



The Early History

of

Coventry, Connecticut

by

John Scarchuk



Acknowledgements

What you are about to read was written over many years, a little bit at a time. This history probably would not have been completed without the assistance and support of Roberta Bates who made it possible for me to complete this publication.

My appreciation is also expressed to Dorothy Wilmot and to Linda Scussel who typed and re-typed early parts of this manuscript.

Thanks goes to my wife, Emily, for her help and encouragement.

1995

Contents

<i>Chapter I</i>	The Geology of Coventry, Connecticut	1
<i>Chapter II</i>	A Brief Early History of Connecticut	7
<i>Chapter IIIA</i>	The Acquisition of the Town of Coventry	12
<i>Chapter IIIB</i>	A Review of the Land Growth of Coventry	20
<i>Chapter IVA</i>	The Earliest Settlers of Coventry	25
<i>Chapter IVB</i>	The Earliest Settlers of Coventry	31
<i>Chapter V</i>	Roads of Coventry	36
<i>Chapter VI</i>	The Five Turnpike Roads of Coventry	41
<i>Chapter VIIA</i>	Railroads (General)	46
<i>Chapter VIIB</i>	Central Vermont Railroad	48
<i>Chapter VIII</i>	South Coventry Trolley Line	52
<i>Chapter IX</i>	Chronological Order of the Naming of Coventrys in Colonial America	64

Chapter 1

The Geology of Coventry, Connecticut

According to Michael Bell in his book The Face of Connecticut People, Geology, and the Land and Sidney Quarrier of the State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut, a renowned lecturer on the geology of Connecticut, geologically Connecticut has four different landscapes. They are the result of the underlying geology resulting in two main types of material. The most fundamental is the bedrock, also popularly known as ledge. This is the crust of the Earth, the rigid rock exterior that seals in the Earth's hot, semi-solid interior. The rocky hide is at least three miles thick, and in some places as much as fifty five miles thick. Compared to the massive size of the Earth, it is no more than a thin skin on a potato. The primary force shaping the landscape is the erosion of the bedrock over millions of years by rivers and weather (in this area, the advance of at least two great continental glaciers). This erosion during the Ice Age is responsible for the second fundamental material—glacial drift. When the ice finally melted, the results of the scouring—silt, sand, boulders—were scattered across the landscape. In most of Connecticut, drift is what lies directly beneath our feet, burying the bedrock. Together, drift and bedrock are primarily responsible for the shape and resources of Connecticut's land.

The area which we now call Connecticut was once an ocean hundreds of miles wide. The bedrock of Connecticut was molded by the terrific forces that closed this early ocean (shoving Africa and Europe into North America) and later opened the Atlantic Ocean. (At one time Coventry was but a hop, skip, and jump from Europe and Africa.) Since the birth of the Atlantic, 200 million years ago, streams have worn away much of the bedrock, developing most of the landscape we see today. A final effect was applied by the scouring by the glacier, advancing from the north and covering the land with thousands of feet of ice. In very recent times (beginning 18,000 years ago—very recently, geologically speaking) the last of the glacier's retreat once again exposed Connecticut to the air.

The melting ice poured water into the oceans. As a result, sea level rose and inundated much of the land. The rise of sea level continues today. These events created the regional differences in Connecticut's landscape and geology; the Central Valley, Eastern Uplands, Western Uplands, and Coast.

It is with sincere appreciation to Arnold Carlson for having been alerted to research conducted by Dr. Hugo F. Thomas of the Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey.

In a communication from Dr. Robert Altamura, Geologist, also of the Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey, dated May 2, 1989, Dr. Altamura states that Dr. Thomas "conducted a study of the general area and did conclude that the Skungamaug may have flowed through the valley where Lake Wangum-
baug is today. He cites three lines of support for this hypotheses:

1. "A preglacial course draining the Skungamaug River through Wangum-
baug Lake area would have had a similar appearance to the present
day Willimantic River which drains southerly and breaks to southeast
at a latitude about where Skungamaug would need to leave its present
valley, breaking also to the southeast, to flow into Wangum-
baug lake
area.
2. "Stream terrace-like features on north shore of Wangum-
baug.
3. "Possibility of deep bedrock south of Lake Wangum-
baug, which
would have allowed for preglacial drainage through area to the Willim-
antic.

"In addition, it is noteworthy that the present elevation of the Skungamaug near a hypothetical break to the southeast to the Willimantic is more than 450 feet above sea level, and that of the Willimantic River, where the continuation of the Lake Wangum-
baug valley would intersect, is about 250 feet above sea level. Topography then does not rule out the hypothesis."

Well reports for wells near the Lake Wangumbaug spillway "showed rock at a depth of 70 feet near Mill Brook, and along Lake Street - a report indicating 125 feet to rock. A bedrock valley could exist below the glacial fill deposits which occur southeast of the lake."

When the Puritans arrived, they encountered a different culture from that to which they were accustomed. The Indians (who had closely followed the retreating glacier) were generally friendly and they willingly taught the colonists how to live in this new found land. They signed deeds allowing the colonists to settle towns and plant fields. Deeds signed by the Indians generally allowed certain rights to the land but not complete ownership. The Indians wished to retain hunting and fishing rights. This matter of rights and ownership was interpreted differently by each side and this was one of the major reasons why wars broke out between the colonists and Indians. In addition, the Puritans tried to convert the native people to Christianity and to bring the tribes under Puritan law. The policy of peaceful assimilation was doomed to failure.

The Connecticut Central Valley and the Coast were the first regions to be settled. When these regions were completely colonized, the first movements into the Uplands began—and, war between the Indians and the Puritans began. The brutal war lasted two years, 1675-1676. From 1675 to 1686—eleven years—no new towns were incorporated. The colonists had been badly scared by the Indian uprisings; even some of the smaller towns at the frontier's edge were abandoned.

After a decade of peace, fear of the Indians ended and the would-be settlers began in 1687 an expansion into the Uplands. Over the next 48 years (1687-1734), 27 towns, including Coventry, were incorporated. Coventry was incorporated in 1712.

Coventry is situated in the Eastern Uplands which borders the Central Valley by the Bolton Ridge from the Massachusetts border in the north to the Coastal Slope to the south. East of the Bolton Ridge and part of it is Coventry. The terrain of the Bolton Range is rough, resulting in fewer farms than in most of the rest of the Eastern Uplands. Many of these farms, hacked out of the steep forests, were abandoned early in the 1800's because the soils were thin and the steep

slopes difficult to plow. These abandoned homesteads were prime candidates for transfer to state ownership, and several large state forests were obtained in the Bolton Range and adjacent areas during the 1920's when much of Connecticut's state forest land was acquired. The Nathan Hale State Forest in Coventry is such an example.

Most of Coventry lies in the central portion of the Eastern Uplands, a broad region of rolling hills. The land is gentler and rounder and is referred to as Windham Hills, a landscape with lush forests and pastoral scenery.

Although the soil contained stones and boulders, it was quite fertile, resulting from the decay of its lush, forest growth. The small colonial farms were quite productive. During the American Revolution, Connecticut farms produced enough surplus to make the state a major supplier of the Continental Army. W. Storrs Lee, in The Yankees of Connecticut writes, "And down the Thames from Norwich plied scores of small craft, low in the water from their heavy cargo. Sacks of wheat and dried peas from the farms of Mansfield, barrels of kiln-dried corn from Pomfret, tierces of ham from Coventry, casks of pickled pork and beef from Norwich, tubes of butter from Plainfield and Moosup, rich round cheeses from Lebanon and Colchester..."

Although productive, the farmland was not productive enough to support a constantly growing population in need of more farmland. In the early years farming practices employed by the settlers overworked the land to the point of exhaustion. The practice of rotating crops, the growing of cover crops, and even idling the soil to restore productivity were not commonly employed practices. Manure from farm animals was not sufficient to keep the land fertile. By 1860 there was hardly an acre of arable land to feed an increasing population which led to an exodus of families from the state. In the beginning these families left for nearby states such as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. Coventry families settled Coventrys in Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York.

❖ Nathan Hale State Forest

The Nathan Hale State Forest has a total of 1,215 acres with about one half lying in Andover. It was bequeathed to the State of Connecticut by George Dudley Seymour in 1946. According to the late H. A. McKusick, a state forester who lived in the Strong House from 1947-1971, Mr. Seymour was interested in gathering memorabilia of Nathan Hale, his family, and associates. Seymour began his purchases in the town of Coventry about 1914 and included the Hale Homestead, the Strong place, the Lord place, and the Olson house and neighboring forest land.

The Homestead buildings and the open land immediately surrounding them were left to the Connecticut Antiquarian and Landmark Society. The Homestead is now run as a museum. The buildings were erected by Hale's father shortly after Nathan's death. It is thought that part of the ell of the main house may have been the original birth place of Nathan Hale.

The Strong place was believed to be the home of Elizabeth Strong, Hale's mother's maiden name. Research proved that a Strong lived here, but that she was a cousin of Elizabeth. Her father settled in the Ripley Hill section. Seymour vacationed at the Strong house and when he had guests over for dinner he suggested that they dress in attire of the period. This house is in the possession of the Coventry Historical Society.

The Olson house, now known as the Sprague house, had no connection with the Hale family. It was built in the early 1800's. This property is also in the possession of the Coventry Historical Society.

The Asher Wright place is the probable house site of Asher Wright who served with Hale at Bunker Hill (Breed Hill) and White Plains. Asher was supposed to have been Hale's camp attendant and to have been affected strongly by Hale's death. After the war Wright returned to Coventry where he lived out the rest of his ninety years. The house site is across the street from the Strong House.

The intent of Mr. Seymour was to restore the property to a condition comparable to that which existed during Hale's boyhood when sheep and cattle grazed on the cleared land. After seeing how difficult the project would be, he was easily influenced by two forester friends, Dean Graves of Yale and George Cromie, to turn the land into a forest project for both timber products and wildlife. By 1940, he had planted twelve acres of several evergreen species and tulip poplars. Since 1946 when the state had acquired the land, nineteen acres were planted primarily to evergreen species and oaks. Plantings of chestnuts have been made for the study of the blight disease with trees grown from native nuts found growing on shoots arising from yet-living stumps, and hybrid crosses with Chinese or Japanese parents. Presently there is no replacement for the American chestnut as a timber and nut tree. In the 1950's plantings were made for the study of Christmas tree production. From all the studies made in the Forest, it appears that this study was the most successful experiment. There are 123 growers of Christmas trees in Connecticut.

In general, the Forest, as are all state forests, is under multiple-use management. It is open to hunting by a permit system.

Chapter II

A Brief Early History of Connecticut

The territory now constituting the State of Connecticut was granted by the Plymouth Company in England to Lords Say and Seal, Brooke and others, in 1631. About this time Mr. Winslow, governor of Plymouth, visited the country along the Connecticut River. Finding the Indians friendly and desirous of trading with the prospective new settlers and neighbors, he selected a spot for a trading house.

The Dutch of New York, questioning the purpose of Winslow's trip, sent a company of men to erect a fort at Hartford to prevent the English from forming a settlement in the region. In 1635 a number of families from Massachusetts began settling at Wethersfield and Windsor. In October of 1635 John Winthrop arrived from England, with orders from the company that owned the territory to build a fort at the mouth of the river. In the summer of 1635 the Rev. Thomas Hooker, with approximately one hundred members of his congregation, left Massachusetts and laid the foundation of Hartford.

The Indians in Connecticut were numerous. Thirty years after its settlement there were twenty Indians to one white settler. It is surprising that, with these odds, the settlers persisted and were able to colonize the state. The worst confrontation occurred in 1637 against the Pequots. During this year the Rev. John Davenport, Mr. Eaton and others arrived in Boston. In 1638 they founded the colony of New Haven at Quinnipiac, the Indian name of the region.

In 1639 the people of this colony met in a large barn and adopted a constitution. It provided that "none but members of some church be permitted to vote or take any part in the government; that all voters should meet once a year to choose the officers of the colony; and that the word of God should be their only rule, as well in civil as in religious affairs." This same year the people of Wethersfield and Windsor met at Hartford, and adopted a constitution for the Colony of Connecti-

cut which in many respects was similar to that of the colony of New Haven. About this time George Fenwick and others began a settlement at the mouth of the river, which, in honor of Lords Say and Seal, and Brooke was named Saybrook. For many years the town was independent from the rest of Connecticut, but in 1664 it became a part of the Colony of Connecticut.

On the restoration of Charles II, John Winthrop, governor of Connecticut, was sent to England to obtain from the king a royal charter for the colony of Connecticut. He presented to Charles II a valuable ring which his father, Charles I, had given to Winthrop's grandmother. Being pleased with the gift, the King granted a charter very liberal in its privileges, and which confirmed all the provisions of the constitution. The charter included New Haven, but the colony, unwilling to give up its entire independence, did not submit to the regulations of the charter until 1665, when the two colonies were united.

In 1686, James II, dissatisfied with the degree of liberty which ruled the colonies, ordered the Colony of Connecticut to surrender its charter. The legislature, whose session lasted into the evening, produced the document and placed it on the table. In the heat of the discussion the candles were suddenly extinguished and when they were relighted, the charter was gone. Amid the darkness and confusion, a Captain Wadsworth had seized it, and escaping from the room, concealed it in the hollow of an oak tree.

When James II was driven from the throne, King William confirmed the charter, which henceforth became the basis of the government until the formation of the new constitution in 1818. Until 1698 the assembly sat in one house, but was then divided into two chambers. In 1700 Yale University was founded at Saybrook, but was later moved to New Haven, and was named in honor of Elihu Yale, a merchant from London.

❖ Summary of the Ratification of patent and Deed

The following is the summary prepared in May, 1989, by Attorney David C. Rappe of the "Ratification of patent and deed" of Coventry, Connecticut in the year of April 12, 1716:

WHEREAS, King Charles, II gave to John Winthrop and others the land comprising the Colony of Connecticut (reserving 1/5th of all gold and silver ore).

WHEREAS, there is within the Colony of Connecticut a tract of land bequeathed, on February 29, 1675, by Joshua, and Indian Sachem, in his will to Samuel Willis, John Tallcott and others.

WHEREAS, the Governor and Company, on February 2, 1686, deeded to Mr. Samuel Willis, John Tallcott and others the land given by Joshua. The land was described as abutting north on a pond called Messhenups to Run South to the southern most part of John Tallcott's farm situated and lying in the New Way to Norwich from Hartford, the south bounds being the North bounds of Joshua Sachem's grant to gentlemen of Saybrook, West by mountains within sight of Hartford, East by Wilimantic River.

WHEREAS, it was enacted by the General Court on May 9, 1706 that a six mile square of land within the tract should be laid out for a town and also the General Assembly held at New Haven October 11, 1711 ordered and appointed William Pitkin, Joseph Tallcott, William Whiting, Richard Lord and Nathaniel Rust or any three be empowered to lay bounds for the town to be named "Coventry."

WHEREAS, the General Court on May 12, 1715 enacted that William Pitkin and those holding title by virtue of deeds from the Legatees of Joshua or those who accept the conditions in the act shall have a six mile square within the tract.

Which conditions that William Pitkin and others listed have accepted. The six miles square is granted to William Pitkin and others as the same is held and enjoyed.

The six mile square is described as follows:

East by Willimantic River running West 6 3/4 miles 36 rods;
South partly on land called the Mile and Quarter partly on Hebron bounds.

Thence runs north from Hebron bounds 6 miles 127 rods on land given by Joshua to Samuel Willis and others; thence East 6 miles wanting 8 rods to Willimantic River North on land given by Joshua to Samuel Willis, John Tallcott and other Gentlemen.

Signed by Governor Saltonstall on April 12, 1716.

Accepted by several subscribers.

❖ Comments

The original charter of Charles II to William Penn opens with "Charles the second By the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, defender of the faith etc., To all whome these presents shall come Greetings."

Obligations of Penn to his Sovereign reveal the feudal character of the Charter. The king has him "Yeelding paying therefor to us, our heires and Successors, two Beaver Skins to bee delivered att our said Castle of Windsor, on the first day of January, in every yeare; and also the fifth parte of all Gold and silver Oare."

It is interesting to see in the charter to William Penn the mention of "two Beaver Skins" to be a nominal request. The request was symbolic where the availability of gold and silver was disappointing.

The beaver is a most historic animal. Trappers were moving west away from the shores to a more plentiful supply and availability by trapping and trading

with the native population. What apparently King Charles II was saying by requesting just two beaver skins to be delivered yearly was, "Go west into the new-found-land where the beaver is. Settle the land for the King where gold and silver may also be abundantly found."

The beaver is found in Coventry on the Coon and Fox Club property along the Skungamaug River waterway. It was a thrill to see the characteristic chewing, near the glass factory site, of the poplar tree to fall it to get at the tender shoots and leaves for its livelihood. The game club is removing them by trapping to prevent the characteristic damming of the waterway which the club prefers not be confronted with.

The Coon and Fox Club has a wonderful opportunity to show its appreciation of the beaver as a historic animal by preserving a limited area for what can be a unique historical site. Controlling the area in which the beaver can exist and live trapping to control its population may produce the desired result. For certain periods during the summer the area could be open to view this most historic animal in its natural habitat which would be quite a treat.

Chapter IIIA

The Acquisition of the Town of Coventry

With the retreat of the last glacier and the reestablishment of vegetation closely followed by animal life, the Indians soon established human life in the area which would be known as Connecticut.

Prior to the 1600s the Nipmuck Indians sparsely inhabited both Tolland and Windham counties. Their principal seats were in the south townships of this part of Massachusetts. South of them was Pequot country. The Pequots, the most warlike of the Connecticut tribes, whose name means "destroyers," decimated the Nipmucks. The Pequots were probably a branch of the Mohegans and their dialect was closely related to Mohegan.

The Pequot-Mohegan boundaries, extended by the conquests of Sassacus and Uncas, included all of Connecticut east of the Connecticut River, and west of it they dominated four tribes, as well as all of Long Island except the extreme west end.

Trumbull described the Indian so:

"The Connecticut, and indeed all the New England Indians, were large straight, well proportioned men. Their bodies were firm and active, capable of enduring the greatest fatigues and hardships. Their passive courage was almost incredible. When tortured in the most cruel manner; though flayed alive, though burnt with fire, cut or torn limb from limb, they would not groan nor show any signs of distress."

When the first English settlers arrived on the Connecticut River in 1633, Uncas, chief of the Mohegans, quarreled with the Pequot chieftain, Sassacus. Uncas was driven from his territory and lived with a few followers in the vicinity of Hartford. Uncas was politic and cunning, and saw an opportunity through a friendship with the English of regaining his stature and even overpowering his enemies. The Mohegan tribe had been, numerically, a feeble clan, but it regained its strength through the number of Pequot refugees who were received into it.

(For every loss the Pequots suffered, the Mohegans gained - a numerical gain of two.)

The ensuing war with the English (1637), known as the Pequot War, broke the power of the mighty Sassacus and the Pequot tribe forever. Uncas was faithful to his promise of support for the English. The immediate results of the Pequot War which seemed most beneficial to the English were, in addition to acquiring of a large territory, the relief from the menace of attacks by the Indians.

By 1638 quite a number of immigrants from England had arrived and the conquered territory was taken up by groups of these new settlers. The tributary tribes were glad to see the English overthrow the Pequots and seize their land, because they expected to be thereby relieved of paying tribute. They didn't at first realize that steady growth of the colony would before long deprive them of their own hunting and growing grounds. In their early enthusiasm the Indians were willing and anxious to serve the white man in any way possible, asking only for friendship and protection in exchange for acting as guides, hunters, messengers and servants. With increased authority, Uncas, however, began to exact more and more of his subjects, including the smaller tribes.

Uncas, because of his relationship to the Pequots, claimed a part of the former Pequot territory. This resulted in an agreement by which Uncas gave up any claim to the territory along the shore in a strip along Long Island Sound roughly twelve miles wide, and was given control of what is now the northern part of New London County and the southern part of Windham and Tolland Counties.

Except for petty disturbances the next and the last great Indian war took place in 1675-1676. It was waged outside Connecticut territory, and was known as King Philip's War. The fighting took place in Rhode Island and Massachusetts where the towns and inhabitants suffered terribly during the following year. When, in the summer of 1676, King Philip was killed, the war came to an end.

The Indian wars in Southern New England were over, and the Indians were subject to the rule of the English. They had seen their lands and their power constantly diminish. After the death of Uncas in 1682 or 1683, the unity of the various tribes ended and each lived independently, engaging in no warfare either

among themselves or the English. Of Indian disturbances in what is now Tolland County, there is little to note. Apparently very few, if any, Indians had permanent habitation in this section.

Uncas having possession of the largest amount of the territory was constantly deeding large tracks of land for little or no consideration, and this practice was followed after his death by his son, Owaneco. Found in Harwood's History of Eastern Connecticut is a copy of a deed signed by Uncas, September 28, 1640, as follows:

"September 28th, 1640. This writing witnesseth that I, Uncas, alias Poquaiom, sachem of the Mohegans, have given and freely granted unto the governor and magistrates of the English upon Connecticut River, all the land that doth belong, or ought of right to belong, to me, by what name soever it be called, whether Mogehan, Yomtake, Aquapanksuks, Potkstannocks, Wippawocks, Massapeake or any other; which they may forever hereafter dispose of as their own, either by settling plantations of the English there, or otherwise, as shall seem good to them; reserving only for my own use that ground which at present is planted and in that kind improved by us; and I do hereby promise and engage myself not to suffer, so far as I have power, any English or any other to set down or plant within any of those limits which before this grant did belong to me, without the consent or approbation of the said magistrates or Governor of Connecticut aforesaid-and this I do upon mature consideration and good advice, freely and without any constraint, in witness whereof I hereunto put my hand.

The mark of Poquaiom alias Uncas

"In presence of Thomas Stanton.

The mark of Poxen alias Foxon.

"The said English did also freely give to the said Uncas five and a half yards Trucking Cloth, with Stockings and other things, as a gratuity.

"A true copy of Record.

Examined by George Wyllys, Secretary

"This is a true copy of a copy examined by Daniel Huntington, Jun.,
Clerk of the court of Commissioners."

It is interesting to see the mention "...reserving only for my use that ground which at present is planted and in that kind improved by us..." The impression that we seem to hold is that the Indians in this area were not involved in agriculture but were hunters and fishermen.

The disposal of a large amount of land which had undoubtedly been previously disposed of in part is directed in the will of Attawanhood whose Christian name was Joshua, son of Uncas, which is quoted as an interesting document of the period. It is interesting in that it directed that his sons shall be educated in English schools and that for himself, he is to be buried "like an Englishman" The will as taken from Harwood follows:

"Pattopage, February 27, 1675:

"I, Joshua sachem, son of Uncas, sachem living near Eight Mile Island on the river of Connecticut and within the bounds of Lyme, being sick in body but of good and perfect memory and not knowing how soon I may depart this life, do make this my last Will and Testament, viz.:

"Imprimis-I give and bequeath all that tract of land lying on both sides of Ungoshet River abutting westward to the mountains in sight of Hartford and Hartford bounds north to Major Tallcot's farm. Northeast to Wattachagoische upon the east side bounded eight miles in breadth from the mountains eastward and to carry the breadth throughout the length being eighteen miles and according to a draught of map drawn and subscribed with my own hands, bearing date with these presents to Capt. Robert Chapman, to Lieut. William Pratt, to Mr. Thomas Buckingham, to each and every one of them 5,000 acres, To William Parker, sen., Abraham Post, Samuel Jones, John Clark, sen., Thomas Durkee,

Richard Ely, and John Fenner, to each and every one of them 4,000 acres; to Francis Bushnal, Lieut. Edward Shipman, sen., and Mr. John Haskall (Wastal) to each and every one of them 3,000 acres; to John Pratt, John Parker, John Chapman, William Lord, jun., Samuel Cogswell, Lydia Raymond, John Tully, Richard Raymond, sen., Abraham Chalker, William Bushnell, sen., and to Joseph Hyngham, sen., to each and every one of them 2,000 acres; to John Bushnell and Thomas Morton to each of them 500 acres; and it is my will that what quantity of land there is left over, or over and above the quantities given, and bequeathed as aforesaid, shall be divided proportionately, according to each man's legacy.

"Item () I give and bequeath all that tract of land lying from the mountains in sight of Hartford northward to the pond called Shenaps, East Willimantic River south by the said river, west by Hartford bounds except three hundred acres already sold to Major John Talcott, and 200 acres to Capt. Thomas Buell, according to a map as aforesaid, viz: to (1) Mr. James Richards, to (2) Mr. Samuel Willis, (3) Capt. Thomas Buell, (4) Mr. Joseph Hayes, (5) Mr. Richard Lord, (6) Major John Talcott, (7) John Allyn, (8) Eleazar Way, (9) Bartholomew Barnard, (10) Nicholas Olmsted, (11) Henry Howard, (12) Mr. Joseph Fitch, (13) Mr. William Pitkin to be equally divided among them into as many parts as there are persons; also (14) Nathaniel Willets to have an equal proportion with them.

"Item - I give and bequeath all that tract of land lying to the westward of Appaquogue Pond eight broad and according to the map aforesaid, viz: to Capt. John Mason, to Lieut. Samuel Mason, Mr. David Mason, Mr. James Fitch, sen., Mr. James Fitch, jun., John Burchard, Lieut. Thomas Tracy, Thomas Adgate, Simeon Huntington, Thomas Lefingwel, Lieut. John Olmstead, William Bachuus, William Hyde, Hugh Calkins to be divided and distributed amongst them and every one of them as my father Uncas shall see met and convenient.

"Item - I give and bequeath to my two sons, all that tract of land between Mipmug Path, and the lands given to the people of Saybrook, and

according to the map, aforesaid, and in case either of my sons die before he attains the age of twenty years then to the survivors. And in case both of them shall die before they attain the age of twenty years, as aforesaid, then to my daughter. But in case both of my Sons and Daughter die before they attain the age aforesaid, then it is my will, that the said lands go to my father and his successors. And furthermore it is my will that these Indians who have lately lived and planted on some part of these lands should not plant there any more, but that they should live under my father Uncas. And it is my desire that Capt. Chapman, Lieut. Pratt, and the legatees of Saybrook, see that this part of my will be performed and that my children be not wronged. Also I give and bequeath to my two sons, forty acres of land already broke up at Podunk and also a plat of land about a half a mile square lying in the last addition to Hartford bounds and in case either die, then to my two squaws or the survivors of them. Further my will is, that my children be brought up for the first four years hence forward with Trusty, and their mother to teach them English and that they should live at or near Saybrook, and at the expiration of four years I desire that my children be kept at the English school and for their maintenance I give them five and thirty pounds, which is due to me from Major John Talcott, Capt. John Allyn, Mr. James Richards and Mr. Richard Lord, to be improved for clothing them, as they shall need.

"Also my will is that my land at Podunk, being forty acres broke up the rents thereof being improved for schooling and educating my children. Also it is my desire that they come not among the Connecticut Indians. And, furthermore, it is my will, that the thirty-five pounds aforesaid, and the rents of my lands at Podunk be received by Capt. Robert Chapman, Lieut. William Pratt and Mr. Thomas Buckingham to be disposed to my children as aforesaid, and I desire all my legatees to have respect to my children especially I leave them to the care of said Capt. Chapman, Lieut. Pratt and Mr. Buckingham.

"Also I desire that Ingham Bayonet and Thomas Cooper, my counselors be counselors of my children. And whereas Mr. John Wadsworth and Mr. Samuel Steel are indebted to me thirty shillings, it is my desire that

it be payed to Mr. Eleazar Way. Also I desire Trusty may not go to the Narragansetts. I have chosen him to have the oversight of my children as aforesaid. Also I desire to be buried at Saybrook, in a coffin, in an English manner and my legatees at Saybrook will see this done. My guns I give to my sons, four to each of them, my pistol to my eldest son. Also my seven brass kettles, and four iron pots, to be divided among my three children; also it is my will and desire that Capt. George Dennison and Mr. Daniel Wetherell be included with Capt. John Mason, and the rest of Norwich to come in with them, for a portion as my father Uncas shall see fit and upon that trust.

"This with what is written on other sides I declare and publish to be last Will and Testament in Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal in Pattopoque this 27 day of February 1665. (Seal.)

"Signed, sealed and published in the presence of us.

"John Dennison
Gersham Palmer,
William Pratt, Jr.

The mark of
X
Joshua, Sachem

"The mark of
X
Uncas.

"The mark of
X
Trust, Slave."

The colonists set aside reservations for the exclusive use of the various tribes, and as the tribes diminished in numbers, so also diminished the boundaries of the reservations. These reservations were managed for the Indians by overseers appointed by the General Court, and who had the power to lease sections of the land to settlers, with the result that the larger part of the reservation in some cases was claimed by the lessees after a term of years, and in many cases held by them as their own property.

The English have been criticized in their treatment of the Indians, but it was a case of survival. As strangers in a new found land inhabited by native people, the English in many ways were instructed and helped to adapt to a new environment. It was the Indian who furnished seed of corn, squash, pumpkin and beans as well as taught the English proper growing techniques. The Indians also explained the use of medicinal herbs. Many of these found their way in the "Pharmacopoeia" commonly and more conveniently referred to as the "Lititz Pharmacopoeia" entitled Pharmacopoeia of Simples & Efficacious Remedies for the Use of the Military Hospital. Belonging to the Army of the Federated States of America, dated 1778. It was completely printed in Latin.

The first Pharmacopoeia of the United States of America dated 1820 and the second "Pharmacopoeia..." dated 1830 through the most recent "Pharmacopoeia..." contained and still contain materia medica (medical material) of Indian origin. Some items of Indian origin were dropped as new and improved substitutes were found and developed.



Indian Autographs.

- 1, UNCAS. 2, OWENECO. 3, ATTAWANHOOD. 4, MAJOR BEN UNCAS. 5, MAMOHET, (son of Oweneco.) 6, MAHACHEMO. 7, MOMAUGUIN. 8, ANSANTAWAE. 9, TONTONIMO, (of Milford.) 10, SHACMPISHUH. 11, MONTOWESE. 12, ACKENACH. 13, PETHUS. 14, AHAMO. 15, NASSAHEGON. 16, CASSASINAMON. 17, HERMONGARRET. 18, WERAUMAUG. 19, CATOONAH.

Chapter IIIB

A Review of the Land Growth of Coventry

King Charles the Second in the fourteenth year of his reign (1674) "give and grant" to John Winthrop Esq. and several others the English Colony of Connecticut, "Reserving only the payment of one fifth part of all Gold and Silver ore..." The first English settlers arrived in Connecticut on the Connecticut River in 1633.

The ensuing war with the English (1637), known as the Pequot War, broke the power of the mighty Sassacus and the Pequot tribe forever. Uncas, a Mohegan Sachem, because of his relationship to the Pequots, claimed a part of the former Pequot territory which included the northern part of New London County and the southern part of Windham and Tolland Counties. By 1638 quite a number of immigrants from England had arrived to settle the land lost to the English by the Pequots. As mentioned in the "Ratification of Patent and Deed of Coventry in the year of April 12, 1716." that within the Colony of Connecticut there is a tract of land of unknown acres given and bequeathed by Joshua, third son of Uncas, in and by his last Will and Testament bearing the date February 29, 1675 to Samuel Willis, John Tallcott, Esq., and several others of Hartford and Capt. Joseph Fitch of Windsor. This land given and bequeathed by Joshua was approved and allowed by the General Court assembled at Hartford May 8, 1679. The Governor and Company of the Colony of Connecticut on February 1, 1686 the second year of the reign of King James the Second "give and grant and confirm this land to the 14 Gentlemen of Hartford and Joseph Fitch of Windsor:

Samuel Willis	Mr. Joseph Haynes	Mr. William Pitkin
Major John Tallcott	Capt. Thomas Bull	Capt. Nicholas Olmstead
Capt. John Allin	Mr. Joseph Fitch	Mr. Thomas Barnham
Mr. James Richards	Mr. Ebeazer Way	Mr. Nathaniel Willit
Mr. Richard Lord	Mr. Bartholomew Barnard	Mr. Henry Howard

The land given by Joshua is described by Attorney David C. Rappe in his Summary of the Ratification of Patent and Deed of Coventry, Connecticut in the year of April 12, 1716.

The General Court enacted on May 9, 1706 that a six mile square of land within the tract should be laid out for a town and also the General Assembly at New Haven on October 11, 1711 ordered and appointed William Pitkin, Joseph Tolcott, William Whiting, Richard Lord and Nathaniel Rust or any three of them empowered to lay bounds for the town to be named "Coventry." The town was officially named "Coventry" and incorporated on May 5, 1712.

Coventry in Connecticut was the first town named "Coventry" in the colonies. Information on how or who was responsible for naming the town is lacking. Being the first Coventry in the colonies, it undoubtedly was named for Coventry in Warwickshire, England.

Joseph Talcott, the surveyor, eventually became governor of Connecticut. He was the first governor born within the confines of its borders. He served in this office from 1724 until his death, a period of seventeen years, longer than any other governor except Winthrop.

Governor Joseph Talcott, son of Colonel John and Helena (Wakeman) Talcott, was born in Hartford, November 16, 1669 and died October 11, 1741 while still governor. He lived in Hartford.

Although the committees of 1706 and 1711 appointed to lay out the township it was in dispute by the Windsor men since their first settlement of Tolland in 1713. It was then and for many years thereafter claimed that the Tolland southern border was one mile further south than it was finally found to be.

The General Assembly held at Hartford, May 12, 1720 chose James Wadsworth, John Hall and Thomas Kimberly to lay out the bounds of Tolland based on locating the north and west lines of the town. The decision favored Coventry's claim to the mile in question, but there were subsequent negotiations between these towns upon this subject.

The towns of Coventry and Tolland appointed a committee of three from each town to finally agree about the dividing line. The committee consisted of Samuel Parker, Joseph Strong and Thomas Root, of Coventry; and Joseph Hatch, Daniel Eaton and Noah Grant, of Tolland, and met on February 6, 1722. They

agreed that the dividing line between the two towns should be the line run by the three men chosen by the General Assembly, May 12, 1720.

The General Court on May 12, 1715 enacted that William Pitkin and those holding title by virtue of deeds from the Legatees of Joshua or those who accepted the conditions in the act "shall have its new town six miles square within the tract, conditions which William Pitkin, Joseph Tallcott, Ichobod Wells, Joseph Olmstead, Senr., John Howard, Samuel Howard and all others have fully accepted and complied with us to their respective parts or portions of land within the town of Coventry." The Legatees Committee completed their survey of the town bounds on September 30, 1715.

The six miles square of land now called "Coventry" is described by Attorney David C. Rappe in his Summary of the Ratification of Patent and Deed of Coventry, Connecticut in the year of April 12, 1716.

In the description of the six mile square area of Coventry is the mention of "Mile and Quarter," a narrow strip of land a mile and a quarter long bordering on the southern border of Coventry to the middle of Hop River.

The first acquisition of land in the Mile and Quarter occurred about 1700 when John Mason entered the area exercising the "Doctrine of Squatters Sovereignty." Others followed suit feeling free to the acquisition of property because the Mile and Quarter lacked any government of its own. Because there was no existence of a government, lawlessness existed. Coventry had petitioned the legislature in 1715 that the settlers in the Mile and Quarter become a part of Coventry in order to bring peace to the area. The legislature repeatedly refused to take action but later fearing the worsening of the lawlessness, the General Assembly annexed the Mile and Quarter to Coventry.

According to Philip D. Brass in his History of Andover, "the Assembly in 1718 extended Lebanon to the south bank of the Hop River and Coventry to the middle of the river in October, 1723." With the southern linear half of the river unclaimed, it appears to be up for grabs.

Another item needing clarification is the definition of Hop in reference to Hop River and Hop Valley. It does not refer to the Common Hop (Humulus lupulus) which is used for giving a bitter flavor to malt liquors, and as a tonic and soporific (inducing or tending to induce sleep). Hop is pronounced and generally spelled like "hope." In a communication by Capt. Benajah Bushnell to Governor Talcott "Dated in Norwich, Feb. the 19th Day, A.D. 1735/6" Bushnell mentioned that "Capt. Peter Mason Sould Willington, and Great Deall of land about Hope River..."Reference found in Collection of the Connecticut Historical Society, Vol IV, page 349. Another reference found in Messier and Aronson, The Roots of Coventry, Connecticut states "...showing Coventry in Windham County and bounded by the 'Hope River' on the south and west."

The Oxford English Dictionary (Compact Edition) 1971 defines "Hope" as "A small enclosed valley, esp. 'a smaller opening branching out from the main dale, and running up to the mountain ranges; the upland part of a mountain valley'..." A river flowing down the Hope is called Hope River but in the present case the river is spelled Hop River.

With the last two acquisitions of a mile along the northern line of Coventry obtained from Tolland, February 6, 1722 and the unclaimed Mile and Quarter, October, 1723, it appeared that it was time for Coventry to sacrifice some of its territory.

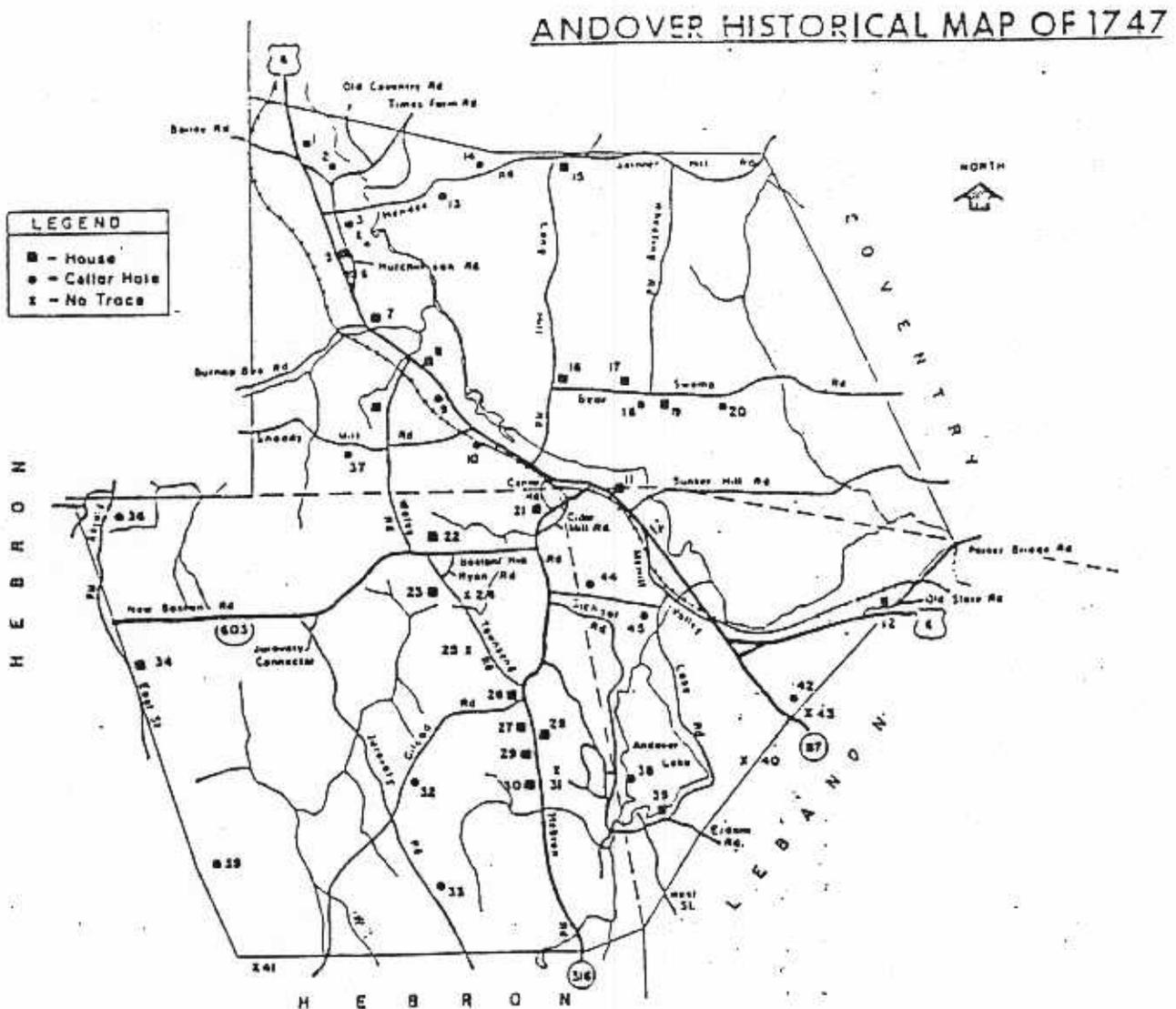
According to the publication A History of the Ecclesiastical Society and 1st Congregational Church, Andover, Connecticut, 1747-1772, "On April 1743 a petition to the Honorable General Assembly to form an Ecclesiastical Society in what is now Andover was signed by "14 persons from Coventry, 18 from Hebron and 14 from "Lebanon Crank" now Columbia.

The signers of the above petition lived at the outer fringes of their respective towns and it was a hardship to get to town meetings and worship services especially when the roads were muddy and covered with snow. Their petition was rejected.

The petition was finally granted in May 1747. The Ecclesiastical Society "was not a town; its inhabitants were still legal residents of Hebron, Coventry and

Lebanon. In civil and political matters, they were under the parent towns' jurisdiction..."

The May 1747 session of the General Assembly granted the petition "signed by Thomas Webster, Nathaniel Kingsberry, Nathaniel House, and others (not named), part of the First and Second Societies in Coventry, part of the Second Society in Lebanon, and part of the inhabitants of Hebron, praying to be made a distinct Ecclesiastical Society with all the acts and laws of this colony, and shall be known by the name of Andover."



The whole upper half
obtained from Coventry

The lower left part
obtained from Hebron

The lower right part
obtained from Lebanon
now Columbia

Chapter IVA

The Earliest Settlers of Coventry

The earliest white settlers of Coventry mentioned are Nathaniel Rust, Samuel Birchard, Benjamin Howard and a family named Carpenter.

Nathaniel Rust (grandson of Henry who came from Hingham, Norfolk County, England, 1633-35 settled in Hingham, Massachusetts and the son of Israel who moved to Northampton where he married) deserves credence as one of the builders of the first home in Coventry.

Nathaniel left Northampton after serving in King William's War (known as the War of Grand Alliance in Europe) 1689-97 as recorded in the History of Northampton Massachusetts, 1898, by James Russell Trumbull. Joseph Parson in his account book mentions that Nathaniel spent the day of September 16, 1696, with his military detachment at Deerfield, Massachusetts. On leaving Northampton he followed south along the Connecticut River to Hartford. While at Hartford he was involved in the following activities before and after arriving in the territory of Wangumbaug as recorded in the office of Register of Deeds, Book A., Springfield, Massachusetts as reported by Rust, Albert D. 1891, *Record of the Rust Family*, Waco, Texas:

"Nathaniel Rust gave a mortgage of full two acres of land with house and barn in Northampton To Richard Lord in the country of Hampshire, in the Province of Massachusetts Bay in consideration of ten pounds already recieved of Mr. Richard Lord but could redeem it by paying him the full sum of ten pounds twelve shillings in current money at his house in Hartford at or before the 24 day of July next year

In presence of us

Nathaniel Rust and a seal

Nathaniel Dwight
Mehitable Dwight
Joseph Hawley

Nathaniel Rust personally appeared before me the subscriber, one of his Maj Justices of the Peace this 15th of Aug 1699 & did acknowledge this instrument to be his act & deed Coram Joseph Hawley.

Aug. 16 1699 this mortgage was received in the Register's office & was then and there recorded from the original

Hartford July 17, 1702 Received of Nathaniel Rust eleven pounds & four shillings cash which is in full satisfaction for y^e within written instrument bearing date July 24 1699 and registered in page 254 of the first book of records.

Mr. Richard Lord personally appeared before me one of her Majesties Justices of ye Peace for the county of Hartford and acknowledges the above written receipt to be his voluntary act and deed. John Haynes-J.P.

On the 8th Day of December, 1703, this receipt was received and was then Registered from the original--

p-John Pynchon Reg^r."

On leaving Hartford Nathaniel directd his course eastward to a wild and unsettled wilderness and there made the first "pitch" in what is now Coventry, Tolland County, Connecticut. The course followed by Nathaniel was along the Olde Connecticut Path (generally along U.S. Route 44), passed through the Notch at Bolton and continuing along the Path into the territory of Wangumbaug which was renamed Coventry. Finding two closely flowing sizable rivers (Skungamaug and Willimantic), he stopped to reconnoiter the area and finding also a most beautiful lake (Wangumbaug) with its surrounding fertile land, his mind was immediately made up where he was to make his first "pitch." This was in 1700; on the west side of this beautiful lake he erected the first house ever built there.

State's Attorney James Huntington of Woodbury, Conn. writes the author (Albert D. Rust), under date of October 25, 1887,: "The statement that Nath'l Rust built the first house in Coventry is correct as I have been taught by tradi-

tion and I know very well the place where he built his house on the west side of the little lake in South Coventry." Under date of January 28, 1890, the same writer says: "That Rust of old who first built a hut in Coventry, and whom Rev. Marvin Root (the historian of Coventry) in his historical address of Coventry designated as one of the founders, the doctrine of Squatter Sovereignty, pitched his camp in one of the loveliest spots in all our state, by the shore of the beautiful Wangamabaug lake in South Coventry."

Nathaniel was married before he went to Coventry and a part of his ten children were born in Northampton before he left for Coventry with his family, which was in 1709. The town records do not show that any of his children were born in Coventry, but it is probable his last three were born here. However, all his sons and probably his daughters as well, settled and raised families here. Nathaniel's father died in Northampton November 11, 1712. Nathaniel received as his portion of his father's estate 61 pounds, 16 shillings and two pence. He also owned the "Samuel Parson's place" in Northampton before 1709 when it was bought by Samuel Lancton.

Nathaniel Rust was not only the first to settle in Coventry, he was also one of the prominent men as long as he lived. In the MS. history commenced by Rev. Mr. Root, his name is met with on nearly every page.

"The following are only a few of the instances where the name of Nathaniel Rust, Sen., appears on the records of the town of which he may be said to be the father. We quote from the MS. history of Rev. Mr. Root.

'The oldest land document embracing the present site of Coventry was the will of Attawanhood, or Joshua. Sachem, son of Uncas, the Sachem of the Mohegan tribe of Indians, now on record in Windham, Conn.'

'The original territory called Coventry was six miles square, but that part embracing Coventry was known for many years as the 'Mile and a quarter.' In the General Court, May 9, 1706, in session at Hartford, William Pitkin, William Whitney, Joseph Talcott, Richard Lord and Nathaniel Rust or any three of them was appointed a committee to lay

Nathaniel Rust or any three of them was appointed a committee to lay out the town, admit inhabitants, etc. In the October session of the General Court, Oct. 11, 1711, 'It is ordered and enacted that this Assembly shall call the said town Coventry and that the brand mark for their horses shall be this figure'. The committee appointed by the General Court proceeded to lay out the town and reported the boundary line all of which appears on record in the Coventry town books. The General Court. 8 May, 1712, passed the act of incorporation of Coventry.

Secretary of upper House
H. Wyllys
Clerk of lower House
R. Bushnell''

Coventry in Connecticut was the first town named "Coventry" in the colonies. We have no information on how or who was responsible for its naming. Being the first Coventry in the colonies, it undoubtedly was named for Coventry, Warwickshire, England.

"The first town meeting for the choice of officers was 3 Dec., 1714. The Selectmen electd at this meeting were: Nathaniel Rust, Timothy Alcott, Samuel Parker, David Lee and James Pike; Town Clerk, Thomas Root; Grandjurymen, Ebenezer Alexander and Benj. James; Listers, John Crane and Ebenezer Edwards; Inspectors, Benj. Carpenter and William Long; Tavern Keeper, Nathaniel Rust.

'Nathaniel Rust lived where Wm. O. Gardner now resides and kept Tavern for many years. He held offices in town frequently and it will be remembered that he was one of the proprietor's committee to lay out the town in 1711. To what extent is not known, but he was, as appears from the town records, a proprietor in the undivided lands in ancient Wangombaug.'

Chosen one of the Selectman, 5 Dec., 1715

Chosen Tavern Keeper, 3 Dec., 1716, p. 30

Chosen Tavern Keeper, 10 Dec., 1717, p. 31

Was on a committee for re-measuring the town plat, 11 April, 1720, p. 16.

Sued for trespass in 'perambulating' the line between Tolland and Coventry, 11 March 1722; town votes to pay the fine, p. 17.

On committee to 'perambulate ye town line on ye south bounds of ye town,' 20 Jan., 1729-30. p. 205.

Names of those admitted as inhabitants on and prior to Aril 26, 1730: Daniel Rust, Nathaniel Rust, Sen., Nathaniel Rust, Jr., Noah Rust, Sanuel Rust and Simeon Rust. p. 35.

Elected Moderator at a 'Legall' town meeting, Jan. 5, 1732-3.

Elected Moderator of town meeting 11 Dec., 1732. p. 220.

'At a Legall Town meeting held in Coventry, Feb. ye 15 A.D.

1734, Peter Buel, Esqr. was chosen Moderator for Day then Humphrey Davenport and Nathaniel Rust, sen. was chose to Audiate accounts with ye farmer school commity.' p. 226.

Chosen Moderator of a 'Legall' town meeting 10 Dec., 1733.

Chosen School Committee, 27 Jan., 1734-5. p. 230.

'At a Legall town meeting held in Coventry, ye 25 Day of March, A.D. 1734-5 Joseph Strong Junior was chose one for a committee and added to ye farmer committee to audiate accounts with ye farmer shool committee, that is Mr. James Badcock, Mr. Nathaniel Rust and Mr. Aaron Cody.'

'Then voted' (at the same meeting)' that Peter Buel Esqr. Nathaniel Rust, Senr. & Sargent Ebenezer Root were a committee to Demand and Receive ye whole of the school money and that they are fully impowered to dispose of the same for the use of ye school and to improve it for ye benefit of ye school to the best of their discretion.' pp. 231-2.

Elected one of the Selectmen of the town, 6 Dec., 1736, p. 241.

Was empowered to 'exchange lands,' 13 Dec., 1736.

Was elected Moderator at a 'Legall' town meeting, 24 June, 1737. p. 244.

The records of the town show a residence there of Nathaniel's descendants as late as 1792, and the land records show that some of the family were there as late as 1806.

His will date 1760; wife's name Mary Rust; gives to his sons and grandsons of 'my beloved son Nathaniel Rust, deceased, to Simeon Rust, to Mathias, to Malatiah son of Malatiah Rust, to Hehial and Joseph Rust, etc.' Gives to his daughters Experience Gurley and Lydia Herrick. Samuel Rust and Ezekiel Herrick he appoints as executors of his will."

Their children were:

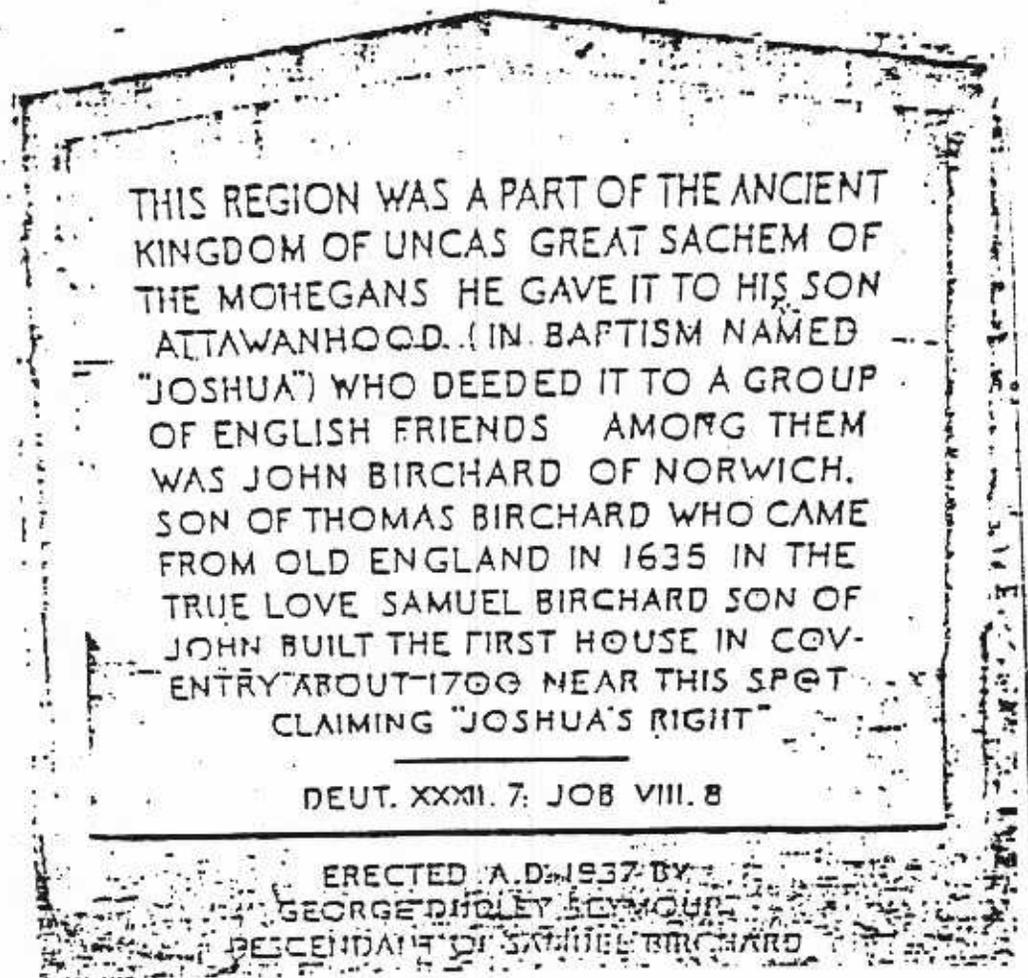
1. Experience, born Nov., 1693; married about 1712, Samuel Gurley, of Coventry and later of Mansfield, Conn., born ; died 23 Feb., 1760 aet, 74.
2. Nathaniel, Jr., born Dec., 1695; married Hannah Hatch.
3. Margaret, born 11 May, 1698; died 18 Sept., 1712. This was the first death recorded in Coventry.
4. Lydia, born 20 Nov., 1700; died 2 Dec., 1703.
5. Samuel, born 10 May, 1703; married Sarah Hawkins.
6. Mary, born 7 July, 1705; died 3 Nov. 1706.
7. Noah, born 24 July, 1708; married Keziah Strong.
8. Daniel, born 18 Feb. 1711; married Anna White and Mary Mead.
9. Elizabeth, born 11 June 1713, married Daniel Herrick, 1731.
10. Lydia (Lediah or Ledia), born 9 May, 1716; married 8 Feb., 1734-5, Joseph Herrick, died 1764.

Chapter IVB

The Earliest Settlers of Coventry

❖ Samuel Birchard and Benjamin Howard

Some accounts of early Coventry also credit Samuel Birchard and Benjamin Howard as the first settlers. The following wording on the marker below claims Samuel "built the first house in Coventry about 1700 near this spot." "Near this spot" is situated on the property of house number 1726 on South Street, Coventry, Connecticut.



The bottom of the monument states:

ERECTED A.D. 1927 BY:
GEORGE DUDLEY SEYMOUR
DECENDANT OF SAMUEL BIRCHARD

The following is taken from Peterson, Maude Gridley, 1912, **Historic Sketch of Coventry, Connecticut:**

COPY OF DOCUMENT IN CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY
(Towns and Lands, Vol, 5, P. 29)

Testimony. Benjamin Howard of full age Testifyeth that about 14 years ago I lived at Wangumbaug now Coventry and I was Settled by the proprietors of said Land Given by Joshua Indian Sachem Viz. by Mr. William Pitkin, Col. Whiting and the rest of the Committee Improved by the propieter and that Sam^l Birchard with his family lived there at the Same Time and I often heard him Say upon the Same Right. the wife of Ben^a Howard Testifyrth unto the above written. Sworn in Court, Auguft 17th, 1714.

A True Copy on file Test Hez Wyllys Clerk.

In this testimony reference is made that Benjamin Howard "lived at Wungumbaug now Coventry ...14 years ago ..." and that "I was Settled there by the proprietors of said Land ..." This testimony was "Sworn in Court, August 17th, 1714." The accuracy of this testimony is up for questioning.

"In the General Court, May 9, 1706, in session in Hartford, William Pitkin, William Whiting, Joseph Talcott, Richard Lord and Nathaniel Rust or any three of them was appointed a committee to lay out the town, admit inhabitants, etc." according to Albert D. Rust in his *Record of the Rust Family*. It wasn't until March 1708 that the town was surveyed for admitting inhabitants in 1709 so settlements sooner than 1709 were not made "by the proprietors of said Land" so this puts in question that Benjamin Howard was settled in Coventry in the year of 1700.

Also up for questioning is "that Samuel Birchard with his family lived here at the Same Time and I often heard him Say upon the Same Right."

COPY OF DOCUMENT IN THE CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY

(Towns and Lands, V. 29)

The Testimony of John Meakins and Samuel Meakins both of Lawfull age--
Testify and say, that four or five Years ago at the Least: Last Michaelmas,
Wee being out in the Wilderness, looking for horfes,, Took up our Lodging at
a houfe in the Wilderness on the Southward Side of a Pond now called Coventry
Pond, which houfe went by the name of Birchard's houfe and went Round
sd pond and Saw no houfe there at that time besides that which Wee Lay in
and having Occasion to go into the Wilderness that way the Last was two
years since & coming to the above 8^d Pond of place Callled Coventry and
Wee Saw on both Sides of the pond houfes built and Land fenced and im-
proved which Land was reputed Joshua's right and claimed by M^r Richards
and M^r Pitkin and Sundry other Gentlemen of Hartford.

Hartford April 17th. 1741--Sworn in Court April 17th, 1714.

Test. Hez Wyllys Clerk.

A true Copy on file--Test. Hez. Wyllys Clerk.

The above testimony states that Samuel Birchard had a home in "the
Southward Side of a pond now called Coventry Pond" about 1700.
There appears to be no recorded evidence that Samuel lived much
before 1709 except for the information on George Dudley Seymour's
monument erected in Coventry.

Frisbie, Ellen Morgan in A Sacrifice of "Seventy-six" - Nathan Hale claims
that "In 1710-1711, the home of Samuel Birchard, the original settler, was the
only house in the vicinity of the beautiful sheet of water, called Shenpipie by
Joshua, which later received the name of Lake Wamgumbaug.

The following is the "Ratification of Patent and Deed of Coventry in
the year of April 12, 1716."

Quantity of acres not Certainly Known given and bequeathed by
Joshua, an Indian Sachem in and by his Last Will and Testament

bearing Date February 29th 1675 to ... and several other Gentlemen of Hartford (a total of fourteen) and Capt. Joseph Fitch of Windsor relation being had to the Said Last Will on Record doth and will more fully appear which said Joshua's Last Will and by the Geovner and Company of His Majesties English Colony of Connecticut in General Cort assembled at Hartford May 8th 1679 is approved and allowed ...

The last will and testament of Joshua gave and bequeathed land to "Gentlemen of Hartford ... and Capt. Joseph of Windsor." No mention is made of John Birchard's of Norwich involvement as a Beneficiary of the will. There exists the possibility that Samuel Birchard may have built an earlier home by exercising the privilege of squatters sovereignty.

❖ A Family Named Carpenter

Also, we have "A Family Named Carpenter" as one of the earliest settlers of Coventry mentioned briefly and inconclusively by Minor, Mrs. William. She states:

"However, a description of the old Connecticut Path, which was most probably followed by the residents of Northampton, when they migrated to Hartford and that area, indicates that it came through this territory, through the cut in Bolton, or Bolton Notch. This would, in my mind, give credence to the claims that a family named Carpenter made the first settlement here."

As we have seen, Nathaniel Rust was involved in business dealings in Hartford as early as July 24, 1699. This involvement increased his curiosity as to what layed east in the territory of Connecticut. He travelled the Olde Connecticut Path (present U.S. Rte. 44) through Bolton Notch into Wangumbaug (Coventry). Finding two sizeable rivers (Skungamaug and Willimantic) he then continued south through very fertile fields until he came upon Lake Wangumbaug where according to Marvin Root, Nathaniel "pitched his camp on one of the loveliest spots in all our state, by the shore of the beautiful Wangumbaug Lake in South Coventry." This was in 1700. This habitation was used as temporary quarters while on business in Hartford. This also insured

possession of this "loveliest Spot" for his family who came down in a group of twelve families from Northampton in 1709.

In the copy of the original map of Coventry 1707-1708, Vol. 1, Coventry Town Book, drawn by Thomas Root, town clerk, there exists in lot Number 1 the name " Sam Birchard." In the Coventry Land Records, Vol. 1 in the distribution of the original rights to the house lot, lot Number 1 went to legatee Barth Barnard's heirs.

How did Birchard get, what appears, possession of lot Number 1? Samuel Birchard may have claimed this area by exercising the privilege of squatters sovereignty. This right might have been honored by the Legatee Committee. If so, why did not Barth Barnard's heirs receive its fifth allotment as given each of the other fourteen legatees? The next possibility appears to be a business arrangement may have been made with Barth Barnard's heirs.

The first roads were paths travelled by foot made by continual walking of individuals no wider than that required for passage. The earliest paths were made by Indians who preceded the colonists. Indians have also utilized paths made by large animals such as deer and bears. As colonists arrived, new paths were also made and with the introduction of oxen and horses the paths were widened especially when drags were used. The first drags were logs dragged from the forest to be used for building their first house on arrival in this their new primitive environment. Later flat boats were made to drag supplies.

Along with paths self-made waterways were used as roads such as streams, ponds and oceans. An advantage of the waterways is that they allow faster and easier movement at greater distances with larger loads. Man-made canals were used as roads where portages were too long or where a convenient connection can be made between two waterways.

As the colonists prospered, 2-wheel and 4-wheel wagons superseded the drags. The roads at first were single-file wide. As the population grew the resulting agriculture and industry required roads wide enough for movement in both directions without interruption. The early roads were primitive requiring well-laid beds for travel and not requiring circumventing large rocks, swamps and steep hills. With the continued growth of agriculture and industry, roads were improved to allow faster movement and greater distances of travel. Improvement of roads require considerable expenditure, thus bringing about the private tolling of roads with tollgates to collect tolls for reimbursing the expenditure required. As time progressed so did technology with the coming of trains and trolleys using rails as their roads. With the continued advancement in technology we have come to the stage of air travel for speedier movement of personnel and freight. Instead of requiring physical roads commercial planes travel an approved route and altitude as their roads.

❖ Paths

Coventry had many Indian paths but the most famous is the "*Olde Connecticut*." This path was the only route leading into Connecticut from Massachusetts, known to the colonists prior to the year 1648. Mathias Spiess in The History of Manchester, has shown very conclusively this is the route followed by Thomas Hooker's Party in 1636 and followed by others for thirteen years until the new way later called the "*Bay Path*" was discovered. Leaving Boston the *Olde Connecticut Path* entered Connecticut at Woodstock, continued to Ashford where it connected with what is essentially Route 44. This path continued through to Mansfield, Coventry, Bolton through the "Notch," Manchester, East Hartford and ended at Hartford.

Many writers have believed that the early settlers like Thomas Hooker and his party "travelled westward through what is now Massachusetts over the "*Bay Path*" to the Chicopee River, then turned south and followed the east bank of the Connecticut River to Saukiaug, now known as Hartford." Twelve years after the Hooker party arrived at Hartford in 1636, John Winthrop wrote in his journal, "This year 1648 a new way was found out to Connecticut by Noshoway, which avoided much of the hilly way." This is what was later called the "*Bay Path*."

The route taken by the Hooker party to Woodstock, Connecticut, is believed by writers to be the route so far followed. From here, following the compass, Hartford is forty miles away. Following the route of the *Bay Path* one would have to turn back to the northwest and travel forty miles to the Chicopee River and from there, another thirty-five miles south to Hartford.

The "*Olde Connecticut Path*" was known by the Hooker party, for others travelled over it before and, in fact, it was the only path over which the early colonists travelled until the "new way was found" in the year 1648. Mention is made by Harwood in his History of Eastern Connecticut that "In September, 1633, a ship sailed from Boston to the Connecticut River. At the same time John Oldham and a small party set out overland to explore the river. In the

autumn of 1634 a group of planters, ten in number, calling themselves the "adventurers," and in their number John Oldham, settled at Wethersfield."

❖ Waterways

As roads, waterways played considerable importance in Coventry. Generally speaking, waterways are roads for the movement of vehicles (ships, boats and barges), but as far as Coventry was concerned, the waterways moved power (waterpower) to operate its mills. Mills situated close to streams used its power directly from the streams. Mills situated away from the streams built canals to direct waterpower from the streams to the mills.

Buena Vista Canal. Except for the springs which are the main source of water for Lake Wangumbaug, the *Buena Vista Canal* is the main source of surface water. The canal begins at a pond at the far end of the Buena Vista road and empties in the lake at Lisicke Beach, a distance of about a mile.

It was first built, according to Ernie Wheeler, by Confederate prisoners and Union soldiers. The purpose of the canal was to replenish the supply of water in the lake which feeds Mill Brook using it as a source of power for the mills along the brook. Today the need for mill use has diminished with the more limited need for industrial use.

Since 1970 it has been damaged by explosions at least three times, once by an individual who wished to divert water to his trout pond. Damage by explosions in 1981 and 1982 was repaired by the Summer Youth Program. It is again in disrepair.

In the early history of Coventry, it appeared that North Coventry was well on its way to becoming the center of activity. It was situated on the Boston Middle Road, an important road that connected four large towns (Boston, Hartford, New Haven and New York). The first post office (1802) in Coventry was located on Route 44 in a house no longer standing at the top of the hill west of the Second Congregational Church. The first mail service was from Hartford to Boston by stage and all mail matter to Coventry included mail to

be distributed to the surrounding communities (Colchester, Hebron, Andover, and Tolland). An important factory, Coventry Glass Factory Company was established on Route 44 next to the Skungamaug River. It was conveniently located for the delivery of its product to Hartford and east along Route 44.

With the convenient source of flowing water situated in South Coventry, it was understandably seen how this source of water can be used as water power to run the developing mills along the length of the stream, resulting in the development of South Coventry as the center of government and activity.

Lake Wangumbaug has been used as a road on the movement of the schoolhouse in which Nathan Hale prepared himself for admission to Yale College. The building was moved over the frozen lake from its original place to a site near Route 31 known as Clarks Grove where clam-bakes and dances were held. Later Mr. and Mrs. Clarlence Scranton named the building "Tramp Inn" because it had been inhabited by tramps and drifters.

Workers at the mills in Coventry who lived on the other side of the lake from their place of employment could have conceivably used the lake as a road going to and from work by boat during the summer and walking across on the frozen lake during the winter. A straight line is the shortest distance between two points.

❖ Conventional Roads

The first roads to be laid out in Coventry were South Street and Cross Street. Later on as the population grew other major roads and offshoots from them were built. A court case involving a highway in Coventry adjudged in the Superior Court at Windham County, February 1771 involving "Buel vers. Clark, etc." was reported by Judge Root in his *Reports of Cases Adjudged in the Superior Court and Supreme Court of Errors*, Volume I, 1798. The decision was made that "lands left for a highway by the proprietors in the original laying out of their lots, that are not wanted for the use of a highway, belong to the proprietors or the town, and may be taken up by the proprietors and laid out into lots, or whether they belong to the town--by court and jury they be-

long to the proprietors--and verdict and judgement was for the plaintiff to recover accordingly."

Today the Town of Coventry has 90 miles of town roads, both improved and unimproved. The town also has Association (private) roads found in the lake area. The town's only commitment with these roads is to plow them during the winter. The roads in Coventry maintained by the State of Connecticut measure seventeen miles.

Chapter VI

The Five Turnpike Roads of Coventry

❖ The Boston Turnpike

The Boston Turnpike, also known as the Middle Road, ran from Hartford according to Frederic J. Wood in The Turnpikes of New England to the northeasterly corner of Connecticut where it connected with the Ninth Massachusetts Turnpike to continue on to Boston also over the Hartford and Dedham, and the Norfolk and Bristol Turnpikes. Travelers over this route crossed the Connecticut River between Hartford and East Hartford by means of a ferry first authorized by the Town of Hartford, in 1681, to Thomas Cadwell. The distance according to the Old Farmers Almanac in 1802 was 106 miles.

The Boston Turnpike Company was incorporated by the Connecticut Legislature in October 1797 with a franchise to build a road "from Hartford through the towns of East Hartford, Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield, Ashford, Pomfret and Thompson to the Massachusetts line," a distance of approximately 48 miles. It was authorized "to erect and establish four turnpikes on said road." None of the four tollgates were stationed in Coventry.

In May, 1798, the company was released from its obligations to build between Bolton and the Connecticut River, but in 1812 it secured a renewal of the privilege, and connected with the Hartford and Tolland Turnpike in East Hartford. It then continued through Manchester, Bolton, North Coventry, Mansfield and on to Boston. The only place to obtain accommodations between Mansfield and Manchester was at Kimball's Tavern in Coventry, a distance of six miles from each adjacent tavern.

The Boston Turnpike was often locally called the "Middle Turnpike." By 1879 all rights to collect tolls had ceased. The Boston road followed more nearly a direct route compared to the northern route through Worcester and Springfield and the southern route along the shore of Long Island Sound.

❖ **The Windham Turnpike**

The first white settlers in Windham County found an old Indian trail leading from Canterbury through Mansfield to Greenwich on Narragansett Bay. The settlers soon developed it into a road which was then considered passible. In 1699 Major Fitch cut out a road from his home in Canterbury to Windham. Producing the best route then available by which the Windham County colonists could reach Providence it became a road of importance which was later known as the "Great Road."

In September 28, 1795, a report, according to Wood, "was made to the Assembly of Connecticut by a committee which had been appointed to view this road ... it found it possible to improve the road by changing its layout at six places in Plainfield, seven in Canterbury, and two in Windham."

The report was accepted and put to rest because sufficient financial interest was not forthcoming to undertake the work. Interest was slow in coming forward, but finally in May, 1799, the Windham Turnpike Company was incorporated for that purpose, with the additional privilege of extending the road from Willimantic through South Coventry to the Boston Turnpike in North Coventry.

Windham, being on what was originally called the "Great Road," had for many years seen the tide of western emigration flowing past its doors to the new settlements in Wyoming County in Pennsylvania, New York, western Massachusetts, and southern Vermont.

❖ **The Hartford, New London, Windham, and Tolland County Turnpike**

This turnpike received its charter in October 1795. Its route was described as running "from the city of Hartford to the city of Norwich from the court-house in Hartford to the court-house in Norwich."

The road of 27 miles in length was to have two tollgates located between East Hartford and Joshua Hyde's house in Franklin. The first meeting was to be held in Coventry. During the succeeding winter the promoters came to the conclusion that they had a difficult problem on their hands. They sought and secured from the assembly, in the following May, a modification of their franchise. They were now bound to build from White's Monument in Bolton to Joshua Hyde's in Franklin. This modification allowed them to avoid the question of a means of crossing the Connecticut River at Hartford. They were also relieved of construction through the compact portions of the two terminal cities.

Actually according to Wood in The Turnpikes of New England this road was improved from its crude pioneer condition. The road passed through six-tenths of a mile of Coventry where Coventry, Andover and Bolton meet.

❖ The Hop River Turnpike

The Hartford, New London, Windham and Tolland County Turnpike, which extended from Bolton Notch to Norwichtown had gone out of business at least on its westerly end, before 1835. On May of the same year, the Hop River Turnpike Company was formed. It was granted a franchise which covered the road of the Hartford to Norwich Turnpike (shortened name) from Andover to Bolton Notch. The rest of the Hop River route carried it to the village of Willimantic. The Hartford, Providence and Fishkill Railroad began in 1842 and paralleled the turnpike for the entire length. The turnpike held on until 1851 and then vanished so no process could be served on it.

The road known as Route 6 was a public necessity, so in 1853 the towns of Windham, Columbia, Andover, Coventry and Bolton were obliged to assume its maintenance.

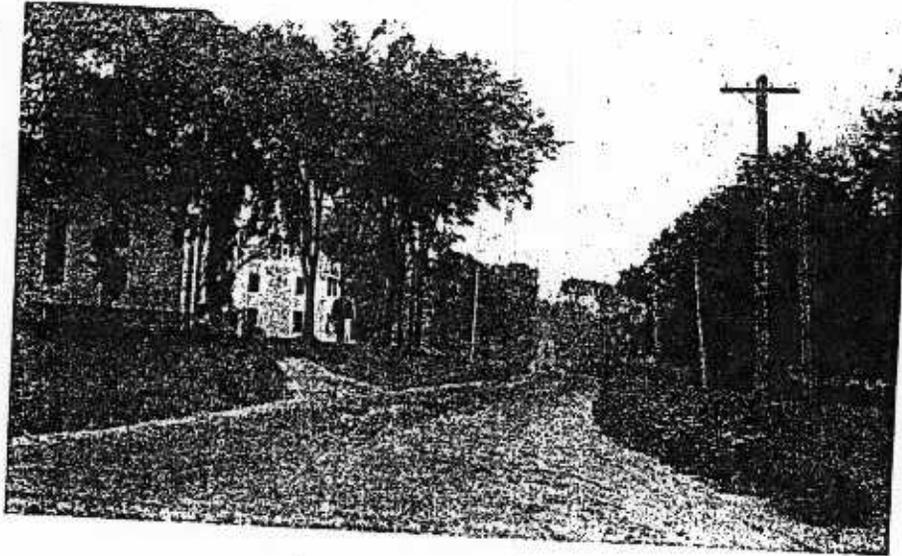
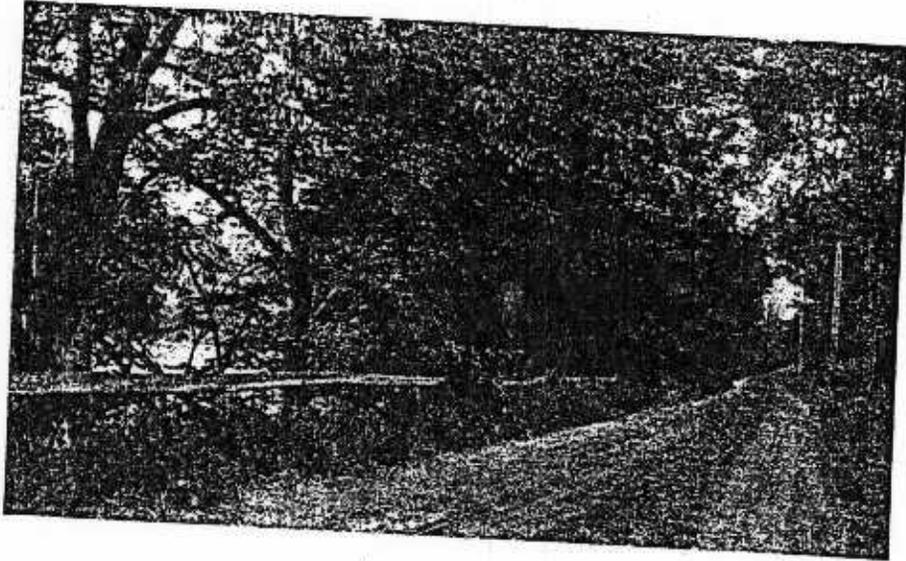
❖ Tolland and Mansfield Turnpike

Wood in The Turnpikes of New England claims a plan was conceived about 1820 by which the stage travel over the Northern Route from Boston to New

York was to be diverted at the westerly end of First Massachusetts Turnpike and carried to Hartford by way of Tolland over the Hartford and Tolland Turnpike. Wishing to become a part of the operation the Wilbraham Turnpike was chartered in Massachusetts in 1820. In Connecticut efforts were made to have the Burbank Road completed. This road had been laid out from the Massachusetts line through Somers, Stafford, Ellington and Tolland, the towns involved, in 1805. The cost seemed prohibitive so this project was laid to rest. But, in May 1828 the Tolland and Mansfield Turnpike Company was formed for the purpose of building the Burbank Road, with the added section from Tolland Street to Daniel Fuller's in Mansfield. About one mile of this turnpike goes through Coventry on Route 195 between Mansfield and Tolland. Had the whole plan been carried out, a roundabout route between Worcester and Hartford would have been provided. It did not appear the need was that great to the Wilbraham Turnpike Company, so the route was not built.

Although the original purpose of the Tolland and Mansfield Turnpike was not fulfilled, it did provide some business between Norwich and Springfield especially with its southern connection at the Windham and Mansfield Turnpike and the Boston Turnpike at Daniel Fuller's at the four corners of Mansfield.

The charter of the Tolland and Mansfield Turnpike Company was repealed in 1847.



Along the Willimantic River
North Coventry, Conn.

Chapter VIIA

Railroads (General)

According to Sidney Withington in his *The First Twenty Years of Railroads in Connecticut*, the first railroad charters were issued by the State of Connecticut legislature in 1832, but the actual operation of a railroad took place in 1837. The first railroads in Connecticut generally ran north and south following the lowlands offered by the valleys in which the rivers also flowed. Earlier, the rivers served as a means of transportation from inland cities to New York. These rivers for the greater part of the year offered navigation down into Long Island Sound, which was protected from the weather and ocean by Long Island, to New York. After Fulton's famous trip up the Hudson River in his steamboat, *Clermont*, in 1807, the development of steamboat traffic was very rapid. In addition to its favorable water transportation, Connecticut had early turnpikes, or toll roads and toll bridges. These roads were built during the half-century before the initial appearance of the railroads.

When Connecticut's railroad pioneers began to think about getting into the railroad business, their thoughts were directed in two directions. First, they concentrated on opening connections into the interior from Long Island Sound, and second, to replace the stagecoach route from Boston to Providence, and thence by boat to the Sound and on to New York. As the need for improvement and shortening the route, the thought of connecting Boston and New York by rail began to play an increasing interest. By the consolidation of the short routes the major efforts of the railroad people were successful.

Dividends on investments in the railroad enterprise were an exception in the early days of railroading. Many railroad companies in Connecticut were organized at a time of serious nationwide financial and industrial depressions. This posed a serious problem for the individual railroads since large amounts of capital were required, amounts which had been unheard of but just a few years earlier.

The difficulty in raising large amounts of money explains the financial disasters experienced by many of Connecticut's early railroads. Bitter competition

among themselves and the water routes and drastic rate-cutting contributed to their financial difficulties.

The first fuel used by the railroads in Connecticut was wood, partly because of the high cost of transporting coal from the coal fields and wood was in plentiful supply. Withington states, "It is probable that horses were first employed, to some extent at least, in yard switching in Connecticut."

The Coventry Glass Factory made at least six different flasks depicting the advent of the railroad in America, showing a horse-drawn railroad car with the inscription "Success to the Railroad." There is no hint that horses were employed in Connecticut to propel railroad cars.

The continued use of wood as fuel produced a scarcity of this form of fuel. The cost of coal began to fall and with the improvement in the technique of burning coal, Connecticut experimentally adopted the use of coal in 1857, and universally in the late sixties.

Connecticut's two earliest railroad charters were granted in 1832, to the New York and Stonington Railroad and to the Boston, Norwich and New London Railroad.

Chapter VIIB

Central Vermont Railroad

Permission has been granted by Director Christofer Bickford of the Connecticut Historical Society to use material from Connecticut Railroads ... Illustrated History, a Connecticut Historical Society publication, by Gregg M. Turner and Melanethon W. Jacobus.

The Central Vermont Railroad operated under several names as we shall see. Presently, it is the only railroad that runs into Coventry that also had an operating station. The railroad enters Coventry from Mansfield for a shallow entrance and a short distance before going back into Mansfield.

The track of the Central Vermont Railroad starts at New London and extends north to Palmer, Massachusetts, and beyond. Today the Central Vermont is owned by Canadian National Railways of Canada--C N Rail--and overseen by its American property affiliate, the Detroit-based Grand Trunk Corporation. Its main line is still intact.

New London was the third largest whaling port in the United States. It suffered a serious business depression due to the price drop for whaling products. Whales also were becoming scarce, thus necessitating trips far and wide, searching for their prey.

To counter the effects of the depression, New London searched for a way to get back on its feet. It concluded that it would best be served by a railroad that seemed like a good venture.

Failing to convince Norwich & Worcester Railroad to build an extension south from Norwich to their own city, New London began to investigate the possibility of building its own railroad to Norwich and Willimantic to Springfield, Massachusetts, with a rail connection to be made with the Western Railroad, which ran between Worcester and Albany. The city fathers of New London agreed that they must at all cost have a railroad. In May, 1847, a charter was secured from the State of Connecticut for New London, Willimantic & Springfield Railroad.

The incorporators were empowered "to locate, construct and finally complete a single, double or treble railroad in the City of New London--thence on the westerly site of the Thames River to the City of Norwich, and thence to Willimantic and the north line of the State towards Springfield in the State of Massachusetts." The charter was adopted in December of that year, and the corporation officially formed. In our local area the road was to pass through Willimantic, South Coventry, Mansfield, Merrow (and each having a railroad station) and on to the Massachusetts state line.

Few Springfield investors felt that the New London project was worthwhile and did not lend enough support. But fifteen miles east of Springfield the up-and-coming town of Palmer showed genuine enthusiasm for the New London road. It also was located on the Western Railroad and Palmer eventually became the line's destination; the railroad became known as the New London, Willimantic & Palmer Railroad.

The timetable of the New London, Willimantic & Palmer Railroad showed passenger trains going north from New London at 7:15 am and 1:50 pm, respectively, arriving at South Coventry at 9:09 am and 3:50 pm. Going south from Palmer the passenger trains left at 7:55 am and 2:10 pm, respectively, arriving at South Coventry at 9:31 am and 3:50 pm.

Groundbreaking occurred in Norwich in 1848 and it was calculated that the average cost of one mile of track to be \$7,889. Locomotives and passenger cars have been supplied by companies in Massachusetts. Freight cars were ordered from the Norwich Car Manufactory. A passenger "salon" car of fifty seats cost \$1,775; a baggage car sold for \$775; and freight cars ranged from \$500 and \$600. Trial conductors on passenger trains were hired at \$40 a month, and the first station agent at South Coventry received \$120 a year.

The line opened between New London and Norwich in October 1849; by August of 1850, the tracks reached Palmer.

The New London, Willimantic and Palmer Railroad had a great deal of trouble in paying bondholders their interest. To handle its obligations to the

bondholders the directors offered to sell part of the road. The offer was refused. The bondholders eventually foreclosed and the trustees took possession of the bankrupt road. The panic of 1857 which was brought on by the business depression did not help the situation.

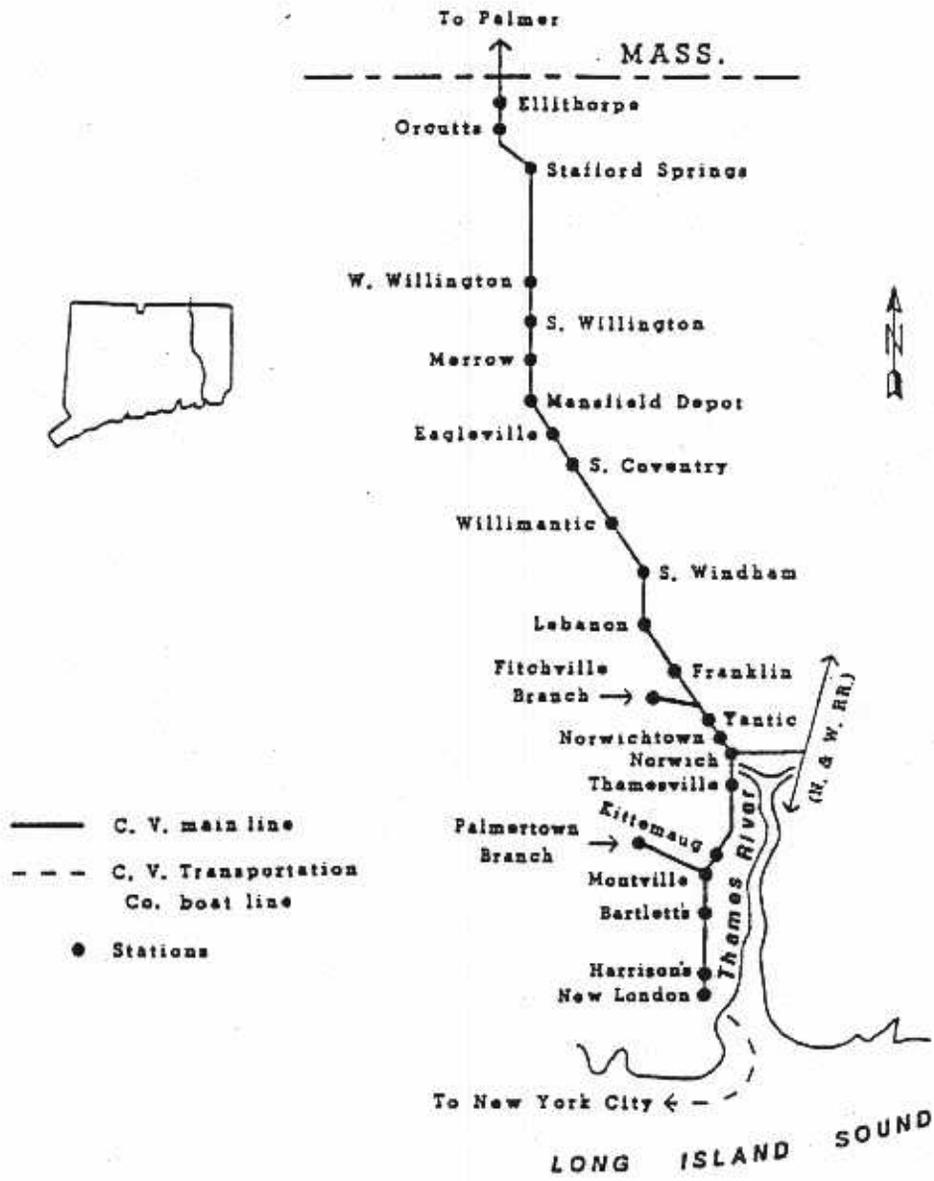
The road received legislative approval and after restructuring its debt, the line was reorganized as the New London Northern Railroad. Operations by the new corporation began in 1861, and solvency was restored.

The new road enlarged its operations to include its own line of steamboats between New London and New York City. The marine operation grew and was eventually succeeded by the Central Vermont Transportation Company in 1908 which ended its services in 1940.

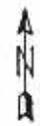
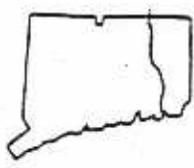
In 1871 the New London Northern directors leased their road to backers of the Vermont Central Railroad, which later became the Central Vermont Railroad.

The Central Vermont carried freight and passengers until passenger service became a liability. Included in the freight were coal and grain that were shipped to Latimer's Grain Company situated near the depot at South Coventry, as well as other commodities for farmers, mills, and other businesses and people. Also of interest was a horse-drawn coach that met the Central Vermont trains at the South Coventry depot. The coach ran between the depot and South Coventry.

Central Vermont Railway



- C. V. main line
- - - C. V. Transportation Co. boat line
- Stations



Not to scale

L. C. Hill

Chapter VIII

South Coventry Trolley Line

The greatest part of this information comes from an article by Harland M. French entitled "The Trolley Comes to Willimantic" from Trolley Days in Connecticut, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1985-June 1986. Most of French's information came from the *Willimantic Daily Chronicle*.

The South Coventry trolley line resulted first from the formation of the Willimantic Traction Co. corporation by a Special Act of the Connecticut General Assembly in 1901. Construction was started on July 11, 1902 and the initial operation began on August 16, 1903.

The Company anxiously started to operate from Willimantic to South Windham, a distance of about four miles, before the whole line was ready. When completed from Willimantic to Baltic, the distance was 10.131 miles and there was an isolated 1.079 miles stretch up Main Street to the Willimantic Cemetery. "The trolley line, isolated from the rest of the system by railroad tracks, was serviced by a lone shuttle car....Passengers and crew were obliged to walk about 200 feet over steam road tracks from one car to the other to complete their trip."

The Willimantic Traction Company was sold on December, 1905 to the Consolidated Railway Company. The New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company was then merged with the Consolidated Railway Company and still kept its original name. Through several business maneuvers the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company was changed to the Connecticut Company.

On June 12, 1908, the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company petitioned State Railroad Commissioners asking that they approve the layout of a railway line on private land, and its proposed method of construction in the City of Willimantic and Towns of Mansfield and Coventry.

The petition was heard on June 24, 1908 and was granted on July 17th. A year later, on August 18, 1909 after examining the extension of the Connecti-

cut Company's line from the cemetery in Willimantic, through a portion of the towns of Mansfield and Coventry to the southeasterly end of Lake Wamgumbaug, the Railroad Commissioners issued a certificate "to effect that same had been found in a suitable and safe condition for the transportation of passengers." Length of the line was 6.828 miles.

The following article from the files of the Willimantic Daily Chronicle is dated August 18, 1909.

OFFICIAL SANCTION FOR OPENING OF NEW LINE GIVEN

Willimantic-South Coventry Trolley Road Inspected By Railroad Commissioner Seymour.

BELLS RUNG ON ARRIVAL OF CAR IN SOUTH COVENTRY.

Tour of Inspection Made by Connecticut Company Officials Followed by Dinner with Celebration Committee of the Board of Trade and Business Men's Association

With school and church bells ringing, flags waving and people cheering, South Coventry welcomed the official car which rolled into that village on the rails of the new trolley line between 12 and 1 o'clock this afternoon.

While men employed on the road have been over the new trolley line in a car several times, today's trip by a car bearing the road's officials and the State Railroad Commissioner was really the opening of the road for traffic and the opening for public travel will be tomorrow when a car will begin running at 6:15 in the morning.

Today there was hardly a house from the Willimantic Cemetery to the end of the line at South Coventry where people were not out in the yard to watch the official car pass and in most cases the people waved flags and where flags were not waving, the women flourished their handkerchiefs and cheered.

Even the weather took a turn for the better, as just before the official car left Willimantic the sun came out and shone for a time, expressive of the general joy that the trolley line to South Coventry was at last a reality.

The first car will leave the carbarn at 5:30 tomorrow morning and run to the railroad crossing to connect with the 6:15 a.m. car from South Windham, and it will then make hourly trips, connecting with the cars for Baltic and Norwich.

The fare will be 10 cents each way and only one car will be operated at present, unless the traffic demands more. Mr. Leary said that as yet no arrangements had been made for handling freight or express, but it is expected this matter will be taken up in the near future.

Officials on the car said that the road was one of the best as far as construction goes that the Connecticut Company ever built, and one of the construction men stated that it was the best-built trolley line he had ever worked on. The roadbed is well built, the wire work is of the best, and there is plenty of power....

This new trolley line, which makes charming South Coventry and the lake with the Indian name easy of access to the people of Willimantic and other cities, is 6 miles in length and it is a well constructed piece of road, having an excellent roadbed and steel and iron bridges, resting on concrete structures spanning the tracks of the Central Vermont Railway and the Willimantic River.

The track is on or near the highway practically all the way and the cars will pass through a beautiful bit of country, with a lake that is already well known as an ideal vacation or day's outing spot just a few steps from the terminal.

In South Coventry there is an unusually pretty street through which the trolley cars will pass. On both sides are huge elm trees that shade the

many handsome residences and many more neat cottages, with their well-kept lawns and beds of bright flowers.

The main street is curved and has good sidewalks and the houses are supplied with water from Lake Wamgumbaug, all these things and others being looked after by the village improvement societies....

One thousand is the estimated population of the village including those who reside nearby, and quite a number are employed in the box shop and other factories.

The industries of the place include the plants of the Kingsbury Box & Printing Co.; E. A. Tracy, wool extract manufacturer; H. K. Washburn, silk throwster; T. H. Wood, silk throwing and fish lines; W. H. Armstrong, wagon factory; Nichels Brothers, leatherboard; John Daby, silk throwing and W. F. & Arthur Wood, manufacturers of lenses.

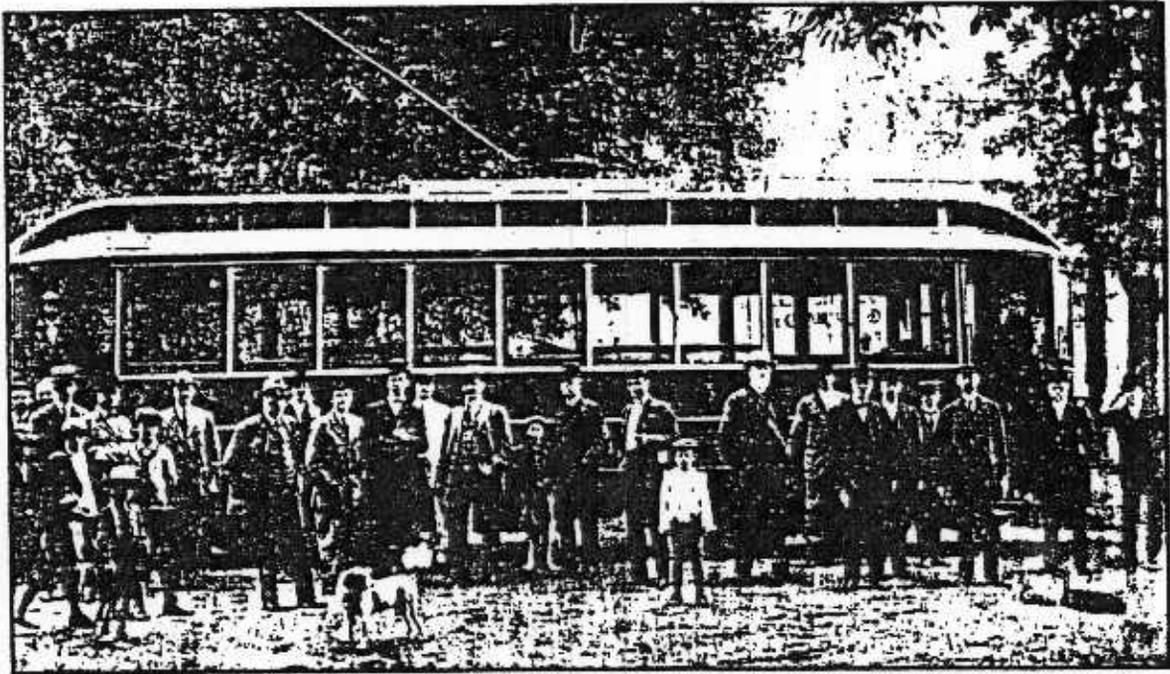
During the course of a year, these manufacturers have to haul a lot of freight and if the Connecticut Company should decide to engage in freight traffic over the new trolley line it would doubtless get considerable business from the mills and factories of South Coventry.

Lake Wamgumbaug, which is a beautiful sheet of water with woods on all sides, extending down to the water's edge, is about 3 miles long and nearly a mile wide in the widest place.... There are 12 powerboats and 60 rowboats on the lake and two of the powerboats, operated by L. W. Daniels, are run to accommodate the public.

Lakeside Park is at the east end of the lake, nearest the village, and in a fine grove of chestnut trees a park has been laid out with paths leading to the boat landing and placed here and there beneath the trees are rustic seats.

The pavilion is a two-story affair with ice cream parlors and bowling alley on the first floor and a hall for dancing upstairs. Nearby is the

merry-go-round and there are refreshment stands and lunch counters all about.



OFFICIALS of the Connecticut Company and the Public Utilities Commission made an inspection trip to South Coventry on car #104 on August 18, 1909, a day before the public opening. Photo shows the party posed at South South Coventry.

On the following day, August 19, 1909, the following article appeared in the Willimantic Daily Chronicle:

NEW TROLLEY LINE WELL PATRONIZED

Many People Riding Between Willimantic and South Coventry on the Connecticut Company's Car.

The Willimantic-South Coventry trolley line was opened to the public this morning and a good business was done all day. Willimantic people who had the spare time went to South Coventry while many South Coventry people came to the city for a ride over the new line. To all appearances the new line will be a popular and favorite one. No doubt the traffic will be heavy for some time at least. The day crew in charge of the car is Motorman Merrill Douglas and Conductor W. H. Carpenter. The night crew is McDougal and McDermott.

The car arrives at the Main Street rail road crossing here at 15 minutes after the hour, and returning reaches South Coventry at 15 minutes before the hour. There is a stop of several minutes at both ends of the route.

In the "write-up" of the opening of the trolley line in yesterday's issue of the The Chronicle it was stated that Joseph Wedge had charge of the wire work on the line. It should have been stated that Joseph Lyons was the one under whose supervision this part of the work was done.

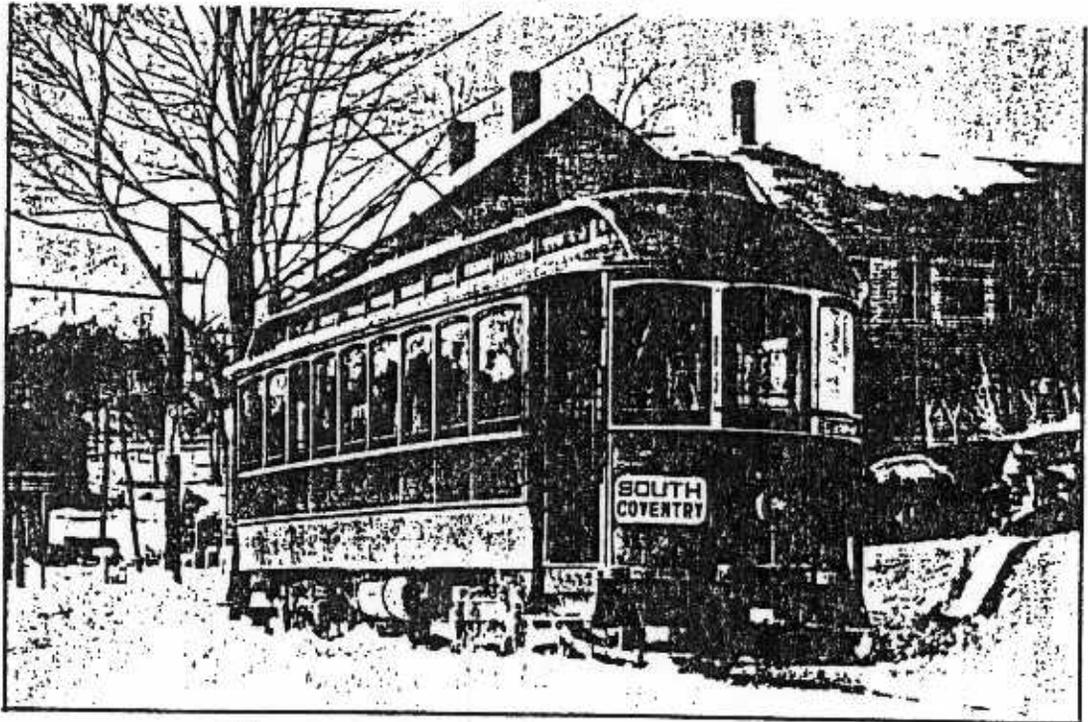
Visitors to Lake Wamgambaug find work going on there in preparation for the general public celebration of the opening of the trolley line to be held on Thursday of next week. A bandstand is being erected and other work done. A band concert is also to be given next Sunday afternoon and evening, the management of the park having made arrangements yesterday with Wheeler's Band of this city.

The trolley service between this city and South Coventry was much hampered this afternoon. There were more people who wanted to ride than the car could carry.

Here is an article from the Willimantic Daily Chronicle for Saturday, November 20, 1926.

MONDAY SEES PASSING OF SOUTH COVENTRY TROLLEY

Public Utilities Commission Renders Decision Allowing Connecticut Company to Discontinue Operation of Branch. Bus Service of New England Transportation Company Will Commence Monday Morning with Schedule Corresponding to That of Electric Line at Increase of 5 Cents in Regular Fare. Work of Removing Tracks to Start on West Main Street Next Week.



CAR #106 on the South Coventry line, circa 1910.

The South Coventry trolley line was the offshoot of the Willimantic Traction Company, the concern that built the line between Willimantic and Baltic in 1906 (Here the paper is in error as this history shows the

line was built 1902-03 -- H.F.). The traction company had a franchise to extend the line to South Coventry but only built the line at the time as far as the Willimantic Cemetery.

About two years later (Here the paper bases the two years upon their date of 1906.-- H.F.) the New Haven Railroad built the South Coventry branch which was operated for about two years and then disposed of to the Connecticut Co. (Here it should be noted that the Connecticut Company operated the line from the beginning but in 1910 the railroad sold it to the Connecticut Company).

For a time the line in possession of the Connecticut Company was a good paying proposition but with the increase in the use of automobiles the business dwindled until night trips were abandoned.

The festivities of the day (Here the newspaper is referring to the first day of the line's operation. -- H.F.) were marred late in the evening when a section of the floor of a dancing pavilion on the shore of Lake Wamgumaug fell in while crowded with dancers. Sixteen persons were injured more or less seriously.

At one time the trolley fare was but 10 cents between Willimantic and South Coventry but corresponding high prices during the World War period caused the trolley company as well as many other operating concerns to advance the rate. For the past three or four years the branch line has been continued at a financial loss.

The operation of the trolley during the early years of its history helped to boost the building of homes along the line. It is doubtful that the trolley line could have been saved even if the proposed plan to raise money to pay for placing the roadbed back in shape after the sewer was laid had gone through.

The Connecticut Company saw no hopes for the future with nothing in prospect for increasing the patronage of the line. The passing of the line will be missed by the non-owners of automobiles and many others

who have used the line for business and recreation purposes from here to South Coventry.

The initials H.B. in parentheses refer to Harland M. French, the writer of this article.

On Monday, November 22, 1926, the Willimantic Daily Chronicle had this following report:

NEW TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS IN EFFECT

Bus Replaces Trolley While Gasoline Car is Used on Railroad

Some one hundred or more commuters from this city and Coventry experienced a change in the method of transportation that was a novelty to many of them. The announcement made a few days ago by the New Haven Railroad that accommodations for early morning commuters to Hartford would be restored to take effect this morning was correct, but not what was expected by the majority.

Instead of the former passenger train #111, a "gas bus" was placed in commission this morning. The vehicle, a combination affair, passenger and baggage, with a seating capacity of 45, was crowded.

Henry St. John, conductor, and "Al" Belleveau, operator, made up the crew. The start was at 7:10 a.m. and the trip was made to Hartford in good time. The "gas bus" will leave this afternoon from Hartford at 5:15 o'clock for the return.

"Finis" was written on the South Coventry trolley branch of the Connecticut Company last evening as far as passenger carrying is concerned. The two "one-man" cars are stored in the West Main Street barn of the company.

This morning, motor bus accommodations for commuters from South Coventry, Perkins Corner and "The Ridges" went into effect. Two

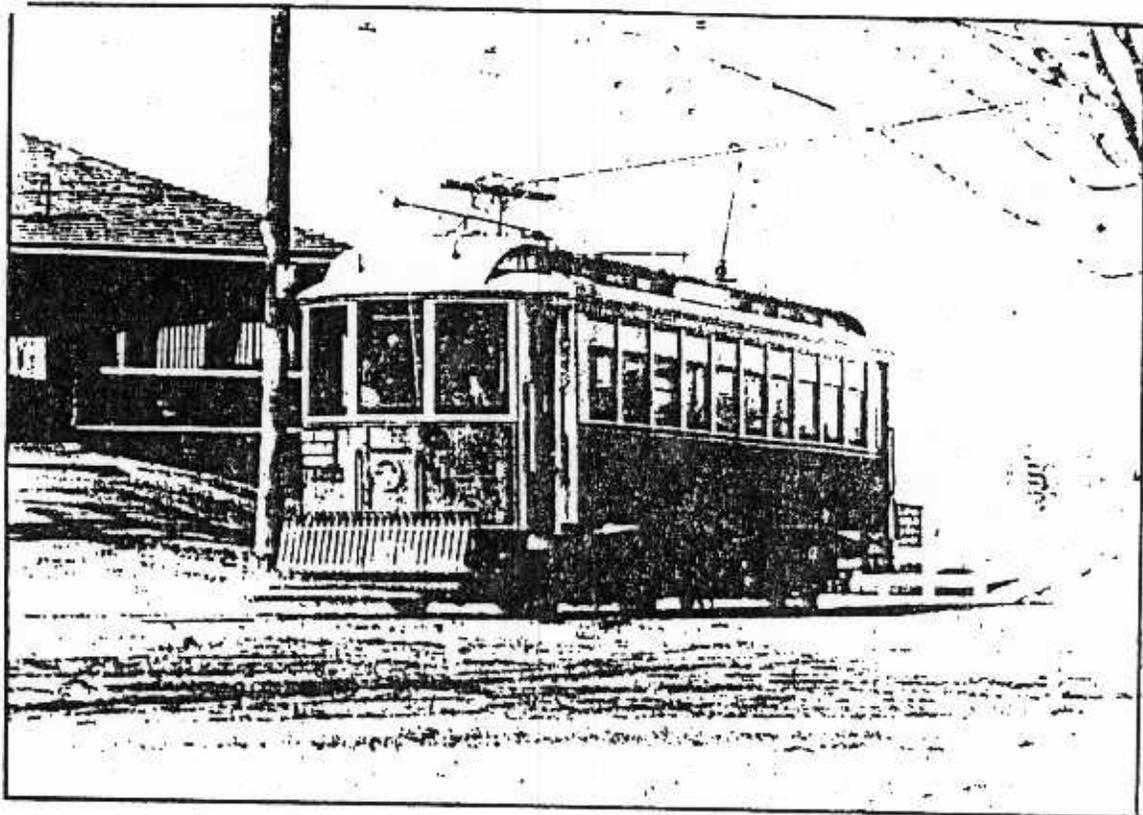
buses were in commission on the first two trips. Thirty-seven passengers were carried on the 6:10 a.m. trip and 39 on the 8:10 trip out of South Coventry and points between this city.

For the most part the commuters on the second trip were school children and South Coventry people employed in local stores. There will be two buses in commission on the 5:30 p.m. trip today. Arrangements are being made to make a special trip to South Coventry and points between at 6:15 p.m.

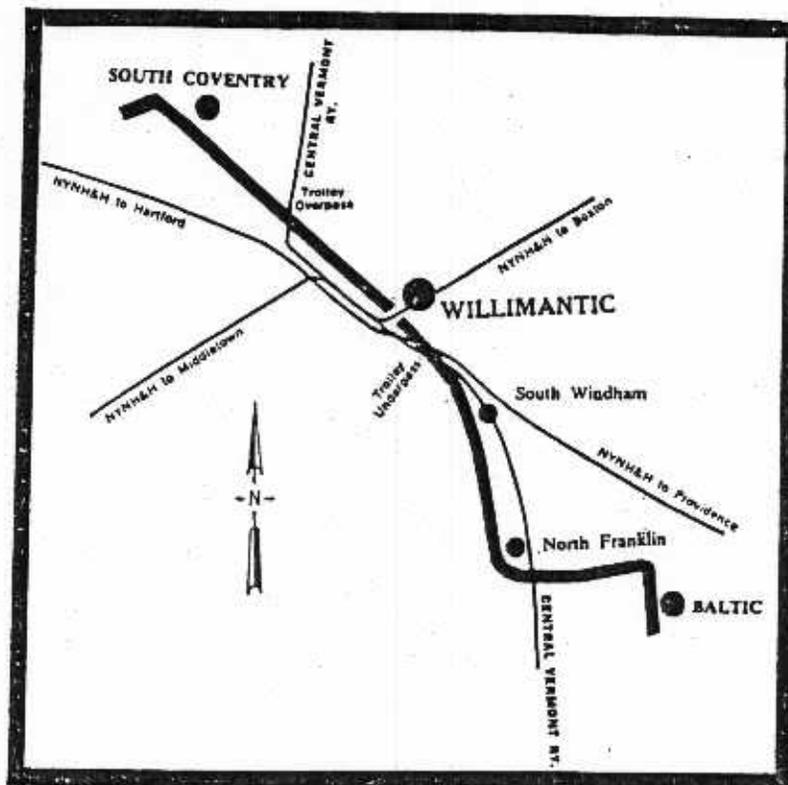
Starter Orin V. Hodgson of the local terminal of the New England Transportation Company stated that on the trips mentioned two buses will be necessary. On other trips a single bus will suffice. Commuters express themselves as being pleased with the new order of transportation.

Starter Hodgson states that for the benefit of the traveling public over the line, the following fares and arrangements will be observed between Willimantic and Bolton Notch, via South and North Coventry: Willimantic to Perkins Corner--15¢, South Coventry--25¢, North Coventry Church--25¢, Bolton (highway junction)--60¢. The fare from Perkins Corner to Bolton will be the same as though proceeding direct from Willimantic. South Coventry, from the Bidwell Inn to North Coventry Church--20¢, Bolton--45¢, North Coventry Church to Bolton--25¢. Rates correspond on the trip from Bolton to Willimantic. If a passenger travels beyond a zone limit, the fare to the next one will prevail. Children over 5 years of age and under 12 years of age will be charged half fare, fractions of a cent being added.

One could take a car from the railroad crossing on Main Street to South Coventry over a single track line with three turnouts. The track followed the side of the road most of the way and used the center of the road in the village of South Coventry and the city of Willimantic."



AT SOUTH COVENTRY, #122 is in front of the lakeside pavilion.



WILLIMANTIC'S TROLLEY LINES included the isolated South Coventry line and the line to South Windham, North Franklin, Baltic and Norwich.

As seen from the diagram of Willimantic's Trolley Lines, "the break in the line at Willimantic at the railroad crossing was dictated by an 1895 state law prohibiting street railways crossing at grade."

"With the building of the South Coventry entry line, a carbarn was constructed on West Main Street near the Willimantic Cemetery." It was used as a city garage up until 1985 and in its place and the surrounding area was built and the "Tylers Square." The trolley line to South Coventry went out of existence on November 21, 1926. The line to South Windham, North Franklin, Baltic and Norwich continued to run for another ten years until December 1, 1936.

Chapter IX

Chronological Order of the Naming of the Coventrys in Colonial America

❖ Connecticut

1. May 8, 1712

*Incorporated and named for Coventry, Warwickshire,
England*

1700

According to Rust, Albert D. 1891. Record of the Rust Family, Waco, Texas, Nathaniel Rust "in his early venture from Northampton he followed down the Connecticut river, arriving at Hartford...Here leaving the but lightly beathen path of civilization he directed his course eastward from Hartford to a wild and unsettled wilderness and there made the first 'pitch' in what is now known as Coventry, Tolland County, Connecticut. This was in 1700. Here on the west side of the beautiful lake in what is now South Coventry, he erected the first house ever built there."

"State's Attorney James Huntington of Woodbury, Conn. writes the author, under date of Oct 25, 1887: 'The statement that Nath'l Rust built the first house in Coventry is correct as I have been taught by tradition and I know very well the place where he built his house on the west side of the little lake in South Coventry' Under date Jan. 18, 1890 the same writer says: 'That Rust of old who first built a hut in Coventry and whom Rev. Marvin Root (the historian of Coventry) in his historical address of Coventry, designated as one of the founders of the doctrine of Squatter Sovereignty, pitched his camp in one of the loveliest spots in all our state, by the shore of the beautiful Wangombaug lake in South Coventry'"

❖ Pennsylvania

2. 1724

Coventry was initially mentioned.

Named for Coventry, Warwickshire, England.

1700

White traders and trappers travelled many years through the area. Peter Bezalis, a French trader, built the first home in Coventry in the year 1700 which was probably used as a trading center with the local Indians.

1831

The Township of Coventry was divided into:

North Coventry

South Coventry

1844

East Coventry formed by a division of North Coventry

❖ Rhode Island

3. August 21, 1741

Incorporated into a township to be known as Coventry. Named For Coventry, Warwickshire, England.

January 1643

Purchased and immediately settled a tract of land known as the Shawomet Purchase. In its incorporation the township included the Shawomet Purchase, West Warwick and a part of Warwick.

❖ New Hampshire

4. January 31, 1764

Charter granted and named Coventry for Coventry, Connecticut

March 1840

Renamed "Benton" - State legislature passed the name change bill in 1839 and at a town meeting in March 1840 approved it.

1777-1788

The earliest families arrived.

❖ Vermont

5. *November 4, 1780*

Charter granted -- Named for Coventry, Connecticut

1789

First Settlement of the Township of Coventry made in Buel's Gore

1800

First settlement in Coventry proper.

October 7, 1825

First settlement in Coventry Gore

❖ New York

6. *February 7, 1806*

Formed from the town of Greene and derived its name from Coventry, Connecticut

1785

First settlement made by Simon Jones of Coventry, Ct. Benjamin Jones, cousin of Simon was responsible for the naming of Coventry, New York. He arrived in 1788.