

Apponagansett's 350th Anniversary; From Hap's Hill to Present Day

Dartmouth was originally a pastoral community and consisted of farms like this one from 1909 (Spinner Publications)

Few could imagine the change North America would go through with arrival of Bartholomew Gosnold at Hap's Hill or Dumpling Rocks in 1602. Of course, most know it as Round Hill today. In just a few centuries, the North and South American continents would be drastically altered and the world remapped, with new nations – indeed, Superpower and First World nations – springing up with a feverish pace.

While, the “Vikings” had certainly arrived six centuries before Gosnold at L'Anse aux Meadows -in an attempt to explore Vinland- they had done nothing with their presence (that we are aware of) beyond the small settlement. After Leif Ericson, would come a man hardly anyone has heard of: Cristoforo Colombo, who sailed the ocean blue. However, Mr. Columbus never made it to the mainland of North America.

Gosnold's arrival at Cuttyhunk signaled what would become a mass influx of Europeans, beginning with the Leiden church members 18 years after. The rest as “they” say is history.

European Settlement

On November 29, 1652 the governor of New Plymouth, William Bradford, along with thirty-four (or thirty-six depending on the historical document) shareholders signed a deed making an official purchase of a “tracte” of land from Wampanoag Indians Woosamequin (Massasoit) and his son Moanam (Wamsutta) for “...thirty yards of cloth, eight moose skins, fifteen axes, fifteen hoes, fifteen pairs of breeches, eight blankets, two kettles, one clock, two English Pounds in Wampum, eight pair

of shoes, one iron pot, and ten shillings...” Though made official in November, the land was unofficially purchased 6 months prior on March 7. While the exchange seems like a pittance, these things were incredibly valuable to the Wampanoags.



*Old Cummings grist
mill (Spinner
Publications)*

The deed that ties this parcel of land to the European proprietors, the Religious Society of Friends or Quakers, gave specific dimensions on what it encompassed – some 100,000 acres of pristine country. These lands were owned by the Wampanoag tribes the *Acushnets*, *Acoaxets*, *Apponagansets* who would have Acushnet (included New Bedford), Dartmouth and Westport respectively, named after them. This also included *Sconticut* or Fairhaven.

For you etymology buffs or fans of Amerindian culture, the words are simple descriptions. *Acushnet* means “[at the head of the river](#),” and *Acushenas* meant “those who live near the head of the river.” *Apponagansett* means “waiting place at the ledge.”

Sconticut means “a place to stay during the summer,” *Acoaxet* means “at the fishing promontory,” or “at the place of pines.” In this context the promontory is a part of land that overlooks a body of water. Please, lend me the liberty of inaccurate spelling with many of these Amerindian words. Historical documents show a similar struggle to write these words using our alphabet.

Over the coming three decades, the European settlers began to spread into the continent, primarily around garrisons, due to the general hostility, understandably so, of the local Amerindian tribes. The first garrisons were at the head of the Apponeganset (would later become Joseph Russell's property) and a mile north of what would become Oxford Village in *Sconticut* or Fairhaven, at the Isle of Marsh. Some of the foundation of Russell's Garrison can still be seen at the site on the appropriately named Fort Street. The garrison, named after John Russell is where the locals would hold out during the coming King Philip's War.

Garrisons, homesteads, and farms

These garrisons were often simply isolated, fortified homesteads, which is what Dartmouth was comprised of early on. The garrisons eventually grew into hamlets, villages and townships. Some of the very first being in *Nomquid* known as Russells Mills, Slocum Neck, and Smith Neck.



*Increase Allen House
south of Bald Hill
meeting house,
nearly 1 mile south
(Spinner
Publications)*

Many of these first settlers to the Dartmouth region were Quakers, who ironically were escaping religious persecution from the Puritans – who came to the New World to escape religious persecution. The early Quakers were far more liberal

in their approach to religion and gender equality, than the Puritans were. Indeed, many Puritans tortured, humiliated, banished, and even executed Quakers for their religious beliefs.

The early Quakers were an industrious, hard-working folk who weren't averse to working on the Sabbath day, unlike their counterparts, the Puritans. This "extra" work day gave the Friends a substantial advantage in availability and convenience which translated into an economic boon for the little township.

One site in particular that really placed the township on the proverbial and literal map, was the iron forge at Russell's Mills started by John Russell, circa 1660. Russell had bought Myles Standish's full share of land – approximately 3,200 acres for \$210. Standish must have been a happy camper, since he paid about \$8 for his share. Quite the return on his investment for a holding of less than a decade! Russell's share comprised a little place we now know as Padanaram, from Bush Street to Russell's Mills Road – including Bliss Corner and vicinity. Padanaram is typically and incorrectly thought to be an Amerindian word, but it is actually an Aramaic term meaning "the field of Aram" dubbed by Laban Thacher in the late 18th century.

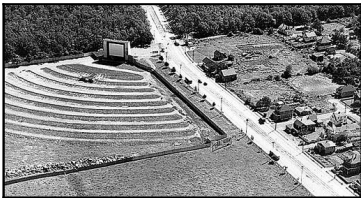
Dartmouth's first buildings

In addition, John and William Cummings erected a stone grist-mill and factory at Smith's Mills. Allen-Sheehan Mill was on Slades Corner Road was erected then and may be the country's oldest. By 1664, Dartmouth would incorporate as a town, taking its name from Dartmouth, Devon, England where many of the first Puritans that came to Dartmouth originated. Around these mills and forges, many farms sprouted up as homesteaders nestled in.

By 1675, and the advent of King Philip's War, there were just shy of 40 dwellings, mainly homesteads. King Philip's War has

been written about ad nausea, so I won't enter the topic with any breadth or depth, but suffice it to say that most of the homesteads were wiped out. In Acushnet, the devastation was total.

However, the settlers weren't deterred and made haste in rebuilding and returning back to normal.



*Aerial view of the
Drive-Thru in
1946. (Spinner
Publications)*

This time a few salt works, shipyards, and workshops were erected to support the booming whaling industry and complimented the homesteads and mills. The first Town House, was erected in 1686, followed by a post office, tavern, school and general store. The first "Dartmouth Friends Meeting House" was built in Dartmouth in 1699, on six acres of land donated by a Mr. Peleg Slocum. It was razed during the Revolution, a new one was put up near the same spot in 1799.

The Howland Homestead was built in the early 1700s, but this home was moved to Newport, Rhode Island. Nonetheless, and perhaps because of its historical relevance, Colonel Green built a summer cottage on the site where he would berth the [Charles W. Morgan](#). The Akin House was built in the 1760s by Job Mosher. It was burnt down by the Redcoats during the Revolution, but Padanaram's first business mogul Elihu Akin rebuilt a home on the spot.

Dartmouth's villages sprout up

The little township of Dartmouth continued to grow, as did the surrounding villages and towns. Eventually, some got too big

for their britches and/or ideological, political differences made them itchy to separate. In 1787, New Bedford (included Fairhaven and Acushnet) and Westport were established with New Bedford receiving additional land from Dartmouth in 1845 and 1888 and Westport in 1793, 1795, and 1805. Reflecting these numbers, the population of Dartmouth according to the census was 6,773 residents in 1776, but 2,499 in 1790 after the towns separated. Dartmouth wouldn't see 6,000 strong until 1920.

Hixville was named after the Reverend Daniel Hix who established a church and mill in the village in 1781. As **public transport** developed, Hixville became a stop between New Bedford and Fall River. This was pivotal in the village's growth and in very little time, a general store, school, post office, inns, and blacksmith sprouted up turning Hixville into a minor economic hub among a primarily pastoral landscape.

In 1827 the Dartmouth Bridge Company erected a bridge across the harbor. Baptists communities developed and the first Baptist Church in the area was built in 1838.



*Everyone's favorite
place to reminisce
about: Lincoln Park!
(Spinner
Publications)*

The Grange Hall put up in 1860, the library in 1871. By 1900, the region was booming and New Bedford was becoming very industrialized with markets, waterfront, and mills.

As is the case today, many would rather live in a more rural area and have a short commute. This made Dartmouth highly desirable and it became a prime residential area. The Dartmouth coastline became a favorite resort area for the wealthy members of New Bedford society and the well-to-do flocked there in record numbers. This led to the development of Mishaum Point, Nonquitt, Salter's Point.

The very pastoral and residential nature of Dartmouth attracted the next population wave: Portuguese immigrants. What attracted them to Dartmouth was that they could continue to have livestock and farms just as they did back in the old country. In spite of Westport, Fairhaven, Acushnet, and Dartmouth annexing, what was left in terms of land makes it the fifth largest town by land area in Massachusetts.

A look to the future as Dartmouth celebrates its 350th anniversary

The town of Dartmouth has a lot in store in terms of celebration. While events are planned over many months from May 18th to September 7th, the actual anniversary is on June 8th, and the town has fireworks, a live concert, and a massive birthday cake planned at Apponagansett Park for "Incorporation Day" and the finale will be a parade on Sept. 7. Each village or neighborhood will have its own [calendar of events](#) planned. The variety of events is astounding. Antique car show, community floats, emergency vehicles, youth orchestras, a visit by the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, wine tastings, ballroom dancing, breakfasts, luncheons, tea, historic photograph displays, cook off showdown, sidewalk sales, civil war encampment and MORE. The vast majority of which are free. Keep up to date and find detail on the town's official website dedicated to the celebration: dartmouth350.com.

