

DRACUT

Dracut was common land from 1664, and remained such until its incorporation as a town in 1701. The act describes the territory as "a tract of land for a township on the north side of Merrimack River"—and then follows its particular bounds. The earliest settlers were members of the families of Varnum and Coburn, and it is supposed that the town derived its name from the native place of Samuel Varnum, in England,—the first actual settler of Dracut, Massachusetts. In early records the name is sometimes spelled *Dracutt*, which may give some idea of its former pronunciation.

In King Philip's War, about March 18, 1676, (1675-6) the Indians attacked the inhabitants of Dracut, and burned three or four houses. The people were pursued, but escaped across the river to Chelmsford. On April 15, 1676, a second attack was made, fourteen or fifteen houses were burned, and fortunately no lives were lost on the part of the inhabitants. Two sons of Samuel Varnum were killed at this period, while crossing the river in a boat. The Indians fired from a covert on the shore, and fled without continuing their attack. The survivors in the boat returned the fire. A raiding party of Indians during the French and Indian War (1755-1763) captured two boys named Coburn, and carried them to Canada.

The petition of the inhabitants for the act of incorporation gives the number of families already settled in 1701 as about twenty families or eighty souls. The common land was disposed of by gradual distribution by the legal voters of the town. In 1741, when the boundary line was established between New Hampshire and Massachusetts, the town of Dracut lost a considerable part of its territory, which was added to New Hampshire, and this portion with other territory became the town of Pelham, which was incorporated in 1746. The original church and society of Dracut left no records, and probably none were kept. The first records of the town begin with 1711, and those earlier are supposed to be lost. The first meeting-house was not finished until 1716.

In 1851 the part of Lowell called Centralville was taken from Dracut and annexed to Lowell. In 1874 about one thousand acres more of Dracut territory was added to Lowell, and in 1879 another tract of Dracut, adjoining Tyngsborough, was annexed to Lowell.

Authorities: M. E. Wright wrote a brief article, entitled "Old Dracut and some Historical Houses", for the "Lowell Book", 1899.