

PRELIMINARY REPORT
of the
ROYALSTON VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT
and
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

One of the many interesting things about Royalston is that its genesis corresponds very closely in time to the birth of our country itself.

Four grants of land, together comprising 2300 acres, were given in reward for services rendered. The first, in 1737, was to Benoni Moore, Joseph Petty and Robert Cooper, for burying bones of soldiers killed in Northfield by the Indians. The others were to Thomas Hapgood in 1742, for fighting eastern Indians; to Pierpont, whose work remains unknown; to Joseph Priest, for lodging all who passed his way to and from the French wars.

In 1752 the General Court ordered a public sale of land "north of Pequoig", now Athol, the last of unallotted Worcester County territory. The conditions of this sale were that each must clear six acres, build a house, and unite with others in establishing a gospel ministry among them. Those who for 1,348 pounds purchased the 28,357 acres, were Samuel Watts; Thomas Hubbard, then Speaker of the House; Isaac Freeman; Joseph Richards; Isaac Royal; Caleb Dana; James Otis, the Revolutionary patriot; Joseph Wilder, Jr.; and John Chandler Jr, Judge of Probate in Worcester County.

These Proprietors

held meetings from 1753 to 1787 at "The Bunch of Grapes Tavern" in Boston, and to the first list were added other names: Thomas Hancock, and after his death in 1764, his nephew John Hancock, first Governor of Massachusetts and the first to sign The Declaration of Independence: Samuel A. Otis; Benjamin Kent; John Ewing II; William Haskins; Willis Hall; Cotton Tufts; James Bowdoin, second Governor of Massachusetts, and Samuel Danforth.

At their first meeting, it was motioned that this land be called Royalshire in honor of Sir Isaac Royal "a gentleman of great spirit for public enterprise, devoted in admiration for his king, and generous and munificent for his time." He gave 25 Pounds toward a meeting house, - one eighth of the cost, and a handsome folio Bible. He also gave 200 acres for school purposes and 2,000 acres, a large part of which was in the town of Royalston, to found a professorship of law in Harvard University. This was known as the Royall Professorship, and was followed by the Harvard Law School. But in 1776 he sailed for England, alas, never to return, but to their credit the fathers of Royalston never changed the name of the town incorporated in 1765 because of this act of their benefactor.

The French War began in 1756, when 35,000 men from Massachusetts were under arms, and for nearly seven years, it held up all peaceful enterprise. But in 1765, three

three years after the capture of Quebec and the close of hostilities on this Continent, the settlers started to come, and the ten acres which includes the Common was consecrated for the meeting house, the training field, and the burial ground.

For the next dozen years, principally from the town of Sutton, but also from Rehobath, Douglas, Upton, Rutland, Howard, Shrewsbury, Brookfield, Grafton, Wrentham, Reading, Sudbury, Abington, Attleboro, Acton and Stow the settlers came. Their names were Walker, Town, Hill, Cutting, Allen, Nichols, Barton, Wheeler, Grant, Sibley, Jones, Richardson, Bullock, Bliss, Fry, Woodbury, Estey, Hemmenway, Waite, Hall, Hedge, Swift, Hubbard, Stimson, Goddard, Pierce, Batcheller, Bond, Morey, Dike, Lee, Gale, Lyon, Peck, Clement, Metcalf, Ware, Stockwell, Chamberlin, Rich, Streeter, Moore, Jacobs, Bruce, Babcock, Ellyot, Livermore, Carr, Rumbell, Perry, Carr, Marsh, Chase, Shephardson, White, Dexter, Gregory, Green, Hutchinson. To this list will be added other names as they are known.

To the first Provincial Congress held at Concord Royalston sent Henry Bond. Nahum Green represented Royalston in the second. But he returned home and died of smallpox, and was buried all alone in a corner of his field.

When the conflict opened there were two military companies in town, Captain Peter Woodbury's

"Royalston's Company", the Ninth Company in Colonel Sparhawk's Seventh Worcester County Regiment, and Captain Jonas Allen's Company of Minutemen. Captain Allen's Minutemen, twenty four in number, responded to the Lexington alarm in April, 1775. Lieutenant Jonathan Sibley's detachment to the Bennington alarm in August, 1777. Ninety four men served on Royalston's quota during some part of the Revolution, and twenty five more Revolutionary soldiers were post-bellum residents of the town. Those who died in the service of the young republic were Bezaleal Barton, Silas Cutting, Jonathan Hutchinson and Isaac Nichols, Jr. perhaps fifteen years old at the time of his death.

To return to the Common: it was laid out by the Proprietors in 1762 "for to build a meeting house, training field and burying ground". For over two hundred years it has served its original purpose as a center for the social, civic, and religious activities of the Town'.*

In 1771 the Square became a rectangle. In 1802 it was extended north by a gift of Captain William Raymond, he who built the house which defines that end of the Common. Thus was covered the cellar hole of Ebenezer Elliot, and the Town pump. In 1835 the school house was built at the south end, facing north. In front of it, on the site of Parson Lee's old garden, the last piece of land was added, and this is how it is today.

Around this Common now stand twenty one buildings. Starting at the south end, and listing them counter clockwise, they are:

* Robert W. Adams, "The Story of a Meeting House".

Specific Buildings

1. The Old School House, built in 1835, Greek Revival style. Now the Historical Society building and Post Office.
2. Harold Newton's House, built in 1853 by William Parke from a hat factory owned by William Jerrel and moved to this site in 1780. Federal style.
3. The Lightning Rods, built in 1839, probably by J. E. P. Austin, Modified Greek Revival style with 8 square pillars.
4. The Columns, built in 1838 by Moses Nichols. Very pure Greek Revival style with four columns.
5. The Bastille, built in 1830 by the Reverend Ebenezer Perkins, Federal style. Chippendale balustrade added in 1927.
6. The Jonathan Sibley House with Old Store attached. The house, Federal style, was built in 1813 by Jonathan Sibley, Jr. The store was built in 1872 by Obadiah Walker. Property of Royalston Academy, partially restored through its adaptive preservation program.
7. White Heather, built about 1890 by J. Howard Lee, Federal style. Lovely fan over door.
8. Alfred Waters' House. Original built in 1820. This house burned and was rebuilt.
9. The Whitney House, built about 1836 by George F. Miller, Greek Revival style. Floor plan as if two houses at right angles.
10. The Goddard House, built in 1802 by Captain William Raymond. Federal style. Beautiful moulding and stencilling.
11. The Margaret Nash House, built about 1874, probably by Joseph Raymond. Federal style, with bay windows.
12. The Raymond House, built in 1825 by Solomon Fenney, Federal style. Especially good floors.
13. The Barnet Bullock House, built about 1825 by Barnet Bullock, Federal style.
14. The Phinehas Newton Library, built in 1911 by Boutwell and Damon of Fitchburg. The architect was H. M. Francis and Sons of Fitchburg. Modified Greek Revival style in brick.
15. The Rufus Bullock Mansion, built in 1807 by Lemuel Fales, Federal style. Other house attached to rear probably built in 1764. Birth-place

of Alexander Hamilton Bullock, Governor of Massachusetts 1868-88. Lovely upstairs ballroom with curved cerulean blue ceiling. Beehive chimney, beautiful moulding. Moses Eaton stencilling.

16. First Congregational Church, built in 1851 by Chauncey Chase, Greek Revival style. Beautiful proportions.
17. Town Hall built in 1867 by Chauncey Chase, Mansard style. Quote from "The Worcester Daily Spy", December 30, 1867: "The building has a cupola surmounted by an eagle and as a whole it is one of the most elegant public edifices in the country".
18. The Bacheller-Chase House, built in 1849 by Chauncey Chase, Federal style. Original house probably built in 1771.
19. The Pierce-Stow House, built about 1850 by William O. Brown, Federal style. Beautiful curving bannisters.
20. The Adams-Burr House, built about 1855 by Elijah Nichols, Federal style with a little Victorian bay window, 2nd floor.
21. The Parsonage, built shortly after 1874 when old building was removed. Late Greek Revival.

ROYALSTON COMMON is of exceptional beauty and it is unique: an untouched and unspoiled example of nineteenth century America -- so far. This is the reason we want very much indeed to have it designated an Historic District, and by so doing, save another bit of our country's vanishing heritage.

Compiled for The Royalston Village Improvement and Historical Society by Katherine Bullock Cole, December, 1971, from L. B. Caswell's "History of Royalston", 1917, H. C. Bartlett's "Reflections on Royalston, 1927, and "The Story of a Meeting House", a pamphlet by Robert W. Adams, 1952.