

CHAPTER XX.

MISCELLANEOUS FACTS AND EVENTS.

In the previous chapters the events connected with the history of the First Congregational, Baptist, Unitarian and St. James' Episcopal church have been noted from time to time. The other principal churches previous to 1874 were the Methodist, Roman Catholic and Second Congregational. The first of these, in the order of establishment, was the Methodist, the second was the Roman Catholic and the third was the Second Congregational. Short histories of these churches, of the two principal secret societies and of the Grand Army of the Republic are given in this chapter, with some facts of interest regarding the geography of the town.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

The Methodist Episcopal church in Keene was organized in December, 1835, with thirty members. They worshipped in various halls, sometimes in the town hall. In 1852 they bought their present lot on Court street of Abijah Wilder for \$450, and the next year built a meeting-house, and the church and society prospered. In 1867 that edifice was sold and removed to Vernon street, where it still stands, and for some months they worshipped in the town hall. In 1868-9 their present brick church was built, at a cost of \$40,000, and was dedicated Nov. 23, 1869.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

In 1857, Rev. Father John Brady, resident pastor at Claremont, having jurisdiction over southwestern New Hampshire, bought a building on Marlboro street and consecrated it to church uses, officiating there once a month; and early in 1862 he transferred his residence from Claremont to Keene. He was succeeded in April of that year by Rev. James Parache, who died the following

year and was succeeded in 1864 by Rev. Bernard O'Hara, who died within two years, and Rev. William Herbert was installed in January, 1866. He built an addition to the church edifice, containing a vestry and living rooms, and took up his residence there. He was succeeded in June, 1869, by Rev. Daniel W. Murphy, who enlarged and improved the church buildings, adding an organ and a furnace. His parish included the towns of Marlboro, Troy, Fitzwilliam, Swanzey and Gilsum, numbering about 2,500 souls, and he remained until March, 1876.

After several short pastorates, Rev. John R. Power was installed in December, 1882, and the following year he bought land for a parochial school, and completed the school buildings in 1885. In 1886, he bought the R. Stewart place on Main street—removing the house to the rear and occupying it as a rectory—and in 1890 to 1892, built the present St. Bernard's church. He was succeeded in 1895 by the present pastor, Rev. Denis A. Ryan.

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

In 1867, in consequence of a disagreement between the First Congregational church and the society connected with it, and because the congregation had become too large to be accommodated in one house of worship, forty-two male and eighty female members of that church withdrew, and in the autumn of that year organized the Second Orthodox Congregational church in Keene. Rev. J. A. Leach was called to be its pastor, and in 1868-9 the meetinghouse on Court street was built, and was dedicated, Sept. 16, 1869. The church prospered and Mr. Leach remained in charge of it for seventeen years, for fifteen of which he was its settled pastor.

FREEMASONS—1784—1874.

In 1784, before the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire was organized, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts granted a charter, signed by John Warren, most worshipful grand master, Paul Revere, deputy grand master, and other prominent Masons, to Asa Dunbar, Alexander Ralston, Luther Eames, Jonas Prescott and Benjamin Ellis, of

Keene, and others in this part of the state—among them Daniel Jones, the distinguished lawyer of Winchester—all Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, establishing Rising Sun Lodge No. 4, at Keene. Asa Dunbar was its first master, and its meetings were held for some years in the hall of the Ralston tavern. In 1792, Rising Sun Lodge obtained a charter from the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire, which had been organized in 1789, and the charter from Massachusetts was returned.

In 1797, Rising Sun Lodge built on land on the east side of Main street, in Federal Row, on the north corner of Main and Dunbar streets—bought for the purpose by William Todd and Jehoshaphat Grout of Alexander Ralston—a two-story wooden building, called "Masons' Hall." (That building was afterwards removed to Court street, by Dr. Joseph Wheeler, and is now the residence of his grandson, Mr. George H. Tilden.) The Masons' hall was on the second floor, doubtless with stores or shops below. Among the masters who succeeded Asa Dunbar were William Todd, 1789 to 1799, and Dr. Ziba Hall, 1799 to 1805, both of Keene.¹ Early in 1805, Capt. William Wyman built the three-story brick store, now the south end of the Eagle Hotel, and the Masons dedicated the upper story of that building as a Masonic hall. That dedication may have been later and by some other body of Masons (the chapter was organized in 1816, and Social Friends Lodge in 1825), as in September, 1805, the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire, in special session at the lodge room in Keene, "arrested" the charter of Rising Sun Lodge on account of the "unpardonable conduct" of some of its members. The seal on the charter was broken and the charter itself destroyed; but the properties of the lodge were turned over to Elijah Dunbar, Esq., for Masonic purposes. June 24, 1809, Jerusalem Lodge of Westmoreland and Charity Lodge of Fitzwilliam came to Keene and celebrated the festival of St. John the Baptist, inviting all

¹ The most distinguished Mason in Rising Sun Lodge was Thomas Smith Webb, of Keene, a bookbinder, who received the master mason's degree in that lodge, Dec. 27, 1790. He was born in Boston in 1771, spent several years in Keene, but removed to Albany, N. Y., about 1796-7. He published an American handbook of Masonry and other works of a similar character—the first published in this country.

Masons in regular standing to join. They assembled at "Brother William Pierce's hall" (tavern, formerly Dr. Edwards's) and marched to the meetinghouse; and had a banquet at the hall afterwards.

In 1825, James Wilson, Jr., and others obtained a charter from the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire for a lodge at Keene, named the Social Friends Lodge No. 42. Its meetings were held in Prentiss's block (now Whitcombs') on the west side of the Square. James Wilson, Jr., was its first master, and he was succeeded by Jesse Corbett and Benjamin F. Adams of Keene and Col. Cyrus Frost of Marlboro. In 1829, '30 and '31, Col. Wilson was grand master of the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire. In 1827, great excitement was caused throughout the country by the murder of one Morgan in western New York, alleged to have been committed by the Masons. In consequence of the bitter feeling thus aroused against Freemasonry—which extended so far as to affect political parties throughout the United States—the lodge at Keene subsided in 1829-30; and about that time the records of the lodge were destroyed by fire. In 1856, Dr. Algernon Sidney Carpenter and others applied for a charter for a lodge in Keene, but it was refused on the ground that a lodge was already in existence here. About that time John Prentiss found among his old papers the charter of 1825, which had been saved from the fire of 1830, and the lodge was reëstablished. Dr. Carpenter was its first master after the reorganization, and the meetings were held in Odd Fellows' hall, Ball's block, until 1860, when rooms were prepared in Elliot's building (St. Johns' block), and the meetings of all the Masonic bodies have ever since been held in that building, their quarters being enlarged and improved as the needs of the order required. The masters of Social Friends Lodge succeeding Dr. Carpenter down to 1874 were Barrett Ripley, Royal H. Porter, Theodore J. French, Don H. Woodward, Edward Gustine, Solon S. Wilkinson, Solon A. Carter, Horatio Colony, Charles S. Coburn, Leonard J. Tuttle and Obed M. Holton.

In 1869 a second lodge was organized in Keene, called the Lodge of the Temple. Dr. A. S. Carpenter was also

the first master of this lodge, and he was succeeded by Dr. Thomas E. Hatch, Edward Gustine, Edward E. Lyman and Francis Brick.

In 1816 a chapter of Royal Arch Masons was organized in Keene, and work was begun under a dispensation. In 1819 a charter was granted by Thomas Smith Webb, deputy general grand high priest, to John Prentiss and others. Broughton White was the first high priest, and he was followed by John Prentiss, Daniel Bradford, James Wilson, Jr., and in later years by John Henry Elliot, and by many of those who had been masters of the lodges. Among other distinguished names which appear on its rolls and on those of the earlier lodges are those of Rev. Clement Sumner, Major Josiah Willard, Capt. Jeremiah Stiles, Hon. Peleg Sprague, Samuel West, Esq., Rev. Laban Ainsworth, Samuel Cooke, Ithamar Chase, John H. Steele and Marshall P. Wilder. From 1835 to 1843 the chapter failed to make returns to the grand chapter, and its charter was declared forfeited June 14, 1843. Gen. James Wilson, then surveyor general of Iowa, took the paraphernalia with him and organized a chapter in that territory. The records previous to 1830 were destroyed in the fire of that year. The charter was restored in 1859.

A council of Royal and Select Masters was formed at Keene, July 9, 1823—the first in the state—with James Wilson, Jr., thrice illustrious master. After some years of activity it became dormant, but was revived in 1872, with John Henry Elliot thrice illustrious master, and named St. John's Council No. 4.

In 1863, a party of Royal Arch Masons, among whom were Don H. Woodward, Barrett Ripley, Elisha F. Lane, William S. Briggs, John Henry Elliot and Edward Farrar of Keene, went to Hartford, Vt., and received the Templar degrees; and in 1866, Hugh de Payens Commandery of Knights Templar was organized at Keene. Dr. Thomas E. Hatch was its first commander, and he was succeeded for nine years by Gen. S. G. Griffin. All the above Masonic bodies, and some others that have been added, are now in a prosperous condition.

ODD FELLOWSHIP IN KEENE.

Beaver Brook Lodge, No. 36, I. O. O. F., was instituted at the town hall in Keene, on March 17, 1851. The ceremonies of institution were performed by the following named Odd Fellows: Most Worthy Grand Master Stevens of New Ipswich, grand master; Grand Master Tuxbury of Windsor, Vt., deputy grand master; Past Grand E. A. Knight of Skitchawaug Lodge of Springfield, Vt., grand warden; Past Grand Prescott Robinson of Fidelity Lodge No. 16, of Andover, Mass., grand secretary; Past Grand I. O. Morgan of Social Lodge of Wilmington, Vt., grand treasurer; Brother Cyrus Newhall of Mt. Pisgah Lodge of Hinsdale, grand chaplain; Past Grand J. McIntyre of Windsor Lodge of Windsor, Vt., grand marshal; and Past Grand Parmalee of the same lodge, grand conductor.

The petitioners for the organization of a lodge in Keene, and their guests having assembled in the town hall, the former were duly examined by three wardens appointed for that purpose. The dispensation was then read by the grand secretary, and the grand master "declared the name of the lodge to be Beaver Brook, and the number to be thirty-six, under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire;" and the deputy grand master then declared the lodge instituted in due and regular form. At this time ten candidates were initiated into the mysteries of the order. Their names were William S. Briggs, George W. Perry, Norman Kellogg, David N. Wright, Jason French, Timothy Colony, William L. Davis, Henry Pond, Samuel S. Stedman and Horatio A. Tuthill. The list of charter members comprised the names of six Odd Fellows who received the degrees of the order elsewhere. They were William G. Hunter, Eli G. Hunter, Ephraim Whitcomb, Mark Wells, George H. Burrows and Levi L. Bates.

After the initiation the lodge was fully organized for the work of the order by the choice of the following named officers: William G. Hunter, noble grand; Eli G. Hunter, vice grand; Ephraim Whitcomb, secretary; Mark Wells, permanent secretary; George H. Burrows, treasurer; and by the appointment of the following: William S. Briggs, conductor; Jason French, outside guardian; Horatio

Tuthill, inside guardian; Timothy Colony, right supporter noble grand; Henry Pond, left supporter noble grand; William L. Davis, right supporter vice grand; David N. Wright, left supporter vice grand. The first candidates proposed for membership in the new lodge were John S. Thayer of Swanzey and Joseph W. Briggs of Keene, who were admitted to membership on April 11, 1851.

Meetings were held in the Sons of Temperance hall, Hall's block, now the addition to the Cheshire House block on the south. About July 14, 1852, the lodge moved into a new hall fitted up for its use by Henry Pond in his brick block at the head of Central square, which is now known as the Grand Army hall in Ball's block. The rooms were several times remodeled and enlarged. The brotherhood dedicated its new quarters on the occasion of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the institution of the lodge, which took place on March 16, 1876. This hall was occupied till 1883, when the lodge was removed to the hall built for the order, in the addition to the Cheshire House, on Roxbury street, in the latter part of that year. New quarters were again built for the lodge in the E. F. L. building on Main street, into which the brethren moved. These spacious and convenient rooms they now occupy. They were dedicated to the uses of Odd Fellowship with pleasing ceremonies on Jan. 31, 1895.

Other organizations have been instituted and fostered by the Odd Fellows and their families. The degree of Rebekah was conferred upon seventeen brothers, on March 19, 1852. The first woman to receive the degree of Rebekah was the wife of Col. Nelson Converse of Marlboro, on June 23, 1852. Friendship Rebekah Degree Lodge No. 6 was instituted on June 21, 1871, by Grand Master James B. Smart, with nineteen brothers and twelve sisters as charter members. After severe struggles for life, and after much self sacrifice and hard labor on the part of some of the members, the Rebekah lodge has a membership of more than 400.

Monadnock Encampment No. 10 was instituted on July 2, 1868. This body has a membership of about sixty.

The advent of the Degree of Patriarchs Militant, in 1885, gave birth to a canton of that name in Keene, the members of which procured uniforms, and appeared from time to time, and assisted in public affairs.

Beaver Brook Lodge has disbursed for benefits the sum of \$13,879.77, and for burial expenses, relief of widows and for charitable purposes the sum of \$9,655.91. Six hundred and seventy-one Odd Fellows have been received as members of the lodge.

After nearly losing its organization by lack of interest during and immediately following the Civil war, and at times nearing a state of dormancy, the body is now flourishing and performing praiseworthy acts of benevolence, with a membership of about 340.

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC.

Post No. 4, G. A. R., Department of New Hampshire, was organized in Keene, Feb. 3, 1868. It afterwards adopted the name of John Sedgwick Post No. 4. After the first few meetings it occupied the armory of the Keene Light Infantry in the old Methodist church on Vernon street. John W. Babbitt was its first commander, and he was succeeded by Solon A. Carter, D. K. Healey, C. F. Webster and S. G. Griffin. For four years the post was prosperous, but the interest subsided and its meetings ceased in the autumn of 1872.

In 1880, under a new system of organization and ritual, the post was revived and has since been a flourishing and effective body, its complete roll of membership numbering upwards of three hundred.

STREAMS.

The Ashuelot river rises among the hills of Washington, Marlow, Stoddard and Gilsum, flows through Gilsum, Surry, Keene, Swanzey, Winchester and Hinsdale and empties into the Connecticut. Its North branch (sometimes called the Roxbury branch, or "the branch") rises in southwestern Stoddard, Nelson and Sullivan, flows through East Sullivan and along the eastern base of Beech hill, at the south end of which it receives a smaller stream from Dublin and Marlboro, and from that junction to the

Ashuelot, about half a mile north of Swanzey line. Below the junction it is called the East branch. It furnishes the water power at South Keene, and just below the railroad arch a part of the water is taken out and conveyed into the South branch, providing the water power for Swanzey Factory and the electric plant at the outlet of Wilson's pond, in Swanzey. The South branch rises in Troy and Richmond, flows northwest from Troy village, turns toward the southwest through East Swanzey and thence north, passing east of Swanzey Centre, and empties into the Ashuelot about a mile south of the Keene line.

Mill creek is the outlet of water from the mills on West street to the river below; and Bullard's island is formed by the creek and the river.

Roaring brook is the outlet of Woodward's pond in Roxbury, conveys the water about two miles to a small reservoir, whence it is brought in pipes over Beech hill and furnishes the greater part of the aqueduct water for Keene.

Ferry brook rises in Sullivan, runs across the north-east corner of Keene and empties into North branch.

Beaver brook, in early records sometimes called Mill brook, rises in Gilsum, comes down on the west side of Beech hill, furnished the power for the first mills in the township in 1736, flows through the meadows east of the Square, and joins the East branch near the Ashuelot river.

Fisher brook is the small stream that takes its rise in the hills and swamp north of Elm street and flows across Court street one and one-fourth miles north of Central square. The outlet of Goose pond is called Goose Pond brook.

Sturtevant brook rises in Gilsum and the northern part of Keene, flows south and west, passing through "Glen Ellen," and empties into the Ashuelot nearly a mile south of Surry line.

Black brook rises in Surry and the northwestern part of Keene, and empties into the small mill pond at old West Keene.

White brook has two principal branches; one comes down the valley west of the old Westmoreland road, the other along the Chesterfield road, uniting just below the

railroad arch. Above the road that leads south over West mountain was the saw mill of Ebenezer Robbins, afterwards owned by Adin Holbrook and lastly by Joel Kingsbury, which was run by an undershot wheel—the mere force of the current, with considerable fall. Below that mill the water is conveyed by a canal—engineered by Elisha Briggs in 1775—and joins Black brook in the small mill pond.

Ash Swamp brook is formed by the junction of Black and White brooks at the mill pond, flows through the meadows on the west side of the town and empties into the Ashuelot near Swanzey line.

New Rum brook rises at the south end of West mountain, runs into Swanzey, curves to the east and north, crosses under West mountain road near its junction with the Winchester road, and flows into Ash Swamp brook.

HILLS AND ALTITUDES.

Following are the altitudes of hills and certain other points above the sea level taken from the United States geological survey of 1895:

The altitude of Main street, Keene, at railroad crossing is 481 feet.

Beech hill ("Beach" hill, previous to 1811, sometimes called East Beach hill) has an altitude at the highest point at its south end of 1,069 feet; at its north end of 1,060 feet.

West mountain—original name, "West Beach hill;" afterwards "Daniels' hill," from its first settlers; and recently "West hill"—has an altitude of 1,366 feet.

Grimes's hill, northwest of West mountain, has an altitude of 1,140 feet.

Stearns's hill, one mile northeast of Grimes's hill, has an altitude of 1,310 feet.

Gray's hill, two miles north of Stearns's, and overlooking the railroad at the "Summit," has an altitude of 1,385 feet.

These three last mentioned hills were named from families who owned or lived near them for several generations. Aaron Gray and Aaron Gray, Jr., were in the militia companies here in 1773, the latter with two sons, William and

Joseph, both of whom were in the Revolutionary army, and Joseph died in the service in 1776. Hugh Gray, another Revolutionary soldier, was probably of this family.

Bartholomew Grimes was here in 1776, and his descendants still live on the homestead; and the Stearnses have lived on their homestead for many years.

The rise in the highway—formerly longer and steeper than now—from the meadow to the site of the first meetinghouse, where E. F. Lane now lives, was called Meetinghouse hill; and a similar rise in Washington street, east of the present jail, was called Potash hill, from a potash building which stood on its west side.