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A History of Sanbornton NH Volume I
By Moses T Runnels

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CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TOWN CENTENNIAL, 1876.

“Oh, what shall be,
In this dominion of the free,
When we and ours have rendered up our trust,
And men unborn shall tread above our dust ?

“Oh, what shall be ? He, — He alone
The dread response can make,
Who sitteth on the only throne
That time shall never shake ;
Before whose all-beholding eyes
Ages sweep on, and empires sink and rise.

“Then let the song, to Him begun,
To Him in reverence end ;*
Look down in love, Eternal One,
And Thy good cause defend ;
Here, late and long, put forth Thy hand,
To guard and guide the Pilgrims' land.”

CHARLES SPRAGUE (Boston Centennial Ode, 1830).

THE significant fact that the date of signing the “Association Test,” on the part of the Sanbornton fathers of 1776, was “July 3” (as seen on p. 155), had led to a tacit agreement all over the present town that movements should be made for a Sanbornton celebration of that day in connection with the centennial Independence Day of 1876.

Accordingly, at the March meeting of that year, the town “voted to have a centennial celebration on or near the ensuing Fourth of July,”

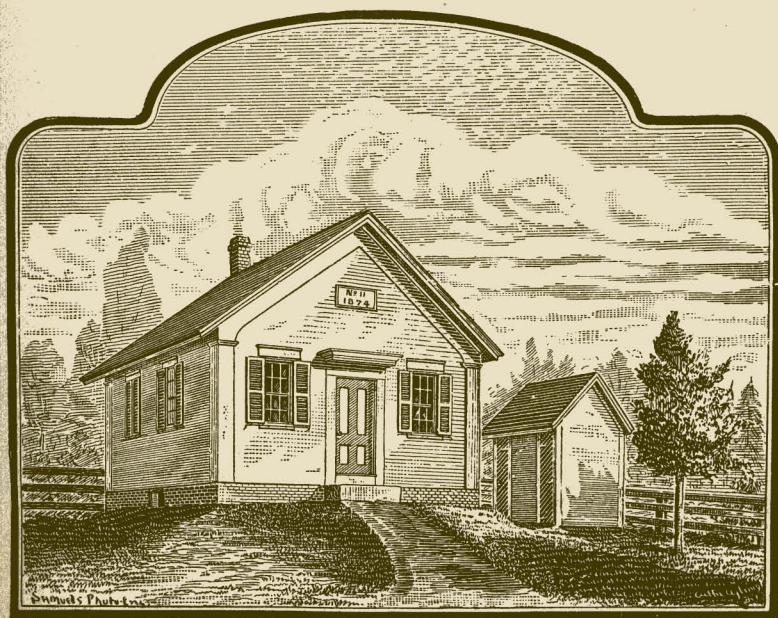
and that a committee of arrangements be chosen, “consisting of the superintending school committee, Rev. F. W. A. Rankin, Jr., and four others, who shall represent the territory of the four religious societies respectively.” — viz., Messrs. Joseph N. Sanborn, Thomas Webster, Esq., Joshua Lane, and Orville E. Brown ; to which committee were afterwards added “the ministers of each of the other three societies.”

Preliminary
arrangements.

* An allusion may be suggested in these two lines to the poetical heading and opening paragraph of Chap. I.



PUBLIC BUILDINGS AT SANBORNTON SQUARE.



SCHOOL-HOUSE, DISTRICT No. 11. (See p. 265.)

This committee, especially through the timely and indefatigable efforts of their chairman, Rev. Mr. Rankin, succeeded in awakening a genuine interest in all the school districts of the town, contributions being cheerfully raised in the separate districts to meet the general expenses, and teachers and pupils enlisting in the enterprise with characteristic zeal. A mammoth tent was engaged from Boston, which it was finally decided to pitch upon the green between and in front of the old academy school building and the Congregational meeting-house.

The evening of July 3 was one of the most delightful of the season, when an informal gathering of citizens and visitors who then happened to be in the vicinity of the Square was held at the tent. This, though unpremeditated, proved a happy, and the only exclusive anniversary celebration of the signing of the "Test." Brief congratulatory addresses were delivered, and as many from the audience present as were known to be direct descendants of some of the eighty-three signers were requested to

Memorial observance on the evening of July 3.

parade in line upon the stage. Among these were Messrs. Jay M. Jewett of Boston; Abram L. Morrison of Laconia; Joseph W. Sanborn of Tilton; Jona. M. Taylor of Sanbornton; and about a dozen others, some of whom could claim that they found not merely *one*, but *two* of their grandfathers or great-grandfathers among the original eighty-three!

On the following day, a large crowd began early to assemble in the vicinity of the tent from all parts of Sanbornton, and many from adjoining towns. The committee of arrangements had made choice of Jona. M. Taylor, Esq., to act as chief marshal, and also as presiding officer for the day. He was efficiently aided by Messrs. Joseph P. Sanborn and Cyrus Swain as assistant marshals, representing the east and west sections of the town respectively. Mr. Reuben Dudley had early appeared with his big bass drum, as in old militia times, to the beats of which, accompanied by the music of a fife, quite a procession was extemporized, and marched around the triangle,* while the patient multitude at the tent were waiting for the delegation from the north-west part of the town. This was attended by the Hill and Sanbornton Cornet Band, and made a fine display, with the school children of one of the districts in a large ox-team gayly decorated! When it arrived, the grand procession was formed to march again around the triangle, the school children being in advance with appropriate banners from the several districts. A

Processions to the tent on the Fourth.

* A circuit of half a mile, made by the main street at the Square, the west road, and a section of the new or Clark's Corner road.

slight embarrassment was met when this procession filed into the tent, which, with all its capacity, was found insufficient to hold the numbers already assembled and still thronging in. But quiet was in due time secured; the marshal called forward Dea. A. B. Sanborn and Mr. Jona. S. Taylor to serve as vice-presidents; and the Throne of Grace was addressed by Rev. Daniel M. Dearborn of New Hampton.

Other preliminaries, besides the enlivening strains of the band, consisted of patriotic odes and songs, sung (as also after the address) by the united choirs and school children, under the leadership of the late Jonathan B. Kelley, and the reading of the Declaration of Independence by the late Edward P. Boutwell, M. D.

The historical address was delivered by the Rev. Frederic T. Perkins of Tilton, the designated orator of the day, and held the undivided attention of the audience to the last.

At the intermission, strangers and invited guests were served with refreshments from liberally supplied tables in the town and academy halls; while the townspeople repaired with friends to their neighboring homes, or "picnicked" by families in all the available nooks and corners conveniently near the place of meeting. The morning had been quite warm, and a heavy shower, accompanied by violent gusts of wind, a little before the audience was to reassemble at the tent for the afternoon, had caused the collapse of a portion of the canvas. As this could not be seasonably righted, a change in the programme became necessary, and the old town hall was speedily filled to overflowing for the rest of the day's entertainment.

Here, after appropriate introductory remarks from the presiding officer, several sentiments were offered by M. T. Runnels, in response to which addresses were delivered by the Hon. Arthur B. Calef of Middletown, Ct.; Hon. John W. Simons of Franklin; Rev. Samuel F. Lougee of Danbury; and Rev. Daniel M. Dearborn. A poem, prepared for the occasion, was also read by Mr. Edwin W. Lane of Hill. Rev. Mr. Rankin felicitously alluded to his numerous charge as school superintendent, — the orators, it may be, of similar anniversaries in years to come, — and introduced the pleasing recitations of Miss Nellie R. Batchelder, Master Oscar S. Wadleigh, and others of the school children present.

As a whole, the celebration was pronounced a decided success. It was estimated that fully fifteen hundred people were assembled in and around the tent during the forenoon. No serious accident occurred, and there seemed to be a unanimous opinion that the committee of arrangements, marshals, officers, musicians, and speakers had all acquitted themselves creditably and honorably, to themselves, to the town of Sanbornton, and to those two

The forenoon
exercises.

A collapse.

Afternoon at
the town hall.

General satis-
faction.

conspicuous days, both in its own and the nation's history, which had rendered a Sanbornton celebration in 1876 thus doubly appropriate!

No abstracts of the able and eloquent addresses of the afternoon were prepared at the time, and no copies at this day could probably be procured. The historical address of Rev. Mr. Perkins, and the poem of Mr. Lane, as promised in the "Prospectus" of this work, are here given in full, very nearly as delivered.