

The first vessel which left our wharves for California was the brig "Ark," and religious ceremonies were observed on the occasion of her departure, an address being made by the Rev. John Emerson, and prayers being offered in the presence of a large concourse of spectators assembled on the wharf. The effect of the gold legend on Newburyport has proved by no means beneficial. It not only carried off a large number of active and enterprising young men, most of whom carried all their property with them, but it unsettled the character of many who remained; their otherwise determined prospects and intentions being changed by this unexpected episode in the openings of business, they were induced to relax their energies in the occupations they were already engaged in, from the uncertainty of continuing in them. The damage, in this respect, — the depreciation of business energy among those who remained, — was greater than the pecuniary value directly abstracted from the town. The majority of those who left Newburyport have not returned. Of those who have, none have added largely to the taxable property of the place. A few, and but a few, have more than made good their original draft on the town.

In November, 1850, some six months before the "Annexation Act" passed, there were in Newburyport 9,572 inhabitants, of which 1,362 were of foreign birth; 1,927 families, and 1,431 dwelling houses. One hundred and sixty-eight deaths had occurred during the year.

When the town of Newburyport was set off from Newbury, the dividing lines were very injudiciously drawn, leaving, as they did, on the river side, both to the north and south of Newburyport, and on the westerly side of High street, a population daily increasing, whose interests were all essentially united to those of Newburyport, but whom the act of incorporation assigned to Newbury. The consequence was, that successive attempts were made from that time until the object was attained, to have these portions annexed to Newburyport.

In May of the same year in which the town was incorporated, Newburyport voted a petition to the General Court to "have their limits and bounds enlarged." In 1794 a committee was appointed

to prepare a petition to the General Court "to enlarge the bounds of the town."

In 1821 the matter received a large share of attention, and was the occasion of long and earnest discussions in "town meeting;" but the advocates of enlargement could not harmonize on the exact boundaries to be desired; one party desiring the annexation of only the more southern and south-easterly part of the town, including the Plum Island turnpike, and the other wishing to include Belleville. The subject was dropped at this time, only to be taken up again in 1827, when a unanimous vote was given in favor of a petition, praying for the annexation of a part of Newbury, including "the ridge." But this also was barren of results. In January, 1835, the town accepted a report, drawn up by a committee appointed for the purpose, recommending the *reunion* of Newbury with Newburyport. But at an adjourned meeting, this project, after a full discussion, was rejected.

At a town meeting held in January, 1833, it was voted to accept a certain portion of Newbury, which a committee appointed by the Legislature had indicated as proper to be annexed to Newburyport, "if it could be done without expense." And at a full meeting on the 21st of the same month, it was voted by a large majority to accept "that part of Newbury which had petitioned to be set off," unconditionally. But the union was not then effected.

In 1843, Ebenezer Wheelwright, Esq., of Newbury, and others, petitioned the Legislature to set off a part of Newbury, and annex it to Newburyport, and this town voted to accept the portion designated in his petition, if that was granted. But the division was not made, the consummation was not yet.

In 1846, a vote of the town was again obtained "to unite the towns, if Newbury should agree to do so," and otherwise, that it was expedient to annex the contiguous portions, "including the Ridge, Belleville, and Joppa, so called." And the Hon. Henry W. Kinsman, John Porter, Esq., and J. B. Swazey, Esq., were appointed a committee to appear before the "committee of the Legislature on towns," and urge forward the measure. This was the commencement of that last series of efforts which eventuated in the annexation to Newburyport of those portions of Newbury described in the act passed April 16th, 1851.

Other ineffective votes have at times been taken and reconsidered on this subject. To quote them all would be a tedious repetition.

A permanent cause of variance between the "water-side" people and the farmers of Newbury, might be found in the fact that the farmers were inclined to place a high tax on personal property, most of which was to be found in what is now Newburyport, while the "water-side people," who were still legally united to Newbury, were disposed to place the higher tax on land, which would bring the main burden on the farmers.

The experiment of steam on the Merrimac has been tried with but limited success.* The steamer Decatur, (1846,) ran some time as a regular packet between here and Boston; while the steamers Sarah, California, Merrimac, Ohio, Lawrence, C. B. Stevens, and Narragansett, ran transiently to Haverhill and intermediate places on the river, making also frequent excursions out to sea, to Plum Island, the Isles of Shoals, &c. Some of these boats did exceedingly well for a limited period, during the summer months, but profits could be very nearly graduated by the thermometrical scale. While the weather continued pleasant for excursions, an extensive patronage might be relied on; beyond that period, the preference for travel into the interior was by land carriage.

At the Annual March meeting in 1850, it was voted by the town, to erect a new Town Hall, "at a cost not exceeding thirty thousand dollars," and a committee was appointed to procure a suitable plan. The location of the Hall was decided by a very small majority, 116 voting in favor of its present site, and 108 against it. The plan for the Hall, draughted by Captain Frederic J. Coffin, was accepted, and

*Yet a permanent steam-tug, owned here and *always ready for use*, to bring vessels over the bar, with a railroad terminating at one of the wharves, (of which there is now a prospect,) could scarcely fail of remunerating the owners. It would take time to become profitable; but without some such arrangement, Newburyport cannot materially increase her commerce. It is the employment of steam which has enabled the merchants of New Orleans to overcome the natural obstacles to the entrance of that harbor; the "bar" at New Orleans, is intrinsically as bad as that of Newburyport, yet it has not been permitted to impede the growth of the place.