

HISTORIC WESTMINSTER.

Events of Other Days as Related
by a Son and Citizen.

Previous to 1770, or about that time, there came from Massachusetts four families who settled on the upper street: Capt. Azariah Wright and his brother Medad, William Holton and John Norton, all connected by blood or marriage relations. Capt. Wright came from Warwick, Mass., and probably all the others came from the same place. William Holton built the residence where Nelson Johnson now resides. Next south on the other corner of the highway was the residence of Azariah Wright, now the residence of Ira Holton. Next south of Azariah's was that of his brother Medad, where is now the residence of his grandson, D. C. Wright, and it is something out of the usual course of events, that the property should have remained so many years in the same family, from the time of the first sturdy and respected old settler. It has always been held by worthy men, and we hope it may remain in the same family for many generations more. Next south of Medad Wright's residence was that of John Norton, the proprietor of the "Tory tavern." It is but just to the memory of Norton to say that he was a kind neighbor, upright and honest; his great fault, being a tory, or adhering to his allegiance to the king and established laws, and he must have had uncommon courage to have battled thus for his honest convictions though mistaken. The residences of Norton and Captain Wright were large and imposing. That of Norton, "the Tory tavern," has been removed in comparatively recent years, and is well remembered by many of the present generation. That of Captain Wright was removed about 1848, when the present structure was built by the late Timothy Hall. Captain Wright, born for a leader of men, of a sturdy and muscular build, with a noble and majestic head and bearing, with his peculiar and energetic mind was well fitted to help shape the destinies of town and state. He soon became famous for his outspoken patriotism, and his active participation in the exciting events preceding and subsequent to the Westminster massacre. At the time of the massacre of French there were several seriously wounded and one mortally: Young Houghton of Dummerston, who survived nine days and was tenderly cared for and nursed in the home of Eleazer Harlow, also the home for many years of Zacheus Cole, where he died. The house stood on the brow of the hill, a few rods north of the residence of B. F. Richmond. Young Houghton's name is inscribed on the French monument. The remainder of wounded were all carried to the home of Captain Wright, where they received from him and his family the tenderest and kindest care. His daughter Anne, then a young girl of tender years, has often described to the writer's father the exciting incidents of that time which were indelibly impressed on her young mind; of her father's patriotic fervor, his sleepless nights, forming and recruiting his military company, and that of joining his company with that of Ethan Allen, who arrived a few days later with his one hundred Green

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agreed to drive him out from amongst them as polluted.

Accordingly he was enjoined on the next Sunday to attend his excommunication at the church. He did attend, but not entirely satisfied with the justice of the sentence, and too much of a soldier to be scandalized in so public a manner for any action which he conceived to be his duty, he resolved to have recourse to stratagem. He therefore went to the appointment with his gun loaded with a brace of balls, his sword, and cartridge box at his side, and his knapsack on his back with six days provisions in it. Service was about half over when he entered the sanctuary in this martial array. He marched leisurely into a corner and took his position. As soon as the benediction was ended, the holy parson (Rev. Joseph Bullen) began the excommunication, but scarcely had he pronounced the words "Offending brother," when the honest old veteran cocked and leveled his weapon of destruction, at the same time crying out with a loud voice "Proceed if you dare; proceed and you are a dead man." At this unexpected attack the astonished clergyman shrunk behind his desk, and his opponent with great deliberation recovered his arms. Some moments elapsed before the parson had courage to peep from behind his ecclesiastical battery. On finding the old hero had come to a rest, he tremblingly reached the order to his elder deacon desiring him to read it. The deacon; (Deacon John Sessions) with stammering accents and eyes staring wild with affright, began as he was commanded; but no sooner had he done so, than the devoted victim again leveled his piece, and more vehemently than before, exclaimed, "Desist and march, I will not live with shame. Desist and march I say, or you are all dead men." Little need had he to repeat his threats. The man of God leaped from the desk and escaped. The deacons, elders, and congregation followed in equal trepidation. The greatest confusion prevailed. The women with shrieks and cries sought their homes, and the victor was left undisturbed master of the field, and the church, too, the doors of which he calmly locked, put the keys in his pocket, and sent them with his respects, to the pastor. He then marched home with all the honors of war, lived 14 years afterwards, and died a brother in full communion.

We will now relate an anecdote of his pugilistic qualities and sternness of character. A party of young gentlemen "high bloods," from Boston were journeying on a pleasure trip, and passing through Westminster, stopped for refreshments and a "good time" at the Whig tavern kept by landlord Pratt, now the fine old residence of David Kellogg. They soon learned that the noted old Captain Wright resided in town, and expressed a great desire to see him. While they were talking the matter over, the landlord called their attention to a venerable and imposing old gentleman then passing in the street, and informed them that it was the man they so much desired to see, and they then interceded with Pratt to call him in, so that they might interview with him. Accordingly the landlord called to him and requested him to come in, and the old gentleman obligingly complied. After a general introduction, and a little friendly chat a

cordially invited the old man to enter the parlor with them and join in a little game of "Hunch" which his advent had interrupted; to which he cordially assented. In the center of the parlor was a large table spread with several kinds of liquors and glasses, and they explained to the old man that the game consisted in the company standing round the table with their hats on, and each one to hunch his next neighbor in the side with his elbow, so pass the hunch round the table, from man to man, and the forfeit to be on the one who first showed sensitiveness from his neighbor's hunch. The old captain soon discovered the pith of the game, for he was receiving terrible digs in his sides, but which he took, with composure and dignity. Soon he received some extra hard digs, at the same time, from his young companions on each side of him, which drew from the pugilistic and doughty old Captain a quick and powerful blow with his fist on the head of one of his young assailants, and he fell heavily to the floor. The force of the blow and the fall, carried the young man's silk hat which he had on when struck, spinning across the room, and shattered a large mirror. This episode of course ended the game of hunch and the old man gravely and serenely retired, while the young men were perfectly satisfied without testing his peculiarities further; and soon left after paying all their bills including the broken glass.

A few days afterwards the landlord was entertaining a few neighbors and guests, with a recital of the incident, and he happened to espy the captain again passing in the street, and he proposed to his company in the bar-room, to have a little fun with the old man; so he went to the door and called for him to come in. He gravely complied and as he came in inquired what the landlord wanted of him. Pratt replied, "You know Captain Wright you broke a looking glass for me the other day, and I want you to pay me five dollars for it." Before the words were fairly uttered the Captain's fist shot out and sent Pratt flying across the room into the fireplace. Pratt soon rallied from the fireplace on to the hearth and on his haunches, and with up-lifted hands deprecatingly and with quivering breath said; "E-h-h-hold on Captain Wright, you and I were always good friends." "Then," with a deep stern voice replied the old captain, "then treat me like a friend."

George T. Lovell has been sick.

Mr. and Mrs. Silas Edwards have been visiting their sister, Mrs. George Beals.

Elbert H. Davidson had the misfortune one day last week of putting his shoulder out of joint.

George H. Davidson and Miss Louise Abbot were married at Saxton's River Tuesday night. We extend our congratulations.

Mr. and Mrs. Ruel E. Clark entertained about 30 of their friends from this place and Bellows Falls, Tuesday evening in honor of their guest, Miss Mary Bryant of Claremont, N. H. Music and games continued until the small hours Wednesday morning. Miss Bryant returned home Wednesday.

Our short article in a recent issue of the TIMES has called forth some reminiscences from an old inhabitant which in this form may prevent many interesting incidents and localities from passing into oblivion or being only shadowily retained by legend or tradition. Says this reminiscencer: "We might commence with the old Court House, and continue from time to time as leisure and opportunity permit. Its exact location is now positively known, and its future identification has been wisely provided for by the foresight of H. C. Lane, who had the supervision of the erection of the French monument by the state of Vermont in the year 1873, as he employed a competent surveyor and had inscribed on a rear panel of the monument: "The Court House was located north $81\frac{1}{2}$ degrees east 17 rods." It was located a very few rods west of the residence of Eli Geer, and a slight depression of the ground marks the location of the chimney, the foundations of which have been mostly removed. It stood on the easterly side of the broad street which gave an ample and commodious parade ground on its southerly and westerly sides for the exercise and evolutions of the militia; for where is now the deep cut of the traveled highway was then a broad and level space extending northerly to the rounded and abrupt bluff. The charter of the town had made the ample provision for a broad street 10 rods in width, extending northerly from "Clapp's hill" on the southerly brow of the broad plateau, about two miles to the bend in the highway near the railroad station and in a straight line. The southerly portion of the street has always been called the "Lower street" although of higher altitude, yet lower down the river, and the northerly portion the "Upper street" because up the river. The travel at the time the Court House was standing, and for many years after, at this point, was at the extreme western limits of the broad street, very close to the old cemetery, and over the ground now occupied by the piazza of the comparatively recently erected residence of B. F. Richmond, thence diagonally down the hill to obtain an easier grade, and emerging at the foot of the hill, on the easterly side of the street. About the year 1810, by the concurrent and unanimous action of the abutters, the fences on each side of the street were moved inward one rod, and again later, in the year 1828, by the advice and inspiration of Hon. William C. Bradley, the abutters by concert of action, on a given specified day, removed the fences another rod inward on each side of the street, leaving the street six rods in width as at the present time. About 1828 the town decided to straighten, cut down and grade the hill, and to do this adopted the novel plan of conveying water in a plank and board sluice from the Potash brook, three-fourths of a mile distant; and this sluice in many places had to rest on wooden horses to

obviate the inequalities of the surface of the ground. The grading or cutting down the hill was very quickly accomplished in one afternoon, after letting on the water, but there is not much doubt that the expense was much greater than by the usual methods of cart and scraper. About 150 rods northerly of the Court House on the west side of the street stood the palatial resi-

dence of Gen. Stephen H. Linsley and where is now the residence of H. W. Leach. It was on this spot that Hon. William C. Bradley gamboled in his early childhood, and it was on this spot and in the Bradley residence that Ethan Allen, early one morning, married his second wife, Mrs. Buchanan, and when and where he granted her request for "time to put on her Joseph." Curious irony of time; this Frances Buchanan was the step-daughter of the detested and noted tory, Crean Brush, thus married to the brave, rough and world renowned Ethan Allen. John Norton, the proprietor of the "Tory tavern," was a guest at this wedding breakfast and during their conversation humorously remarked to Allen, "General, I understand that you do not believe there is a God, or Heaven, or Hell." Allen mused a moment, and then turning a stern eye on Norton, replied, "No, John; I believe there is a Hell—for tories." Just north, on the lot adjoining, and now the Wetherell premises, was the store of Eleazer May, who afterwards was so long and successfully associated in the mercantile business with Mark Richards in the "Brick store" and in an upper room of which building was the Vermont bank of Westminster. Mark Richards was a man of high repute, a member of congress for several terms and also a lieutenant governor of the state. After the removal of the county seat to Newfane the Court House was sold at auction in 1806 to Maj. Isaiah Eaton, a skilled and noted silversmith, who employed several workmen in the prosecution of his lucrative business. Zacheus Cole, who died a few years ago very aged, was one of his most skilled and trusted workmen. Many parts of the old structure entered into the erection and repairs of Eaton's residence and shop. The Eaton homestead is now owned and occupied by Mrs. Judge Stoddard and in her possession may yet be seen the old entrance door to the Court House and also the stairs perforated by bullets at the time of the massacre of young French. We think some action should be taken to procure these interesting and precious relics from the owner, and have them placed in the State House at Montpelier, or some other safe place for safety and inspection of the present and future generations. Nor are these the only interesting relics preserved and connected with the memory of those patriotic days and the old Court House. Fred I. Lane of this town has the identical drum used by Capt. Wright's company, assembled immediately after the massacre to avenge the people's wrongs and the death of the martyred French. The old drum after lying many years in an old garret is in a fine state of preservation, and will to-day respond as readily and sonorously to the tap of the drum stick, as it did 120 years ago, to quicken the pulses and patriotic ardor of our great-great-grandfathers. The same gentleman has also the tip end and ball of the flagstaff that stood in front of the old Court House. The massacre occurred 120 years ago the coming 13th of March. If acceptable, these reminiscences will be continued in future communications.

Events of Other Days as Related
by a Son and Citizen.

[Continued.]

As has been stated, Judge Hall became the owner and occupant of the Captain Wright mansion. During the presidency of Jefferson political party lines became sharply drawn and in Westminster about equally divided, between Democrats and Federalists (both new names then) and so evenly divided, that there was great uncertainty one year which would win in the election of candidates to the legislature. Both were hopeful and so prepared for a jollification and banquet. Judge Hall was the Federalist candidate and was victorious and his friends all repaired to his spacious residence in the evening following for the banquet and to celebrate his victory. The Democrats, though beaten at the polls, determined not to be out done in banqueting and so repaired (as has been previously arranged in case of victory) to the Democrat Landlord Pratt's for a banquet, without the glorification and then was concocted a scheme to have some fun and mortify Judge Hall and his friends. The judge had previously secured a large quantity of fine juicy meats for the occasion. In the early hours of a cold, dark and cloudy September evening his guests begun to arrive in large numbers and soon his yards were filled with vehicles and teams and his house crammed with guests. In the meantime the delicious meats were roasting on spits, before a huge roaring fire in the large kitchen fireplace and all was hilarity and jubilation. Meantime the various actors in the intended joke had been carefully chosen by the Democrats at the tavern.

Justus Lane, then young, but always a shrewd and leading factor in the execution of such schemes, was an ardent Democrat but a trusted servitor of the judge and had an important part in the execution of the plot. Young Atherton Chaffee who resided where Edgar Riley now resides, had another important part. When the meats were done and nearly ready for the tables, young Lane went to a back pantry window facing the yard and waved a handkerchief as a signal to commence operations. At the signal two confederates in the deserted yard over-turned a chaise attached to a horse, which tripped and threw the horse to the ground and they then immediately raised the cry, "a horse down, a horse down." In a twinkling, the crowd were surging from the house and soon left it vacant. Then young Chaffee, with a large grain sack under his large caped white overcoat, slipped unobserved into the kitchen and it was the work of but a moment for him and his confederate, young Lane, to transfer the well cooked and juicy meats from the spits to the wide mouthed sack and carry into the yard and throw it across the back of a fleet horse, while yet the crowd were eagerly observing and attending to the struggles of the tangled and prostrate horse, young Lane in his youthful inexperience and excitement, his heart going pit-a-pat with the expectation every moment of exposure, until he heard the rapidly receding clatter of the horse's

feet in its wild gallop down the street with its bold young rider and the stolen meat. In a few minutes the prostrate horse was released and the crowd re-entered the house and discovered the loss of the meat. The crowd seemed like a swarm of angry bees and deep and loud were the curses and imprecations bestowed on the unknown perpetrators of the trick, while some said it might have been done by several large dogs that were present with their masters. The meat arrived very quickly at Pratt's but was not eaten by the jubilant plotters, for a few afternoons afterwards "Aunt Polly Wales" who lived in a hired tenement belonging to the judge and who with her husband were quite poor, called on Mrs. Hall in a very cheerful mood and was enthusiastic in extolling the benevolence of Landlord Pratt, though he was a Democrat, for he had given her and some others a nice supply of roasted meats, left over and not used at his banquet. Mrs. Hall "smelt the rat" and replied, that "she guessed Aunt Polly and her husband were eating the judge's meat." This conversation between the old ladies was listened to by young Lane from behind a partly closed door.

In speaking of young Houghton who was mortally wounded when French was killed, we intended to say that Mrs Frank Richmond who lives on such historic ground, is the granddaughter of the Eleazer Harlow, in whose home was so tenderly soothed and cared for the dying Daniel Houghton.

One of the most brilliant intellects that has ever graced our halls of congress or added fame to our state was that of William C. Bradley who died March 4, 1867, aged 85 years and Westminster was ever proud to claim him as her gifted son. His fine old mansion is now occupied by H. S. Hannum, but when it was sold several years since, his historic old law office with the ground it stands on was reserved and is still in the possession of his granddaughter, Mrs. Henry A. Willard of Washington, D. C., and is carefully cared for and preserved. This old law office is in close proximity and adjoins the grounds and residence of his grandson, Daniel Kellogg, before alluded to as Pratt's tavern. In the front lawn of the Bradley mansion there was until recently, if not now, a little mound and a small marble slab resting thereon, inscribed, "Here lies our faithful Penny." This affectionate little dog was a great favorite of Mr. Bradley and occasionally accompanied him in his attendance at county court. On one of these occasions when Mr. Bradley had made one of his forcible and eloquent pleas, he took his seat and as usual little Penny immediately jumped into his master's lap. His opponent, a young lawyer desirous of displaying his forensic abilities, commenced his reply to Mr. Bradley in a loud voice and with wild gesticulations. Then little Penny from his seat in his master's lap, commenced a furious barking. The old orator patted the little dog on the head and said, "Hist! hist Penny, only one puppy at a time." Suppressed laughter from the bar filled the court room and even a broad and genial smile illumined the countenance of the sedate and dignified court. The young lawyer sank back into his seat crest-fallen and dumfounded, utterly unable to proceed.