

FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS MAGAZINE.

TOPOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES of the COUNTY of ESSEX.

THE county of Essex is bounded on the North by the State of New-Hampshire, East by the Atlantic, South and West by the county of Middlesex and Chelsea in the county of Suffolk. The first settlement within the bounds of Massachusetts (proper) was here made in 1628, by John Endicott, Esquire, one of the original patentees, and many years Governour of the colony. It was made a county in 1643, being one of the three original Shires into which the colony was first divided. It contains at this day twenty two townships, which with the number of houses, families and inhabitants, as ascertained by the late census, are here arranged according to the dates of their several incorporations.

	Date.	Hous.	Fam.	Inhab.
Salem,	1628	928	1493	7921
Ipswich,	1634	601	881	4562
Newbury,	1635	538	723	3972
Lynn,	1637	300	404	2295
Gloucester,	1639	673	1006	5317
Rowley,	1639	278	328	1772
Salisbury,	1640	267	325	1778
Wenham,	1643	74	92	502
Manchester,	1645	142	196	965
Haverhill,	1645	330	435	2402
Andover,	1646	402	525	2863
Marblehead,	1649	618	1104	5660
Topsfield,	1650	107	150	780
Amesbury,	1668	303	391	1805
Beverly,	1668	422	637	3290
Bradford,	1675	196	253	1372
Boxford,	1685	128	163	925
Methuen,	1727	181	217	1293
Middleton,	1728	102	119	682
Danvers,	1757	372	460	2425
Newburyport,	1764	616	939	4837
Lynnfield,	1782	66	82	491

This county pays about one seventh part of the State Tax, elects six Senators and Counsellors for the government of the Commonwealth, and one Representative in the Legislature of the United States.

The face of the country is pleasingly variegated with hills, vales, woods, and plains. A great number of ponds well stored with fish of various kinds

are interspersed through the country. These give rise to numerous streams, on which are seated mills for the various necessary uses of the people. The land is generally fruitful, but is said to be peculiarly favourable to barley, which yields the most certain crop; the ears are fuller, and the grain larger and fairer than in any other part of the State. The sea coast is indented with a number of good harbours, and several rivers pass into the sea within the bounds of the county. Merrimack river intersects it entirely; on the north side of which are the towns of Salisbury, Amesbury, Haverhill and Methuen. These all extend three miles from the river to the line of Newhampshire.

Salisbury adjoins the sea coast and contains two parishes. It is separated from Amesbury by Powow river, which has its rise in Kingston, Newhampshire, in its course passing over several falls, on which are mills of several kinds. It is navigable one mile from its mouth andm, any vessels are built on its banks. Near its junction with the Merrimack a convenient bridge is erected across it, furnished with a draw, forming the communication between Salisbury and Amesbury, seven miles from the sea. Adjoining the sea coast and on the banks of Merrimack river, are large tracts of marsh, where are annually cut great quantities of salt hay. The most ancient settlement in this town is in the lower parish, at which place the General Court of the former province of Massachusetts bay was sometimes held. The part of the town at present most flourishing, is a point of land formed by the junction of Merrimack and Powow rivers. Here is a village very pleasantly situated on the bank of the Merrimack, where, before the revolution war, shipbuilding was carried on to a considerable extent, which, though now much decreased, is still not wholly laid aside; and this, with its auxiliary trades and some little navigation owned and fitted here,

gives the place a very lively and busy appearance. The continental frigate Alliance was built at this place under the direction of Mr. Hacket, a very respectable naval architect.

Next to Salisbury is *Amesbury*; containing also two parishes. At the lower part of this town adjoining to Powow river is a compact settlement consisting of one street near a mile long, where are several shops of goods and the various kinds of handicrafts usual in this country. Another small village, there called Amesbury Mills, though lying principally in Salisbury, is formed around the lower falls of Powow river, mentioned before. At this place the water falls about one hundred feet within the distance of fifty perches, and in its descent carries one bloomery, five saw mills, seven grist mills, two linseed oil mills, one fulling mill, and one snuff mill, besides several wheels, auxiliary to different labours. The rapid fall of the water, the dams at very short distances crossing the river, the various wheels and mills arising almost immediately one over another, and the very irregular and grotesque situation of the houses and other buildings on the adjoining grounds, give this place a romantick appearance, and afford in the whole one of the most singular views to be found in this country. In the eastern part of the town, beside the incorporated congregation, are a presbyterian church, a meeting of friends, and a small society of separatists, who call themselves baptists and receive the instructions of a lay-exhorter. Several attempts have been made to establish an episcopal church here, and more than once a house for worship in this kind has been set up, but from the small number of persons of that persuasion or some other cause, these attempts have proved abortive. The business of ship building was heretofore conducted with spirit in this place, but as in other places on the river Merrimack, it is considerably lessened. The land is in general of a strong and excellent quality and is well cultivated. It was heretofore remarkable for the quantity and quality of the cyder made, but the decay of their orchards and the disheartening

ravages of the canker worm, have almost annihilated this branch of husbandry.

Haverhill is the next town in order on the river and consists of four parishes, besides a respectable congregation of Anabaptists, formed from this and the adjoining towns. The inhabitants are principally devoted to husbandry, except at the place emphatically called *the town*, where is a compact settlement extending a mile on the river. The people here are chiefly employed in commerce and the mechanick arts. Travellers are struck with the pleasantness of this situation, and a number of neat and well finished houses give it a considerable appearance of elegance. Here are three distilleries, one of which has lately undergone a laudable transmutation into a brewery. Some vessels are annually built here, and several are employed in the West India trade; but the business of the place is very sensibly less than before the revolution. A manufactory of sail cloth was begun here in 1789, and is said to be in a promising way.

Methuen adjoins Haverhill and extends on the river to Dracut in the county of Middlesex. It contains two parishes. Husbandry and the cutting and marketing of lumber divide the attention of the inhabitants. The latter branch of business has, it is conceived, been followed too much to the detriment of the interest of agriculture. But it is said the people are now devoting more of their attention to the cultivation of their grounds, which will of course soon wear a more thriving aspect. The land is very various, but the town is said to contain its proportion of good soil, and the present rough and barren appearance of a great part of it is rather to be imputed to the neglect of cultivation than to any original ill quality of the ground.

Passing over the river we enter *Andover*, divided into two parishes. The general appearance of this place is thriving, and, for an agricultural town, the buildings, publick and private, are in a style of uncommon neatness and elegance. The land is of an excellent quality and under handsome cultivation,

cultivation, particularly that part of it which is watered by *Sarusheen* river, a considerable stream which takes its rise in Bedford in the county of Middlesex, and passing through Billerica, Tewksbury and Andover, discharges itself into Merrimack river, at this latter place. In the south parish are a powder mill, and paper mill. From the former of these large supplies were furnished to the army during the late war; the paper mill is yet in its infancy, but has already exhibited specimens of its manufacture of an excellent fabric. These are both owned by the Hon. Mr. Phillips, President of the Senate, a native inhabitant of this town, whose unwearied attention to the political, manufacturing and literary interests of his country are too well known to need an encomium here, and have endeared his name to the citizens of the Commonwealth in general, and especially to those of the county of Essex. Under his auspices and by the liberal benefactions of his father, the late Hon. Samuel Phillips of Andover, and of the Hon. John Phillips, L. L. D. of Exeter in the State of New-Hampshire, an academy was instituted in this town in the year 1778, and in the year 1780 an act passed the Legislature incorporating the gentlemen above named, with sundry other respectable characters, by the name of "the Trustees of Phillips's Academy in Andover." *

The appointments of this Seminary are liberal. A preceptor, an assistant preceptor, and a teacher of writing and practical mathematics are at present well supported, and the funds are said to be in a growing state. Within its original design some higher branches of learning may be taught as ability and opportunity shall arise.

Bradford is eastward of Andover on the river, and is divided into two parishes. The land is in general good and well cultivated. In the upper

part of the town considerable quantities of leather shoes are manufactured and vended for use and exportation in the commercial towns. In the lower parish some vessels are built for merchants in other places. Several streams fall into Merrimack river in this town, which support a number of mills of various kinds.

Below Bradford and extending from thence to the sea is *Newbury*, containing five parishes, besides a society of Friends or Quakers. The inhabitants are principally employed in husbandry, and have in general the happiness of a grateful soil that well rewards their industry. The land, particularly in that part of the town which lies on Merrimack river, and is here distinguished by the name of *Newbury-Newtown*, is of a superior quality, under the best cultivation, and is said by travellers to be equal in appearance to some of the most improved parts of Great Britain. From some of the high lands a very extensive and variegated view is had of the surrounding country, the rivers, the bay, and the sea coast from Cape Ann to York in the province of Maine. On one of these heights, called *Spring Hill*, and in a most commanding situation, is the elegant summer residence of the Hon. Mr. Dalton, late of the Federal Senate, who, to the character of a statesman and gentleman adds the no less honourable distinction of a sagacious and enterprising husbandman. Some few vessels are here owned and employed in the fishery, part of which are fitted out from Parker river. This river takes its rise in Rowley, and after a course of a few miles passes into the sound which separates Plum Island from the main land. It is navigable about two miles from its mouth, where a bridge crosses it 870 feet long and 26 feet wide, consisting of nine solid piers and eight wooden arches. This bridge, built in the year 1758, is on the post road
from

* This name distinguishes this institution from a similar one in New-Hampshire called *Phillip's Exeter Academy*, founded solely by the Hon. Dr. Phillips, the funds of which are said to exceed £10,000 currency. In addition to these foundations, this gentleman has been by far the most munificent benefactor to *Dartmouth University*. Such wise and pious distributions of property in the life time of the possessor are the most honourable display of genuine publick spirit and disinterested patriotism; and the man who thus nobly triumphs over the sordid dictates of avarice or a mistaken self interest, has surely a better title to be canonized than a whole host of legendary Saints and Martyrs.

from Boston to the eastward, and is supported by a toll under the management of a trustee, who accounts annually to the court of sessions for the county, and is removeable by them at pleasure. About three miles higher up the river is another bridge supported at the charge of the county.

In a quarry of lime stone in *Byfield* parish is found the *Asbestos*, or incom-bustible cotton, as it is sometimes called. Marble has been found in the same vicinity, and it is conjectured that there are considerable beds of it. The specimens already exhibited have been beautifully variegated in colour and admitted an admirable polish.

Dummer Academy, in *Newbury*, was established in 1763. Its appointments depend principally on the rent of a large and valuable farm, devised by his Honour *William Dummer, Esq.* formerly Lieutenant Governor of the province, for the support of a perpetual grammar school in this place. The election of the preceptor was by the Governor's will, vested in the minister of the parish of *Byfield* for the time being and a committee of the parish chosen for that purpose, and he was made removeable by the government of *Harvard College*. Some apprehensions that the laudable intentions of the donor might in a future time be frustrated, induced the Legislature in 1782, on the application of the late venerable *Dr. Chauncy*, sole surviving executor of *Mr. Dummer's* will, to incorporate certain respectable trustees with entire powers of managing the estates and of electing and removing the preceptor. The Academy is situated in a healthful and pleasant place, retired from the noise and vices of the busy world; and is at present under the tuition of the *Rev. Isaac Smith, A. M.* who has been lately inducted to the preceptor's chair, and whose amiable virtues and respectable talents intire to the youth committed to his charge the full advantage of a regular and happy institution in the paths of virtue and science.

Newbury Port, originally part of *Newbury*, from which its incorporation detached it in 1764, and by which and *Merrimack* river it is wholly en-

circled, is perhaps the most limited in its extent of land of any township in the commonwealth, containing but about 640 acres. Here are four houses for publick worship, viz. one Episcopalian, one Presbyterian and two Congregational. It was formerly remarkable for the number of vessels annually built here; but since the commencement of the late war, this business has in a great degree failed and no manufacture of consequence has yet supplied its place. The continental frigates *Boston* and *Hancock*, were built here, besides many large private armed ships during the war. The trade to the West Indies is carried on here with much spirit and to a great amount. Large quantities of rum are distilled, which is principally exported to the Southern States. Some vessels are employed in the freighting business, and a few in the fishery. In November 1790 there were owned in this port six ships, 45 brigantines, 39 schooners, and 28 sloops, making in the whole 11,870 tons. A term of the Courts of Common Pleas and General Sessions is held here on the last Tuesday of September.

Merrimack River is navigable for vessels of burthen about twenty miles from its mouth, where it is obstructed by the first falls or rapids called *Mitchell's Eddy*, between *Bradford* and *Haverhill*. Vast quantities of ship timber, ranging timber, plank, deals, clapboards, shingles, staves, and other lumber, are brought down in rafts, so constructed as to pass all the falls on the river except those of *Amuskeeg* in *New-Hampshire*, and *Pautuket* between *Chelmsford* and *Dracut* in the county of *Middlesex*. In the spring and summer considerable quantities of salmon, shad and alewives are caught, which are either used as bait in the cod fishery, or pickled and shipped to the West Indies.

Within the county of *Essex* are twelve ferries across *Merrimack* river, at all of which, except the one between *Newbury Port* and *Salisbury*, the rates of ferriage are equal and moderate, being fixed by the Court of Sessions. That particular ferry claims an exemption from the jurisdiction of the Court

Court of Sessions, and partly from the high rate of ferriage, and partly from the great want of dispatch, it is now very little frequented, the principal passage of travellers being over Swaley's ferry, about three miles above Newbury Port. A petition was presented the last session of the General Court by sundry gentlemen, of Newbury Port and its vicinity, praying for liberty to erect a bridge across the river about two miles above the town. Every good citizen wishes well to this publick spirited enterprize, while many considerate persons are extremely doubtful of its feasibility. The Bar across the mouth of this river is a very great incumbrance to the navigation and is especially terrible to strangers. There are sixteen feet of water upon it at common tides. At the close of the late war a voluntary association of the merchants of Newbury Port was formed for the support of two small

heights on the larboard hand at entering the river, as a guide in passing this bar in the night. In 1787 the General Court granted a sum of money for the erection of two sufficient light houses, and made the maintenance of them a publick charge. These, together with the buoys in the river, by the federal constitution and the cession of the commonwealth, are now maintained at the expense of the general government. The houses are of wood and contrived to be removed at pleasure, so as to be always conformed to the shifting of the bar, and thus the single rule of bringing them in a line will be the only necessary direction for vessels approaching the harbour, and by this direction they may sail with safety, until they are abreast of the lights, where is a bold shore and good anchoring ground.

(To be continued.)