



Waterbury Town and City Records

COLLECTION, M-22

DATE

1745 – 1922

CONTRIBUTOR

Mattatuck Museum

ADMINISTRATIVE/BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY ELEMENT

Waterbury began as the Mattatuck Plantation, a land grant given to settlers from Farmington, Connecticut in 1676. In addition to Waterbury, the Mattatuck Plantation included the modern-day Connecticut towns of Naugatuck, Middlebury, Watertown and Thomaston, and portions of Wolcott, Plymouth, Oxford and Prospect. The Village of Mattatuck was settled in 1678 and centered on what is today the Waterbury Green. Town status was granted in 1686, and the name Mattatuck was changed to Waterbury.

Waterbury's population remained small, hovering at just under 200 people, until the 1720s. The settlers worked as farmers, carpenters, millers and blacksmiths. New arrivals were required to gain permission to live in Waterbury, and normally entered a contract with the town in which they promised to reside there for a minimum number of years while practicing their trade.

Waterbury's population grew rapidly in the middle of the eighteenth century, expanding from 350 people in 1725 to 3,536 people in 1775. During these decades, the town's activities focused on construction of bridges and highways, the building of Meeting Houses, Sabbath-day houses and schools, tending to the sick and the poor, and settling boundary disputes with neighboring towns. The eighteenth century saw the growth of commerce in Waterbury, as taverns and general stores flourished with the increase in population. Merchants operated numerous small businesses, establishing trade with towns throughout the colony. Several late-eighteenth-century merchants found success as manufacturers in the early nineteenth century.

Waterbury's wealthier families tended to be descendants of the original settlers, and much of their wealth came from land ownership. These same families operated general stores and taverns, and produced many of the town's professionals: physicians, attorneys and clergymen. Many of these prominent families also included slave owners.

Despite the loss of so much of its territory, Waterbury flourished at the end of the eighteenth century. A new school was constructed in 1785 on the Green, and both the Congregational and the Episcopal churches constructed elegant new buildings on the Green in 1795. All three projects were funded by public subscription. Merchants began to venture into manufacturing, producing nails, clocks, pewter buttons and woolens. These ventures flourished in the nineteenth century, and Waterbury became renowned for its brass manufacturing industry.

SCOPE & CONTENT

The Waterbury Town and City Records contains documents from 1745-1922. The collection is organized chronologically.

The Waterbury Town and City Records contains documents from Connecticut's early colonization and Waterbury's incorporation as a city. Some of the documents include documentation of town debts and minutes from town meetings. There are various records collected by the Selectmen of Waterbury, as well as court rulings between Waterbury and other cities regarding landownership. Interesting to note is documents containing information on the architecture of Fulton Park.

ARRANGEMENT

The collection is organized chronologically.

RELATED PEOPLE/INSTITUTIONS

City of Waterbury (created by)