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History of the Town of Henniker

Merrimack County, New Hampshire

Leander W. Cogswell

A facsimile of the 1880 edition
with a new foreword by
Francis Lane Childs

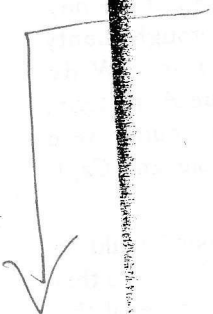
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practice. Its old leader, William Abbott, will be remembered for his skill as a cornet-player, performing any piece of music set before him in a fine tone, and with beautiful expression. He was one of the best cornet-players this state has produced.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC.

Prof. C. C. Gibson's orchestral band, composed of himself, William Abbott, David Connor, and Luther H. Whitcomb, furnished music many years for balls, dances, concerts, and other occasions, through the central part of this state. Their services were in almost constant demand during the winter and spring months of the year, and their music was of the most pleasing character. As an orchestral band, for sweet and sublime music they have never had an equal in the state. Hiram Rice was also an excellent occasional player in this band.

DEAF MUTES.



Nahum Brown was the first deaf mute known in his family, and the first one in this town. No cause was ever assigned for his misfortune. He came here when a small lad (previous to his father's coming), and resided in the family of his uncle, Capt. Joseph Gibson. Up to this time, and for some time after, he had never worn shoes. He chopped wood at the door, his bare feet standing upon a warm plank. He was married at the age of twenty-seven. Rev. Mr. Rice, who married him, was at a loss how to make him understand the ceremony, when Mr. Eastman, the bride's father, told him "That those present could hear enough, without regard to Mr. Brown." Mr. Rice performed the ceremony, which was then explained by signs to Mr. Brown. He never learned to read or to write, except his own name, which was done by imitation. He was a regular observer of the Sabbath, and attended church constantly upon that day. His idea of heaven was that of a holy city, where good men and women visited each other on wings. His wife proved an

excellent helpmate, and assisted him in his business; and his intimate friends aided him in his trades. He was a good farmer, and a superior teamster. He was a great lover of fun and of good jokes. One evening, late in the autumn, he went to Samuel Clark's and engaged him to assist him the next day, asking him to take his blasting tools with him. Mr. Clark did so, when Mr. Brown took him into his potato field. Taking a drill, he pointed it at a hill of potatoes, saying, "They are so large my oxen cannot pull them out," and wanted them blasted out. Mr. Clark soon saw the joke that had been played upon him.

Mr. Brown having disposed of his farm to Jacob Rice, he purchased the one upon which his son Thomas now resides, in the west part of the town. Here he lived the remainder of his days, and managed his estate in an excellent manner. Being possessed of a vigorous constitution, he was ever industrious, and prided himself upon the amount of labor he was able to perform. He was a highly respected citizen, and enjoyed the company of his neighbors and fellow-townsmen, at whose homes he was ever a favorite.

For several years previous to his death he was troubled with a pain in one side of his head, and, after a while, one eye became blind. Soon afterwards a similar pain seized the other side of his head, affecting the vision of the other eye, and he became sightless and helpless. For the last year before his death, he required the constant care of two persons, and suffered intensely. He understood perfectly every movement of his devoted wife and of his son Thomas, and often made signs to them as to his complaints. Just before his death, he made signs for them to come near him. Upon doing so his wife touched him, when he smiled, so pleased was he that she, who had shared his joys and his sorrows, and with whom he had passed so many pleasant years, and who had watched so faithfully by his bedside during his long isolation, as it were, from the world, was near him; and with her hands upon him, he passed peace-

fully away, his friends confidently hope and believe, to that holier and better place "where the deaf ear shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

THOMAS BROWN,

son of Nahum and Abiah Brown, was born in this town, July 25, 1804. He lived at home, working upon the farm, until the age of eighteen, when he entered the school of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb at Hartford, Conn., then just opened, under the management of the late Dr. H. P. Peet, under whose instruction he remained five years, and was one of the first graduates of that institution. He had for teachers, besides Dr. Peet, Thomas H. Gallaudet and Lamont Clerc, three of the earliest and most successful teachers of deaf mutes in this country.

Before attending school, Thomas had no idea of the name or meaning of anything he saw around him. The thankfulness of his heart at being able to read and write knew no bounds. He came home in 1829, and has ever since lived on the farm where he now resides. April 1, 1832, he married Mary Smith, of Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard, also a graduate of Hartford. They lived most happily together until 1863, when she died, greatly lamented by all whose privilege it was to know her.

Since 1850, yielding to the solicitations of his mute friends, who have ever looked to him for advice, in consequence of his being one of the oldest and ablest graduates of the asylum, Mr. Brown has most of the time been connected in some official capacity with their various associations. He was the first president of the New England Gallaudet Association, which position he held for several years. He has also been president of the New England Clerc Monumental Association, and is vice-president of the National Clerc Monumental Association.

Mr. Brown married, for his second wife, Sophia Sumner, of Leeds, Me., a hearing lady, who has four educated mute brothers.

Thomas, like his father, is a great lover of fun, and his humor is unbounded. He is one of our most intelligent, upright, industrious, and respectable citizens.

Mr. Brown is one of the most interesting of mute speakers, and at all the gatherings of the mutes he is called upon to address them. The first speech he ever made was in Hartford, Sept. 26, 1850. A silver pitcher, most elegantly wrought, was presented to each of his old teachers, Messrs. Gallaudet and Clerc. Mr. Brown was the originator of the movement, and at the presentation spoke as follows:

"My deaf and dumb friends: The object of our assembling here is chiefly to pay our grateful respects to our early benefactors,—to those to whose assiduous labors we owe our education, and the hopes and happiness it has afforded us. Let me congratulate you upon our happy meeting. How interesting to us all is the occasion,—as one for the renewal of former friendships and the expressions of grateful acknowledgments to our best friends and benefactors. Let us ever remember them, and love the great and good institution with the sincere love of children."

On Wednesday, Sept. 6, 1854, a large concourse of deaf mutes, from all parts of the Union, met at Hartford to join in the ceremonies of the completion of a monument that had been erected to the memory of Mr. Gallaudet. Mr. Brown delivered a short address upon the occasion, which was given, as he gave it, to the large number of hearing people present, by a teacher of the institution. We give an extract, showing how deeply grateful he was for the services of his old teacher, whose memory was that day being commemorated:

"Thanks to our gracious God, that we are spared to meet here to enjoy the honor of raising a monument to the deceased Gallaudet, who formerly sought our happiness and prosperity, while others have been called away by a mysterious dispensation of God, who would have wished to have witnessed this celebration.

"Was this monument built for our worship, or an idol, or for an ornament to this institution? No! it perpetuates our affectionate remembrance of a departed friend and benefactor, and will be an endless memento to this institution, of which that great man was the first principal. How good God was to have prepared and selected such a man as was Dr. Gallaudet, for the friend and teacher of deaf mutes. I ever felt towards him as my kind father. Now he is on his dusty pillow. His monument stands as an immortal memento to future teachers and pupils. May the choicest blessings of heaven descend upon us, that we may be prepared to meet our first beloved teacher when God shall call us away."

The fiftieth anniversary of the "dawn of education on American deaf mutes" was held in Hartford, Aug. 22, 1866, upon which occasion Mr. Brown presided, and made a speech in review of what had been accomplished at the institution during the fifty years which had passed away since it was founded.

Mr. Brown attended the semi-centennial celebration of the founding of the New York institution for the deaf and dumb, in New York city, August 28, 1867. He was introduced to the large audience by Dr. Peet, his old instructor, who gave him a very flattering introduction. In the course of his remarks, Mr. Brown said,—

"On the 10th of September, 1851, I was at work on my farm, in a lot which I had named the 'Gallaudet lot.' The day was intensely hot, and I felt very sad and gloomy, although I could not give any reason therefor. I worked as long as I could, and finally gave it up, and went to the house to rest. I had hardly set down in my chair, when some one brought me the news that T. H. Gallaudet was dead. I was much shocked and grieved, and since then have wondered whether there was not some mysterious connection between my sad feelings on that day and the death of my early friend and benefactor. I have never studied the theory of premo-

nitions, but I confess it appears to me that there are such things."

January 4, 1854, quite a remarkable meeting of deaf mutes took place in this town, at the house of Mr. Brown, to frame a constitution for a society to be called the "New England Gallaudet Association." Each New England state was represented. Mr. Brown presided, and William B. Swett was secretary. They held three sessions daily for five days, save upon the fourth. The morning session was opened with prayer by some member of the board. A complimentary resolution to Mr. Brown was passed at the close, to which he responded very neatly. A resolution of thanks "to Mrs. Brown for her attention, promptitude, and excellent board;" to Mr. Swett, "for his services and hospitality;" and to Albert Gove and his wife, for their friendliness and hospitality, was also passed.

There in solemn convention these deaf mutes sat and transacted their business, with as much order and regularity as would any hearing assembly, and most certainly with far less noise.

Mr. Brown has been rightly named the "mute Cincinnatus of America," and his memory will ever be held in high respect by all who have known him.

THOMAS LEWIS BROWN,

son of Thomas and Mary S. Brown, was born in this town, July 8, 1839. When only a day old, a careless nurse let him fall upon the floor, and this, his mother always said, was the cause of his being a deaf mute. She was the more inclined to this belief, from the fact that her daughter was a hearing child. In 1851, Thomas was sent to school at Hartford, where he remained until 1857. He rose rapidly in his classes, and was regarded by his teachers as a superior scholar. He remained at home until the spring of 1859, when he was engaged as a teacher in the Deaf and Dumb

Asylum at Flint, Mich. He entered upon his duties March 7, 1859, and has been connected with the institution ever since, teaching the first or highest class since 1865. He is regarded by the principal, his fellow-teachers, and his pupils, as an efficient teacher and a valuable acquisition to the institution.

MASONIC.

The first meeting of the Masonic fraternity, of many members, occurred upon St. John's Day, June 24, 1823, when there was a large gathering of the order belonging to this and the neighboring towns, to commemorate the day. At this time there was no lodge in town, but one was opened by St. Peter's lodge, of Bradford, at the house of William Cressey, where a procession was formed, which proceeded to the old Congregational church, to listen to an address delivered by Brother and Rev. Mr. Nye, Congregational minister from Claremont. A large concourse of people was present. At the conclusion of the exercises, the procession was reformed, under the direction of Perley Howe and Timothy Darling, who officiated as marshals on the occasion, and marched back to Mr. Cressey's, where a bountiful dinner, provided by the fraternity of this town, was partaken of. The tables were spread on the green in front of Mr. Cressey's house, and were shaded by small birches placed at intervals their entire length, and arched over them. Hon. Joshua Darling presided on the occasion. After the eatables were disposed of, the fraternity were called to order, and sentiments appropriate to the day and the order were read and responded to.

There were at this time quite a large number of Masons residing in this town; and in the early spring of 1825 a petition for a lodge to be established here, to be known as Aurora Lodge, No. 43, was presented to the Grand Lodge of this state, which petition was considered, and a charter granted, June 8, 1825. The first meeting of the lodge was