

WHERE IS CHICOPEE, MASSACHUSETTS?

Chicopee is a diverse urban community (pop. 55,000) located on the Connecticut River in Hampden County, Massachusetts near Interstate 91. Chicopee is a Nipmuck name from chekee, "violent", and pee, "waters", with reference to rapids. The Nipmucks were the native residents of the region before the arrival of the English. Chicopee is bordered by West Springfield and Holyoke on the west, South Hadley and Granby on the north, Ludlow on the east, and Springfield on the south. Chicopee is 92 miles southwest of Boston; 90 miles from Albany, New York; and 140 miles from New York City. It is the home of Westover Air Force Base, a key part of the local economy, employing about 1,000 local residents and housing 2,500 reservists of the 439th Military Airlift Wing. A historic district in Chicopee Center encompasses stately homes from the city's past. Each fall, one of the largest Polish celebrations in the United States takes place in Chicopee when 75,000 visitors come to feast on kielbasa and dance the polka.

HISTORIES OF THE TOWNS OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Heritage Surveys, Inc. (Land Surveying and Civil Engineering) is building a compilation of historical pictures and sketches of the towns of Western Massachusetts from its archives of ephemera and books. This is a work in progress.



Gaylord Manufacturing Company 1850's

Around 1659 the first pioneers came to settle near the "Chickkuppy" River, upon both sides of which wilderness was dense and unbroken. Undoubtedly the very first to bear thither the axe of civilization were the brothers Japhet and Henry Chapin. These two young men were sons of Deacon Samuel Chapin, who was a native of Wales, and who settled in Springfield with his family, consisting of four sons and two daughters, in the year 1642, where another daughter was born in 1644. Henry was probably the eldest of the two brothers...

He entered into a contract with John Pynchon, of Springfield, for the purchase of land in what is now the town of Chicopee, and on the north side of the river of that name. Here is a copy of that contract:

"March 9, 1659 sold to Henry Chapin 200 acres of land on ye Chickkuppy River, to run fro ye hills on ye east side to the Great river on ye west, and the south it is to be bounded by and to join the Chickkuppy river, about the place which shall be judged best for a warehouse, is to be taken out and excepted out of the parcel; yet so as to be 200 acres is to be made up there together. Also, Henry is to have half of ye upper Island, which is to be equally divided as can be, and also he is to have five acres of mowable meadow at the ower end of the muxmeadow. For all which he to pay and allow me the sum of 20 pounds, in wheat at current prices, at four several payments, viz., five pounds, by the first of March next, which will be anno 1660, and five pounds by the first of March 1661, and another five pounds in 1662, and the last five pounds ye first of March 1663 - all payments to be in wheat at prices current at the severl times of payment." ...

The eight sons of Henry and Japhet each had a large family, viz., Henry, 10 Benjamin, 12, Samuel, 10, Thomas, 11, John, 8, Ebenezer, 13, of whom 11 were sons, and Jonathan, 11, aggregating 87 grandchildren. The eight sons died at an average age of eighty years.

A large part of the territory originally settled by the two brothers is now occupied by their descendants. At the time of the settlement of Henry and Japhet in the Chicopee country the Indians had become hostile and were a source of disquietude and alarm to the encroaching palefaces, and to such a degree that arms were continually carried by the settlers, even to the meeting-houses. To reach this they had to tread the pathless forest and ford the streams, for the nearest church was six miles distant. For many years the savages continued their warlike attitude toward this and other settlements, which culminated in the burning and massacre at Deerfield in 1704.

-Source: History of The Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts, Philadelphia Louis H Everts, 1879