

TOWN HISTORY

The Town of Southampton lies in the Connecticut River Valley, along the southern edge of Hampshire County. The land is both hilly to mountainous as well as rolling and farmed in large areas. The Manhan River runs through town starting from the Westhampton line and running to the Westfield line and then north to the Easthampton line. The river and its tributaries drain the town. The highest elevation in the town is to the north-west at Mt. Pomeroy (1233' above sea level).

The uninhabited, woodland area was originally purchased from the Non-o-tuck Indians and called Northampton. In 1730, Southampton was established as a precinct and thirty families drew land grants. In return, they were required to build at least a one-room house within two years.

The nearest church was eight mile away in Northampton. In 1743, Jonathan Judd preached in the town and continued to do so for sixty years. The church was reinforced as a fortress against Indian raids. This frontier settlement was the farthest to the northwest with no other between it and Canada.

By 1753, most of the Indian raids had subsided and settlement increased. At this time, Southampton, a district with nearly all town privileges, was incorporated. At this same time a schoolmaster, Silas Sheldon, was acquired. Later he gave the town a considerable gift of \$2,500 for the establishment of Sheldon Academy. In 1773, Southampton had its first town meeting at which the official name, "Southampton", was adopted.

The town's industries consisted of lumbering and forest clearance and there were many sawmills within the town. In addition to sawmills, Southampton also had a charcoal plant, bark mill, match mill, turning mills for axe helves and piano legs, a chair factory, and two shingle mills. Also, within the town was a large tannery, gristmills, whip factories, a woolen mill, clothier works, and a thriving network of rum and brandy distilleries

As forest cleared, more rich agricultural lands were uncovered leading to large acreage of farming. Two of the more recent and publicized enterprises were the lead mines which had their heyday in 1770, and the Northampton-New Haven Canal which passed through the town and was in operation for thirteen years.