore, the chain being passed over rolls on one side of the boat, and the ferryman by vigorous pulling on the chain moved the boat from shore to shore. This ferry remained in use until 1857 when a new covered wooden bridge was built on stone piers and abutments at the old location, and was known as the Canterbury bridge.

This bridge withstood the attacks of storm and floods for forty years; and was finally swept away by high water and floating ice in the spring of 1896 (March 2). When the flood of water abated, the old style chain ferry once more appeared and conveyed passengers safely across the historic stream until the present steel bridge was built in 1898. This last bridge being built considerably higher above the river than either of its predecessors, it is confidently expected that floods will never carry it away.

BRIDGES OVER THE CONTOOCOOK RIVER.

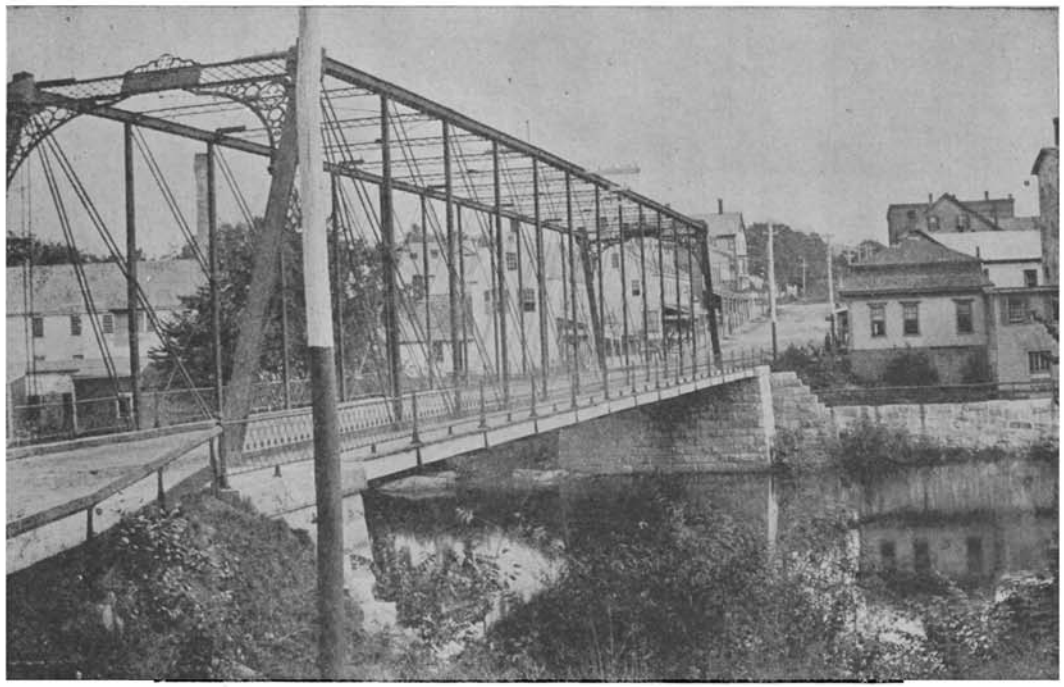
In 1765 the Province road was laid out by royal authority (John Wentworth, governor), through the province of New



THE COVERED WOODEN BRIDGE, 1849.

Hampshire, from Portsmouth to No. 4 or Charlestown, on the Connecticut river; and on this road, which passed through Penacook, a bridge was built over the Contoocook river, by the town of Boscawen, at a point near the works of the Concord Axle company. The foundation for the abutment on the south side can still be seen at times of low water. The northern end of this bridge landed on the high ledge which rises almost vertically from the water some twenty-five or thirty feet in height; which seem to indicate that the north end was considerably higher than the south end. This bridge was built by John Flanders and Capt. Henry Lovejoy. The writer can find no record of the destruction of this bridge, and it may have stood until 1805, when a new bridge was built on the same location by the towns of Boscawen and Concord, both sharing the expense although the location was entirely in the town of Boscawen. This union bridge remained in use for about twenty years, and was swept away by high water in 1824.

The next bridge to replace that was built at the location of the present steel bridge in the center of the village; this location being all in the town of Concord the Boscawen people declined to share the expense. This location of the bridge called for changing the roadway which formerly passed through the yards of the Concord Axle works, and making the new road from the Washington House to the Penacook House nearly a straight line. This bridge, built in 1825, was erected on two granite piers, and granite abutments at each end; this was an open bridge built without any overhead frame or covering. This old red bridge did good service for an increasing amount of travel until 1848 or 1849, when it was replaced by the covered bridge, built on the same piers, by a Mr. Paddleford, a noted bridge builder. The covered bridge was never particularly ornamental, and always dark and unpleasant at night; it was found useful as a horse shed in stormy weather, but was never much liked by the citizens. It remained in service, however, until 1874, when it was replaced by the first iron bridge, built under the direction of Hon. John Kimball, mayor of Concord. This marked a long step in advance, and at the opening of the bridge there was a large and enthusiastic gathering of citizens and visitors from neighboring towns,



THE IRON BRIDGE OVER THE CONTOOCOOK RIVER, ERECTED 1874.

the occasion being observed as a holiday by the entire community. There was a public meeting in Exchange hall, with speeches by the mayor and other distinguished persons present. The iron bridge having become somewhat worn by twenty-five years' hard service, it was replaced by the new steel bridge which was finished in November, 1898, but no public ceremonies marked its opening for public travel.

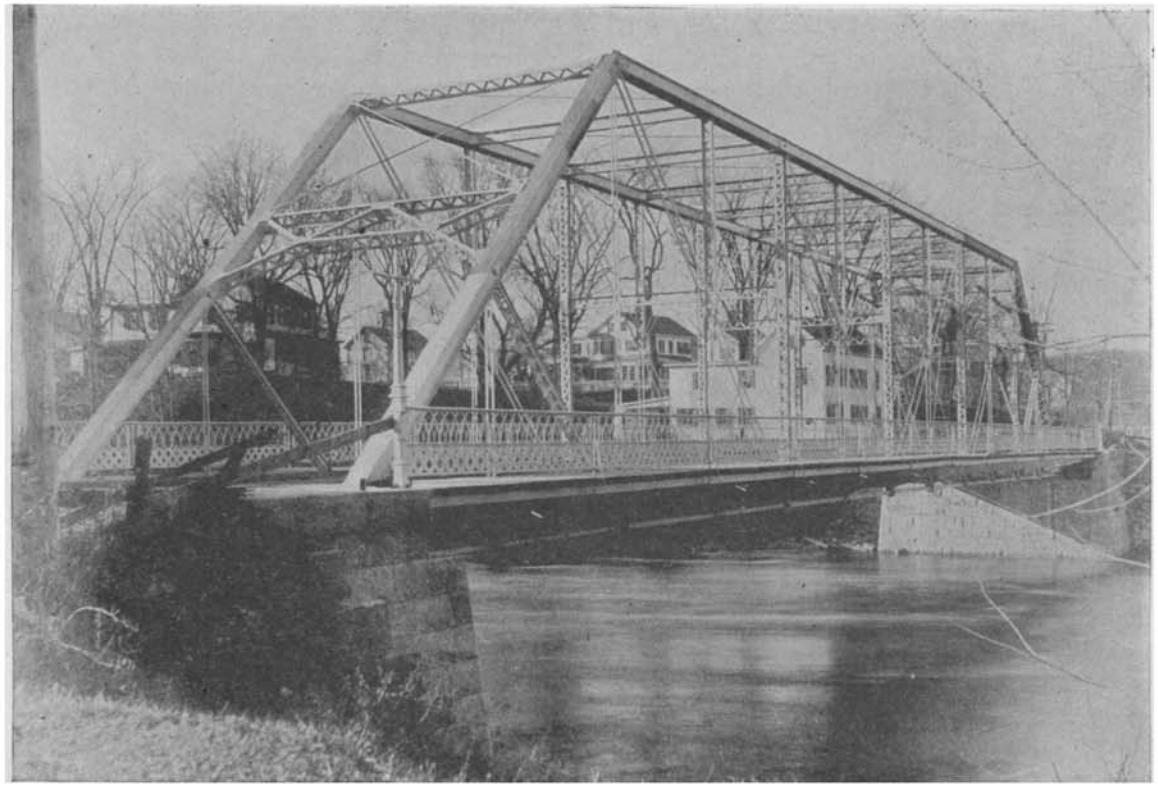
About one quarter of a mile below the steel bridge at Main street there were built, about the year 1850, two wooden covered bridges over the Contoocook river; two, because of an island in the river which divided the river into two branches. These bridges were commonly called "twin bridges," being much the same size and built in the same style, but the one connected with the south bank of the river belonged to Concord, while the other belonged to the town of Boscawen; the town line running across the island between the bridges.

The bridge on the Boscawen side proved to be the more durable, as it is still standing. The one on the Concord side was taken down in 1899, and replaced by a portion of the iron bridge which formerly was at Main street. The first bridges over the outlet at the Borough, at the present locations, were built in 1846, at the time when Washington street was laid out. Those bridges were carried away by the flood in 1852, and the present covered bridge, near the residence of George Frank Sanborn, was built in the following season by Dutton Woods. The lower bridge, near the residence of Henry Morrill, was rebuilt in 1897, about the time when the street railway was extended to the Contoocook River park.

Previous to 1846 there was a bridge over the outlet at a point opposite the road leading south past the Fowler homestead. The date of the building of that old bridge is not known, but it was probably there before 1800, it being near the first sawmill built in 1760.

ANCIENT HOUSES.

There are three houses now standing, and occupied as dwellings, each of which is called by some the oldest house in the village.



THE STEEL BRIDGE OVER THE CONTOOCOOK RIVER (MAIN ST.), ERECTED 1898.

First, the Old Tavern, now called the Penacook House, which is known to have been built in 1787 by John Chandler, and which is mentioned more at length elsewhere in this history.

Second, the one-story cottage standing a few rods east of the Washington House stable, now owned by John Chadwick, Esq., and rented as a tenement. This was an old house in 1830, but no definite information as to the date of building is now obtainable. Probably it dates back to the later years of the eighteenth century. It was occupied as early as 1830 by Winthrop Elliott, who did the shoemaking for the neighborhood for a whole generation.

THE OLD ROLFE HOUSE, 1774.

Third, the one-story cottage occupied for many years by Col. Abial Rolfe, and now standing near the Nathaniel Rolfe barn and occupied as a tenement. This house was built by the grandfather of Nathaniel and Col. Abial Rolfe about the year 1774, and has been in the possession of the Rolfe family ever since—about one hundred and twenty-five years. Three generations of the Rolfes were born in this house, which is still in a fair state of preservation and liable to last for two or three gen-

erations more. This house holds the record as the "oldest house" in the village.

Another of the old houses is the one standing next west of the Episcopal church, and owned by the Chadwick sisters. The frame of that house formerly stood on the corner now occupied by the Washington House. When the old house was torn down a certain Mr. Gilchrist purchased the frame and old material and carted it down to the lot now occupied, in November, 1846. He put in the cellar that same fall, and in the spring of 1847 put up the house. How long that house stood on the corner of Main street and Washington square cannot now be ascertained, but the frame is probably one hundred years old. Other authorities claim that this building was moved into the village from Boscawen or Salisbury.

The old Chandler house, now occupied by E. L. Davis, was built by a Mr. Eaton about 1800. The Timothy Rolfe house, now occupied by John R. Hill, was built in 1815, and the Nathaniel Rolfe house, now occupied by Abial W. Rolfe, was built in 1836.

On the Boscawen side of the river the house now owned by Asa M. Gage, was built by Isaac Chandler, a brother of John Chandler, the landlord, but whether it was built before or after the Tavern cannot now be ascertained. The present owner is confident that it has been built over one hundred years, and the probabilities are that it was erected at about the same date as the old Tavern. It was, when occupied by Isaac Chandler, almost a public house, as the proprietor was a prominent man in business affairs, and many public and corporation meetings were held there. Mr. Chandler had no children, and the old homestead passed into the hands of William H. Gage, father of Asa M., about 1825, who added the ell part, and built the barns now standing. The frame of the front part of this house is of oak timber, still sound and strong, apparently good for another hundred years' service. Another of the Chandler brothers, Jeremiah, had a house where the present Chandler Gage house stands, which was also built in the last century. It was taken down about 1845 to make room for the present dwelling. It was occupied for a generation by Richard Gage, father of Chandler

Gage, who came to the village about 1803. He married a daughter of John Chandler in 1805, and his nine children were born there.

The Plummer house next east of the old Tavern was built by Nathan Chandler, son of John Chandler, landlord, in 1806, and was owned by him until 1829, when he moved down to the house now owned by E. L. Davis, having sold the Plummer house to George D. Varney, who at that time bought up the land and water power in the center part of the village. Varney owned it

THE OLD PLUMMER OR CHANDLER HOUSE.

but a short time, and it then passed into the possession of the United States bank at Portsmouth, by which corporation it was sold to Benjamin Kimball in 1830 or 1831. Hon. Benjamin A. Kimball of Concord was born in this house in 1833.

John Chandler, the landlord, moved into this old house in 1818, after giving up the Tavern business to his son-in-law, Reuben Johnson. Some other families who have occupied this house are those of Luther Gage, Joseph Gerrish, Jeremiah Kimball, Moody Kimball, John Ellsworth, A. W. Quimby, Abner B. Winn, Isaac K. Gage, Nehemiah Butler, Almon A. Harris, and

the Plummer family. The Luther Gage house, opposite the Plummer house, was built by Abial Chandler in 1849, to replace the old Elliott house which stood on the same location. The Elliott house was built in the last years of the last century by Miss Louis Elliott, seamstress, who made clothes for both men and women, going from house to house to do the work. She sold the place to Leonard Morrison, who was living there in 1840. Morrison sold it to Abial Chandler, who occupied it for a few years and then moved to Lawrence, Mass.

There was also an old house owned by Benjamin Elliott, father of the late Alfred Elliott, in the early years of the present century, which stood on the site of the present Charles M. Rolfe house. That house was built before 1800, and torn down to make room for the present dwelling which was built by Calvin Gage in 1848.

Still another of the old houses in that section of the village was a one-story cottage located just opposite the saw shop. This was occupied for several years by William H. Gage, and his son Asa M. was born there. That house was also torn down to make room for a larger dwelling before 1850.

The one-story cottage of two tenements still standing on Commercial street just at the top of the hill above the Harris mill, was built about 1820 by Timothy Abbott, father of Charles Abbott, the celebrated drummer, and was occupied by father and son about fifty years.

North of the hotel on the Boscawen side the oldest house is probably the John Johnson house on Queen street, occupied in later years by William Duckworth. This house was built before 1800. At about the same date Obediah Johnson, brother of John, built a cottage on Main street a little north of Queen street. Both of these Johnson houses are still standing.

The Samuel Ellsworth house, now owned by William C. Towne, was moved from Canterbury early one spring about 1830, and was an old house then. It was drawn across the Merrimack river on the ice by ox teams, driven by Asa M. Gage, and landed none too soon, as the ice broke up and went out that same night. The house was drawn to its present location, which was then the southwest corner of William H. Gage's farm.

In those days buildings were moved by the neighbors, who furnished the ox teams and did the work without pay, but refreshments were furnished by the house owners.

The house next south was built by John Ellsworth, a brother of Samuel, about 1840.

The Samuel R. Mann house was built in 1830, and first occupied by Calvin Gage. In 1842 H. H. and J. S. Brown moved in, and remained until the houses were built on "Brown's hill" in 1844. The two-tenement house next north was built by Samuel Martin in 1836.

The original mill house at the foot of Brown's hill was built by Benjamin Kimball in 1831, as a residence for the grist miller.

The earliest houses in the Borough district are nearly all gone. One of the oldest now standing is the Marshall Baker house, now occupied by Cyrus Savory, a son-in-law of Mr. Baker. There was a very old Elliott house standing on the George E. Flanders place until 1886, which was built before 1800, and occupied by three brothers for more than half a century. Several of the older houses of the Elliott family were located at or near the Hollow, south of the Jere Fowler place, but only one or two of them are now standing.

There was a two-story house standing on the corner now occupied by the Washington House, which was last occupied by one of the Elliott families, and in earlier years by John Sawyer, William H. Gage, and others. It was used for meetings and religious services considerably before it was torn down to make room for the Washington House, which was built by John Sawyer and Joseph Eastman of West Concord in 1847.

The Lyman K. Hall house is an old house rebuilt. It was formerly a hotel in the town of Warner, and while standing there had General Lafayette as a guest, while on his journey from Concord to Windsor, Vt., in June, 1825. The building was taken down and carted to Penacook where it was rebuilt by James Connor, the first occupant at the new location being John C. Morrison.