

Sunday Worship at Sugar Ball
Sept 13, 2020

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Church Historian

Over hundred years many attempts were made for a grant to be approved by the Massachusetts General Court to settle the plantation of Pennycook in the fertile interval twenty-five miles north of the Scotch-Irish settlement of Londonderry. On January 17, 1726 the General Court of Massachusetts finally granted to one hundred prospective settlers, who were to be selected, after careful inquiry and personal examination by a committee of the court, a tract of land seven miles square, lying on both sides of the Merrimack river, within the northern boundary of the province, as then claimed by the Massachusetts government.

Early Wednesday morning, May 11th 1726 the surveyors, chain-men, helpers, a few admitted settlers, numbering in all thirty-two set out from the inn of Ebenezer Eastman in Haverhill on their journey to Penny Cook. The members on this journey were from the towns of Bradford, Haverhill, Andover, Salisbury and Newbury. Oh, one other member in the group that was very important, their spiritual leader the Rev. Enoch Coffin of Newbury.

The journey begins – they travel on horseback to the town of Londonderry, then through unsettled country to the Amoskeag Falls and up the east bank of the Merrimack. They had some minor casualties fording the Suncook and Soucook Rivers, but, after two days of riding, found themselves late on Friday afternoon coming out of the pine waste of the Dark Plains and looking down at the fertile plain from the bluff on the beautiful Sugar Ball Interval where we now stand.

On Saturday, May 14th early in the morning the surveyors and chain-men set out to survey 103 lots in the Township according to the General Court's order. Lot No 16 was my eighth great grandfather's lot.

Sunday May 15th work was suspended. The company remained in camp and devoted its hours to religious services in the morning and another in the afternoon. On this bluff, where we are standing today, the first religious service was held within the limits of the Plantation of Penny Cook. The services were conducted by Enoch Coffin.

On the two hundredth anniversary of our church in 1930 the program of celebration included a prologue. In that prologue, was a prayer by Rev Enoch Coffin. This was the prayer:

My brethren, let us pray.

Almighty God,
We praise Thee for Thy watchful love and care;
Through flood and danger, Thou has brought us safe,
Provided us a new plantation here.
So make us swift and keen to do Thy will,
Give strength to labor, grace to live in truth;
And grant that by our faith this wilderness
And solitary place be glad for us.
Amen