

## Barkhamsted 170 Years Ago

“Barkhamsted was granted to Capt. Thomas Moore and Lieut. Jonathan Ellsworth and other persons of Windsor, in 1732. The first person who made a permanent settlement in the town was Pelatiah Allyn from Windsor. He removed here about the year 1746 and remained the only inhabitant of the town for 10 or 12 years. In the summer he employed his time in clearing and cultivating his lands, and in the winter in hunting. His plantation was toward the south part of the town, near the dividing line between this town and New Hartford. As there were frequent alarms on account of the Indians, he used, when danger was apprehended, to repair to a fortified post in the northern part of New Hartford. He took special care to guard himself against a surprise at his own house. The next man who made a settlement in the town was Israel Jones from Enfield, about the year 1759. Besides these,” .....[And here are listed several names of settlers and the towns from whence they came.]

“The progress of the settlement was slow. In 1771 there were but 20 families in the limits of the town, and the inhabitants were so few that they were not called upon to do military duty until 1774. The town was incorporated in 1779. The Rev. Ozias Eels, the first minister of the town, was ordained January 1787. He died in 1813.”

“Barkhamsted is bounded north by Hartland, west by Winchester, east by Canton and Granby and south by New Hartford. [It is interesting to note that neither the Colebrook nor Barkhamsted text mention the fact that the two towns share a common boundary for a short distance along Colebrook’s southeast corner and Barkhamsted’s northwest corner.] It is 6 1/2 miles in length from east to west and 5 miles in breadth. The central part is situated 23 miles northwest from Hartford. The township is rough, stony and mountainous and is intersected by two high granite ridges, and upon their summits there is much broken land, some of which is inaccessible. In some places these ridges exhibit very lofty and sublime features. Iron ore has been discovered in small quantities in different parts of the town, likewise some strata of limestone. [This last statement is not true.] The soil is hard and dry and not generally good for tillage, except along the streams. The mountains and hills were formerly covered with excellent timber, consisting of oak, chestnut, sugar maple, beech, pine and hemlock; a considerable portion of which has been destroyed by wind and fire, and by the axe, under a system of improvidence at a time when timber was considered of no value.”

“The [wood engraving that accompanies this town description] is a representation of the principal part of the village of Hitchcocksville, in Barkhamsted; it is situated on the west branch of the Farmington River, near the corner of four towns, Hartland, Colebrook, Winchester and Barkhamsted. The village contains upwards of 20 dwelling houses, 1 chair factory, 2 mercantile stores, and an Episcopal church, which was founded July 4<sup>th</sup> 1829, and called the Union Church. Part of the chair factory is seen on the left, and the church on the right of the engraving. The village was commenced about fifteen years since; it is 20 miles from Litchfield and 26 from Hartford. There are superior water privileges for extensive manufactories in the immediate vicinity.” [The artist stood on the Robertsville – Riverton Road as it rounds the bend near where the present church is located on the right and looks straight ahead through the center of the village and across the bridge in front of the Riverton Inn. He does not identify the Pinney Tavern, which is

shown in the right foreground behind the small building at the side of the road. I assume the building with 10 windows located directly across the bridge is the Riverton Inn.]

“A little more than a mile south of this place a few of the last remnants of the Narragansett Indians have a location; they came here about the year 1779 and purchased about 200 or more acres of land. Their houses, or rather cabins, are along side of the road. There are about 20 souls that make their constant residence here, though at times they number as many as 30 persons.”

Walt Landgraf and Doug Roberts, who know the true history of Barkhamsted better than anyone, have disproved some of the allegations here and have uncovered many more interesting facts concerning the early years of Barkhamsted. I strongly urge anyone interested in this town who has not visited the Squires Tavern on the East River Road to do so. Walt and others on the staff are there on Wednesdays, or you can call Walt at 379-6118 or Doug at 379-6175. Barkhamsted is fortunate indeed to have such a valuable resource in these two gentlemen.

#### Historic Bytes

Bob Grigg



*West view of Hitchcocksville, Barkhamsted.*