

HISTORY OF THORNTON, GRAFTON COUNTY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

-----  
Information located at <http://www.nh.searchroots.com>  
On a web site about GENEALOGY AND HISTORY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
and its counties TRANSCRIBED BY JANICE BROWN  
Please see the web site for my email contact.  
-----

The original source of this information is in the public domain,  
however use of this text file, other than for personal use, is  
restricted without written permission from the transcriber  
(who has edited, compiled and added new copyrighted text to same).  
=====

SOURCE: Gazetteer of Grafton County, N.H., 1709-1886 by Hamilton  
Child, Syracuse, N.Y.: H. Child, June 1886

page 625  
HISTORY OF THORNTON NH

THORNTON, a triangularly outlined township, lies in the eastern part of  
the county, in lat. 43 degrees, 54' and long. 71 degrees 40', bounded  
northeast by Livermore, Waterville and small part of the county line, north  
and west by Lincoln, Woodstock, and Ellsworth, and south by Campton, with an  
area of 28,490 acres. The township was granged to Matthew Thornton and  
others, in seventy-three shares, July 6, 1763, to contain 23,000 acres. It  
was named in honor of Mr. Thornton, who subsequently became a member from  
this state of the Continental Congress and a signer of the Declaration of  
Independence. No settlements were attempted under this grant and a new  
charter was issued October 21, 1768, including additional territory enough  
to make 40,071 acres in the whole, which was to be divided into ninety  
shares. The grantees were mostly men of Londonderry [NH] and vicinity, and  
the town was not incorporated until November 24, 1781. A large amount of the  
town's territory was lost through overlapping the territory of Woodstock,  
or Peeling as it was originally named, and also other several other changes  
have been made in its original boundaries, viz.: By an act of the legislature  
approved June 16, 1807, the jurisdiction of Thornton was extended over a  
tract of land called Blanchard's Gore, lying easterly of the town, and  
June 14, 1807, Capt. Jotham Cummings Jr., of Plymouth, was appointed agent  
on the part of the state to meet an agent of Thornton and establish the  
easterly line of the town. June 23, 1842, a strip of land containing about  
eighty acres, known as Waterville Gore, was severed from Waterville and  
annexed to Thornton, and finally, in July 1867 a portion was set off to  
Campton. To following petition addressed to the General Court in 1797, by  
Matthew Thornton, relative to a dispute between the towns of Peeling and  
Thornton, fully sets forth the story of the grant, etc. of Thornton, viz.:--

"Humbly shews the Subscriber that in the Year 1763 His Excellency Benning  
Wentworth Esq Governor &c of the then Province now State of New hampshire,  
granted to Daniel Peirce, your Petitioner and Associates, a certain tract of  
Land in the County of Grafton and State aforesaid lying North of the Town of  
Campton, and adjoining thereto, and gave it the name of Thornton, some time  
after the Charter was signed, Your Petitioner examined the outlines of the  
Grant with more attention than he did before he received the Grant, and  
easily perceived it cold never be convenient for one parish, and extremely  
inconvenient for two. Your petitioner therefore took no care to procure  
Settlers, and let the time expire, that by the Conditions in the Grant the  
settlement of said Town sou'd have been compleated--Therefore Said Grant  
reverted to the Grantor, and the Charter conveyed no title to the Grantees.  
His Excellency John Wentworth at the time being Governor. Your petitioner

waited on him shewed him the plan, and by his direction obtained a Second Grant of said Thornton, only varying the lines of said Town. as soon as your petitioners received this second Grant (which was dated Oct'r 21st 1768) proceeded and laid out the Home lots, and about one half the second divisions and procured Settlers as fast as possible, and notwithstanding its being a Fronteer town, and the late War at time raging between Brittain and America, yet as I paid for Building Grist and Saw Mills and made the term of settlement easy, the settlement went on considerable rapidly, and is now become a fine flourishing Town, which was but a short time past a howling Wilderness. The inhabitation have lived quietly and happy until the Year 1793, at which time there arose a controvercy between a Town called Peeling, and the Town of Thornton. The history is as follows The Grant of Peeling bears date the 23 of Sep't 1763, and was Regranted in the Year 1771 December 17th to other Grantees by the name of Fairfield--Some time after the date of the Charter of Peeling, the Grantees send a Committee to run the out lines of their Township, and after running about one & an half miles, held a Council and concluded it not worth the notice of the Grantees, and so returned home called a meeting of the Grantees, the Grantees when met approved of their Committee's report. nothing was done until the year 1790 when some Gentlemen purchased of the Original Grantees, for a very trivial sum their rights as Grantees--some time in the year 1793 Run the out lines of the Town called Peeling ex-party, by which they took in a considerable part of Thornton as it was laid out by the Second Grant, and some of Goffs location they immediately put on one or two Settlers on that part of Thornton which they say fell within the limits of Peeling, but none on any other part of their Grant,--

"Therefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Honors wou'd take his Greivance into your wise consideration and Confirm the Charter of Thornton as laid out by the second Grant and incorporate--or call those pretended proprietors of Peeling to answer for not fulfilling the conditions of their Grant or otherwise relieve your petitioner as in your wise Judgement shall appear just and equitable, and your petitioner as in duty bound will every pray."

"M. Thornton."

The surface of the town is rough and uneven, in some parts mountainous, though there is much good farming land, 13,462 acres being under cultivation, while the soil is deep and fertile, there being some especially good interval land along the rivers. Of the beauties of the scenery the territory boasts, it is perhaps superfluous to say more than that the picturesque valley of the Pemigewasset extends through nearly the center of the township, north and south. The stream has several tributaries here, the principal of which are the Mill brook, from the east, and Bagley brook, from the west. Mad river, having also several tributaries here, passes through the nearly the center of the township, north and south. The stream has several tributaries here, the principal of which are Mill brook, from the east, and Bagley brook, from the west. Mad river, having also several tributaries here, passes through the southeastern part of the town, to unite with the Pemigewasset in Campton. There are good water privileges afforded by these streams, while on Mill brook there is a beautiful cascade, the water falling from a perpendicular rock forty-two feet in height. Peaked hill pond, a small body of water, lies in the southwestern part of the town, and Cone pond, a still smaller body, lies in the southwestern part.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN OF THORNTON NH IN 1885

In 1880 Thornton had a population of 774 souls. In 1885 the town had

ten school-districts and ten common schools. Its ten school-houses were valued at \$3,000.00. There were 184 children attending school, eleven of whom were pursuing the higher grades, taught during the year by two males and twelve female teachers, at an average monthly salary of \$26.50 for males, and \$20.64 for females. The entire amount raised for school purposes during the year, was \$1,156.83, while the expenditures were \$1,048.48, with John L Barbard, superintendent.

#### DESCRIPTION OF VILLAGES

WEST THORNTON, a small post village and station on the P.V.R.R. has a store and about a half a dozen dwellings.

THORNTON (p.o.) is located in the central part of the town

#### BUSINESS AND MANUFACTURES

FRANK FOX'S GRIST-MILL, on road 15, was built about fifteen years ago. It has two runs of stones, and does custom work.

LEWIS J. MARDIN'S BOBBIN-SHOP, on road 1, corner 2, built in 1882, turns out about 500,000 bobbins per year.

DANFORTH FOSS'S SAW AND SHINGLE MILL, on road 36, was built by George Durgin, about 1840, and came into Mr. Foss's hands in 1851. He manufactures about 150,000 feet of lumber per annum.

JAMES N. McCOY'S SAW MILL, on road 19, built in 1882, gives employment to sixteen hands, and turns out about 1,000,000 feet of lumber per year.

#### SETTLEMENT OF THE TOWN OF THORNTON NH

The settlement of the town was begun by Benjamin Hoit, in 1770, and his son Benjamin Jr., was the first child born in the township. Three years later the town had a population of seventy-four souls, its inventory for that year being as follows:--

"April 22 ye 1773

"A true inventory of the poles and estates in Thornton are Eighteene poles three horses one two year old Colt Six oxen fiteene Cows two two year old thirty five acres of land.

"Taken by me--

"John Brown."

In 1783 the population had increased to 280 souls. Two years previous, in 1781, the General Court was petitioned to grant the township incorporation privileges, the following being a copy of said petition:--

"The Petition of the Subscribers Inhabitants of the Town of Thornton in the County of Grafton in said State Humbly Sheweth--That the Inhabitants of said Thornton ...pray that your Honrs would be pleased to take their Cause under consideration and grant the said Town of Thornton full incorporation.. [this is an extract of the complete petition, which may be found in the original document.]

"Thornton 31st May 1781--

"Abel Willey, Ezekiel Elliot, William Varnum, John Brown, Moody Cook,

"John Fletcher, Edmund Elliot, Richard Patee, Alexander Lang,

"Sam C. fuller, James Rankens, William Webster."

In answer to this petition the town was incorporation November 24, 1781, and from this time its population gradually increased, so that in 1800 it had 535 inhabitants.

About the year 1836 a band of counterfeiterers were at work in this part of the country, having stations located in houses at intervals all along from Canada, their mark on each being one red window-sash in front. Two of these stations were located in Thornton. One of these was the house now occupied

by A.H. Kendall. Some time since, while tearing out a chimney he found dies for making Mexican silver dollars, of the date of 1832, and some specimens of three-dollar scrip, though no dies for making the latter were discovered.

#### PROMINENT CITIZENS AND EARLY SETTLERS OF THORNTON NH

WINTHROP BAGLEY, of Taunton, was born in 1762, served in the Revolution, and at the close of the war, came to this town and settled upon the place now occupied by George H. Blasdell, on road 22. He ran a tavern for several years, and the sign used is still in the family.

JACOB LELINGHAM, a Revolutionary soldier, came to this town about 1783, settling upon the place where Samuel Connors now lives, on road 15. He lived here about five years, and then moved to road 8, where he lived until his death. He laid out a road on the river, and helped build the same. He married Hannah Torry, and reared a family of nine children, namely, William Jacob, Henry, Daniel, Walter, Pinkham, Samuel, Catharine, and Hannah. Jacob Jr. married Mary K. Edgerly, and located in Woodstock, on road 6. He afterwards moved to Thornton, on road 11. He reared five children, one son and four daughters.

ELIJAH DURGIN, of Hopkinton NH, came to Thornton in March 1792, and settled where Benjamin Smith now lives, on road 32. At that time this place was at the end of the road.

EBNEZER FOSS, of Concord NH, came to this town about 1797, and settled where Merrill Greeley now lives, on road 31. At that time there was no grist-mill nearer than Canterbury, and all grain to be ground had to be carried to that town. Carter, the seventh of Ebenezer's thirteen children, was born here, and is at present the oldest man born in town. He married Mary Whitney in 1822. She is still living.

MOSES FOSS came to Thornton, from Canterbury NH, among the early settlers, and located where Willard Foss now lives, on road 31. He was the first settler in Waterville, and remained there until 1848, when he moved back to Thornton.

A.H. KENDALL came here about twenty-five years ago, and was in the bobbin business for several years. He is a tanner and currier by trade, and has held nearly all of the town offices.

ISAAC MITCHELL, a native of Hartford, Conn., married a Miss Anable, of that place, and reared twelve children, all of whom came to Campton, and settled in the eastern part of the town. His son Elijah, who served in the war of 1812, married Eliza, an adopted daughter of Timothy and Susanna Webster, and reared ten children, six of whom are living. Elijah Jr. lives with his mother, who is now eighty-one years of age, and his brother, Harlan P., at Campton village.

(end)