

"THE ANCHOR"

Early History

Denmark was a hilly area of dense forest, numerous lakes and fast running streams when Yankee settlers trudged into this wilderness in the foothills of the White Mountains and transformed it into a rural community.

Situated on the east bank of the Saco River in Oxford County, Denmark was formed from a part of the town of Brownfield and an area called Pleasant Mountain Gore.

The first settler to come to this land was Daniel Boston. In 1780, he bought upland and intervale land on the eastern side of the Saco River from Henry Brown and his wife, Elizabeth, the founders of Brownfield. Daniel Boston stayed but a short time on this piece of Brownfield that eventually was to become a part of Denmark. When he sold his land to Timothy and Mary Cutler of Scarboro, in 1803, he listed his residence as Happy Valley, or Hiram.

In the small frontier town of Fryeburg nine miles away, a group of men with the same common interest of providing an education for their children formed a committee. They petitioned the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for financial aid to help establish a school. In February of 1792, a charter and three large tracts of land in the Province of Maine were granted for Fryeburg Academy. One tract containing over 9,000 acres was located in Pleasant Mountain Gore. This tract, along with grants made to four other men and the trustees of Fryeburg Academy themselves, eventually became the eastern part of Denmark. The four other men were Asahel Foster, David Porter, Ichabod Warren and Gideon Lowell.

Asahel Foster of Bridgton received 2,000 acres for 105 pounds, 16 shillings. David Porter and his son, Isaiah Porter, received 200 acres in the Hio Ridge Section for \$50.00 and Ichabod Warren of Berwick received 300 acres for \$30.00. In 1795, a square mile of the Gore was reserved for surveyor Gideon Lowell of Standish, who paid 28 pounds, 10 shillings. The trustees of Fryeburg Academy received 590 acres.

In Pleasant Mountain Gore, Asahel Foster's grant was the first to be surveyed and Denmark's first permanent settlement was established here. Asahel Foster, who originally came from Danvers, Massachusetts, was an early pioneer of Bridgton and first settled at Sandy Creek and later in South Bridgton where he built a saw mill. Asahel Foster didn't settle in Denmark but had his 2,000 acres surveyed into lots and sold. The laborious, expensive and time-consuming chore of surveying the Foster grant in the dense forest was done by Samuel Titcomb in 1790. Early settlers - Isaac Berry of Foster's grant and Enoch Perley of South Bridgton - built a saw mill on the brook that flows out of Perley Pond near the Sebago Road in Denmark.

Early land owners in Foster's grant were Isaac Berry of Middletown, Massachusetts; Ezra Stiles of Brownfield, Nathaniel Symonds of Bridgton, George Thomes of Gorham, Elias Berry (son of Isaac Berry), and Tyler Porter of Boxford, Massachusetts.

In 1793 two carpenters, Cyrus Ingalls and Samuel Spafford, from Andover, Massachusetts were induced to come to Denmark, build a saw and a grist mill, and settle here. They paid land traders Stephen Foster and Daniel Harvey of Bradford, Massachusetts, 600 acres of land and mill rights on Moose Brook. This lucrative land deal was made on condition that Ingalls and Spafford build a good saw mill within 14 months and a grist mill to grind corn within 26 months of the date of the agreement and that they were to be kept in good order for 20 years. Three years later, Spafford, who never lived in Denmark, sold his half of the investment to Ingalls for \$700.00.

The land on the west side of present day Denmark was Brownfield. This land was granted to Henry Young Brown, divided into lots and sold by him, and after his demise, by his wife Elizabeth. Some of the first settlers on the west side of town were Jedediah Long of Berwick, Maine; Ichabod Warren; Joshua Ames of Wilmington, Massachusetts; Samuel Richardson of Billerica, Massachusetts; and Joseph Walker from Fryeburg. The three Fryeburg Academy tracts of land, one of which was Pleasant Mountain Gore, were

sold to Philip Page of Fryeburg for \$10,000. Page failed to make the mortgage payments and he relinquished the rights to the land back to the Fryeburg Academy Trustees on July 14, 1801.

One month later, in August of 1801, wealthy land speculator John Peck from Newton, Massachusetts bought the three Fryeburg Academy grants, consisting of over 15,000 acres, for \$10,000. Peck was a merchant who built an enormous house in Newton, Massachusetts and had a boulevard constructed at great expense past it. He later lost his money in land speculation and moved west. John Peck had the 9,137 acres of land in Pleasant Mountain Gore surveyed by Captain Isaiah Ingalls of Bridgton. The land was divided into lots and sold. Some of the men who bought land from Peck were Daniel Howe, Robert Patterson, Isaac Hobbs, Captain John Spring, Samuel Trumbull, Job Pike, Stephen Fessenden and Benjamin Harnden.

The sale of lots in Pleasant Mountain Gore and the establishment of Ingalls' saw and grist mills at Moose Brook were instrumental in the development of Denmark as a community. Men were attracted to Denmark by the lumbering and the farming opportunities. The grist mill offered them a convenient place to grind their corn. The pioneers could also be found trapping, trading and hunting.

Other settlers were Jonathan Saunders of Billerica, Massachusetts; James Head of Pembroke, New Hampshire; and Obadiah True of Cornish. Sampson Whiting, Augustus Harnden and Daniel Dix came from Wilmington, Massachusetts. Obadiah True and Sampson Whiting were Revolutionary War veterans. Still other settlers were Thomas Gellerson, Silas Snow, Robert Deering, Moses Bennett, Perley Hale, James Alexander and William Fessenden.

The trustees of Fryeburg Academy gave James Lord 50 acres of land in Denmark for building a bridge across one branch of the Saco River. Jedediah Long gave James



Reuben and Granville Harnden's saw mill on Black Brook in West Denmark.

Harnden a parcel of land and mill privileges for building him a saw and grist mill on Long Brook. John Kenison, Sr., from Eaton, New Hampshire, settled near Pleasant Mountain. He was married twice and had 31 children. Ephriam Jewett of Ipswich, Massachusetts, and Francis McKusick, who married Jewett's oldest daughter, settled at Head's Corner. Thomas Pingree and his wife, Phoebe (Alexander) Pingree, of Henniker, New Hampshire, came early to south Denmark. Pingree "spotted" the first trail over Allen Mountain from Hiram to Denmark. His brother, Parson Pingree, also settled in Denmark. Parson Pingree's grandson, Hazen Pingree, became a governor of Michigan.

In 1806 the town of Brownfield was reconstructed and an area of land east of the Saco River was set off to Denmark. Many families previously in Brownfield found themselves in Denmark. With the population growth and added land area, the men of the town decided to petition Governor Caleb Strong to incorporate the town so that they could enjoy the privileges of citizenship. It would also enable them to raise by taxation needed funds for roads and schools.

In the petition for incorporation, the request was made to name the new town Denmark. Much speculation has arisen over the origin of the name. Authorities cannot agree on why the name was chosen. On February 20, 1807, Governor Caleb Strong of Massachusetts approved the petition, and a warrant calling for the first town meeting was issued by Joseph Howard and directed to Cyrus Ingalls, Esq. The first meeting was called to order on March 23, 1807, at one o'clock in the afternoon.

Compiled by Sylvia MacDonald