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A history of the town of Braintree, Massachusetts for use by third-grade teachers

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A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF BRAINTREE, MASSACHUSETTS FOR USE BY THIRD-GRADE TEACHERS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Justification.-- A number of brief histories of Braintree have already been written as well as many pamphlets and papers on particular aspects of the town. Most of these historic accounts have drawbacks, some are weighted in favor of early history, others are too brief, but most are merely too old. None of them are conducive to use by a teacher who needs something to refer to when teaching small children about their town.

Purpose.-- This account is intended to act as a reference for teachers who are not well acquainted with the history of Braintree, and the way in which the town government is set up today. It is not intended as a complete history of all aspects of the town's life.

Scope.-- The writer has tried to cover the areas which would be most interesting to both teachers and children. For this reason, some items have been left out which might otherwise be included. These include the history of the various churches, clubs, and other social organizations.

Method.-- To gather the information the writer has used many different sources. For the early history the volumes written in the past and the town records, as well as pamphlets, monograms, and papers

have been used. An account of later-day events and organization of the town was compiled from the literature available, town reports, and interviews with many of the heads of departments and older residents.

Organization.-- The history, as much as possible, had been written in chronological order. Chapters two through five cover old Braintree. Areas considered are early settlements, development of the town, life in colonial Braintree, and the various wars of the colonial period.

Chapter six covers, briefly, life in the 19th Century and a sketch of the earliest industries, those of the past century and some of those in existence today.

Chapter seven gives an account of the development of four of the services provided by the community. These are the School Department, the Police and Fire Departments, and the Thayer Public Library.

Chapter eight presents an overall picture of the system of government now existing in Braintree with an explanation of most of the town departments.

Footnotes have been employed in the account of the early history. Their use has been governed by the availability of sources and whether or not the item was interesting enough for a reader to desire further information.

CHAPTER II

Early Settlements and Rise of the Town

1. Indian Life

In the spring of 1614 John Smith, the well-known English sea captain, sailed down the coast of New England.[1/] As he sailed, Smith made a map of the area. This map, probably the first of the New England area, made special note of the area around Boston, Massachusetts, which he called London.

Among the towns which now occupy this land is Braintree, founded in 1640. It now has an area of about fourteen square miles, but was at one time much larger. At the time of its incorporation it included the present municipalities of Quincy to the north and west, Randolph and Holbrook to the south and west. To the east, Braintree faces the Atlantic Ocean and the town of Weymouth.

Smith, on his visit, was highly impressed with the region and thought it would be a good place for a colony. However, he was on a trip of exploration, not colonization. When he returned to England, he suggested that a colony be planted on the Massachusetts coast.

1/ Captaine John Smith, A Description of New England, Boston, 1865 (reprint from the London edition of 1616), p. 1.

In 1620, when the Pilgrims arrived on Massachusetts' shores, they settled at Plymouth, south of Smith's landing place. Another well-known captain, Miles Standish, in 1621 visited what is now Squantum.[1/] He was also impressed with the area, but his people were already settled, and so the land remained without white settlers.

Both Smith and Standish, when they landed, met the inhabitants. What they saw was almost entirely different. In the seven years between the two visits, a tribe of Indians had changed from a powerful nation to a handful of weak scavengers of the soil. These Indians were called the Massachusetts. In the early days of the 17th century they were a fast growing, powerful, warlike tribe. At the time of Smith's arrival it is estimated that they could put almost 3,000 fighting men in the field at a time.[2/]

The natives were not wanderers, but rather had planted large areas of corn and other crops; in general, they were quite prosperous. The life of these Indians was, however, far from sanitary. The homes were virtual pigpens. This breeding place of disease along with their increase in number, and its resulting increase in filth, were the factors which led to the near extinction of the tribe. In the late teens of the

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1/ D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., "History of Norfolk County Massachusetts," Quincy, Charles Francis Adams Jr., J.W. Lewis and Co., Philadelphia, 1884, pp. 257-388; p. 11.

2/ Ibid., pp. 258-260

17th century the time was ripe for an epidemic to strike, and strike it did with a fury. As death made its rounds, the dead were left where they fell, to rot. The sick were deserted to die; and the living ran to flee the scourge which could not be escaped. The area around Braintree was almost swept clean of human habitation. In the entire South Shore there were not more than forty to sixty souls remaining when Standish landed. The epidemic hit hardest in the present Boston area, and weakened as it spread north and south. Mainly due to this plague the Indian did not play the part in the history of eastern Massachusetts which he did have in the settlement of most of the country.

2. Merrymount

The area, depopulated by sickness, did not remain empty long. In 1625 the vanguard of immigrants arrived. A group of about thirty indenture servants and their leaders, among whom was a man named Morton, attempted the first colony.[1/] The head of the group was Captain Wollaston, after whom the colony was named. He had brought this band of men to the new world primarily to trade with the Indians. The scarcity of the Indians, and the disinclination of the men to work hard, soon ended the dream of great profit. One winter in New England was enough for Wollaston, and he decided to leave for the warmer climate of Virginia; with him went some of the men.

1/ D.M. Wilson, Three Hundred Years of Quincy, 1625-1925, Wright and Potter, Boston, 1926, p. 4.

The settlement was left in the hands of a Mr. Fitcher, who did not have the ability to command men. Somewhat of a mutiny soon broke out and within a few months Fitcher hastily left the scene. The men left were now commanded by Thomas Morton, who was with Wollaston, one of the original partners.

Morton devised a plan to get the most out of his men. He promised them little work and much pleasure, and that is about what they had while he reigned. Morton soon changed the name of the colony from Mount Wollaston to Merrymount, which was an appropriate change. The men made friends with the surrounding Indians, paid them well for furs, and gave them presents. The Indians in return kept the whites well stocked with food and other supplies. On Merrymount, Morton and his fellow revelers danced, made merry, and sang songs composed by their leader.

News of the goings on at Merrymount, and no doubt the successful Indian trade, soon reached the ears of the Pilgrims, and they were duly scandalized. It was decided that something had to be done, and the best thing would be to get rid of Morton. Miles Standish set out with a small group of soldiers and found Morton visiting in Weymouth. He was arrested, but escaped in a rainstorm. Morton fled to his house in Merrymount followed by Standish. At the mount he found no one to help him repel the invaders and was again arrested.

The deposed ruler was brought to Plymouth, tried, found guilty, and shipped back to England. He soon reappeared in Massachusetts, was again arrested, and sent to England. Morton was not to be denied a home in the new country and so again came to America. This time after his arrest he did not go to England but rather to Maine, where he died in 1645.

3. Annexation and Incorporation

While Morton was having his merriment and later his troubles, others were arriving in Massachusetts. Boston was settled in 1630. Three years later a group from around Braintree, England, led by Rev. Hooker, settled south of the Neponset, near Morton's camp.[1/] These people stayed there for a few months and then left for Cambridge. They soon left that town for Hartford, Connecticut. Some of these settlers probably stayed in the original area around Mount Wollaston, or returned there, and most likely had a hand in naming the future town.

Boston, in 1634, annexed the Mount Wollaston land to itself. The reason for this action was the crowding of the Boston shore line by new arrivals, and the need for land for them.[2/] Parcels of the land annex were granted to residents of Boston. Many of these new owners did not

1/ Adams, Quincy, p. 277.

2/ N.B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 1628-1686, Boston, 1853-1854, 5 vol.; vol. I, p. 119.

come to live on the land but rather held it for speculation. Many unknown farmers did come to the newly opened land, along with others whose names are well known for various reasons. Among these were Rev. John Wilson, Edmund Quincy, William Coddington, William Hutchinson, the husband of Anne Hutchinson, Rev. John Wheelwright, and Henry Adams.

At this point in Massachusetts' history a religious quarrel broke out. It was of great importance to the colony at the time, but it is not too important to Braintree except in how it affected some of the above-mentioned men.[1/]

The people who did come to Braintree found it difficult to go to church in Boston, and asked for their own church. A chapel, which was a branch of the Boston church, was authorized with Rev. Wilson, the Boston pastor, as minister. Wilson did not bother much with the congregation, and Rev. Wheelwright took over. Wheelwright, unfortunately, was opposed to Wilson in the quarrel going on. The church battle ran its course, and in the end Wheelwright and Hutchinson, with his wife, were expelled from the colony. Coddington was not banished but left Massachusetts in disgust. Wilson was the winner and stayed in Boston while Quincy, Hough, and Adams either made peace with the victors or managed to stay out of the quarrel.

1/ Adams, Quincy, pp. 269-276. Here is a full acount of the religious controversy.

In 1640 there were sufficient church members in the settlement to establish a town, for in colonial Massachusetts the church preceded the town. In that same year the General Court incorporated the area and named it Braintree. The origin of the town's name is not certain. It may have been named for the town in England from which some of the earlier settlers had emigrated. Charles Francis Adams, in 1858, said that the name may have come from an old Saxon name, "Branchtreau," which meant "a town near a river."[1/] If this is true, then the town is appropriately named because of the Monatiquot River, which runs through it.

The town incorporated in 1640 included all the land between Dorchester and Weymouth. Later, as the population grew, it was divided into three precincts. Settlers moved from the north to the south. In the earliest days, and now, the north section was the most populous and prosperous. The north precinct is now Quincy, the middle Braintree, and the south is Holbrook and Randolph.

From 1634 to 1640 Boston had been giving land in the new town to its own residents. This land was often unoccupied, and even after the town was established it was not under the town's control. This unused land brought in no taxes, and only increased the tax burden on those who

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1/ Address given by Charles Francis Adams, on the opening of the Braintree Town Hall, 1858.

Samuel Bates, ed., Records of the Town of Braintree, 1640-1793, Randolph, Huxford Printers, 1886, p. 3.

were living there. In order to stop any worsening of the situation, a law was passed in 1641 which stated that anyone who wished to sell land had to first offer it to residents and then to outsiders. Even at that, if an outsider wanted to buy the land and settle he could be kept out by the town, for new residents had to have permission to enter a town. Another reason for laws of this kind was to keep the poor out of a town upon which they might prove to be a burden. The problem of absentee land ownership continued for many years. It was not until 1673 that all the land came under control of the town government.

Another aspect of the land problem was that of purchasing it from the Indians. In 1665, twenty-five years after the town was incorporated, and more than thirty years after the first permanent settlers arrived, the town fathers decided to formally buy the land from the Indians.[1/] The Indian chief at that time was Wampatuck, known to the settlers as Josiah. Why there was such a delay in buying the land is not clear. It is possible that the formality of a treaty of purchase was bothered with at this time was because of the Indian trouble going on to the south. By the terms of the treaty the Indians, in exchange for 21 pounds, 5 shillings, sold the land to the residents. The Indians promised to live in peace with the white people, and, in turn, were to be allowed to live on the land and hunt unmolested forever.

1/ Samuel Pattee, History of Old Braintree, Green and Prescott, Quincy, 1878, p. 45.

It was well that the town did officially buy the land, for in 1682 a Richard Thayer claimed that he had previously bought the land from the Indians, and that he owned all of Braintree.[1] He went so far as to have the case brought to the royal court in London. The townspeople banded together and answered Thayer's charges. The case was decided in favor of the town.

Getting around to buying the land was not the only thing in which the people were slow in acting upon. Town government in Braintree, as in other towns, was slow in developing. It grew gradually, and only as necessary. There is no doubt that some form of government was existing in 1640, but it is doubtful that it was formal, or conducted much business. Town meetings were not held regularly, and were conducted in private homes. For the first thirty years the records were kept in a very haphazard manner. The first recorded act of the government, in 1640, was to order the land of Mr. Coddington, who had left the colony, would be rented out and the income would be used for a school fund.[2]

It was voted in 1673 that meetings would be held regularly in March and October of each year.[3] It was at the same time that the

1/ Samuel Pattee, History of Old Braintree, Green and Prescott, Quincy, 1878, pp. 41-43.

2/ Town Records, p. 1.

3/ Ibid., p. 13.

first list of office holders was recorded. These officials consisted of: five selectmen, a town clerk, and commissioner, two constables, a tithingsman, and eight fence viewers. The following year surveyors of highways and field viewers were added. The election of men to the posts was quite simple. Men would be nominated for each post and the eligible voters would vote for a man by dropping a grain of corn in a hat. If he did not favor a certain candidate, a voter could vote against him by dropping in a bean.

As the town grew a meeting house was needed. The first one was built of stone for it was to serve as a fort, in case of attack, as well as a place for meetings. At these meetings all resident males took equal part in the procedures and shared equal responsibility for what went on. Every man at one time or another had to serve as either tax collector or surveyor of highways.[1/] Each job was shunned. The surveyor was responsible for repairing and building necessary roads, whether he knew how to or not. The tax collector's job was even more odious, for he had to pay any taxes he did not collect. Taxes in early days could be paid in produce or by working on the roads.

Although everyone was supposed to hold one of the positions for a year, there was an escape. If a man did not wish to serve and had sufficient money he could buy his way out. The price was a fine of five

1/ Adams, Quincy, pp. 314-315.

pounds. This was a fairly common practice, but not a foolproof one. A subsequent meeting might elect the man to the same position, and he would have to pay again or take the job and get it over with. The fine system was of value, for the town gained a considerable sum from these five pound fines.

CHAPTER III

Military Training and the Indian Wars

1. Preparation

As soon as the town was officially established the citizens of Braintree, as those in other towns, organized themselves into a unit to defend themselves and their homes. This unit was mainly to defend against Indian attack. Although the Indians of the area were few and friendly, still the threat of an uprising was ever present.

The first army was made up of infantry, and pike men were added later. The pattern for organizing the men was clearly set down in colonial law.[1/] All inhabitants of the colony, English or otherwise, between the ages of sixteen and sixty were obliged to take part in military training. The men were organized into companies of 100 men unless there were less than 200 men in the town, in which case there need be only one company. Each company was to have two drummers.

Individuals were expected to supply their own arms. If a man was unable to do so because of poverty, the town would furnish them. The weapons consisted of machlock muskets, pikes, swords, and pistols.

1/ Adams, Quincy, p. 326.

The musket was fired by powder in a flat pan, and a fuse. The disadvantage of this was that the wind could blow the powder away, or the rain wet it. The infantry men, carrying these guns, made up the bulk of the army there being two infantry men to each pike man. The pike was a pole ten feet long with a spear attached to the end. It can easily be seen why only the sturdier men of the town were pike men. The swords were carried by the officers who might also carry pistols if they wished.

Training was supposed to be held weekly, on Saturday. Lulled by peaceful times and friendly Indians the men met less often, and for a time only eight meetings a year were held. The training which was received was never used against the neighboring Indians, but was of value against the Indians to the south and in the colonial wars.

The Massachusetts in the mid 1600's were led by a chief Kuchmakin, commonly called Cutshamokin.[1/] He had at first objected to settlers in his territory south of Boston, but was soon reconciled to the fact. The chief himself even became a Christian, but would not allow his people to be converted. He was afraid that if they joined the white man's religion they would no longer pay him tribute. Thus retaining his position with the Indians, and sharing in the life of the whites, he was able to act as a mediator between the two races in their quarrels.

1/ Adams, Quincy, pp. 326-330; Pattee, pp. 360-366.

Although Cutchamokin and his people seemed friendly, the settlers did not put full trust in them. In 1642, when word was received from Connecticut that the Indians there were threatening to fight, the Massachusetts governor arrested the chief and his leading braves. After a night in jail and a lengthy questioning, they convinced the officials that they were still friendly and were allowed to go home.

In the following year the Indians themselves came to the governor and asked for protection in case the Connecticut Indians should start a war. The governor agreed to give the protection on the condition that the Indians would give up their heathen worship and become Christians. This the Indians agreed to do. How faithful they were to their new religion in time of peace is a matter of question.

2. The Wars

The long threatened Indian attacks finally came to being in 1645 and continued spasmodically for the next thirty years. The Narraganset Indians of southern Massachusetts, and Connecticut periodically harrassed the colonies, often violently. During this time they were led by three chiefs, Pessacus, Minigret, and Metacomet, who is better known as King Philip. The final affair bears the name of this last chief.

The wars took a great toll on the colonies. Close to six hundred men met death from one cause or another connected with battles, twelve complete towns were laid waste, and more than six hundred homes were

destroyed. The number of deaths is tremendous when the sparse population of the colonies is considered. During the year 1645 alone, Braintree was called upon to supply 200 men to fight Pessacus and his marauders. This does not mean that 200 individuals each served for the year. Many of the enlistments were for brief periods, and some of the men may have served two or three enlistments in a year. This call on manpower was still great. While fathers and older brothers were in the battlefield, boys from 10 to 16 were instructed in the use of arms for the defense of those at home.

The success that the Indians had was not due so much to their superiority, but rather to the incompetence of the colonial leaders. The soldiers at first tried to chase the Indians into the forests and swamps. With their heavy artillery and other equipment they soon were bogged down, and the redmen were able to escape the possibility of a pitched battle. In the later stages of the war the tactics were changed. Instead of chasing the braves the colonists attacked the Indians' villages, captured the women and children, and burned the crops. This, along with promises of no punishment for those who surrendered, gradually broke the spirit of the Indians and caused them to desert their leaders. The best known of this series of wars was the "King Philip's War."[1/] Philip became chief in 1662 and lived peacefully for a time. The Indians,

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1/ A good book for children on this war is King Philip, the Indian Chief by Esther Averill.

however, had been selling their land for English blankets, guns, ammunition, and rum. Little by little they were being pushed into the forests. Although, for the most part, the sales were legal the Indians wanted their land back; however, they still wanted to get more English goods. Caught in this dilemma, they decided that the only thing to do was to fight and take both the land and the goods.

In 1671 Philip started to stockpile arms, but was detected and disarmed. The respite was brief, for in 1675 war broke out. For the next year and more, Philip and his band raided Massachusetts and Connecticut, burning and killing. They went as far west as the Connecticut River, and as far north as Braintree.

Braintree did not escape the fury of the raiders. On the night of February 25, 1675 a band of Indians attacked the southern section of the town.[1/] Four persons were killed in the raid, three men and a woman; it seems there were no wounded. The woman was possibly taken alive and killed outside the town. Her body was found hung from a tree about three miles from the town on the road to Bridgewater. This raid caused the people to set up a garrison on the Bridgewater road. No further incidents occurred, and the town did not hear the sounds of war again for a hundred years.

1/ Pattee, p. 363.

Meanwhile Philip and his braves were raiding and looting. Philip went to New York to try to enlist the aid of the Mohawks, but failed. In mid 1676 his power started to wane as his braves left him. He was finally killed in August of that year. This ended the worst of the Indian wars. Philip's body was drawn and quartered, and his head was exhibited in Plymouth for many years.

After the Indians had been subdued, there was comparative quiet in the region until the Revolutionary War started. Between these two wars there were several inter-colonial wars which did not affect southern New England too much. We will leave that subject for a later time, and now look in on the life in colonial Braintree.

CHAPTER IV

Life in Colonial Braintree

1. Homes

The first real settlers of Braintree were poor farmers. They had either been allotted a small parcel of land or had bought it from those who had been given large tracts of land. The basis of the town's economy was naturally agriculture. The main crops were corn, potatoes, beans, and other vegetables which are still grown in the area. The farmer's home was built of rough logs cut from the nearby woods. It had a thatched roof and oiled paper for windows. The house was built around the chimney with its large fireplace. Through the center ran a hall, off which were the rooms if there was more than one room. The furniture of the average home consisted of a few beds, undoubtedly hard; a table or two, and possibly some chairs. The beds were made of wood or, more often, corn husks. Only the rich had feather beds. Bed linens were a rarity. The chairs and tables were usually in the kitchen. In some of the homes of the wealthy, some cushions and chair coverings might be found. Most homes had stools rather than chairs. Silver was very rare. Pewter was not as uncommon, but the farmer's family usually ate from wooden bowls or trenchers. The trencher was a hollowed out block of wood from which two people might eat. Kitchen

utensils were usually a kettle of brass or iron, and possibly a few pans. As the prosperity of the family grew so did the implements in the home.

The clothes of the early family, and those of many later generations were things which were meticulously cared for. The clothes were usually homespun and old. Since styles for the majority changed very slowly, the clothing was passed down from generation to generation. One item of which this was particularly true was a man's hat. The same hat might well be seen being worn by father and son for fifty years.

2. Food and Drink

Food was not always appetizing, but it was forever simple. Indian corn meal was easily the stable food; wheat flour was found only in the homes of the well to do. Much of the corn meal was used to make bread, but corn bread dries out quickly so rye was added to prevent the drying. The vegetables, corn, squash, peas, carrots, etc., were those grown on the family land. Fresh meat was almost unknown except when an animal was freshly killed. What meat was not consumed immediately was salted. This constant eating of salted meat caused the expected thirst and led, in part, to the well-known drinking habits of colonial New England.

Tea and coffee were not the common beverages until the mid 18th Century. Prior to this time the most common drinks were water, milk, beer, cider and rum, with the accent on the latter three. The amount of cider consumed was almost unbelievable. The beer was brewed locally.

One of Braintree's earliest industries was a brewery. In the same year that the church was established, the first tavern was opened.

3. Town Life

Until the 19th Century there was no such thing as a shopping center. The village store sold all the necessary dry goods, and a glass of rum. If anything other than the ordinary goods was desired, a person was forced to travel to Boston, a trip of some note. Any services which the residents needed were available at the shops of the various craftsmen.

The town mechanics consisted of the cobbler, bootmaker, mason, and, most important, the blacksmith. Through his shops, at one time or another, passed every implement made of, or with, iron. If he did not make the item he would at some time or another have to repair it. All horses, of course, were shod at his shop. A skilled mechanic was a man of means, for he could usually earn from $.65 to $1.00 a day.

Despite the stories of the good health of the so-called good old day, poor health was more common than good. It was truly a survival of the fittest. Mental health was not as perfect as some would believe. There are many instances in which the town paid to have the insane taken care of, or removed from the town limits. Physical health being poor, the average person died young, according to modern standards. One of the most common ailments was rheumatism, which struck rich and poor. Dropsy was not uncommon, and small pox epidemics broke out regularly.

In 1735 and 1751 diptheria epidemics broke out in force. In the 1751 siege, Weymouth had a death toll which amounted to ten per cent of the population.[1/]

A typical day in colonial Braintree, as in other towns, consisted of working, eating, sleeping, and back to work again. If we followed a visitor to the town, staying at a fairly well to do home, his day might be like the following.

If he came in the winter, which was the worst time, he could while away a day in front of the fireplace. Dressed in his overcoat the part of him toward the fire would toast while the other half would freeze. After a while he could turn around and reverse the torture. If he could read, he most likely would find a copy of the Bible, and possibly a copy of Milton or Shakespeare. In the evening our friend would go to a bedroom, colder than the first room. During the night he would hear and feel the wind whistling through the various cracks in the walls and roof. In the morning, unwashed, as any water left in the room would have frozen, he would hurry to the kitchen for a breakfast of corn meal washed down with cider or milk. After eating he might walk through the town, past the few mechanics' shops and the store to the tavern. Here he would be at the center of town life. In the tavern the week old news of the area, and the month old news of Europe was heard. Here political debates took

1/ Adams, Quincy, p. 321.

place, and most of the major issues of the town were discussed and decided upon. Many of the influential members of the colony, including John Adams, hated these places of drinking and carousing, but could not deny that they were the political centers of the towns. Other than at the tavern there was no place to hear news. Later day Braintree of the late 18th Century was luckier. It was one of the first towns to have a post office. The office was established in 1790, probably because John Adams was the Vice-President.

Amusements were few and far between. The Sabbath was the only day of rest. The celebration of Christmas was frowned upon by the pious Puritans. The big social event of the year was the Autumn husking bee. About this occasion the following has been written, author unknown.

"Farewell the pleasant husking nights, its merry after scenes,

When pumpkin pies are placed beside the pot of beans,

When ladies joined the social band, nor once affected fear,

But gave a pretty cheek to kiss, for every crimson ear!"

From the mention of the "ladies" joining the fun, it might be inferred that they took part in few of the town's social activities.

4. Travel

As was said before, a trip to Boston or anyplace beyond the town was something to be remembered. Well into the 19th Century traveling

was, paradoxically, a great trouble, and no trouble at all. It was bothersome because roads were very few and very poor. It was of little trouble because the average person did very little traveling.

The General Court had, in 1639, ordered that a road be built from the northern end of the colony to the southern end.[1/] The road was extended to Plymouth, and was commonly called the Plymouth Road. Each town through which the road passed was responsible for its upkeep. Braintree at one time was remiss in this duty and was fined because of it.[2/] Prior to 1760 there was no set procedure for repairing the road or for financing the repairs. In that year a tax was imposed on the residents and the revenue was used for road building. The road was then kept up, but was still a far cry from being a good one. Good roads were not, however, a real necessity for the first hundred years or so of the colony. Walking and horseback riding were the most common forms of transportation. Very few had carriages. The stage coach did not make an appearance until 1767, and was not much used until the next century. Those who wished to travel could do so best by sea. There was a packet and later a steamboat which served the coast towns north of Plymouth. This boat line was in service up until the arrival of the railroads in the 1840's.

1/ Adams, Quincy, pp. 299-303.

2/ Town Records, p. 413.

5. Schools

We have only looked at the life of the adults in early Braintree. The life of the young, while not as strenuous, was still not one of all play. Braintree had its schools.

In 1642 the General Court gave the selectmen of the towns the authority to set up schools.[1/] In 1647 the towns which had fifty householders had to set up a school.[2/] Braintree did not wait for permission to work on school problems. As was noted, the first recorded act of the town government was to rent Coddington's land for a school fund. It is not until 1679 that we find a school master being employed, however. In that year a Mr. Thompson was hired.[3/] Education, while semi-compulsory under the law of 1647, was not free. The tuition varied from time to time. In 1700 the cost was four shillings.[4/] In 1701 it was raised to five shillings.[5/] The selectmen did desire that all children have an education, and agreed to pay a part or all of the tuition of those who were unable to pay. The practice of paying tuition continued until 1720 when the schools were made free to all. It is interesting to note that Mr. Thompson was also the town doctor, and, much to the delight of his scholars, school was closed when he had to attend to the sick.

1/ Charters and General Laws of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts, Boston, 1814, p. 7.

2/ Ibid., p. 186.

3/ Town Records, p. 18.

4/ Ibid., p. 47.

5/ Ibid., p. 51.

The first school was on Hancock Street, near the present Quincy Square. In 1698 it was thought that a new school building was needed. After much debate, in 1716 a new one was built. The old one was sold to a Mr. Webb for the storage of hay. Until late in the 1700's there was only one school house in operation at one time. School was conducted in each of the three precincts for three months of the time. This meant that a child in the north, or south, section was near school three months, walked two miles three months, and four or five miles the next three months if he wished to attend for the whole year. Needless to say, the younger children and those the most distant from the school went for only three months. Those in the middle district were the best situated.

Primitive is a word which could well describe the schools of early Braintree. The grimy black walls had no pictures, blackboards, maps, or decorations on them. Children of both sexes, and various ages, sat by twos and threes on rough benches behind rows of desks. The older boys and girls sat on opposite sides in the rear of the room; the younger ones sat in the front. These scholars were neither taught much nor well. The rod was freely used on the uncooperative. Very few graduates could write well or read rapidly, but this was not too serious in a time when reading and writing were not a great necessity. Most of the students, in time, learned to read and write to an extent, and that was sufficient. Religious training was an important part of the curriculum, and a review of Sunday's sermon took up much of the school time on Monday.

Thus we have a brief view of what life was like in Braintree two to three hundred years ago. We will now go on and see how the most important event in colonial America, the Revolutionary War, affected Braintree.

CHAPTER V

Revolutionary War

1. The Coming Storm

The Indian wars ended in 1676, and there was peace in the New World until 1689. From that time until 1763, there was an almost continuous war going on between England and France for the control of North America and many other parts of the world. In all, there were four distinct wars, each of which has a name for the part of the struggle fought in America. In chronological order they were: King William's War (1689-97); Queen Anne's War (1701-13); King George's War (1744-48); and the French and Indian War (1754-63). The three earlier wars were not too important in America, and consisted mostly of Indian raids prompted by the French on the New England and New York frontiers. These were counteracted by raids by Indians friendly to the English on the French. In King George's War, Governor Shirley of Massachusetts led an expedition of Bay State to Louisburg, Canada and captured the fort. It was, however, returned to France at the end of the war. Among those on the expedition were thirteen men from Braintree, six of whom died on the way to the fort. Occasionally, during the different struggles, men were called from Braintree but the calls were not large enough to bother the town.

The war which began in 1754 was a different affair. Both French and English put regular troops in the field. Men from all the colonies were called to arms, and many from Braintree served in the nine-year war. The actual fighting occurred in the northern parts of New York and adjacent areas, and so did not directly affect Braintree or any part of southern New England. Peace came again in 1763 and the colonies, free from attack except for the western frontier, settled down to what seemed to be a long period of prosperity. The peaceful times did not last for long. Twelve years later war again broke out.

England had spent a considerable amount of money to defeat the French in America. As a result, she had gained the wastelands of Canada and freed the colonies from fear of attack. The government of King George III felt that, because of this, the colonists should help repay the debts incurred. The colonists disagreed with this and tried to block every attempt to get money out of them. Many laws were passed by Parliament regulating commerce and imposing taxes. They all had two things in common; they raised little money, and they increased feeling in America against the Mother Country. The most famous of these taxes was the "Stamp Act." This law put a tax on all papers, legal documents, and such. It is generally conceded that the colonists objected to the right of England to tax them directly. The tax itself was small. There was, however, little hard money in the colony and any tax could cause hardship on those it affected.

The people of Braintree were no different than those in other towns, and did not welcome the law. They had John Adams draw up a petition to be sent to Braintree's representatives in the General Court.[1/] The petition lamented the tax and called it unconstitutional.

The Stamp Act was repealed in 1766. When the news reached the colonies there was joy and celebrations almost everywhere. Braintree was one of the exceptions. At that time there were sufficient Tories in the town to stop any public demonstrations. The repeal of the law did little to improve relations. In 1767 a boycott against British goods was initiated in Boston. Braintree joined the boycott but was not as open about it as Boston.[2/] At a town meeting it was voted that European goods would not be imported because they were luxuries, and the people were not rich enough to spend money on them.

The influence of the Tories gradually lessened in Braintree, and in 1773, when the Boston Tea Party took place, one Braintree resident helped unload the ships in Boston Harbor.[3/] In the following September General Gage started to seize the powder stored in the towns around Boston. One day, when a British soldier was seen near the powderhouse in the north section, a group of men from the southern end of town

1/ Town Records, p. 233. After the repeal news was received, John Adams said that he had never seen such a quiet day.

2/ Ibid., p. 238.

3/ Adams, Quincy, p. 334.

removed the powder to prevent the Tories from handing it over to the English.[1/]

The feelings of the different citizens were fairly well known around town. Most of the Tories lived in the north district, while those favoring revolt lived in the middle and south. Of course, as in all such affairs, only a minority on either side were active. Despite the intense feeling rising everywhere, the Tories were not unduly harrassed.[2/] It was not until 1775 that things became uneasy for them. Even after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the King was prayed for in the north precinct church each Sunday. In 1775, at a town meeting, a list was made of those people who were undesirable (Tory).[3/] The list included only about a dozen names, one being the minister. Of these, only the minister, Mr. Winslow, left town. The rest made peace with their neighbors and became loyal citizens. It is reasonable to say that others had already left the town for Boston and the safety of the British army.

2. Revolution

The battle of Lexington took place in April of 1775, and a more serious view of the whole affair was taken by all. Almost all business

1/ Adams, Quincy, p. 335.

2/ Ibid., p. 336.

3/ Town Records, p. 481.

was closed down and the school was dismissed. The teacher's services were no longer needed because a school was then an unnecessary expense. Minutemen companies had been formed and were now called out, for there was a threat of raids on the shore towns by the British in Boston who needed food. In May of 1776 three British ships anchored off Germantown, and a small island was occupied. The minutemen made a raid on the island, but neither side was much more than a nuisance to the other.

The battle at Bunker Hill took place on June 17, and disturbed the sleep of the Braintree residents. The roar of the cannons and the battlefield smoke was all that reached the town. It undoubtedly caused some uneasy moments for the people, for they were unaware of what was going on. During the summer harassing raids were made by units from Braintree on the British posts around the harbor. These were not of much consequence. Two of the raids were made on Nantasket, where crops were burned and the lighthouse destroyed.

The summer was long and hot, and food was short, but life was bearable until an epidemic broke out in the army camp and spread to the neighboring towns.[1/] Almost every home in Braintree had sickness, and many had a death or two. With the coming of winter, the sickness died down and life returned to as near normal as possible until March.

1/ Adams, Quincy, pp. 338-339.

In March of 1777 cannon fire was again heard as Washington's army seized Dorchester Heights. On March 17 the British started the evacuation of Boston. With the British sailed the end of the fighting for Massachusetts. A few British ships did lay in anchor in the bay and caused the people some anxiety, but they did not cause any trouble and soon sailed. The rest of the war affected Braintree only when a call came for men or supplies.

How many men actually served in the army is difficult to tell.[1/] What is certain is that good men were hard to find. The ardor of 1775 and 76 soon died down, and men were not willing to go any distance for any length of time unless given more money than the army was paying. For this reason, the town voted bonuses to those who would serve outside the state. It is doubtful that more than 500 men served enlistments of six months or more during the whole war. This does not count all those who served for a day or two, or for as long as one or two months. There is little doubt that everyone capable of carrying a gun saw some service, even if it were only standing on the shore to watch for any raiding parties.

On the monetary side of the account the story is a little different.[2/] Hard money soon disappeared. Paper money took its place and soon lost its value. The town records have numerous notes on the rates of money

1/ Adams, Quincy, pp. 341-342.

2/ Ibid., pp. 343-344.

to be paid for army supplies. In all, the war cost the town about $100,000, which was about one-quarter of its accumulated wealth. The record of men willing to fight is not the best, but as far as money contributed for independence is concerned the people of Braintree could well be proud of themselves.

3. Postwar Break Up

After the war ended, poverty was widespread in all parts of the country. Sections such as Braintree were more fortunate than the large cities. Here the people worked with their own hands on their own land or in their shops, and so could obtain the necessities of life by growing food or by obtaining services by paying with produce. The absence of money made it difficult for the town to collect taxes, and so it stayed in debt for many years.

The war had temporarily disturbed the quiet life of the town, but with peace came back some of the normal living. The town meetings were again concerned with problems such as collecting taxes, choosing town officials, whether to annex Squantum and part of Dorchester, what kind of school to have, and how to care for the poor.

A question which had disturbed the town for many years finally came to a head in the early 1790's. There had long been talk about

1/ Adams, Quincy, p. 349.

making the north district a separate town. In 1790 a group of north citizens petitioned the General Court to allow their precinct to be incorporated. In 1792 the Court finally passed an act granting the separation, and called the new town Quincy. There soon arose an argument over the name, some wanting it called Hancock, but Quincy it was and still is. At the same time the south precinct was made a separate town and called Randolph. Thus the first split in the town of Braintree occurred.

CHAPTER VI

Growth of the Town Since 1800

1. Overall View of Town Life

After the Revolutionary War industry was almost at a standstill. It was not long, though, before the new nation started its Industrial Revolution. Throughout the 19th Century Braintree shared considerably in this industrial growth, and grew with it.

The present town limits, with minor changes, were fairly well established by the separation of Quincy and Randolph. This breakup cost the town more than half of its land and about half of its population. In 1657 there were about eighty families settled here; by 1701 the number of residents rose to around eight hundred. By 1790 there were 2,770 people living in the town, but the division of the town brought the figure down to 1,280. From that time on the population has shown a steady growth until now it has reached 26,698, an increase of over 9,000 in twenty years.

Life in Braintree during the last century was much the same as any small town. Most of the people earned their living by working in the various factories located here or in the neighboring towns. Some maintained farms and grew produce, which was sold in the vicinity or

sent to Boston. There were some stores, but many of the merchants traveled around the town with their merchandise in a wagon and sold groceries, meats, fish, vegetables, and many household items to the housewife at her back door. Braintree had a considerable amount of traffic and transit trade since it was on the main road from Plymouth to Boston. The railroads provided an easy route to Boston, and roads were improved to facilitate the shipment of goods to all points. A boat line existed which served the coastal towns, and regular stops were made at the Monatiquot River. This caused East Braintree and the Weymouth Landing area to become a rather busy trading center. Farmers from the south brought their produce and drove their cattle to the Landing where it was loaded on the boats. This was a convenience for it saved the cattle from being driven the last fourteen miles or so to Boston. These men on returning home bought many of their supplies in the stores by the river.

The 19th Century did not see any excitement caused by the wars of the previous hundred years. There were wars, however, which caused Braintree to send its young men to fight for their homes and ideals. Names which are still familiar in the area are found on the lists of men who fought in the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. These troubles occurred many miles from the town, and so did not bother its life too much.

The center of the town's life was easily the church. After 1800

many new and different churches made their appearance, and the different congregations held their picnics, parties, suppers, and other affairs. These, in the absence of the present-day amusements, served as the town's social life. There was, of course, the band concert which enlivened the summer Sunday afternoons.

The steady growth in population both caused and was caused by various factors. The industries needed people, and the people needed schools, fire and police protection, and various other municipal services. We shall made a survey of the industries, past and present, in this chapter. In later chapters we shall see how the present town government and services have grown.

2. Early Industries

Iron Works.-- One of the great needs of the early settlers was pots and pans, and other implements made of iron. They could be imported from Europe, but this took time and was expensive. If they could be manufactured in the colony it would be a great convenience.

Around 1640 a group of men led by John Winthrop, Jr., son of the Governor, found that there was iron ore in many parts of the colony. The towns which seemed to have the best ore and facilities were Braintree and Saugus. On a trip to England in 1642 Winthrop raised enough money to start the project. Braintree, eager for the industry and inexpensive metal, granted the company 3,000 acres of unused land. The land was to

be used to supply wood for the furnace. The company actually started operation in 1643 in two parts of the town.

Water was the best source of power available, but there was not sufficient water in any one place for the whole operation. The Monatiquot River and the Furnace Brook are both small, but together could supply the needs of the company. The works were split between the two streams. The forge was erected on the Monatiquot near Middle and Elm Streets, and the furnace was built on Furnace Brook in Quincy near St. Mary's Church.

The iron works, started in great hopes, did not prove to be successful. It was soon found that it would be cheaper to import iron utensils from England. A short new lease on life was given to the company in 1651 with the importation of cheap labor. Cromwell had captured a number of Scotch prisoners in 1650. About 270 of them were sent out to Braintree to help the iron works. They did not do much good and in 1653 the company went into bankruptcy.

An attempt was made to revive the industry in 1674, but this failed as did one in the next century. In the early 19th Century another attempt was made at a new site. This was also on the Monatiquot, near Union and Commercial Streets. This also failed and the iron industry disappeared from Braintree.

Fishing.-- Fishing was, in the early days, very important. Much of the fish caught was sold to the residents to supplement their diet of

salt meat. There was also a good market for salted and dried fish in other colonies, and in the Catholic countries of Europe and their colonies. The selectmen, in 1755, thought the occupation was important enough to exempt fishermen from military training, and the paying of poll tax for three years. Until the early part of the present century, there was an unusual run of smelt and herring up the various streams. Smelt Brook was so named because of the fish in it each year. Pollution of the streams by factories finally put an end to the occurrence.

Granite.-- The resource for which the Braintree-Quincy area is best known in granite. When the town was young there were laws which forbade the taking of granite from the settlement. The residents could use all they wished, but might not remove it to be sold. In time the restrictions were lifted, and granite quarrying became a very important industry, especially in the Quincy section. Two famous projects which used granite from this area were King's Chapel in Boston and the Bunker Hill Monument.

Glass.-- A group of German settlers had a thriving glass industry going in the Germantown section about the middle of the 18th Century. A large part of the plant was destroyed by fire, and the settlers were unable to raise money to continue so the company closed up in 1760. A lottery was used to raise funds to start the company again after the Revolution, but again it failed. There are still some pieces of glassware made by the company in the old homes of Quincy.

3. Nineteenth Century

The last century saw a number of industries move to, or start in, Braintree and then gradually disappear. We will take a brief look at some of these.

In the early days of the century a lace factory was founded. It prospered for a time, but soon failed and the plant was converted to a shoe factory. This one, and other shoe factories which were started, made Braintree a prosperous center of the boot and shoe industry until after the Civil War. Many companies here made boots for the army during the war. In the years following 1870, this industry started to fade as other towns to the south became the shoe centers of New England.

Some of the other industries which flourished were a cotton mill, coal companies, two paper mills, and a rubber factory. A fan company did very well for a time selling hand-painted fans throughout the country and in Europe. This company ceased operation in the late 1890's, and the plant was used by a company making shoe laces. Many of the older residents still remember both of these companies, and some of them made a comfortable living there earning six to eight dollars a week.

4. Present Industries

Shipbuilding.-- Shipbuilding in Braintree goes back to the years before 1700. The Monatiquot River in East Braintree was the scene of the launching of many ships, both sail and steam. In the early days,

fishing vessels were always under construction. The largest ship in the country, the Massachusetts, was built there in 1789. The present Fore River Shipyard had its beginning on the Monatiquot. The company was started by two well-known residents, Mr. Watson, the co-worker of Alexander Graham Bell, and Mr. Wellington. Here was launched the only seven-masted ship built, the Lawson. The company might still be located there except for the fact that the river is not very wide. When two destroyers, the Lawrence and the McDonough, were being launched, one of them broke loose and landed on the opposite shore. This caused the decision to move. The yard is now located on the Quincy-Braintree line and is part of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. During World War 1 the old yard was used for the building of submarine hulls.

Since World War 1 Braintree has declined somewhat as a manufacturing center. There are still a number of industries present, a few of which we will mention.

The Abrasive Products Company.-- This company manufactures all types of abrasives, paper fibers, and cloth. The main product is sandpaper. All the items are sold throughout the world.

Armstrong Cork Company.-- This company was originally the Monatiquot River Works where rubber parts for gas masks were made during World War 1. That company later became the Stedman Flooring Company, which made rubber floors. When the Armstrong Company decided to make rubber flooring, the Stedman Company was purchased

in 1936. Here are made various types of rubber and cork products, including rubber tile flooring.

Boston Consolidated Gas Company.-- The gas company was founded in 1911. It supplies gas to eight South Shore communities including Braintree.

Cities Service Company.-- A large storage plant is maintained in East Braintree. Petroleum products are sold to Cities Service agents and independent oil dealers in the area.

The J.M. Connel Shoe Company.-- This company makes both men's and women's shoes and riding boots as well as other types of footwear.

Alves Photo Service.-- All types of photographic equipment and services may be obtained at the Alves Company. It serves many communities on the South Shore and specializes in photographic Christmas cards.

Hunt Potato Chip Company.-- One of the best known companies in Braintree is Hunt's. Their potato chips are sold in most towns in the Greater Boston area.

The Pneumatic Drop Hammer Company.-- This company, founded in 1922, makes drop hammers for stamping and embossing jewelry, silverware, and other items. Its machines are used in many countries around the world.

Specialty Converters, Inc.-- This is a paper company which manufactures waterproof paper for many uses.

The Observer.-- Braintree's only newspaper is the Observer, a weekly paper. It was first started in 1778, and is presently published by the Observer Press. There are microfilms of many of the old copies and all the later ones in the public library. Many interesting items about Braintree may be found in them.

This is not to be considered a complete list of all industries in the town today. It only contains the ones which are better known, and there are others of importance. There are, of course, a number of merchants and businessmen who have shops and offices in various parts of the town. Of late a number of new industries have come to the town, including an electronics company. The town is now working on an industrial development plan which should attract more industries to the community.

CHAPTER VII

Municipal Services

1. School Department

We have already had a glimpse at the early schools in Braintree. Now we will see how they have developed to the present time. Until 1790 the schools were under the supervision of the selectmen. In that year a school board of fifteen men was appointed to consider the needs of the schools. Each precinct was represented by five members. There was, at the time, one grammar school for the preparation of those going to college, which was conducted in each of the precincts for three months at a time during the year. The teacher was always a man and the curriculum rather simple; English, Latin, writing, and arithmetic. There was also in each precinct a primary school taught by a woman. The one in the North Precinct was held quite regularly, and those in other districts only when a woman could be found to teach for the small salary paid.

After the separation of the towns, Braintree had a regular primary and grammar school. In 1827 Braintree and Weymouth established an academy for the preparation of those who wished to attend college. The set-up continued until 1857 when Braintree started its own high school in the Town Hall. In addition to the high school, other schools for younger children had been built as the town grew. In 1870 there were nine of these

schools of three different types. The population was distributed in such a way that schools had to be adapted to the number of children they served. In the outlying districts there were one and two-room ungraded schools. In the more populated areas there were primary and intermediate schools as well as a grammar school for those who hoped to go to the high school.

The number of children who ever reached the high school was rather small. About half of those who were able to finish grammar school were able to pass the examination for high school. In 1874 fifty students took the examination, and only twenty-eight passed. Out of this number only five graduated. This is not meant to be a criticism of the schools of eighty years ago. A high school diploma was not as necessary as it is today, and a person without one was in no way ashamed of the fact. The school board desired that all boys and girls go to school as long as possible, but realized that many things prevented this. The high school was originally designed for those planning to go on to higher education. In order to help those who could go to high school, but planned on going into business rather than college, an English course of study of three years was offered as well as the four-year Latin course. The student who pursued either of these courses was exposed to a rather varied curriculum, and it is easy to see why he was considered a well educated person. The following is an example of the course of studies during the 1870's. Needless to say, it was often revised, but this was typical.

English course	Latin course
first year	
first semester	
arithmetic	
English grammar	same as English
geography	
U. S. History	
one day of reading, writing, spelling, and drawing	
second semester	
algebra	
ancient and modern history	same as English
natural philosophy	
rhetoric	
second year	
first semester	
algebra	algebra
bookkeeping	chemistry
chemistry	Latin
rhetoric	rhetoric
one day each semester of declamation, drawing, and mental arithmetic	
second semester	
geometry	geometry
bookkeeping	Latin
physiology	physiology
geology	geology
third year	
complete previous subjects, plus astronomy and botany	finish previous subjects, plus French or Greek and botany
fourth year	
	astronomy
	Latin
	French or Greek
	moral philosophy

If this were a required course of study today, we probably would have just as small a proportion of high school graduates as there was in

the past century.

The schools at this time were still run by the school board members who were well acquainted with educational methods and did an extremely conscientious job. Almost eighty years ago they lamented the slavery to text books which was so prevalent in the schools. Some of their ideas which were considered reactionary at the time are common practices now. The board at that time had most of the same troubles that bother the schools today. They annually asked the town for money to buy books, maps, desks, and other materials, and for money to grade the school grounds. Where to find room for the children was a constant problem. The problem, however, was different in different parts of the town. In 1881 the Union School's classes averaged sixty-one pupils while some district schools had only thirteen, or as few as nine, pupils in a class. Teachers' salaries were a headache then also. A good pay for an experienced teacher was $400, but the board felt that teachers would do better work and remain longer if they doubled the salary. The turnover in personnel was incredible. A high school teacher was commended by the board when he stayed for three and a half years.

In 1885 the town decided that it could afford a superintendent of schools, and Mr. J. T. Clark was appointed at a salary of $600. The Braintree schools must have been held in rather high esteem in educational circles, for more than 100 qualified men applied for the position.

Some of the school problems were relieved in 1875 when General Thayer willed $260,000 as an endowment for an academy to be erected on the site of his home. Thayer Academy was opened in 1877, and is located about a half mile from the present Braintree High School. The academy is a complete high school, and originally offered a free education to any child who lived in the Braintree of General Thayer's day. Since he lived before the town was broken up, this included children from Quincy and Randolph as well as Braintree. The academy recently started to charge a tuition.

From 1890 to the present time the schools have been expanding almost continually. In that year the superintendent reported that most of the schools were overcrowded. In the Pond School, which was built in 1873, extra chairs had to be placed in the aisles and hallways. The high school, still in the Town Hall, was also overcrowded. To relieve the situation, the Monatiquot School was built in 1892. It was originally planned to accommodate grades five to eight and the high school, but the superintendent warned that the high school would soon need the whole building. The situation in the east district was no better. The old Iron Works School was both crowded and decrepit. After much debate, the property at the corner of Liberty and Commercial Streets was purchased, and a school was built there and opened in 1893. The land had been the homestead of Rev. Jonas Perkins, a minister and member of the school board, and so the school was named in honor of him.

The town continued to grow and so did the crowded situation in the schools. A new school was requested in 1897, but was not approved that year. In 1900, however, the Penniman School was completed. The land had been donated to the town by Mr. N. E. Hollis, and the school was named in honor of his mother's family.

The Pond School was still overcrowded, and a proposal was made in 1904 to rebuild it in order to take care of the children who had been forced out of the Monatiquot which was completely taken over by the high school. Instead of rebuilding the Pond the Noah Torrey School was built in 1905. This school was named for a well-known Braintree doctor.

In the year 1906 the Torrey, the Pond, the Penniman, and the Perkins Schools were all crowded. Some classes had seventy pupils, many had sixty and over half had more than fifty, the recommended maximum. One class was held in a room of an old factory. To relieve the situation in East Braintree, the Abraham Lincoln School was opened in 1910. Braintree Proper still needed more classrooms, and so the Hollis School was approved, and was ready for the children in 1912. This school was named for the Hollis family, well known in Braintree.

After building six schools in twenty years, they did not build any more until 1924. In that year the Thomas A. Watson School in East Braintree was opened. The school is near Mr. Watson's estate and named for him. This started another period of expansion. The Noah Torrey was again overcrowded and an annex, the Noah Torrey Primary, was built in 1926.

In the meantime, the high school enrollment was continually growing. The school had originally been planned for 200 pupils; in 1904 there were 157 children attending. By 1925 the school was hopelessly overcrowded. To relieve this, a new high school was opened in 1927. This building had been expanded in 1949. When the new high school was opened, the Monatiquot School reverted to an eight grade grammar school.

Meanwhile, the Braintree Highlands district was growing, and in 1930 the Highlands School was opened there. This marked the end of this building period. A combination of the depression and World War II kept the town from investing in new schools. During this time only one building, a two-room school, was built in 1938. This school was named in honor of Miss Josephine Colbert. In gratitude for the honor given his sister, Miss Colbert's brother willed a sum of money to the town for school needs.

The next era of expansion, which is still going on, was started in 1951 with the building of the Donald E. Ross School. Donald Ross, a native of and teacher in Braintree, was killed in action in World War II. During 1953 two elementary schools were opened, the Lakeside and the Josephine Foster. The latter school was named in honor of another former Braintree teacher. The Monatiquot School Annex was constructed in 1954. In 1955 another primary school, the Alberto Eldridge, was opened. Mr. Eldridge had been an elementary school principal. As far as the future is concerned, a Junior High School in South Braintree is to be completed for 1956, and other new schools as well as alterations to

present schools are planned.

At the present time the school policies are formed by a school committee of six. The members serve three-year terms, two being elected annually. Their policies are administered by the superintendent and his assistant whom the board appoints. The committee, with the superintendent, elects teachers and other personnel of the department. The schools now employ over 270 teachers, as well as supervisors and teachers of special subjects. Some of these special departments are: health, guidance, visual education, home instruction, music, and art. The high school conducts an extensive sports program as well as other activities such as a band and dramatic society.

In addition to the public schools, Braintree also has in its boundaries Thayer Academy, which we have mentioned, and the academy's Junior School, Thayer Lands. Archbishop William's High, which offers an education to Catholic students of the South Shore, is also located in Braintree.

2. Police Department

Prior to 1893 there was no organized police force in Braintree. The selectmen acted as the officers of the peace. If an arrest were required, one of them made the arrest with the aid of a constable. For the most part there was little policing to be done. At different times the town did have a semi-official force which usually consisted of three men who did night duty.

In 1893, at a Town Meeting, it was voted to maintain a regular Police Department. The department then consisted of three patrolmen, one for each district, who walked around the town from 7 P.M. to 3 A.M. In 1910 Amos Loring, one of the first patrolmen, was appointed Police Chief. This system continued until 1914 when Sunday patrolmen were added to the force during the summer and fall months. Full time officers were not employed until 1928. For some years prior to this, the merchants of North Braintree had hired men to patrol the area for the full day. Though this action was approved by the town, the merchants paid the policemen.

In 1920 the famous Sacco-Vanzetti episode, in which two men were murdered, occurred. The town then decided to hire two more men and established a police headquarters. Previously the headquarters had been the home of the chief, and cells for prisoners were at the Town Farm.

The first police car was purchased in 1926. In the following year a one-way radio, tuned to the State Police radio, was installed. A patrol wagon was bought in 1927. This vehicle was wrecked in 1930 while taking an injured man to the Quincy Hospital. In the following year a new patrol wagon and an ambulance were purchased. Since that time the ambulance has been replaced twice and the patrol wagon once, in 1954. The ambulance has been an extremely useful vehicle since it makes an average of better than a trip a day. The department now has five cars equipped with two-way F.M. radios. An A.M. radio system was installed in 1940,

and replaced with the F.M. sets in 1950. The present police headquarters, located in the same building as the central fire station, was built in 1931.

At the present time the department consists of the chief, one deputy chief, three lieutenants, six sergeants, and thirty-two privates. The regular force is very valuable, and ably assisted by 100 auxiliary policemen. In 1955 the force performed 2,064 hours of duty, mostly on holidays, at special events and during the flood emergency. In cooperation with the school department, there is a very active School Safety Patrol program. The program was in operation for many years in some of the schools, but was expanded to include all schools in 1945. A photographic laboratory was started in 1947, and a Juvenile Officer appointed in 1954. Recently a Police Athletic League for Boys had been organized.

3. Fire Department

Fire is one of the greatest hazards known to man. In 1645 the town officials ordered that every home should have a ladder next to the chimney for use in case of fire. In the earliest days of the town if a fire broke out everyone available turned out to fight it.

After 1714 there was a town fire warden to direct the fighting of fires. In 1812 the town, with Weymouth, was given permission to appoint men to act as fire fighters, with equipment at Smelt Brook in Weymouth Landing. In 1840 it was voted to free call firemen from paying a poll tax, and to pay them $10 a year. In 1846 a joint Weymouth-Braintree fire commitee was established. The town started its own department in 1872

by setting up engine houses in the three districts of the town. The personnel at this time was still on a call basis. Fire alarms were set up at various points, and anyone detecting a fire would sound the alarm. An electrical system was installed in 1894. Each district had a hook and ladder, and a hand pump, at its disposal which were hand-drawn. The town did not own any horses of its own, but contracts were made with men who had horses near the stations. At the sound of an alarm these men brought the horses to the station as quickly as possible. Usually two men received contracts, and the one who arrived first was paid for the run. At the same time all call firemen answered the alarm.

This system was undesirable for many reasons. The most important ones were that the horses were often a distance from the station when the alarm sounded, and they did not always wear harnesses which could be attached to the engines. In 1912 there was a fire in the Town Hall, which resulted in the complete destruction of the building because the horses were late in arriving at the stations. As a result of this, at subsequent town meetings it was urged that the department be modernized. In 1914 the proposals were accepted. A new station, in South Braintree, was built and one piece of motor-driven apparatus was purchased.

The first regular Fire Chief, Mr. Fred Tenney, was appointed in that year. With the truck he would answer all calls along with the horse-drawn engine of the district involved. The horses were continued in use until 1921 when the department became completely motorized. One horse-drawn

piece was retained for a while, but was used only in emergencies.

At the present time the department has seven pieces of active apparatus and two in reserve, housed in three stations. In all, there are forty-two men regularly employed, and about thirty-six call firemen. These include a chief, one assistant chief, two deputy chiefs, two captains, five lieutenants, thirty privates, and one man in charge of the fire alarm system.

4. Library Department

One of the finest buildings in the town is the Thayer Public Library in South Braintree.

In 1865 General Thayer offered to give the town $10,000 for a library, which the town did not have, if the people would vote the same amount. He also offered an additional $10,000 as a library trust fund, and he was even willing to lend the community the money it was to supply. Strangely enough, the town refused to accept the offer, and not in a nice way. In 1870 the offer was reconsidered, and after much debate, was accepted. General Thayer died before plans for the building were complete, but the trustees of his estate agreed to go through with the agreement. At a special town meeting, the plans were accepted in 1873. The building was started immediately, and opened the next year. The structure still stands, and is now used by the Water Department.

In its first year the library contained over 1,000 books. It was opened only two afternoons and one evening a week. Its use was so great

that the next year the building was open every day, except Sunday, and two evenings a week.

In order that the residents could easily obtain books, branches were opened in various homes and buildings in that section of town. In the course of time a library was opened on Quincy Avenue near Weymouth Landing. There are now branches in Braintree and the Highlands area.

Since opening with 1000 books, the library has grown considerably. Volumes have been obtained from various sources other than the money appropriated by the town. Many persons have donated books, and others have left money in trust funds for books and other materials. Most of the funds are rather small, but still appreciated and useful. Two of the larger ones are the Hunt Fund and the Foundation, or Thayer Fund. The latter one is mainly for maintenance.

In time the old building became too small, and the present building was built. It was opened to the public in 1953. At the present time, it contains about 50,000 volumes and has a total circulation of 274,000 books. The library provides two services for children. It has a special children's department, and supplies the public schools with a good supply of children's books during the school year. In addition to the literary department, there is also a music department.

The library is supervised by a board of five trustees. Three of them are appointed by the trustees of Thayer Academy, and two are elected. The staff of the library includes the head librarian and ten assistants.

CHAPTER VIII

TOWN GOVERNMENT

1. Town Officials

The town government in Braintree is much the same as in other New England towns. Most of the business is conducted at the annual town meeting with day-to-day business taken care of by the selectmen, various commissions, and heads of departments. We will first discuss the several town officials and then the operation of the town meeting.

Moderator.-- The moderator, an elected official, is the person who controls the town meeting. He receives only a token salary, and is usually an outstanding public-spirited citizen. As the chairman of the meeting he must see that the members do the work assigned and do not wander too far afield. He must at all times control the speeches, being sure that no one brings in irrelevant arguments which stall the meeting, and yet he must give everyone a fair chance to present germaine arguments.

The moderator appoints various committees to work on items in the town warrant. He also appoints the members of the finance committee.

Finance Committee.-- Fifteen citizens appointed by the moderator make up the finance committee. They consider all matters which involve the expenditure of money. They must necessarily be people who have a good knowledge of money matters, town affairs, and are willing to spend long hours to help the town. After the items on the warrant which will require the spending of money are determined, the committee investigates all of them and holds public hearings on them. A report is then made out with recommendations on what action should be taken on each item. The position of the committee is purely advisory. The town meeting may reject any of the recommendations; however, they are usually accepted. At the meeting, the members may be called upon to defend any of the committee's recommendations.

Town Clerk.-- Records of all events which are of concern to the town are kept by the clerk. He records vital statistics such as births, marriages, and deaths. In addition, he keeps an account of the action taken at town meetings and elections. His account is the official record of the town. Most licenses are issued by his office including those for marriage, dogs, hunting, fishing, and various other types.

Treasurer.-- All money and trust funds of the town are under the control of the treasurer. He receives all money which is collected by the tax collector, or any other department which may receive revenue. The banks in which the money is to be deposited are selected by him. He floats any loans which are authorized by the town, and authorizes the

expenditure of the town's funds.

Selectmen.-- The administrative arm of the town government is the board of selectmen. The board is composed of three men, each elected for a three-year term, one member being elected yearly. The chairman of the board is selected by the members. All officials, not elected, are appointed by the selectmen. Some of these are the chiefs of the police and fire departments, all firemen, the town accountant, and the town clerk. If an elected official leaves his office for any reason before his term ends, the selectmen appoint someone to finish out the term. All the departments in the town are normally under their control, but with the various commissions in operation the selectmen do not actually have to direct them very much. The departments which they do exercise the most control over are the highway, police, and fire.

Among the various jobs which the selectmen do are issuing various permits, approving new streets, assessing betterments, and making up the town warrant. They also give their approval to all expenditures made by the treasurer. Their business is conducted at regular open meetings and any special sessions they feel necessary. Any selectman is available to individual citizens at all times.

Welfare Board.-- The selectmen usually, but not always, make up the welfare board. The board has charge of all relief work in the town. This includes old age assistance and aid to dependent children. It does not include soldier's relief, which is provided for by the board of selectmen.

Assessors.-- After the town warrant has been passed, the budget is sent to the assessors. They determine how much money the town must spend in state and county assessments, and add it to the budget. They then subtract any money the town has on hand and any revenue it is to receive from outside sources. A final budget is then arrived at. A poll tax of $2.00 is imposed on all male residents over twenty-one years of age. The money not raised by this tax must then be raised by a tax on real and personal property.

The assessors inspect and assess all new property as it comes into being, and periodically inspects old property. Each year the town is evaluated and the total value, in thousands of dollars, is divided into the budget to determine the tax rate in terms of so many dollars for every thousand dollars of the town's value.

Tax Collector.-- The assessors, after computing the tax rate, send it to the tax collector. This elected official then sends tax bills to the residents who are subject to the tax. Upon collecting taxes he sends the money to the treasurer. The collector is responsible for the collection of all taxes. If he does not collect any he must have a good reason. If the tax happens to be unjust or completely uncollectable, an abatement may be made. If a person should refuse to pay a just tax, the collector may do one of two things. If the tax is on personal property, the debtor may be arrested and put in jail. If the tax is on real property, the collector may seize the property and attempt to sell it.

Tree Warden.-- The official who is responsible for the appearance and care of the town's trees is the tree warden. He removes any trees which are dead, diseased, or objectionable for any reason. He also sees that new trees are planted when necessary. Working with a division of the highway department, he protects the elm trees against disease. Not many years ago the gypsy moth was a definite menace to the town's elms, but spraying has done much to protect them and beautify the town.

Planning Board.-- The members of the planning board work with the building department to regulate the selection of sites for the erection of houses and business buildings. The board does this through a zoning code, but can grant wavers from this code if there is sufficient reason. The board also does long-range planning for the town so that it will be prepared for future developments.

Sealer of Weights and Measures.-- One of the services which the town gives its citizens is the checking of measuring devices. The sealer, with special instruments, inspects all scales in markets and other businesses to assure accurate weight. He also checks meters on trucks and other vehicles, as well as those in establishments which use them such as gasoline stations.

Mosquito Control.-- To help insure the health and comfort of the people, Braintree, in conjunction with neighboring towns, has a mosquito control division. The areas in which mosquitos breed are sprayed in an attempt to free the region of these pests.

Highway Department.-- In the early days of the town one man was elected as a surveyor of highways, responsible for the upkeep of the roads. As the town grew, three men were elected. These men, with a foreman each and a few pieces of equipment, maintained the roads. Many times in the last century, however, the roads were repaired by private citizens.

With the advent of automobiles better roads were needed, and in 1921 a highway department was set up. The superintendent is appointed by the selectmen, and is responsible to them. The department is responsible for the maintenance of road services, the construction of any new roads approved at the town meetings, and rebuilding roads as needed. The installing of curbings and sidewalks, as well as the maintaining of some grass plots and shrubbery is also done by the department. One of the most important tasks is the removal of snow and the sanding of streets. Rubbish collecting is also done by the department.

The town engineers work with the highway department in laying out streets, making maps, and other highway work.

Park Commissioners.-- Each precinct has a commissioner who sees that parks and playgrounds in the area are cared for and equipped.

Board of Health.-- The members of the board of health keep a check on the sanitary conditions of the town in general. They inspect all restaurants and other places of assembly, offer free inoculation against contagious disease to those who wish them, and have recently inaugurated

a clinic for polio inoculations.

Retirement Board.-- Three employees of the town, appointed by the selectmen, are in charge of the employees' retirement system. This system includes all workers in the town's employment except teachers and other school personnel.

Measurer of Wood and Hay.-- Not many people in the present day need to have hay or wood measured, but at one time the measurer was an important official. If a person buying these commodities thought he was not receiving full weight, he might call the measurer to check it.

Sewer Department.-- In 1900 the town was told by the state that a sewer system was needed. The town board of health told the people that there was a need. In 1906 and 1917, committees considered the problem. During these years no action was taken. It was not until 1931 that the townspeople decided to put in a sewer system. The system started at that time is not yet complete, but is progressing rapidly. For the most part, it is a gravity flow system with pumping stations at the low areas. The system connects with the Metropolitan pipeline and discharges into the harbor at Grape Island. The cost of installation of sewer pipe is borne by the town and the affected residents.

Water Commission.-- In the early days of the town water was obtained from wells, springs, ponds, and rivers. In 1885 the town received permission from the state to operate a water department. A private company started operation in 1886. The town purchased this company

after some legal trouble, and took complete control in 1891.

The water was originally taken from Little Pond in South Braintree. This pond was too small, and the waters of Great Pond were tapped. In 1930 it was necessary to use the water of Little Pond again for commercial use. Great Pond had to be expanded in 1940, with the construction of a reservoir. The water of Braintree is as pure as any in the area, but to insure this purity a filter was constructed in 1934.

At the present time the water supply is adequate. If need be, the system can connect to the Metropolitan District Commission system. This would be too expensive just now. The system is connected to the Quincy supply for emergency use.

Building Inspector.-- All new buildings and other construction and alterations are supervised by the building inspector. He watches to see that all building is done according to the existing building codes, and issues permits for construction.

Light Department.-- In 1891, early in the history of electric lighting, a committee was set up to consider a power station in Braintree. In 1892 a town meeting appropriated $30,000.00 for the establishment of a plant in East Braintree. The plant was originally planned to provide power for street lights only. In 1893 equipment was purchased to supply electricity to homes, as many people had their home wired.

The plant was under the supervision of the selectmen from 1892 to 1909. In the latter year it was voted to elect three men to act as a

municipal light board. This board has run the plant in an extremely efficient manner. It has been expanded continually as the town grew, always paying for itself by its own revenue. This plant has provided the town with the most modern service, and is one of the best investments the town has made.

2. Town Government

Elections and Town Warrant.-- The election of town officials is conducted on the first Monday of March each year. This election is considered the start of the town meeting. A person seeking election to a certain position need only take out nomination papers and obtain signatures from a certain number of qualified voters. The number to be obtained varies. It is one per cent of the total number of votes cast in the previous election for governor. Thus, if 10,000 votes were cast, the nominee must obtain 100 signatures. Any resident who is a registered voter may run for any town office.

Prior to the elections the selectmen receive the budgets and various requests from the different departments of the town. The items, along with those decided upon by the selectmen and those received from citizens, are consolidated into the town warrant. The warrant is published and posted, and a town meeting is called for on the second Monday after the election. All the articles which have to do with money are investigated by the finance committee, which publishes a report.

Town Meeting.-- Braintree, since 1938, has had a modified type town meeting. There is insufficient room for all the citizens to attend, and so 240 town meeting members are elected by the people, and they conduct the business.

At the meeting, the articles on the warrant are considered in order of appearance on the warrant. Anyone present at the meeting may speak about an article, but only the elected members may vote. After an article has been voted upon it may not be reconsidered unless the motion for reconsideration is made within one hour of the original vote. If all the articles are not voted on at one meeting, additional meetings are held on successive Mondays until the warrant is completed.

If during the year new business must be considered the selectmen may call special town meetings. If an emergency should arise which requires the expenditure of unappropriated money, the selectmen may commit the town to spend the money. However, they must call a meeting within thirty days to have the expenditure approved.

CHAPTER IX

Biographical Sketches

1. North Precinct

Old Braintree contributed many great men to the formation of a civilization in the New World, and the formation of the United States. Two presidents and a signer of the Declaration of Independence were natives of the North Precinct. Volumes can and have been written about John Adams, his son John Quincy Adams, and their contemporary John Hancock. It would not do them justice to try to condense their lives into a few pages here. One interested in their lives may obtain accounts in any library. We will, therefore, content ourselves with brief sketches of some of the distinguished citizens of the Middle Precinct, the present Braintree.

2. General Ebenezar Thayer

General Thayer, a member of one of Braintree's oldest families, was born August 21, 1746. He died at the age of sixty-two in 1809. He served as the Town Clerk and Treasurer for about twenty-one of the years between 1776 to 1804. As clerk he did much to keep the records of the town in an orderly manner, and brought up to date the records prior to his time.

During the Revolution he served a number of enlistments, usually in independent companies. He rose steadily in the military ranks, and was commissioned a Brigadier General in the militia around 1791. As well as being clerk and treasurer, Thayer was also a selectman for eight years and a member of the Executive Council for two years. When Norfolk County was formed in 1793, he was appointed its first sheriff, a position he held for only one year.

3. General Sylvanus Thayer

Sylvanus Thayer is probably the better known of the two generals. He was born June 9, 1785. At the age of eight he went to live with his uncle, a Revolutionary soldier, in New Hampshire. This environment undoubtedly did much to direct his future career. While in his teens he worked in a country store, educated himself, and taught in the district school. He was admitted to Dartmouth College in 1803, and in his senior year was appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Less than a year later he graduated from the academy, the leading member of his class.

At the outbreak of the War of 1812, he entered the army as an engineer. He was appointed Chief of Engineers of the Northern Army, and later went to Virginia to build defenses for that state. For his fine work in the defense of Norfolk, he was brevetted Major in 1815. After the war he was sent to Europe to study the military systems of

Napoleon's army. He arrived in England just after Napoleon was defeated, and so for two years studied the armies which occupied France.

Upon returning home he was made Commandant of West Point by President Monroe. After a stormy start he reorganized the academy completely. It is to General Thayer that West Point owes much of the fame it has today. He resigned this post in 1833.

His next task was to construct the defenses on Pemberton Island and build Fort Independence. Late in 1843 he again went to Europe to study military science. On his return he was honored by degrees from many colleges, including Dartmouth. In 1863 President Lincoln made him a Brigadier General, and two days later the General retired from the active service. The last nine years of his life were spent in Braintree.

During his military career General Thayer had managed to save a considerable amount of money. Much of this he donated to education. The Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College was endowed by him. He also endowed the Thayer Public Library, and left money for the establishment of a school on the site of his home. This school became Thayer Academy. Sylvanus Thayer dies in 1872. His remains now are buried on the campus at West Point.

4. Benjamin Vinton French

Braintree's contribution to the horticultural world was made by Benjamin French. He was born in Braintree on July 21, 1791. At the age

of twenty-one he started a grocery business in Boston. He was successful enough to retire in 1836 at the age of forty-five. The rest of his life was devoted to raising food and flowers on his 200 acre farm in Braintree. The farm was a showplace which attracted hundreds of visitors every year.

Mr. French raised every possible kind of vegetable and flower, but his specialty was the field of Pomology. At one time he had 400 types of apples, about the same number of pears, and 100 kinds of plums and cherries.

While he had lived in Boston he had been very active in public life. He had been Assistant Assessor, Overseer of the Poor, Director of the House of Reformation for Juvenile Delinquents, as well as director of banks and insurance offices. In 1843 he served on the Executive Council.

Mr. French was one of the founders of the Norfolk County Agricultural Society, the U.S. Horticultural Society, the U.S. Agricultural Society, and the Massachusetts Board of Agriculture.

5. Businessmen

During the 19th Century there were a number of businessmen who were also outstanding citizens.

Caleb Stetson, 1801-1881.-- Mr. Stetson was primarily interested in the shoe industry, but he also had interests in other fields of commerce. In 1842 he was elected a director of the Shoe and Leather Dealers' Bank;

later he became its president. He also served in the State Legislature, and was chairman of the Committee on Banks and Banking.

For many years Mr. Stetson operated, at his own expense, a school in East Braintree until the town was able to support one itself. In his will he left a bequest to the Thayer Public Library.

Norton Eugene Hollis, 1840-1923.-- Mr. Hollis was a member of one of Braintree's older families. Early in life he drove a meat wagon in town, and that was the start of his career. At the age of twenty-four he became interested in the shipping of cattle from the West, and became successfully engaged in that business.

In 1869 he, with two other partners, formed a meat company in Boston. In 1880 he became the Boston agent for the Swift Company of Chicago, and set out to sell the idea of buying dressed meat to Bostonians. It was greatly through his efforts that people of the area came to accept the meat prepared in Chicago, instead of buying only meat of cattle slaughtered in the area.

It was Mr. Hollis who donated to the town the land on which the Pennamin School now stands. His will stipulates that the town will inherit his estate after the death of his last living relative.

Thomas Watson. -- In recent years the most famous resident has been Thomas A. Watson, author, mechanic, and businessman. In conjunction with Alexander Graham Bell, he developed the first workable telephone. After leaving telephone work, he helped found the Fore River

Engine Company. His estate was on the shores of the Monatiquot River in East Braintree, near the Watson School, named in his honor.

Other well-known men and families in Braintree include Rev. Salter Storrs, Rev. Jonas Perkins, Dr. Noah Torrey, Warren Mansfield, Ellis Hollingsworth, and the Morrison, French, and Avery families.

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