



WE ARE HAPPY TO ENTRUST TO THE SAFE KEEPING OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE BOUND VOLUMES OF THE MANUSCRIPT "A CAPITAL FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE" BY OUR MOTHER, GRACE PAGE AMSDEN.

WE HOPE THAT THIS WILL MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN THE HOMES AND PEOPLE OF CONCORD PRIOR TO 1825.

OUR ONLY REQUEST, MADE BECAUSE OF THE IRREPLACEABLE NATURE OF THE MANUSCRIPT, IS THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE REMOVED FROM THE BUILDING OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

John P. Amesen
Edward E. Amesen

A CAPITAL FOR NEW HAMSHIRE

Grace P. Amsden

GRACE PAGE AMSDEN

Grace Farnum Page was the daughter of Charles Tilton Page and Almira (Booth) Page. She was born in Medford, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1872, her father being then in charge of the Boston office of the Page Belting Company. The family moved to Concord, New Hampshire, when Grace was a very small girl, and they lived successively in two old houses noted in this manuscript -- the Deacon John Kimball house and the "Fifer" Davis house.

She attended the old Walker School and the Merrimack Grammar School, and entered the (second) High School in the late 1880s. From there she went to Boston for the study of piano and organ, with work in musical theory and harmony.

Returning to Concord, she taught piano and was organist in the First Methodist Church. On June 29, 1898, she was married to Henry Hubbard Amsden, a High School classmate from Penacook, who had studied medicine at Boston University and was then in practice in Attleboro, Massachusetts. An opening for a physician brought them back to Concord about 1905 and there she lived for the remainder of her long life -- since 1921 in another old house built by one of the Walker family.

One son, John Page Amsden, was born to her in Attleboro and another, Edward Daggett Amsden, was born in Concord. Hers was an extremely busy life. In addition to her home-making and raising her children, she undertook the care of her husband's professional accounts, was active in church affairs, taught a Sunday School class, took an interest in the Woman's Club and the Women's Auxiliary of the New Hampshire Medical Society.

But her interests were still wider. She delved much into history, particularly that of Concord. She became a member of the New Hampshire

Historical Society and was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution and in the Daughters of Founders and Patriots of America. She has told in her preface to this manuscript how she came to undertake the staggering toil that went into it, but she has not told of that toil nor of the uniqueness of the result. Nor has she told of the historian who tried to discourage her by saying that the plan was useless, since there were not enough old houses in Concord to justify the attempt. She went ahead and proved the advice was erroneous.

The undertaking, in the form into which it developed, was a new one, at least in the case of New Hampshire local history. One town history, it is true, identified substantially all of the old houses, road by road. Mrs. Amsden went further. She located a host of buildings that were a century old in 1928, the year in which she began the work which she was to carry on for nearly a generation.

Nobody except one who has searched the records of a farm for a run of thirty years or more, can even imagine what it took to search the records of a farm for two hundred years and more at the registries in Exeter and Concord. She searched many of such farms. She went into the probate records of both Rockingham and Merrimack Counties. She studied Provincial Records, the records of the Proprietors of Pennycook Plantation, the records of Concord, other manuscripts of varied sorts, printed books, and pamphlets. She sought out and interviewed people of advanced years for family traditions and anecdotes. She traveled all the roads in Concord. She made an astonishing collection of photographic and other illustrative material.

Out of this, and more, she was able to tell the stories of the houses. Beyond that she was able to do something which nobody else thought of -- to

tell about the people who had lived in them. What kind of people were they? How did they earn their living? What kind of lives did they have? What were their successes and failures? How, on balance, did they help make Concord a fit place to be a capital city? Also, as nobody else has done, she was able to put down in words the look of "the street" (Main Street) at various times from 1766 to 1834. To a degree she did this also for State Street, Pleasant Street, and West Street.

The length of the resulting manuscript and the number of illustrations make publication prohibitive. Consequently Mrs. Amsden's sons have had the manuscript bound in its present form in order to protect it for the use of those who may wish to examine it for reference.

Mrs. Amsden completed the manuscript, as she has said, in 1950. From that time she noted in it, as long as time and failing strength permitted, such changes as later occurred up to the time of her death on February 2, 1960. A few additional notes have been made by the writer of this introduction in an attempt to bring the information up to mid-year of 1961.

Elwin L. Page

Concord, N. H.
July 15, 1961

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To The Reader
of
A Capital For New Hampshire.

The project for this work originated with Mary Rolfe Jackman (Mrs. C. J.) herself a descendent of a pioneer family in Concord. During her term as Regent of Rumford Chapter, D.A.R. (1928-30) Mrs. Jackman appointed the writer to the interesting task of listing the century old houses still standing in Concord. The starting point for this work was a map of the central part of the town as it existed in 1827, prepared from memory by Lewis Downing, Jr. and published (pp. 48-49) in the History of Concord edited by James O. Lyford. The identification of such of these buildings as might be standing in 1930 was the immediate objective and the method used involved an extensive search among old deeds and wills and the drafting of maps of old roads and old homestead properties.

The History of Concord by Nathaniel Bouton, D.D. came into almost daily use and for the first time the writer understood many of ^{the} references therein to local places and events. This suggested that this and future generations in Concord might profit by access to such facts. Slowly the purpose unfolded to compile the mass of data gathered in years of research, into a readable story of the first century of Concord's development—a story now written—hoping that it may stimulate pride in our capital city and a sense of responsibility for continuance of the work faithfully done by our forefathers.

Such a story cannot be limited to houses of wood and brick: it must concern itself with the people who made these houses into homes and with the children and grandchildren reared therein to become worthy citizens of this Capital of New Hampshire. The story expanded into the realm of genealogy, and again Dr. Bouton furnished the basic material. But it was not until the story reached its final revision that the historical and the genealogical became subordinate in the writer's mind to the spiritual implications of the whole. The long dragging "Depression" had tried the soul of America,

Long tested principles of religion and of government were set aside in high places and the responsibility of man to his God and of the citizen to his government underwent a strange change. To live through the "Depression" was a test of faith and loyalty: to spend those years in almost daily contemplation of the faith and sturdy character of the people of early Concord, left one with the disheartening sense that we of this generation have lost something vital to stability of character.

The folk who wrought with such success in the establishing of our city were ordinary men and women if judged by present standards. Few of them were gifted: fewer still were equipped with more than elementary education. Their one great and common asset was their inheritance of Puritan faith and character, to which they added a common sense developed through practical experience with the forces of nature and the ways of man. Undisturbed by the illusive theories of our present day intellectualism, they proved the certainties of cause and effect and so were wise in their day and generation

Our forefathers professed moral principles founded upon the Ten Commandments and a political code of personal liberty founded upon self-discipline. They knew their God because they depended upon Him daily: they claimed personal liberty because they stood ready to accept its responsibilities. They demanded no easy way of life.

In 1856 Dr. Bouton addressed his completed History of Concord "To The Reader" and closed ~~it~~ with these words-

"Verily, 'Our lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage.' Be it our aim, with the Divine blessing, to transmit it to future generations."

Acknowledgment.

For help in this work, the writer is indebted to the two histories of Concord before mentioned and to many sermons and addresses of Rev. Nathaniel Bouton, D.D. and to the following:

| | | |
|------------|----------------|---|
| Ayer, | Sarah Connell, | Diary. By permission of Margaret H. Jewell. |
| Abbott, | George | Iron Works Anecdotes. |
| Cook, | Howard M. | Town Topics and Wayside Jottings. |
| French, | Allen | Gen. Gage's Informers. |
| Hutchins, | Levi | Autobiography. By permission of Gordon Hutchins |
| McFarland, | Asa, Jr. | Outline of Biography and Recollection. |
| McFarland, | Henry | Sixty Years in Concord. |
| Rolfe, | Abial | Reminiscences. |
| Walker, | Joseph B. | Saunterings About Concord. Count Rumford. |

Invaluable letters and articles in oldtime Concord newspapers. written by those who treasured Concord traditions.

The pictures for this work have, in large measure been loaned by friends too numerous to mention. Several of the portraits and illustrations are copied from Bouton's History, while others, by permission of the City Government, are taken from the Lyford History.

The portrait of Benjamin Thompson, attributed to Gainsborough, is used by permission of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard College: that of Thomas W. Thompson, by permission of Dartmouth College, and that of S. F. B. Morse by permission of his great grand-daughter, Clara Morse: the miniature of Lucretia Walker, by courtesy of Joseph T. Walker: the portraits of Robert Rogers and his bride, Elizabeth Brown, by permission of Mary Cochran Rogers, and that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, by permission of D. Appleton & Co.

The drawings of reconstructed houses were made by Mrs. Marjorie Rowell Sturm, descendent of an old Concord family, through the generosity of the Timothy and Abigail Walker Lecture Fund. Mrs. Sturm contributed one of these drawings.

Acknowledgment. 2

Several fine photographs of old houses in West Parish were specially taken and given by Leroy B. Painting of the Kimball Studio.

Many difficulties and perplexities in pursuance of this work, were solved by good friends of an older generation. I owe great debt to George Henry Silsby, John Calvin Thorne, Charles Eastman Staniels, Fred A. Eastman, Sidney B. Upham, Mrs. John Burgum, Mrs. Frank Dimond, William W. Flint and Mrs. Benjamin H. Farnum. It is my regret that this work could not be accomplished during their span of life upon earth, for they desired to see its completion.

There are others in Concord and away from Concord, who have cheerfully answered innumerable questions and letters. Last, but not least, I acknowledge the patience of the three men of my family who have escorted me over abandoned roads in search of cellar holes of oldtime homes, and on many picture taking expeditions.

(Mrs. Henry H.) Grace Page Amsden

Last revision 1950.