

274 YEARS AGO IN MERRIMACK

What we know as Merrimack, NH was part of home of the ancient native peoples from about 16,000 years ago. In the 1600's, the Pennacook Tribe occupied the Merrimack River Valley, under the leadership of Sagamore Chief Passaconaway, who made peace with the new settlers. On April 2, 1746, King George II, granted the town's first charter to Governor Benning Wentworth. Previous to that, we were part of "Naticook", which included current Litchfield and the part of current Merrimack north of the Pennichuck Brook and south of the Souhegan River. All of this was included in the "Old Town of Dunstable", which included many current towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Little did King George suspect what happened to his colonies in only 30 years in 1776 under the leadership of his successor, King George III. Four years later, we received a new charter adding the area north of the Souhegan and extending to the Bedford line, which had been called Narragansett V. In 1976, our town celebrated its 250th anniversary. You may have noticed the "Welcome to Merrimack" signs, which have both dates on them. So, this month those of us living in the original charter celebrate 274 years and in June, the northern part of town can celebrate their charter. In 1996, a great celebration was held with parades; More on that in a later article.

For your information, the wording of the original charter is included here. Note the various spellings and punctuation:

"Charter of the Town of Merrimack

Province of New Hampshire

*George the Second by the grace of God of Great Britain,
France and Ireland, King Defender of faith.*

To all whome these presents Shall Come Greeting---Whereas sundry of our Legal subjects inhabitants of a tract of land within the antient Boundaries of the town called old Dunstable, in our province of Newhampshire on the westerly side of Merrimack River herein after Discribed have humbly petitions and requested of us that they may be Erected and Incorporated into a Township Enfranchised with the powers authorized and priviliges which other towns within our said province by law have and enjoy and it appearing to us to be Conductive to the general good of our said province as well as of the said inhabitants in perticular by maintaining good order and encouraging the Culture of the lands that the same should be done---Know yea---therefore that we of our Especial Grace Certin knowledge and for the incouragement and promotion the good purpose and end aforesaid By and with the advice of our trusty and well Beloved Benning Wentworth, Esqr. our Governor and Commander in chief and of our Council for said province, have Erected incorporated and ordained and by these presents for us our Heirs and Successors do will and ordain that the Inhabitants of the Tract of land aforesaid bounded as follows -eth (viz) Beginning at the

River Merrimack where Pennychuck Brook comes into that River then by the said Pennychuck Brook to Pennychuck pond then due north by the magnet Souhegan River then by that River to Merrimack River then on the west side of Merrimack River to the place where it first began and that shall inhabit the same be and by these presents are declared and ordained to be a town Corporate and are hereby erected and incorporated into a body politick and a Corporation to have Continuance forever by the name of Merrymac with all other power and authoritys Immunities and franchisement which other towns within our said province or any of them by law have and to hold the said power and authoritys Immunities and franchises to them the said inhabitants and their Successors forever always to us our heirs and successors reserving all of the white pine trees growing and being and shall hereafter grow on the said tract of land fit for the use of the royal navy reserving also power of dividing the said town to us our heirs and Successors when it shall appear necessary and convenient for the benefit of the inhabitants thereof and several towns within our said province are by the laws thereof enabled and authorized to assemble and meet the majority of votes to Chuse all such officers as are mentioned in the said Laws we do, by these presents nominate and appoint Col. Joseph Blanchard to call the first meeting of the said inhabitants to be held within the said Town at any time within thirty days from the date hereof giving legal notice of the time place and design of holding such meeting in Testimony whereof we have Caused the seal of said province to be hereunto affixed.

Witness Benning Wentworth Esqr. our Governor and Commander in Chief of our said province the second day of April in the year of our Lord Christ 1746 and in the nineteenth year of our reign,

Benning Wentworth

By His Excellencys Command
And Advise of the Counsel
Theodore Atkinson Sect.

Recorded the 2 day of April 1746

Theodore Atkinson

Phinehas Underwood, Town Clark”

The Merrimack Historical Society remains closed until further notice due to the current crisis. For information, contact president, Marc Nozell at Marc@Nozell.com, vice-president, John Lastowka at John.lastowkaa@outlook.com or curator Anita Creager at anitacreager58@comcast.net or 424-5084.