

## BLAINE

Not every agricultural section will bear as close inspection as will the fertile County of Aroostook. As one rides along the main highway from Houlton northward, he is surprised and delighted with the number of fine farms and handsome farm buildings along this road in the several towns through which the road passes, while the view on either hand is most beautiful.

Some twenty-five miles north of Houlton on the road to Presque Isle, and at the point of intersection with the road through Mars Hill and Easton to Fort Fairfield, is situated the thriving little village of Blaine. It is a busy little inland village with neat and handsome residences, and with a beautiful outlying farming district on every hand.

The town of Blaine includes but a half township and extends but three miles north and south and six miles east from the boundary line. The first clearing was made upon the town nearly fifty years ago, just after the conclusion of that bloodless struggle which has passed into history as the famed Aroostook War.

In 1842, the year in which the Ashburton Treaty was concluded, Mr. B. W. Chandler came from the town of Winslow and cut the first tree upon the town for farming purposes. The spot chosen by Mr. Chandler for his new home was the beautiful ridge of land just north of the present village and upon the farm now occupied by Mr. R. W. Lowell. With the exception of the winter lumber roads, there was then no road in all this section and the home of this hardy pioneer was miles from any neighbor, and in the midst of an almost boundless wilderness. Some six miles further north could be seen the smoke from the log cabin of James Thorncraft, built the year previous on what is now the Trueworthy farm in Westfield, but the entire township of Mars Hill, and indeed the township of Easton, next beyond on the north, was at that time covered with its original forest growth as yet unbroken by any clearing.

During the few years following a number of other settlers came upon the town and when Mr. Joel Valley came in 1847 and commenced a clearing upon the spot where the village is now located there were about ten settlers upon the town. To one who looks about this busy little village, with its business industries and its many indications of lively enterprise, it seems hardly possible that the man who cut the first tree upon the village site is still one of its active business men and that all

this development has been the work of about forty years.

In the fall of 1847 Mr. Valley came from New Brunswick and took a lot which included all the land contained in the present village on the east side of the road and extending back to the Mars Hill line. He commenced his clearing and built his log house nearly upon the spot where the present hotel is located.

Mr. B. W. Chandler was then living on what is now the Lowell farm and Benjamin Bubar had a small clearing on the west side of the road a short distance below. William Freeman and Sherman Tapley then lived in a double log house which stood on the line between what are now the farms of Mr. Tapley and Deacon Noble. Freeman had a small clearing on the east side of the road on the present Noble farm, and Tapley had a clearing on the farm where he now lives. Half a mile below Tapley's one Rideout had a clearing on the west side of the Houlton road, with a log house on the opposite side.

A short distance below where the road crosses Three Brooks, James Clark had a log house and small clearing on the west side of the road and William Rideout had commenced an opening and built a cabin on the east side opposite Clark's. James Gilman lived on the east side of the road in the extreme south part of the town next to the Bridgewater line, most of his clearing being in that town.

About a half mile west from where Blaine Corner now is, William Roake and Charles DeMerchant had small clearings. These settlers were all who were upon the town in 1847 and the clearings were then very small and very little improvement had been made in the new settlement.

With Mr. Valley came Joseph Bubar, who settled on the west side of the road about three-fourths of a mile south of Blaine Corner.

In the spring of 1848, John Bell came from New Brunswick and settled on the west side of the road near the Corner and during the same year George Monroe and George Hotham settled on opposite sides of the road, south of Sherman Tapley's, and in the fall Thomas Bell came and bought half of John Bell's lot. In 1850 Samuel Brown took a lot about half a mile southwest from Blaine Corner. Nearly all the settlers named above came from New Brunswick, but later families from different parts of the State of Maine began to come in and settle upon the town. Levi F. Preble came from Chesterville in 1859 with other settlers who made their homes in Mars Hill. Mr.

Preble with his family settled in Blaine, where he lived many years.

Blaine, then known as Letter B, Range One, was a half township belonging to the State of Massachusetts and the land was sold to settlers for \$1.20 per acre, payable mostly in road labor. A few of the early settlers received deeds from the State of Massachusetts, but the greater part of them did not complete the payment for their lands until after the town had passed into the possession of the State of Maine. Samuel Cook, Esq., or Judge Cook, as the settlers called him, one of the pioneer settlers of Houlton, was agent for Massachusetts and attended to the sale of the lands and the location of the newcomers. When the State of Maine came into possession of the town the price of the land was reduced to fifty cents per acre in road labor and the settlers were credited with the work already done under the Massachusetts agent.

Mr. Joel Valley cleared up the land on the east side of the road in the present village and in 1856 built a frame house on the spot where the hotel now stands. There he at once commenced keeping public house, as there was at that time much teaming upon the road, and his house was a convenient stopping place for teamsters and other travelers going to Presque Isle and the country above. He continued in the business until 1864, when a disastrous fire occurred which swept away every building at that time standing at Blaine Corner. In 1866 Mr. Valley built the present hotel and the next year sold it, together with the farm, to Mr. Joseph Joy. Mr. Joy afterwards sold to Stephen Lake, he to Daniel W. Orcutt and he to Jonathan Hersom, the present proprietor. Mr. Valley was the first trader in the town, though in the early years he had no store but kept goods for sale in his house, and when he built his frame house he used the old log house for a store.

The first store at the corner was built by Messrs. Sherman and Perkins of Augusta on the site of the present Jones store. Perkins soon after sold out to his partner, Lewis Sherman, who continued to trade in the store until it was burned in 1864. After the fire Mr. Sherman sold out to Bedford Hume, who built the store now standing and continued in business for about a year, when he sold to Charles F. Collins, a son of Hon. Geo. W. Collins, of Bridgewater. Mr. Collins traded in the store some two years and then sold to Stephen Lake, who in 1868 sold to Benj. F. Jones. Mr. Jones continued in trade and at the same time carried on a large lumber business until three years ago,

when he sold the store and stock to Mr. John Bubar, the present occupant. Mr. Jones still continues to reside in Blaine, though a large part of his business is at his mill in Mars Hill, only about a mile distant.

In 1866, Messrs. Jackson and Oakes built the store in which R. E. McFarland now trades. After trading a year they were succeeded by Henry O. Perry, Esq., who shortly after removed to Fort Fairfield and Orlando Robinson occupied the store for about two years, when he closed his business and for some years the store was vacant. In 1884 Mr. A. O. Nutter, formerly of St. Albans, commenced business in this store, where he continued until 1889, when he moved into the store where he is now located, and his place was taken by R. E. McFarland of Cambridgeport, Mass.

In 1873 Stephen Lake built the building in which Mr. S. H. Hussey now trades. Mr. Lake continued in trade a few years, when he sold the building to Mr. Frank Levine, who resided in it but did not trade in the store.

In 1874 Mr. Joseph Chandler built a mill on the Presque Isle of the St. John about half a mile from the village. He still owns the mill, though it is not at present in operation.

In 1859 Mr. Wm. Robinson came to Blaine and purchased 260 acres of land in the south part of the town a short distance above the junction of Three Brooks with the Presque Isle Stream. Upon this land was a fine mill privilege, and in 1864 Mr. Robinson built a mill which contained one shingle machine. Mr. Robinson died in 1873 and the business was continued by his sons, H. O. and F. C. After a short time Harrison O. Robinson sold out to his brother and removed to Presque Isle, where he is now engaged in trade. The business has since been conducted by Mr. Fred C. Robinson and has been much enlarged and extended.

For some years after the first settlers came upon the town the road from Houlton to Presque Isle was the only road in the town and it was a long time before this was in a passable condition for travel. It was then so badly cut up by the heavy teaming in spring and fall as to render it a most uncomfortable highway and it was not until after the extension of the New Brunswick Railway to the towns in the Aroostook Valley that it became a smooth and easy road for travel. As the heavy teaming is now in a great measure discontinued the road is kept in fine condition through the town. In 1858 the East road was opened, connecting with the East Ridge road in Mars Hill

and running in a southerly direction across the town and continuing on to Baird's Mills on the boundary line.

The next road opened was the new County road, which starts from Blaine Corner and runs directly south across the town on the lot lines connecting with the Houlton road about a half mile south of the line between Blaine and Bridgewater. This road was laid out in 1858 for about half the distance across the town, and some ten years later was laid out for its entire distance by the County Commissioners and was built by the town.

The half township was formerly included in a plantation organization with Bridgewater which joins it on the south, but when Bridgewater was incorporated as a town in 1858, it was organized as a plantation and known as Letter B, Range One.

In 1860, when a postoffice was established, the name was changed to Alva, which name it retained until 1874, when it was incorporated as a town and named in honor of Hon. James G. Blaine. Mr. Dennis Getchell was the first postmaster, but he soon resigned his commission and was succeeded by Mr. Joel Valley, who held the office until 1872, when he resigned and H. O. Perry was appointed. When Mr. Perry removed to Fort Fairfield, Mr. Valley was reappointed and held the office until 1885, when Mr. F. E. Brown was appointed and was soon after succeeded by Mr. A. O. Nutter.

Upon a pleasant eminence a short distance west of the Corner is the village schoolhouse, a handsome two-story building surmounted by a bell tower. The schools in this building are graded and there is also one term of free high school each year. The schools are under the supervision of Mrs. Sophia M. Tapley, a lady of much ability and herself a practical school teacher.

On the Houlton road there are fine farms with good substantial buildings throughout its whole length through the town. Here are seen large, smooth fields, clear of stumps and stones and in fine cultivation. In every portion of the town we find good farms, though of course in the newer sections the stumps are not yet all out. The soil, however, is of the very best and in a very few years these newer farms will show broad, smooth meadows and the scythe and cradle will give place to the mowing machine and reaper. Blaine will class with the best of the farming towns in Northern Aroostook and is one of which the illustrious statesman for whom it is named has no reason to be ashamed.