



DENISE W. MERRILL CONNECTICUT SECRETARY OF THE STATE

Search

Select Language | ▼

[Translation](#)

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[Home](#)

[About Secretary Merrill](#)

[Civic Engagement](#)

[State Agency Regulations](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[ELECTIONS & VOTING](#)

[BUSINESS SERVICES](#)

[STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTANCY](#)

[OTHER AGENCY SERVICES](#)

[About the Office](#)

[News and Announcements](#)

[Contact Us](#)

CONNECTICUT TOWNS IN THE ORDER OF THEIR ESTABLISHMENT; WITH THE ORIGIN OF THEIR NAMES

Until 1700 almost the only official action of the colonial government (General Court) in regard to town organization, was to authorize the town name, usually chosen by its leading man, from his home in England. In October, 1700, we find implied or quasi incorporation, such as exists to this day in the records. "This assembly doth grant to the inhabitants of the town of Lebanon all such immunities, privileges and powers, as generally other townes within this Colonie have and doe enjoy." The authoritative legal definition of a town in England, contemporary with the earliest Connecticut settlements is given in the first edition of Coke's Commentaries upon Littleton, published 1628: "It can not be a town in law, unless it hath, or in past time hath had, a church, and celebration of Divine services, sacraments and burials." The churches, which moved bodily, with their pastors, from Massachusetts to Connecticut, proceeded to exercise the secular powers which we regard as those of the town, but the English township is known by its ecclesiastical name of parish. Several of our towns were first set off as parishes from great town-tracts; yet the town in Connecticut colony essentially separated church and state in government, in that it never restricted political suffrage to church members. As to dates, the official colonial records are followed, as soon as they begin, 1636.

As Indian was not a written but a spoken language, its spelling is often a matter of astonishing versatility. Because of mutilation of the Indian names by Colonial scribes and by the Colonial pronunciation it is frequently impossible to arrive at any definite conclusion with regard to the original meaning. The variety of dialects, even in the Algonquin tribe, varied greatly, even among those living within thirty or forty miles of one another. This added greatly to the complications of spelling Indian words in English.

To add to the confusion, the white men continually applied Indian names to features of the landscape that were not at all in the Indian mind when they coined the word. Thus a word meaning a hill might be applied by the white men to all the surrounding territory and come eventually to mean a pond. And so the Indian names, or their Indian approximates, have come down to us not in the names of the towns, which the white men were creating in the tradition of their own race, but in features of the countryside streams, mountains, hills and other natural aspects.

THE COLONY

1. Windsor, settled by a company from Plymouth Colony, arriving with the frame and materials of a trading house on their vessel Sept. 26, 1633. This house was set up, 80 to 100 rods below the mouth of the Farmington River, on a tract previously bought of the original Indian proprietors. Before the summer of 1635, the settlers had bought Great Meadow, north of the Farmington, and placed cattle and servants on their lands. They sold out, 1637 and 1638, to Dorchester, Mass., settlers, who had arrived in their vicinity, 1635, and named their settlement Dorchester. It was named in 1637 from Windsor in Berkshire, now a royal residence.
2. Wethersfield, settled as Watertown 1634; named 1637 from Wethersfield in Essex, England. Indian name, "Pyquag."
3. Hartford, Dutch trading house, "House of Hope," 1633; settled as Newtown in 1635; named 1637 from Hertford in Hertfordshire, Indian name, "Suckiag."
4. Deep River, was formerly Saybrook, fort, soon a settlement, 1635; named 1639 from Lord Say & Sele, and Baron Brook; name changed by act of General Assembly, July 1, 1947. Indian name, "Pattaquasset."
5. New Haven, settled April, 1638; named Aug. 1640, from Newhaven on the south coast of Sussex. Indian name, "Quinnipiac."
6. Milford, settled early in 1639; named November, 1640. Indian name, "Wepawaug."
7. Guilford, settled, 1639; named from Guildford parish in Surrey, July, 1643. Indian name, "Menunkatuck."
8. Stratford, settled in 1639; named in 1643 from Stratford-le-Bow, Essex, or more probably, Stratford-on-Avon. Indian name, "Cupheag."
9. Fairfield, settled 1639; name = fair field; or possibly from Fairfield in Kent. Indian name, "Uncoway."
10. Greenwich, settled by the English and named, July 18, 1640, from Greenwich near London; N.Y. to Ct., transferred, 1656. Indian name, "Patuquapaen."
11. Stamford, settled in 1641; named 1642 from Stamford in Lincolnshire. Indian name, "Rippowam."
12. Farmington, settled in 1640; incorporated and named, Dec. 1645. "Tunxis shall be called Farmington" = farming town.

AR 16-060
Exhibit G
Submitted at 7/5/2016
Public Hearing

by _____

JUL - 5 2016

REC'D AT
 Regular Meeting
 Special Meeting
 Public Hearing

109. Waterford, incorporated from New London, Oct., 1801; name descriptive.
110. Wilton, named a society, 1726, from Wilton in Wiltshire; incorporated from Norwalk, May, 1802.
111. Sherman, incorporated from New Fairfield, Oct., 1802, and named from Roger Sherman.
112. Marlborough, named 1747, from great Duke of Marlborough, or from Marlborough, Mass.; incorporated from Colchester, Glastonbury and Hebron, Oct., 1803. Previously Eastbury and New Marlborough.
113. Columbia, incorporated from Lebanon, May, 1804, and given the poetic name for the United States.
114. Burlington, incorporated from Bristol, May, 1806; named (as Burlington, Vt.), prob. from 3d Earl of Burlington. Formerly "West Woods" or "West Britain."
115. Canton, incorporated from Simsbury, May, 1806, and the name Canton suggested by the late Ephraim Mills, is derived from a likeness to a Swiss canton. Original name, "Suffrage."
116. *Meriden, named in a deed 1664, from "Meriden Farms," Dorking, Surrey, Eng.; incorporated from Wallingford, May, 1806.
117. Middlebury, incorporated from Southbury, Waterbury and Woodbury, Oct., 1807; named from its position, 1790.
118. North Stonington, named 1724; incorporated from Stonington, May, 1807.
119. Vernon, incorporated from Bolton, Oct., 1808, and named prob. from the home of Washington at Mount Vernon, Va. Formerly North Bolton.
120. Griswold, incorporated from Preston, Oct., 1815; and named from Gov. Roger Griswold.
121. Salem = Hebrew "peace"; named from Salem, Mass., and incorporated as New Salem, from Colchester, Lyme and Montville, May, 1819.
122. Darien, incorporated from Stamford, May, 1820, and named from the Isthmus of Darien. Formerly parish of Middlesex.
123. Bridgeport, name descriptive, 1800; incorporated from Fairfield and Stratford, May, 1821. Indian name, "Pequonock." Formerly Stratfield or Newfield.
124. Chaplin, society, named 1809 from its deacon, Benjamin Chaplin; incorporated from Windham, Mansfield and Hampton, May, 1822.
125. Orange, incorporated from Milford and New Haven, May, 1822, and named from Wm. of Orange (III of England). Formerly North Milford. *See "A Century of Meriden" (Curtis-Gillespie).
126. Manchester, incorporated from East Hartford, May, 1823, and named from Manchester, England, because of manufacturing. Originally Orford parish.
127. Monroe, incorporated from Huntington, May, 1823, and named from Pres. James Monroe. Formerly parish of New Stratford.
128. Madison, incorporated from Guilford, May, 1826, and named from Pres. James Madison. Formerly East Guilford.
129. Prospect, incorporated from Cheshire and Waterbury, May, 1827; named as fine lookout place. Formerly Columbia parish.
130. Avon, incorporated from Farmington, May, 1830, and named from Avon river at Stratford-on-Avon. Formerly Northington.
131. North Branford, named as society, 1768; incorporated from Branford, May, 1831.
132. Bethany, named as parish, 1762; Heb. = house of dates; incorporated from Woodbridge, May, 1832.
133. Bloomfield, incorporated from Windsor, May, 1835; named from a Hartford family. Formerly Wintonbury.
134. Westport, incorporated from Fairfield, Norwalk and Weston, May, 1835; name descriptive. Indian name, "Saugatuck."
135. Chester, parish 1640, named from Chester in Cheshire; incorporated from Saybrook, May, 1836. Indian name, "Pattaquonk."
136. Ledyard, incorporated from Groton, May, 1836; named from Col. Wm. Ledyard, commander at Fort Griswold, Groton, 1781. Formerly North Groton.
137. Clinton, incorporated from Killingworth, May, 1838, and from Gov. Dewitt Clinton of N.Y.
138. East Lyme, named 1816; incorporated from Lyme and Waterford, May, 1839.
139. Westbrook, parish named 1810 as west parish of Saybrook; incorporated from Saybrook, May, 1840. Indian name, "Pochaug."
140. Portland, incorporated from Chatham, May, 1841, and named from Portland, Dorsetshire, famed for quarries. Originally named Conway.