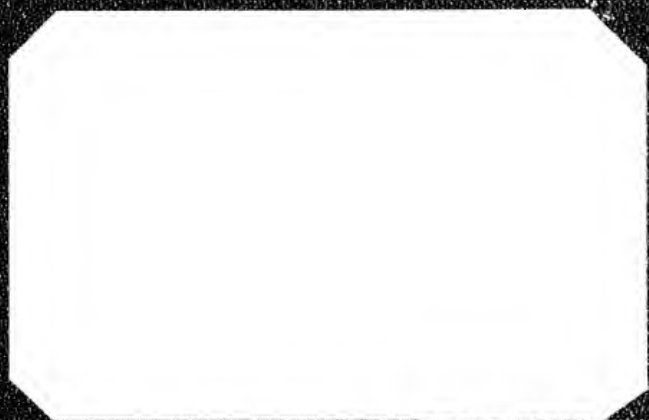


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Class F 74

Book 245















A

DESCRIPTION

OF

DEERFIELD,

IN

FRANKLIN COUNTY,

INTENDED AS AN EXHIBITION OF THE PLAN OF A CONTEMPLATED

GAZETTEER

OF

MASSACHUSETTS PROPER.

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BY RODOLPHUS DICKINSON, Esq.

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DEERFIELD, MASS.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

G. J. NEWCOMB, PRINT.

1817.

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GREENFIELD, JUNE 10, 1817.

SIR,

TRANSMITTED is a view of the town of Deerfield, accompanied with a request, that you will be so good as to prepare, as soon as convenient, an account of your town on a similar plan, noticing also any other subjects of interest not contained in this description, and transmit the same to me. My intention is to publish a minute account of every place in the ancient part of the state, upon a plan altogether different from the summary notice of places usual in Gazetteers, and I have selected the present subject as a guide to facilitate the inquiries of gentlemen, to whom my communications, requesting information relative to their several towns, should be addressed. The field not being very extensive, compared with that which some other states would furnish, it will doubtless be practicable to throw the whole account into an octavo volume of about 800 pages, therein giving to each town, an ample description: and with a view to save unnecessary labour, I suggest the wish, that this should be proportionate to the relative consequence of the several places described. Should you not be particularly conversant with the title of Interior Structure, though details on that head would be acceptable, yet as that will be the subject of an extensive general chapter in the work proposed, it may be omitted in the particular accounts, and the return on the other subjects of inquiry thereby transmitted with less delay. It would be desirable to receive your notice by the 1st of October next, through the Post-Office, should no other opportunity offer: and if from any cause you should find it inconvenient to oblige me in this particular, you will confer a great favour by delivering this account to some person who may have leisure, disposition, and ability, to comply with my request. Unless otherwise directed, I must claim permission to attach the name of each gentleman to his description, in the general publication.

I flatter myself that the great importance of the ultimate object, which can never be effected without the aid I solicit, and the real satisfaction which you and your friends must derive from a full description of the place of your particular attachments, will be sufficient inducements to zeal in the undertaking.

I am, Sir, very respectfully, your

Obedient Servant,

RODOLPHUS DICKINSON

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A  
DESCRIPTION  
OF  
**DEERFIELD.**

EXTENT AND BOUNDARIES.

**DEERFIELD**, a post town, and the most ancient in Franklin county, is 8 by 5 miles in extent, and is bounded north by Greenfield, east by Connecticut river, which separates it from Montague and Sunderland, south by Whately, and west by Conway and Shelburne. It originally included the towns of Shelburne, Conway, Greenfield, and the principal part of Gill, and was 12 miles in length, and 10½ in breadth.

SURFACE.

THE surface of this town is much diversified. The interval valley, pervading the centre of it from north to south, for a distance of about 4 miles, is a level alluvial tract, intersected by Deerfield river, a beautiful stream, passing diagonally to the north east, and receiving Green river from the north, about two miles above its confluence with the Connecticut.

South of the meadows, is an extensive section of plain land, skirted southerly by a forest of pines, and by a fine tract of interval ground on the western margin, watered by an inconsiderable stream.

The western division, excepting a covered pine plain extending north of Deerfield river, consists of elevated and wide spreading highlands, with a breadth of nearly 2 miles within the limits of Deerfield.

A narrow tract of interval land lies upon the western bank of Connecticut river. Between this and the valley of Deerfield river, a range intervenes, varying from a single ridge to about 3 miles in width, which, in traversing the town from north to south, gradually rises, till you arrive a little below the village, and terminates after a descending course of nearly an equal distance. The central part of this ridge is 750 feet above the valley, forming the highest point of land in the township, and presenting an interesting piece of mountain scenery.

A few small ponds pervade the central valley; and aside from the streams which have been noticed, the town is well watered, and the water, very generally, of a superior quality.

The woodlands upon the hills are extensive; but the level parts of the town present an almost universally cultivated surface, the interval section, in particular, displaying little more than the shade trees attached to the several fields.

#### INTERIOR STRUCTURE.

THE geology of Deerfield has not been minutely observed. The plain and valley extending through the centre of the town, and the meadow along the western bank of Connecticut river, are of a secondary alluvial formation. The soil in the valley is in some places twenty feet in depth, resting on a bed of gravel, and from many appearances, this probably reposes upon red conglomerate and sandstone. The plain, encircling it, is in some places highly argillaceous, and in others a coarse silicious sand.

The mountain in the easterly part of this town consists of two ridges running in a parallel direction. Both of these present on the western side, high, mural, naked fronts, with numerous amorphous masses lying at their base, and extending upward a considerable distance: but on the eastern side these ridges are of easy ascent. The western range, which commences abruptly near the south line of the town, and extends about six miles northward, is wholly composed of red conglomerate, or plumb pudding stone. The strata dip to the east about 10°. The other ridge is of the transition formation, consisting of grey wacke or trap, which rests on the secondary formation. The veins of this rock are highly impregnated with iron.

About a mile west of the village of Deerfield the primitive formation commences. The rock on the mountain in this part of the town is mostly gneiss. There are however some masses of granite, and a few of the rocks are considerably shistose. Garnets, pyrites, steatite, epidote, tourmaline, and sappare have been found in this range. The gneiss, like most other rocks of this kind in New-England, is stratified in a north and south direction, and the lamina dip to the east about 45°. Where Deerfield river has cut through this mountain, it has laid open on the northern bank, a small bed of limestone.

#### SOIL, AGRICULTURE, AND PRODUCTIONS.

THE soil of this town is in general of a good quality. On the hills, it is a loam much interspersed with gravel and stones; on a part of the plains clay predominates, the soil of the remainder is light and sandy, and upon the lower interval grounds, a deep, rich, alluvial mould. The lands on Connecticut river, and the sloping grounds under the mountain south of the village, are superior for grazing and grain. The plain in the south part of the town has of late years been much improved by gypsum, and affords good crops: and on the western side of it is a rich and productive interval, with valuable uplands in the rear. Much of the land on the western hills is well suited to the culture of grain, and some of the pastures in that part of the town are excellent, and with a little attention, might be converted into fine mowing fields. The

meadows on the banks of Deerfield river, receiving in a remarkable degree its rich deposits, are admitted by those who have travelled extensively, as not surpassed in richness by any land in the union.

The farmers of this town are uncommonly laborious, and from the nature of their agricultural pursuits, find little opportunity for relaxation from the most unwearied industry, during any season of the year. The system of agriculture here pursued is excellent. In the cultivation of those crops that claim their principal attention, they have adopted many improvements. The staple articles of produce are hay, Indian corn, and peas and oats, for the purpose of fattening cattle. These form the distinguishing feature in the husbandry of the interval lands; and the alternate cultivation of the two latter, presents the principal rotation of crops. The lower sections of the meadows exhibit the finest grass plats; and the warm and richly mellow soil of the higher parts is adapted, in an unexampled degree, to the production of the best and most abundant crops of Indian corn; and the successful cultivation of it may be regarded as the fort of the farmers of Deerfield.

As a limited display of the resources of this town, without adverting to the immense crop of hay, and peas and oats, and the various other productions for domestic use, it may be safely estimated, that the crop of Indian corn during the year 1815, was not less than 50,000 bushels; and that the average produce of other years considerably exceeds 40,000, one half of which is probably raised by the inhabitants of the village: and by the latter, 500 of the finest cattle, mostly purchased of the farmers in the upland towns, are annually fed, in the best manner, from the beginning of December to May, the weight of which may be computed at 550,000, and the proceeds of their sale in market, at \$40,000, with a profit of about one half the amount.

The want of good pasturage has long been a serious inconvenience to the inhabitants of the village, but this is gradually becoming less, by the opening of the woodlands on the eastern hills.

The orchards in Deerfield are small, having been much reduced by the ravages of the canker worm. The highlands are favourable to the culture of fruit trees, but the other parts of the town are extremely unsuited to the growth of any except the apple tree, and even this fruit is much inferior to that upon the hills.

#### CLIMATE AND DISEASES.

Most of the facts relative to climate being equally applicable to every place within a small extent of territory, a notice of them under each town would be superfluous. The title is here inserted for the purpose of receiving communications relative to any peculiarities which may exist in the respective towns, but principally, for collecting the result of meteorological observations.

During the year commencing with April 1806, the greatest heat in the village of Deerfield was 96°, and the most extreme cold 14° below zero. The quantity of snow in that year was 62 inches, and in the winter of 1811-12, 76. In February 1807, the frost measured three feet in level open land.

The number of deaths which have occurred in this place, according to the parish register, since the year 1787, a period of nearly 29 years, have been 510. This upon an average is a fraction over 17 a year. It appears that 59 of these have died of the consumption, 66 of dysentery, and 48 of fevers. The greatest number of deaths which have occurred in any one year from consumption is 7, from dysentery 38, and from fevers 22.

#### MINERAL WATERS.

In the southern part of the meadows, about two miles from the village, are a number of small mineral springs, flowing at the foot of a low bank in a marshy situation. The waters have not been regularly analyzed; but from evident appearances, are supposed to be strongly impregnated with magnesia, sulphur, and iron. They are in some repute for the cure of cutaneous disorders; and are considerably resorted to in the mild seasons of the year.

#### CURIOSITIES.

THE traces of Indian habitations, extending even to villages, on the declivities of the high grounds bordering the valley, and on the gentle elevations which diversify it; their implements of war, industry, domestic use, and of taste, and the remains of their dead, which are discovered in various places upon opening the ground, and by the undermining of the banks of Deerfield river; and an outward door, of one of the houses in the village that withstood their assault at the period of its destruction, which was cloven through by their tomahawks; and two unlettered stones, lying horizontally upon the ground, marking the place of the destruction of Capt Lathrop's company, still remain to arrest the attention of the curious.

The Sugar Loaves, in the southern part of the town, two detached elevations 500 feet above the plain below, presenting majestic precipices, and affording from their summits an interesting prospect of the surrounding country, have often excited the admiration of the enlightened traveller, and may be justly classed among the curiosities of nature.

A ledge of granitic rocks, nearly equidistant from the village of Greenfield and Deerfield river, about fifteen rods east of the public road, which passes from north to south upon the bank of Green river, exhibits numerous concavities of various structure, which may deservedly claim the attention of the naturalist.

#### VILLAGE.

THE village of Deerfield is 90 miles west by north of Boston. The centre of it is situated, as accurately ascertained by various astronomical observations, in latitude  $42^{\circ} 32\frac{1}{2}'$ , longitude  $72^{\circ} 41'$ .

The site of the village is very fine, being a perfect terrace, extending from the eastern heights about half a mile, and otherwise bounded by meadows. This breadth is about equally divided by a street of a mile in length, lying nearly on a meridian line, and dis-

playing on each side handsome home lots. In the centre of this, rises another terrace, crossing the street, and affording sufficient space for a village green.

The village consists of 53 dwelling houses, of which 43 are of two stories, and all except two constructed of wood; a congregational church, an extensive brick building occupied as an academy and boarding house, a large brick school house, three stores, a printing office, and book-bindery.

#### MANUFACTURES AND TRADE.

DOMESTIC fabrics are wrought in almost every family in the town, and constitute in the aggregate an object of great importance; and with other articles of the first necessity the inhabitants are mostly furnished from their own manufactures. There are in Deerfield 4 saw mills, 1 grist mill, 1 oil mill, 3 fulling mills, 2 carding machines, 1 trip-hammer, 1 salt petre work, 1 tannery, and 2 distilleries. At Muddy Brook, in the south part of the town, is an extensive boot and shoe factory.

Deerfield is an agricultural place; and an extensive trade is almost forbidden by local circumstances. It contains however six retail stores, in which is invested a stock of \$20,000.

#### RELIGION.

THERE is in this town a society of congregationalists, and another of baptists. The former comprises the principal part of the inhabitants. The latter consists of most of the families residing west of Deerfield river. A few families in the southern part of the town are united with the church in Sunderland.

The salary of the congregational clergyman, is \$666,67. The religious funds are large, and the interest accruing from them will in a short time be sufficient to support the ministry.

#### MINISTRY.

THE Rev. John Williams, born at Roxbury, December 10, 1664, and educated at Harvard college, was the first minister of Deerfield. He was ordained in May 1686, and died June 12, 1729, aged 64.

Mr. Williams was succeeded by the Rev. Jonathan Ashley, a native of Westfield, who was educated at Yale college. He was ordained November 8, 1732, and died August 28, 1780, aged 68.

The Rev. John Taylor, a native of Westfield, and successor of Mr. Ashley, received his education at Yale college, and was ordained February 14, 1787. He resigned August 6, 1806.

The present clergyman is the Rev. Samuel Willard of Peterham, a graduate of Harvard University, who was ordained September 23, 1807.

#### POPULATION.

IN April 1703-4, the population of Deerfield was 280; in 1765, it was 737; in 1790, it contained 1330; in 1800, 1531, and in 1810, the population was 1570, and of the towns within the ancient limits 6242. Deerfield now comprises 210 dwelling houses.

## EDUCATION.

DEERFIELD Academy was incorporated March 1, 1797, and commenced January 1, 1799. The donations of individuals for its establishment exceeded \$3000. One half of a township of land in the District of Maine has since been granted to it by the state legislature. Private donations have also been made since its incorporation to the amount of about \$1000 for the purchase of a library and philosophical apparatus. The library now contains between two and three hundred volumes. The apparatus is excellent. It was selected in London by the Rev. Dr. Prince of Salem, and cost nearly \$800. The library and apparatus render the means of improvement at this institution superior to those at most academies in this part of the country.

Within a few years the building has been much enlarged for accommodating boarders. It is three stories high, and contains 22 rooms, besides the school, dining, and philosophy rooms.

There are eleven school districts in Deerfield, in most of which teachers are employed during the year, and in the others about three fourths of the year. From 500 to \$750 are annually appropriated by the town to the support of schools, besides a considerable sum derived from individual subscription.

Two social libraries are established in the village, one of which is an Encyclopedia company. The other library contains about 600 well selected volumes, comprising an unusual proportion of books of science.

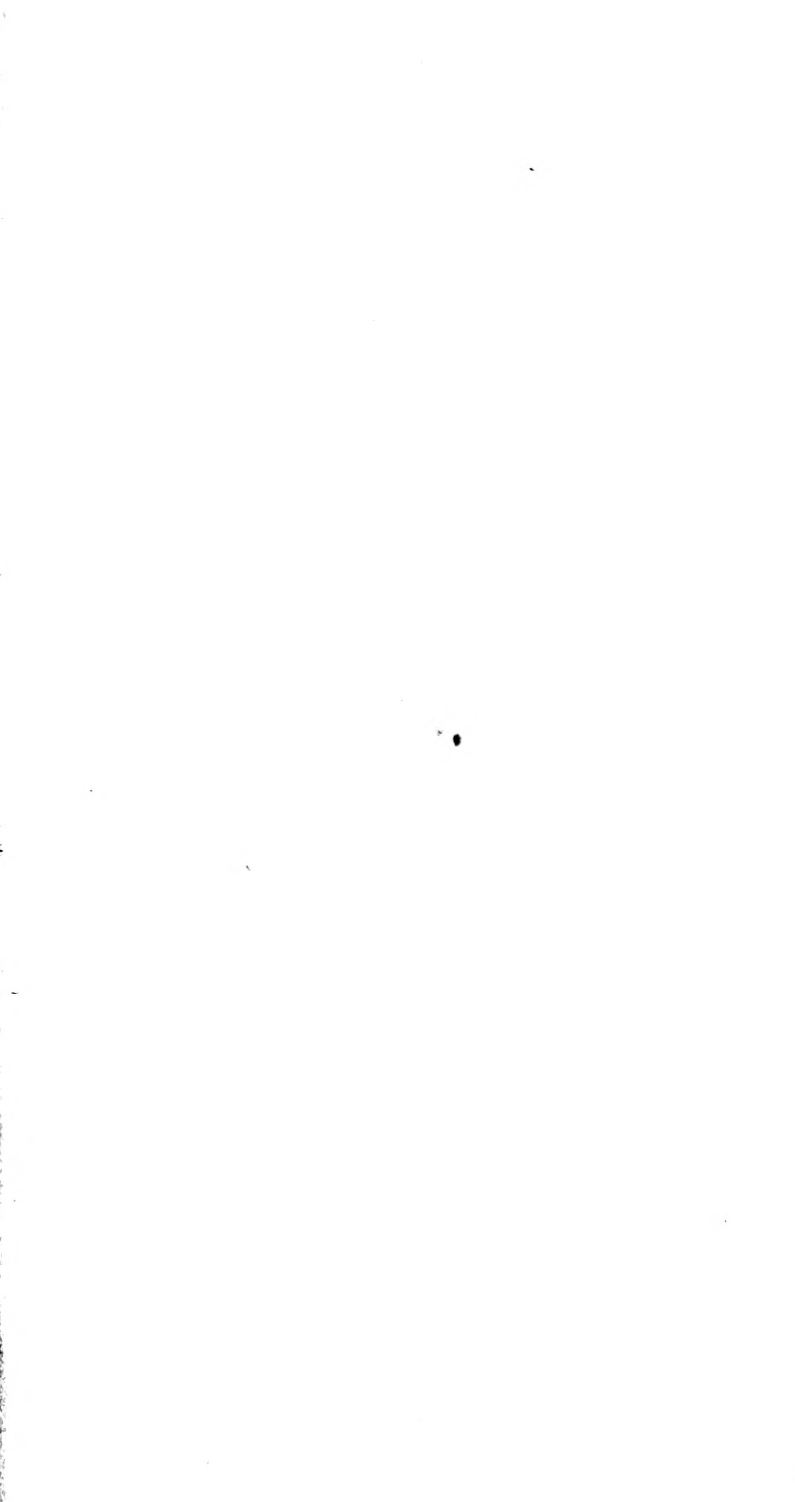
A literary and scientific society was established August 6, 1804, composed of young gentlemen of the town and academy, to which others have also been admitted as honorary members. The society is now in a very flourishing situation. The frequent, and stated meetings ever since its institution, while they evince an unusual stability, have been attended with much improvement.

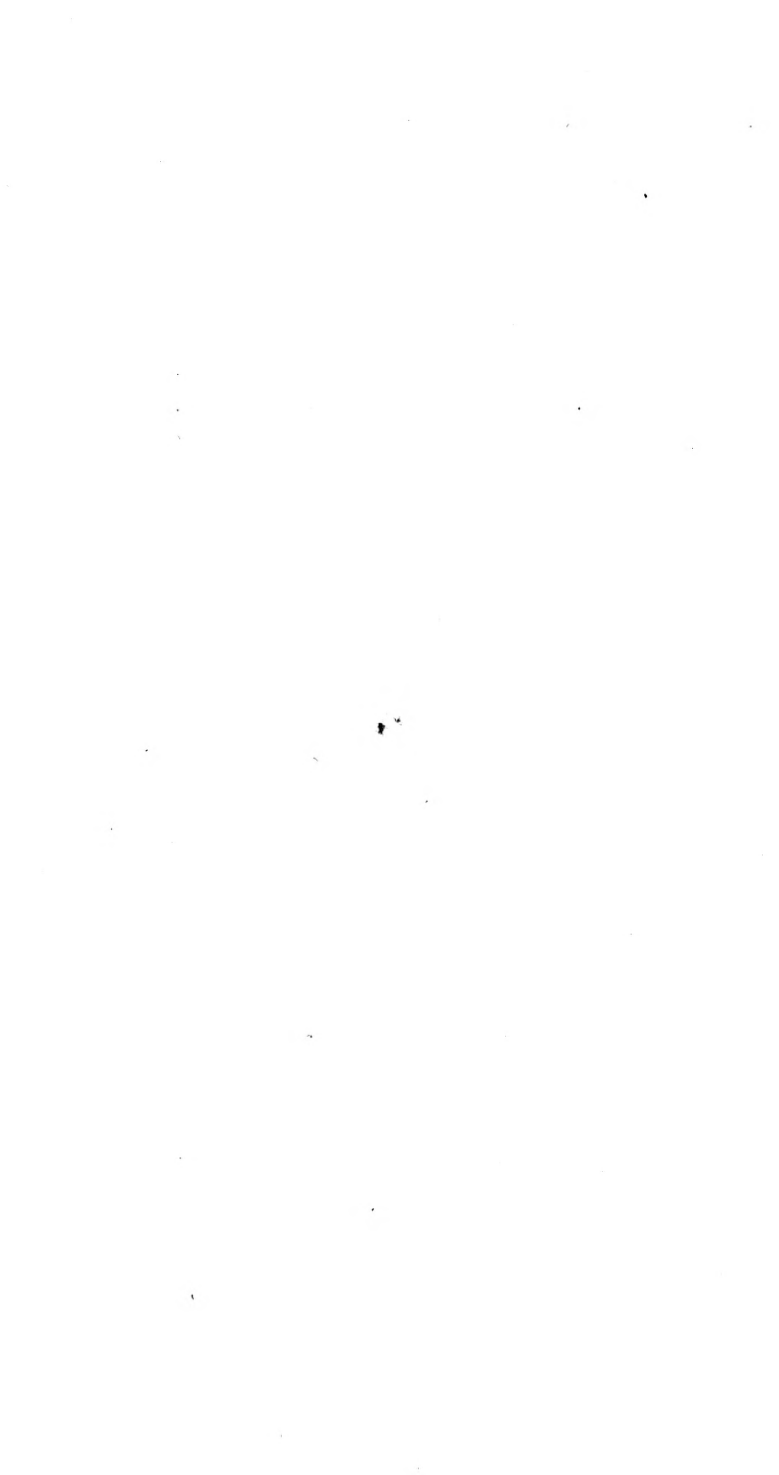
In December 1813, another styled "*The Franklin Agricultural Society*," was instituted in this town, the object of which is improvement in the whole management and economy of a farm, with all its appurtenances. The reports of the process and result of experiments relative to those important subjects, which have already been made to the society, and the spirit of inquiry awakened in the community by the association, during the short period of its institution, have produced much good, and afford the pleasing prospect of more extensive usefulness. The number of members is now about 70, several of whom belong to the adjacent towns. The money raised by the admission of members is vested in valuable agricultural books, both of European and American production.

## FIRST SETTLEMENT.

In the year 1669, this territory was granted by the provincial government to the town of Dedham. The first settlement commenced in the spring of the year 1671, and a few houses were built upon the site of the present village, which was then a forest.









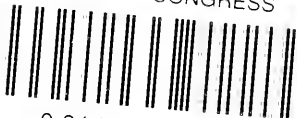








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