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THE NEW TOWN OF WESTWOOD.

INCORPORATED APRIL 2, 1897.

BY BENJAMIN FISHER.

THE formation of a separate town by the division of the Town of Dedham is not a question of recent or sudden growth; it has been discussed at different intervals for many years. About forty years ago Capt. James Tisdale, father of Oileus Aurelius Tisdale, who now lives at Walpole Corner, formulated a plan to incorporate a new town by taking parts of Walpole, Dedham and Dover, and for this the name of "Waldeddo" was suggested. No active steps, however, were taken in the matter until a few months ago.

This last proposition of incorporating the Town of Westwood, which has just successfully passed the Legislature and become a law, was first suggested during November of 1896, by Mr. Frank Fisher of West Dedham; Dr. C. C. Colburn, Mr. Henry E. French and others were soon interested in an investigation of the subject. The plan, on general principles, at once met with a hearty response from the older and more conservative men of the district proposed to be set off, and all were desirous of giving the matter careful examination. Then, upon making inquiries about the steps necessary to secure a separation, it was found that a petition to the General Court must be entered immediately in order to receive consideration from the Legislature of 1897. Accordingly a petition was hastily circulated and

The map accompanying this article is a photo-lithographic reproduction, after a tracing by Mrs. C. E. Russell, of the original in the Library of the Historical Society. The territory covered by the map forms the principal part of the new town of Westwood.

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WESTWOOD.

[April,

duly filed with the Secretary of State and published in compliance with law. The signers of the original petition were as follows:—

CALVIN S. LOCKE,	NICHOLAS FURLONG,
LUTHER A. RAYSON,	MICHAEL MUGVERHILL,
HENRY E. WEATHERSEE,	BENJAMIN FISHER,
BENJAMIN WEATHERSEE,	JOSEPH L. FISHER,
WILLIAM COLBURN,	DANIEL W. PARKER,
JOHN L. FISHER,	DENTON BAKER,
W. W. BAKER,	CHARLES ROSEN,
W. SCHLUSSEMEYER,	JOHN W. ALLEN,
EDWIN BAKER,	GEORGE C. CHENEY,
CHARLES H. ELLIS,	JOSEPH H. WALLEY,
HENRY E. FRENCH,	REVEREN COLBURN,
HENRY S. DEAFER,	FREDERICK FISHER,
	SIMON W. HATHAWAY.

Supplementary petitions bore one hundred and ninety-seven additional signatures. A public meeting was subsequently held on the evening of December 19, 1896, at Colburn Hall, West Dedham. At this meeting the following Committee of Fifteen was chosen to give the subject further consideration and report at a future meeting:—

W. W. BAKER,	CALVIN S. LOCKE,
DR. C. C. COLBURN,	CHARLES DEAN,
LUTHER EATON,	CHARLES H. ELLIS,
BENJAMIN FISHER,	JOHN L. FISHER,
FRANK FISHER,	HENRY E. FRENCH,
SAMUEL C. FRENCH,	NICHOLAS FURLONG,
SIMON HATHAWAY,	ALBERT N. REYNOLDS,
	MARCELLUS WALKER.

The first meeting of the Committee was held on December 21, 1896, when it organized with W. W. Baker as Chairman, and Charles H. Ellis as Secretary. The following Executive Committee was then chosen:—

FRANK FISHER, <i>Chairman</i> ,	
DR. C. C. COLBURN,	CHARLES DEAN,
EDWARD C. CHOATE,	HENRY E. FRENCH.

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Mr. Frank Fisher resigned and Mr. Benjamin Fisher was elected in his place.

FINANCE COMMITTEE,
W. W. BAKER, *Chairman*,
SAMUEL C. FRENCH, LUTHER A. EATON.

Mr. Edward C. Choate and Mr. Joseph L. Fisher were elected to fill the vacancies caused by the resignation of Rev. Calvin S. Loeke and Mr. Frank Fisher.

A second public meeting was held on the evening of January 2, 1897, when a full report was given by Mr. Benjamin Fisher for the Committee of Fifteen. At this meeting not a voice was raised in opposition to separation. The Committee recommended that the petition for the incorporation of the new town be presented and advocated at the next session of the Legislature, and it was unanimously voted:—

That the report of the Committee be accepted; that its recommendations be adopted; and that the Committee be given full authority to have the petition presented and advocated at the next session of the Legislature.

Henry E. Fales, Esq., of Milford, was immediately secured as counsel for the petitioners. Mr. Fales had nearly completed drafting the bill which would have been presented to the Legislature within a day or two when he died very suddenly. Edward A. McLaughlin, Esq., of Boston, who so ably served as the Clerk of the House of Representatives for many years, was then retained as senior counsel for the petitioners.

The hearing before the Committee on Towns took place at the State House, Wednesday, February 24, 1897. It was largely attended by citizens from all sections of the town. The old town offered no opposition to division; its interests were represented by John R. Bullard, Esq., as counsel. No remonstrants responded when invited by the Committee, although during the testimony of the petitioners Dr. John W. Chase, of Dedham, asserted that he was "mildly opposed to separation." The testimony in behalf of the petitioners was given by Mr. Charles H. Ellis, a Selectman of Dedham, Mr. W. W. Baker, a

member of the school committee, and of the board of engineers of the fire department, Col. James M. Ellis, Mr. Luther A. Eaton, Mr. Nicholas Furlong and Mr. Benjamin Fisher from the district set off, and from the old town by Messrs. Preston R. Mansfield, Joseph A. Laforme, Clifton P. Baker and Heman W. Chaplin. Mr. Erastus Worthington, Jr., who made the survey and prepared the map, also testified as engineer. From the testimony offered the following facts are taken:—

	Dedham after division.	Westwood.
Total area in acres,	6974	6959
Miles of accepted Streets,	41, ⁵ / ₈	27, ¹ / ₂
Valuation, 1896,	\$7,857,541	\$925,000
Population,	6196	1015
School buildings,	8	3
Scholars,	1172	159
Poor in the Almshouse,	11	1

Towns in Massachusetts smaller than Westwood.

In population,	100
In valuation,	145

On Thursday, March 4, the Committee from the Legislature, in company with the Executive Committee, its Counsel, and with Mr. J. Everett Smith, Chairman of the Selectmen, and Don Glendon Hill, Esq., Town Clerk, representing the Town, visited Dedham, driving over the territory in a tallyho.

The Committee voted unanimously, in favor of the petitioners, and accordingly a bill to incorporate the Town of Nahatan was reported in the Senate on March 8, 1897, by Senator Charles F. Woodward, Chairman of the Committee on Towns. No opposition to the passage of the bill appeared until it reached the House, when the representative from Nahant objected to the name "Nahatan," owing to its alleged similarity to the name Nahant.

It was desirable for the old, as well as the new town, to have the question of incorporation settled, if possible, before

April 5, when appropriations for the coming year were to be made. Therefore, in order to remove every trace of friction, however trivial, and thus expedite matters, the name was changed to Westwood. On the day this was done, under a suspension of the rules, the bill was read a second and a third time, and was passed to be engrossed in the House, in concurrence with the Senate. Barring the name, no changes were made in the bill as originally presented to the Committee, except one amendment adopted in the Senate at the instance of Mr. Bullard, representing the old town, inserting the following new section:—

Section 11. Nothing in this act shall cause a vacancy in any town office in said Dedham for the current town year.

His Excellency Governor Wolcott signed the bill on Friday, April 2, 1897, shortly after ten o'clock. The quill used was given to Mr. Benjamin Fisher, Chairman of the Executive Committee for the Petitioners.

From the very start the proposition met with very general favor in the district proposed to be set off; few declined to sign the petition, and no one actively opposed it. The petitioners at no time advanced a grievance against the Town of Dedham, basing their case almost solely on the ground of unlike development and dissimilar interests of the parts separated by the line of division. The Committee of Fifteen worked together with unusual harmony and diligence, and others interested lent their aid cheerfully. Between Dec. 19, 1896, and March 25, 1897, they held seven meetings, all of which were well attended, while the Executive Committee held several meetings each week.

The fair-minded spirit in which the movement was accepted by citizens of the old town was not only highly creditable to themselves, but also extremely gratifying and of positive value to the petitioners.