

A Brief Early History of Springfield, New Hampshire

After the French and Indian War ended with the Treaty of Paris 1763, King George III granted a charter on January 7, 1769 to John Fisher, Esq and fifty-nine others for a settlement that they named Protectworth in what was then Grafton County.

The land was not claimed until 1772, and not by the original investors. At that time Israel Clifford, Ebenezer Lovering, and Timothy Quimby laid claim to land for settlement. One of the reasons Protectworth was so slow to settle was that most of the best land was owned by Governor Wentworth. As the American Revolution became a reality, Royalist Governor Wentworth left New Hampshire for England.

Settlement did not become popular until after the American Revolution, 1783, when veterans began moving into the northern frontier looking for land. In 1794, there were 210 citizens and the name of the town was changed from Protectworth to Springfield and was incorporated by the new state of New Hampshire.

Springfield is bounded on the north by Grafton, east by Wilmot and New London, south by Sunapee, west by Croydon, Grantham, and Enfield on the northwest. Springfield has been part of three counties, first Grafton County, then Cheshire County and eventually Sullivan County where it remains in 2006. Springfield is a hill town with many lakes and ponds. The lake closest to the center of town is Lake Kolelemook once known as Station Pond. Branches of the Sugar and Blackwater Rivers have sources in Springfield. The former empties into the Connecticut River, and the latter into the Merrimac River. The Fourth New Hampshire Turpike, now known as Route 4A, goes through the eastern part of town. Route 114 goes from south to west through Springfield Village, and Route 89 goes close to the western boundary of Springfield.

The first school in Springfield was started in the Loverin barn across from the general store in Springfield in 1783. By 1851, there were 14 school districts in Springfield such as Fowlertown in the southeast part of town near Wilmot, and Perleytown in the southeast part of town near New London. There were neighborhood schools due to conditions of the roads and the type of transportation. By the late 1930s there were only two elementary schools, Center School near the meeting house, Center and Maxfield Schools were closed and the students moved into the new Memorial School in January, 1949. The students attended Memorial School until the town joined the Kearsarge Regional School District in the 1960s. Springfield retained a kindergarten which is still in existence in 2006. The Memorial Building became the town offices on the right side of the building, and the town kindergarten on the left side. An addition was made in the 1990s for them Libbie A. Cass Library.

Most of the settlers depended on subsistence farming suitable for growing corn, grains, potatoes, apples, and maple syrup products. The swift brooks gave waterpower for grinding corn, sawing lumber, making shingles, etc. Later there would be mica mines.

The Star Quartz Sphere, considered one of the finest in the world, was obtained from a Springfield mine by Paul Burroughs and is now the property of the National Museum in Washinton, DC.

In 1795, Philip Colby was chosen to obtain plans for a meeting house from Salibury, NH. The meeting house was built in what is now Old Pleasant View Cemetery and dedicated in September, 1799. The meeting house was moved to its present location in 1851, at the junction of Route 114 and Four Corners Road. The meeting house has been restored several times over the years and is still in use. Church services are no longer being held in the upstairs.

After the Civil War, Springfield, as other New England towns, saw a decrease in population. Towns like Springfield with poor, rocky soil were no longer the frontier towns of the 1700s, and families began moving west to seek their fortunes.

In the late 1800s, early 1900s, Springfield became the summer home of several families from Washington, DC and points south. Instrumental in this endeavor was Dr. Gary Morgan, a native of Newport, NH, who encouraged his friends to make Springfield their summer home. Descendents of the summer families still play an important role in the area.

More indepth information about Springfield can be found in the following material: A Pictorial History of Springfield, for sale through the Springfield Historical Society Charles McDaniel, History of Springfield, from The History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties, c 1886, or individual copies of Springfield reprinted in 1872. Springfield, New Hampshire Bicentennial, 1769-1969.