

# OLD HATFIELD'S CELEBRATION.

## THE DICKINSON HALL DEDICATED

With Interesting and Impressive Ceremonies—Some Eloquent and Scholarly Addresses.

From Our Special Correspondent.

HATFIELD, Wednesday, May 30.

This town had a dual celebration to-day, the regular memorial services being held in the morning with the dedication of the Dickinson memorial hall in the afternoon. This hall, which has already been fully described and illustrated in The Republican, is the gift of Samuel Huntington Dickinson, a sturdy and substantial farmer, a native and resident of the town, whose ancestors were among the pioneers who founded the town. Some three years ago, when the 212th anniversary of the



SAMUEL HUNTINGTON DICKINSON.

Indian attack upon the town was celebrated, much was said upon the advisability of building a memorial hall. Rev R. M. Woods said at that time: "You children, who to-day glory in your fathers should not be satisfied until a suitable memorial is erected to their achievements." Thanks to the generosity of Mr Dickinson, the desire expressed in those words has been consummated. In March, 1892, the town voted to build a hall in which the town records could be safely preserved. One day when the committee was discussing ways and means, Mr Dickinson stepped in and calling one of the members, said he would help to build the hall. Later on the plans broadened and then Mr Dickinson stepped in and agreed to pay all the cost, which he has done. The result is that the town has a substantial fire-proof structure, admirably adapted to the needs of the town. On the first floor is a generous hall, with a room at the left for the use of the town officials and the preservation of records, and on the right is a memorial room, which is to be a receptacle for the preservation of relics illustrating the early history of the town. Upstairs is the library hall, in which are already 3500 volumes—with room for 10,000. This unpretentious structure is thoroughly built throughout, and has cost \$14,500. In front of the hall four cannon used in the late war have been placed. These were the gift of Congress upon the petition to Congressman Norcross some years ago.

There are four bronze tablets on the interior of the building. As you enter the first you notice reads: "This building was presented to the town of Hatfield by Samuel Huntington Dickinson, May 30, 1894." On another are the words: "Men of Hatfield who served their country as soldiers for independence, 1775-1783, and then follow 125 names of these worthies." The next reads: "Men of Hatfield who served their country as soldiers for Union, 1861-1865," with 98 names of these heroes on the tablet of bronze. In the memorial hall is a tablet, the gift of Miss Abby H. Dickinson, to the memory of Benjamin Waite. Miss Dickinson left \$500 to the Norwattuck Indian association, and this money



DICKINSON MEMORIAL HALL.

paid for the tablet. Waite was one of the heroes who in 1678 went to Canada and rescued those of Hatfield who had been taken captive. On this tablet is inscribed this letter from Waite about that time:—

To My Loving Friends in Hatfield:—  
These few lines are to let you understand that we are arrived in Albany how with the captives, and we now stand in need of assistance for my charges are very great and heavy, and therefore any that have any love to our condition let it move them to come and help us in this matter. I pray you hasten the matter, for it requireth great haste. Stay not for the Sabbath, nor shoeing of horses. We shall endeavor to meet you at Canterhook (Kinderhook). It may be at Housatook. We must come very softly because of our wives and children. I pray you, hasten then, stay not night or day, for the matter requireth haste. Bring provisions with you for us. Your loving kinsman,  
BENJAMIN WAITE.

At Albany written from mine own hand. As I have been affected to yours all that were fatherless, be affected to me now, and hasten the matter and stay not, and ease me of my charges. You shall not need to be afraid of any enemies.

The exercises to-day have been held in the church, which stands near the hall, while the hall was thrown open during the day that it might be well inspected. William H. Dickinson was president of the day, and he conducted the services in a happy manner. Music was furnished during the afternoon by St Joseph's band of Northampton and by the church choir. While there was no such design in the arrangements, it so happened that the three speakers of the afternoon were not only natives of Hatfield, but, like the donor of the building, their ancestors were among those who settled the town back in 1660.

Charles K. Morton gave the historical address, which showed much research and study on the part of the speaker, particularly in going through the old records of this ancient town. The purpose of the address was to show the official action of the town during the Revolutionary and civil war, and the attitude of the inhabitants during those critical periods. The town was not incorporated until 1670, but what were called "side" meetings were held for 10 years prior to that time. That the inhabitants were brave and patriotic was demonstrated by extracts from the early town records. At one time a vote was passed "to consider the disuse of articles of British manufacture until such time as our chartered rights shall be restored." At another time the selectmen were instructed "to procure a sufficient stock of powder, lead and flint" with which to protect themselves. And then John Dickinson was chosen a delegate "to meet at Concord to consider what means are best and most advisable for the province to come to at this most critical day." Again the citizens were instructed to pay no attention to the orders of Gen Gage, as he was looked upon as an enemy of the province. Every

vote was permeated with the spirit and fire of patriotic men all through the trying days of the early history of this town.

At the beginning of the civil war this maxim was observed: "Old men for counsel, young men for war." The selectmen of 1861 were Moses Morton—an uncle of the speaker—Roswell Hubbard and Lemuel Cooley, all men of over 70 years of age. Their administration was a successful one, and finding the duties too arduous, they declined a re-election. In 1862 William H. Dickinson, John T. Fitch and Reuben H. Belden were elected selectmen, and served during the war. Their efficient services in securing enlistments, their fair and honorable treatment of volunteers, and their prudent and skilful management of the financial interests of the town are matters of history. The town voted sums of money that seem to us incredible, made liberal provision for the families of volunteers; all who purchased substitutes were reimbursed by the town, and what was best of all, the money was assessed upon the polls and estates and collected and paid by the town as they went along. At the end of the war the town stood as to-day, without a dollar of debt. In closing his address Mr Morton said: "It has been my purpose to show you the noble characters of our ancestors. First settling the wilderness and rescuing the land from savage foes, fighting for the independence of the colonies, building meeting-houses, school houses and helping to frame a government for the people and for the people. It would have been interesting if I could have told you of the ratifying of the constitution of Massachusetts, the same having been audibly read and commented upon, article by article, in the town-meeting. We point with pride to our ancestry, brave, self-sacrificing, God-fearing men, thrifty, but just, frugal but generous, their influence and example has gone out through the length and breadth of the land. They have left to us their goodly heritage. May we, our children and our children's children, prove worthy of the trust."

Samuel P. Billings, who has long been known as the "democratic sage of Hatfield," spoke for Mr Dickinson and presented the building to the town in behalf of the donor and the building committee. This was very fitting, for Mr Billings has been associated with Mr Dickinson since they were boys together and he was one of the building committee. His remarks were brief, pointed and practical. He said that the gift was thoroughly anti-sectarian. It was given to all the people without any regard to their sect, color or religious belief and this building was therefore dedicated to the whole town and its uses.

Daniel W. Wells, president of the Smith charities, responded for the town and formally accepted the gift. In doing so he spoke very appropriately of what the women of Hatfield had done in building up that town. He began with the 26 women, who in 1660, with their husbands did so much in taking up the original grant and in settling the town. Then he spoke of the virtues and bravery of Mabel Patridge, Eunice Williams, Dr Lyman's wife, Rebecca Dickinson, the maiden gown-maker of the town, and others, including Sarah Coleman, Canada Waite and Captivity Jennings. The last two were born in captivity in Canada, and the last named was ancestor of the Smiths, who founded the munificent Smith charities and Smith college. Sarah Coleman, who married John Field, was the ancestor of the merchant princes, Marshall and Joseph Field of Chicago. He also recounted what the daughters of the town had done in the Revolutionary and civil wars. After thus speaking upon the theme of the women of the town Mr Wells accepted, on behalf of the town the memorial hall. In doing so he spoke in a thankful strain to the building committee, saying that the town would ever appreciate their faithful work and acknowledged ability. He then turned to the donor, Samuel H. Dickinson, and said: "With love and appreciation this dear old town accepts this memorial at your hands; we recognize your ability and faithfulness; we honor you for your service and we promise to keep and guard this trust with jealous care, that it may go down to our children a monument to home and native land. To Samuel Huntington Dickinson, the donor of this enduring structure, we express our gratitude and affection. We gladly accept your noble gift. We are greatly moved by the generous heart which prompted it. We are

mindful of your loyalty to birthplace and to home, and within your laurel wreaths shall be our prayer: 'Lord keep thy memory green.'" Rev Robert M. Woods offered the prayer of dedication and the exercises were brought to a close by the singing of "America" by the audience.

E. A. Ellsworth of Holyoke was the architect of the building and A. C. Matthews of Northampton the contractor. The building committee was composed of the following gentlemen: Joseph H. Wells, Samuel P. Billings, William D. Billings, Jacob Carl, William H. Dickinson, Henry S. Hubbard, Selectman Charles A. Jones, Rev Robert M. Woods, John McHugh, Jr., Charles K. Morton, Matthew J. Ryan, Alvin L. Strong, John Vollinger, Benjamin M. Warner.

The morning services began at 9 o'clock at academy hall and the program consisted of music by St Joseph's band, singing by school children and a double quartet of Smith academy pupils, under the direction of Prof Chambury. An appropriate address was given by Col Bliss of Great Barrington. The procession was then formed to march to the cemetery, led by the band and followed by soldiers and school children. After the 10 soldiers' graves were decorated the procession moved back to the front of Memorial hall, where tribute was paid to the unknown dead, after which there were selections by the band. A band concert was given in front of Smith academy from 1 to 2 o'clock, after which dedication exercises took place.