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A Tale of Two “Moretowns”

Many New England towns and cities were named after towns in other British colonies or in England from which early settlers emigrated. Moretown, however, was thought by historians to be unique, the only community to have that name in the world (1, p. 2; 2, p.4). Although that is true today in the United States – there is only one Moretown – historically there have been two communities in Vermont referred to as Moretown (3). The existence of a second Moretown was discovered during the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

As part of the celebration in November, 2025, a Ken Burns six-part documentary *The American Revolution* premiered on public television. The first episode made mention of a Colonel John Peters being sent by the residents of Moretown, Vermont to represent them in the first Continental Congress (4). In the weeks following the broadcast numerous people, including the editor of *The Valley Reporter*, contacted members of the Moretown Historical Society to inquire about Colonel Peters. People were excited that “Moretown” was featured on national television and surprised that Colonel Peters, a loyalist, had lived in “Moretown.” Members of the Society at first thought that Ken Burns and his researchers had made a mistake in stating that Colonel Peters was from Moretown. Historical Society members knew that the first European settlers, Seth Munson and Ebenezer Hazeltine, had arrived in Moretown around 1790, long after the first Continental Congress (1, p. 1). This led to the discovery that there had once been two Moretowns in Vermont.

The first, and present-day, Moretown was chartered on June 7, 1763 by Benning Wentworth, Esquire, the Governor of the Province of New Hampshire (6, p. 295-299). Its name may have been derived from the family of two of the original grantees, Daniel and James Moorehouse (6, p. 454).

Other Moorehouse family members received grants from Governor Wentworth at about the same time as Daniel and James (6, p. 454). To recognize the patronage of the Moorehouse family, the governor may have chosen to abbreviate Moorehousetown as Moretown (6, p. 454).

A second “Moretown” was an unofficial name used by the residents of Waits River Town (a.k.a. Waitstown), which is now Bradford, in Orange County, Vermont. Waits River Town was first officially named Mooretown in a New York patent on May 3, 1770 (7, p. 13-21). The name honored Sir Henry Moore, the Royal Governor of New York (6, p. 297). Although legally designated “Mooretown,” the residents, mapmakers, and the Vermont General Assembly often referred to the township as Moretown. Evidence for this can be found in the pay rosters for Revolutionary War scouts and soldiers from Mooretown which give their residence as “Moretown” (8, p. 140, 345, 361, 555, 716 & 753). Some of the early maps of Vermont published in 1789 (9), 1796 (10, 11), 1799 (12), 1815 (13), and 1818 (14) show Mooretown as “Moretown.”

Following the Revolutionary War, the residents of Mooretown decided that they no longer wanted to be reminded of a royal governor and petitioned the Vermont General Assembly to change the town’s name (6, p. 297). The change took place on October 23, 1788, when the General Assembly formally renamed Mooretown as “Bradford” (7, p. 30).

Indeed, there were once two Moretowns in Vermont – one official, which was chartered in 1763 and settled around 1790, and the other officially designated as Mooretown in 1770. Although patented as “Mooretown,” residents, mapmakers, and government officials often referred to Mooretown as Moretown. Even though Mooretown officially became Bradford in 1788, it took over 30 years for all reference of Mooretown/Bradford as Moretown to completely disappear.

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By

Bob Blodgett

Howes Rd

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