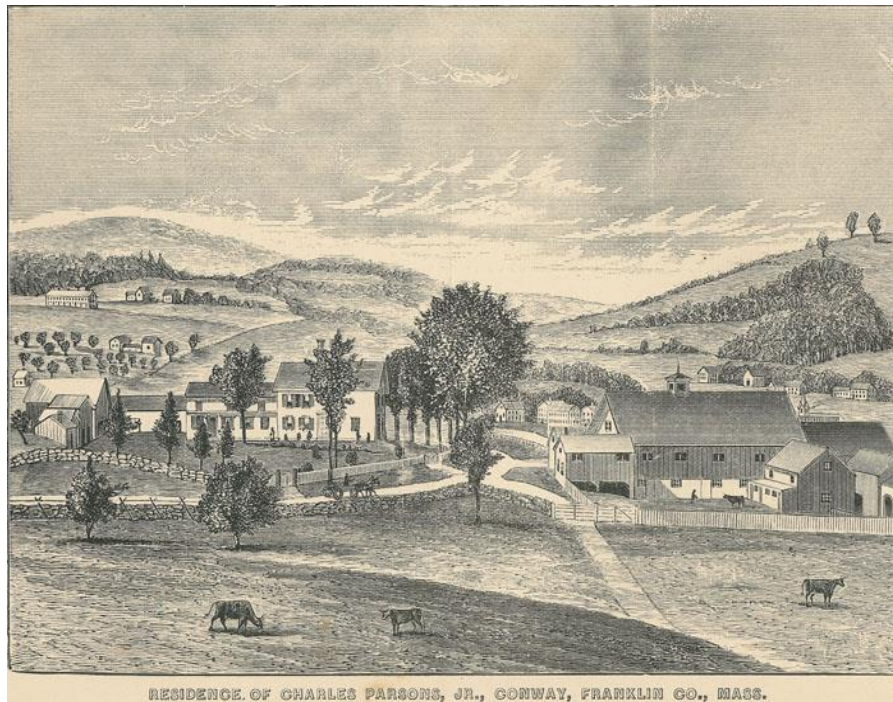


WHERE IS CONWAY, MASSACHUSETTS?

The Town of Conway (37.8 square miles) lies in the foothills of the Berkshires just west of the Connecticut River Valley, a region rich in agriculture. It is the 4th largest in area of all towns in Franklin County and is the 11th most populous (1990 census). Conway shares boundaries with seven other towns: Buckland and Shelburne Falls to the north, Deerfield to the east and north, Whately and Williamsburg to the south, and Ashfield and Goshen to the west. It is the first hilltown northbound on State Route 116. Three miles east of the town line, Route 116 intersects Interstate 91, a north-south connection to nearby Greenfield and Northampton. Fifteen miles further east is Amherst, home to the University of Massachusetts and other colleges.

HISTORIES OF THE TOWNS OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Heritage Surveys, Inc. 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.



Parsons Road

Conway, Massachusetts - 1800's

NATURAL FEATURES

Conway is a country of hills, and occupies, a region noted for its salubrious atmosphere. The most conspicuous elevations are Dry, Pine, Cricket, and Poplar Hills, from whose summits fine scenic views may be obtained. The Deerfield River forms the northeastern boundary, and flowing through the town is a valuable mill-stream called the South River, which, rising in Ashfield, passes east to Conway Centre, and thence north and east, and empties into the Deerfield River. Bear River and Roaring Brook are the only other noticeable mill-streams. Native alum, fluor-spar, galena, mica slate, black limestone, and other minerals are sometimes found, but in no considerable quantities.

NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

Many interesting stories are still extant of the peculiar experiences that beset the early settlers of Conway, and the primitive conveniences with which they were compelled to make existence endurable. Of one, William Warren, it is said that his entire stock of goods, upon which to begin farming consisted of a cow, an axe, hoe, chain, and one "bung town copper." Oxen or horses were among the sighed-for but unattainable things, and carrying grist to mill upon his back was, if not a favorite performance by the settler of the period, a common one.

Amos Allen is reported to have thus conveyed three bushels of rye from Hatfield, from which place, too, Malachi Maynard carried to Conway nineteen shad and two good-sized pigs, all lodged in the same bag, For a wager for 8 pounds, John Sherman ran, one hot day in 1785, eight miles in fifty six and a half minutes, but there appears no evidence that this pedestrian fever spread throughout the town...

...It was the custom in the early days for the young maiden to walk barefoot to meeting on Sunday, carrying her best shoes in her hand, which, just before reaching church, she would put on at some convenient place, and straightway march into the house of worship, conscious of the high respectability, at least, of her feet-coverings. Until a few years ago the curious might have beheld, at the foot of Jonas Rice hill, a chestnut-tree whose spreading boughs furnished many a time and oft a covering for the favorite "dressing-place" of these young women.

When Parson Emerson took up his residence in Conway, his wife sensationalized the community through the possession of a table-cloth and a silk umbrella, - articles which, because of their rarity, continued long to be objects of veneration and awe among the innocent pioneers...

REVOLUTIONARY RECOLLECTIONS

The first action taken by the town touching matters which led to the war of '76 was Aug. 5, 1774, when, the pamphlet from the Boston committee of correspondence being considered, a committee, consisting of Captain French, Deacon Wells, Robert Oliver, Mathew Gould, and Consider Arms, was chosen and instructed to prepare a way, which they did in the following:

"Having read and considered th letters sent us from Boston, respecting the rights of the colonies and the infringements of those rights, we fully agree with you that those rights and privileges are invaded, and of this province in particular. We shall join with you in all lawful and salutary measures for the recovery of those inestimable privileges wrested from us and firmly to secure those that remain, for we are sensible that should we renounce our liberties and privileges we should renounce the quality of men and the rights of humanity. We fully pay our proportion of money desired by the General Court, in order to the support of the Hon. Committee of Congress, greatly relying and depending upon their resolutions."

Excerpts from "History of The Connecticut Valley" written in 1879