

## THE ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF MAYNARD

An old saying "Money is the root of all evil; of strife and upheaval" can be aptly applied to the story of the attempt to change the name of the town of Maynard. This event took place early in the year 1902 when the American Woolen Company and a group of Maynard businessmen under the Woolen Company's influence, conceived the idea of re-assuming the original name of the town - "Assabet". This was the name that was given to the small village that took shape within the confines of the towns of Stow and Sudbury around 1845. It adopted the name "Assabet" from the river which flowed through its center and which bound both towns. The original use of "Assabet" reverts to the Algonquin Indians who used it to describe "the place where materials for making fish nets grow." This was the name of the village when Amory Maynard first came to town and it was still but a mere hamlet. There were no streets and a large portion of what is now the thickly settled part of the town was unsettled and heavily wooded. But conditions began to change with the founding of the mill which was a success from the very beginning. New stores and residences began to spring up and from time to time the town constantly improved in every respect. When it was incorporated in 1871, the town was appropriately named for Amory Maynard through whose business activity the town was developed.

Vigorous measures were at once adopted to put the new town on a firm footing - schools were built, streets were laid out, lighting was installed and everything possible done to make the town a wider awake, well managed affair. The town grew and prospered and its inhabitants formed an industrious, intelligent community. In 1899, however, the Assabet Manufacturing Co. failed up, completely



unexpectedly not only crippling the town's great source of revenue but also blotted out \$132,000 which the mill operatives had deposited within the company, there being no town bank at that time.

It was at this time that the first whisper against the Maynard name so closely allied with that of the Assabet Mills effected the suggestion that the town adopt a new name, but a leader was lacking and nothing definite was done.

The feeling did not die, however, and when the American Woolen Co. stepped into the picture and asked for a change in the town's name for business reasons, the idea met with great favor from a portion of the populace, while still another portion favored retaining the old name.

On February 4, 1902 a petition to change the name of the town was presented to the committee on towns in the State Legislature. Among the petitioners were James B. Lord, Luke S. Brooks, Ralph Whitehead, Dr. F. V. Rich, Thomas Naylor, Julius Løve and the American Woolen Co., William M. Wood, Treasurer. It became House Bill No. 903 and reads as follows:

"An Act to Change the Name of the Town of Maynard".

Section 1:

The Town of Maynard in the County of Middlesex, shall take the name of Assabet.

Section 2:

This act shall not take effect unless accepted by a majority of the legal voters of said town, present and voting, thereon, by ballot, at a special meeting held upon notice given at least seven days before the time of said meeting, and the polls shall be open at nine o'clock of the forenoon and shall not be closed before four o'clock in the afternoon of said day, nor remain open longer than six o'clock in the afternoon of said day.



### Section 3

It shall be the duty of the selectmen of said town to certify and return, as soon as may be, the number of ballots in favor of acceptance of this act, and the number of ballots against the acceptance of the same, to the secretary of the commonwealth, and if it shall appear that a majority of such ballots is in favor of the acceptance of this act, the said secretary shall immediately issue and publish his certificate declaring this act to have been duly accepted.

### Section 4

This meeting shall be held within 90 days of the passage of this act.

In the summer of 1967 a portion of the residents of Maynard were shocked and saddened by the action of Maynard Industries in filling in a section of historic Mill Pond, which it controls. There again - money talks, and nothing was done about it. The newspapers, however, received letters, and editorials were written on the subject. Such was also the case in 1902 and Maynard received some controversial publicity. Here are some of the printed reactions:

From the Boston Herald, February 8, 1902  
"Maynard in a Stew"

This town seems liable within the next few months, if not weeks, to assume the characteristics of a house divided against itself, so strong is the feeling and pronounced the existing sentiment regarding the proposition to have the name of the place changed by action of the state legislature.

It does not appear that the promoters of the scheme took much pains to make their plans known to the older residents: consequently there has developed in certain quarters a feeling of mingled surprise and indignation. This feeling is in no way softened by the knowledge that the committee on towns in the present session of the General



Court will be called on to consider a petition from James B. Lord, Luke S. Brooks, Ralph Whitehead, Dr. F. U. Rich, Thomas Naylor, Julius Lowe and the American Woolen Company, W. M. Wood, treasurer, which asks for legislation providing for a change in the name of the town of Maynard.

The name understood to be desired by these petitioners is Assabet, which is, by the way, the original name of the place, although it was more commonly known as Assabet village in those days, which were previous to April 19, 1871. On that date the community began its corporate career as a town named in honor of Amory Maynard, a gentleman who was, in the strictest sense of the word its founder, since to his influence and work the busy and growing town of today owes its existence.

The bill as proposed provides that the act desired shall not take effect unless accepted by a majority of the legal voters of the town present and vote thereon by a ballot at a special meeting. This meeting also shall be held within 90 days from the passage of the act.

In connection with this movement and as means of fortifying the position taken by the petitioners for a change, a monster petition will probably be produced, as such an instrument is said to be in circulation among the operatives of the American Woolen Company at the present time.

But there is another side to this question, as to all others of a public nature, and that is found in the position taken by the remonstrants, who are numerous. Amory Maynard died in March 1890 and there is still existant in this town a most profound feeling of respect for the man and his great work in really creating the town. This sentiment has never, unless possibly on the day of Mr. Maynard's funeral when the whole community was in mourning, been manifested more strongly than now. There are people here who look upon the



whole movement made in the direction of having the town's name changed as ill advised and entirely uncalled for. Among the business men and the older residents this sentiment exists most generally, and some of that class are loud and enthusiastic in their protests against the proposed change. When the hearing is given at the State House it seems very likely that strong opposition will develop. Loyalty to the name of Maynard in this instance is unquestioned, and day by day this feeling is becoming strengthened.

Communication from C. H. Persons, Town Clerk, February 14, 1902

#### WHAT 'S IN A NAME?

"There is more force in a name than men dream of." When thirty-one years ago the citizens of this then newly incorporated town, enthusiastically and unanimously voted that the name to be engraved upon its seal and recorded in the archives of the state and nation, should be MAYNARD. They intended and expected that it would stand to future generations as a memorial to Amory Maynard, 1st, a man who by his far reaching forethought, never tiring energy, unceasing industry, changed an obscure hamlet of a few scattering farm houses to a thriving and well known manufacturing village nestled among the hills on either side of the Assabet River. He built broader and greater than he conceived of doing and the busy growing town of today owes its very existence to the influence, the labor and the perserverance of its founder.

The older citizens of Maynard cannot easily forget these things. They remember the man himself and also his good wife. They cannot forget the enthusiasm expressed at his birthday party given February 24, 1884 by a committee of citizens to commemorate the attainment of his four score years. They remember the respect shown him on the day of his burial when the whole town was draped in mourning. Remembering all of this, they fail to understand why, at the risk of dissension



among the citizens, we should be required to tear down this memorial by those who presumably unacquainted with the facts, seek to profit thereby. (Charles H. Persons, Maynard.)

February 14, 1902, Supt. George Hinchcliffe gave out the following letter Tuesday night for publication in the local papers. The communication explains itself.

Boston, February 11, 1902

George E. Hinchcliffe, Esq., Agent.  
American Woolen Company  
Assabet Mills, Maynard, Mass.

My Dear Sir:- The desire for the change of the name of the town of Maynard to Assabet is in the main for convenience in facilitating the business of the company. We expect to do a business of seven and a half million dollars annually in the Assabet Mills. The amount of packing in cases will be something tremendous and the stenciling of these goods and marking we would like to have made as concise as possible and would like to drop the word "Maynard".

It would shorten the address of the stenciling that much, as you will readily see that goods shipped to and from the "American Woolen Company, Assabet, Mass." would convey the name of the mill and at the same time save much stenciling.

This in a business of our magnitude is important. The second reason is that we would like as far as possible to establish for the new Assabet business, which is purely men's wear, a distinctly fresh start for itself rather than to have it confused with the former dress goods business of the old bankrupt concern.

There are other numerous minor reasons but these are in our opinion sufficient to encourage us to hope that the people of your town will grant us the change.

Very truly yours,  
William L. Wood,  
Treasurer, American Woolen Co.



Another communication to the Editor of the Maynard Enterprise, signed simply "Mill Operative"

"The agitation which is going on in regard to the changing of our town is a topic which should be thoroughly discussed and understood by the voters to insure an intelligent vote being cast should the state legislature decide to grant the request of a handful of petitioners and permit the disagreeable question to be brought before the town voters. The hearings which have been held before the legislative committee have brought out facts which no one seems to dispute.

First and most conspicuous is the fact that no good and sufficient reason for changing the name has yet been advanced by the petitioners.

Second: In giving the name of Maynard to the town when it was first incorporated the citizens at that time conferred a merited expression of respect and esteem on the man who laid the foundation on which the town has been built.

Third: The name of Maynard is an appropriate one for the town to bear. Amory Maynard was an industrious and ambitious man and possessed more than average share of good clear grit and above all he was a common man of the people, democratic and unassuming in his ways, and it was not only fitting but appropriate that the newly incorporated town should bear the name of its illustrious founder, he being closely identified with the particular industry which gave the majority of its inhabitants their livelihood. He kept in close touch with his employees and sympathized and encouraged them in their endeavor to prosper. It has been said of him that he built them no libraries, they neither wanted nor expected him to: he gave them what they most desired, steady work and wages that would compare favorably with any other woolen mill in the country. I entered the employ of



the Assabet Manufacturing Company when Amory Maynard was in his declining years and although he was then aged and feeble, he would almost daily be seen in some part of the mills, wandering from room to room, seeming to take special satisfaction in the noisy hum of the machinery and the industry of the workmen. It is to such a man as he, that our republic owes its existence and prosperity, and the learned gentleman "with no axe to grind", who at the hearing in Co-operative Hall "thanked God that he owed the Maynards nothing" may be mistaken. In my opinion every struggling young Maynardite owes something to the example of one who through his own grit and perseverance overcame hardships and poverty and reached the heights of fame and fortune and still preserved the respect of his fellowmen for his honest integrity.

To those who are using their influence and power to obliterate the name of Maynard and force upon us a new name for our beloved town we say "Before you ask us to disregard the sacred memories of the past and forget the sentiments of by-gone days and withdraw the well-merited gift bestowed on our old friend, first give us a good reason.

Signed "Mill Operative"

The Marlboro Enterprise printed the following editorial  
February 18, 1902

"As Others See It"

A movement has been started in the Town of Maynard to change the name of Assabet which is the title it formerly bore when only a village and a part of Stow and Sudbury. This change to an outsider looks like a move in the wrong direction. The town has built up a reputation and a name which is of value to its businessmen and by the proposed change this standing advertisement built up by the years of toil will be rendered null and void. It will make trouble and inconvenience in years to come for both shippers and consignees,



and all for what seems to be a whim on the part of some who are comparatively new to the town. It is no secret that the change is desired primarily by the American Woolen Company and that it is generally opposed, in heart at least, by those who have been most active in making the town what it is today. The reasons which are given for this change seems hardly inadequate. One is that it will take less ink for the name in writing and stenciling and another that the goods made in Maynard have not been up to the stand and of the new firm which has charge of the mill. But the latter reason seems weak when it is remembered that the mills have always been known as The Assabet Mills and the name Assabet is still to be retained. Of course, the Maynard people have a right to do as they please with their own but to the man up a tree it looks as though the "sundry other reasons" might cover something which has a decided bearing on the proposed change of name.

The matter is to be heard in Committee and referred to the legislature probably with a referendum clause. It seems to bad that the name of Maynard should be taken away from the place which owes its existence to those of that name.

On March 11, 1902 many prominent citizens and business men of the town of Maynard attended the hearing at the State House, Boston, relating to the changing of the name of the town. The hearing was continued until Tuesday, March 18th. On March 18th, the hearing began and after a two hours' session it was continued for one week, the committee on towns deciding to pay a visit to Maynard. On March 25th the committee was met at Concord Junction and carried to Maynard on a special car of the Concord, Maynard and Hudson Street Railway. The power plant of the street railway company was inspected, after which the committee was driven to the new power plant of the American



Woolen Company, and also shown through the newly constructed mill. The committee and special guests were dined at the Maynard House.

At 1:45 P.M., they arrived at Riverside Co-operative Hall and immediately Senator Day, Chairman, called the meeting to order and briefly stated the purpose of the hearing. The hall was well filled with followers of both petitioners and remonstrants. Among the old settlers of the town were noted in the gathering: Augustus Newton, Bernard McCormick, John and Artemus Whitney, Edward F. Felton, John Doyle, John Collins, Charles Randall, Charles Maynard, Edward Henderson, Joseph Hird, Abel G. Haynes, Asahel H. Haynes, David Henderson, Thomas Naylor, Julius Lowe, James B. Lord, Frank and Roland Harriman, William H. Gutteridge, M. Howell Garfield, Eugene Colbert, John Wall, Amory Maynard, 2nd, A. D. Holt, William Carver, John Vose, Sumner Rogers, James F. Sweeney. There were many ladies in the gallery.

The petitioners were represented by Michael J. Murray of Boston, while Thomas Hillis of Maynard appeared for the remonstrants. Mr. Hillis, when the hearing was announced, stated there was present in the hall one who took a great deal of interest in Massachusetts towns and a special interest in Maynard. As a special indulgence, Mr. Hillis asked that the witness be allowed to open the hearing as he had to leave on an early train. Mr. Hillis then called upon Representative Brown of Bedford. He looked upon the changing of the town's name more in the nature of a historian than otherwise. He compared the founding of Fitchburg with Maynard. Fitchburg being named after John Fitch, who like Amory Maynard began the career of the place by the erection of a small mill. Mr. Fitch, he said, had never made any bequests or promised anything. The city of Fitchburg has received many gifts from present residents, but nothing has ever been said about changing its name. His tribute to Amory Maynard was "If it is said he has bestowed no great legacy on the town, I say look about



you: this town, this entire enterprise is the work of this one man who should be and will be honored as long as the town exists, and I hope as long as the names of Concord and Lexington exist this little town will bear the name of Maynard". He said he knew of no local feeling in the matter and if he did it would not change his attitude. He did favor the proposition of allowing the citizens to vote on the question.

Julius Lowe for the petitioners said he had resided in Maynard for 29 years and was in the wholesale and retail liquor business for 21 years. He signed the petition for a change of name and in talking with others had found a decided sentiment in favor of the change. He said he had no feeling against the Maynard family. He had lost money by the failure of the Assabet Manufacturing Company and at that time had heard considerable discussion relating to a change of name.

Asahel H. Haynes appeared for the petitioners, and stated he had been in the clothing business for 25 years. He favored the change and believed the sentiment in the town was also that way.

Ralph Whitehead, resident for 18 years, favored the change. He believed the sentiment in town to be 3 to 1 in favor of the change. He had purely private reasons for wanting the change. He had lost money by the failure of the old company but refused to state the amount.

James F. Sweeney was called upon and he said that the impression prevailing that he was counsel for the American Woolen Company was erroneous. As a citizen of the town he wished to express his views on the matter. He spoke of his early life in Maynard, of his father and mother having been married in the town, and said his interest in the town was still sufficient for him to claim it as his legal residence although for many years he had resided in Boston. He said he had no axe to grind or any private grievance to air. He had known and knew him as an honest businesslike man. He also knew Amory Maynard, 2nd, the only remaining branch of the family left in Amory Maynard



town, and esteemed him as highly as he had the man whose name the town bore; but nevertheless was strongly in favor of the change. He spoke of the influence exerted over the voters of the town when the Assabet mills were controlled by the Maynards, intimating that the operatives dared not vote against the wishes of the mill owners for fear that their means of livelihood would be cut off. He charged the Maynard's with being opposed to the installation of the public water system and the building of the present Nason Street schoolhouse; and when the town was incorporated in 1871, the Maynard family and the Assabet Company owned nearly all the tenements in town. There were no sidewalks, street lights, and but poor educational advantages. He spoke of the lack of a town hall and said that for many years they had been obliged to pay a high rent for the use of Riverside Hall, a building owned by the Maynard family. Further stated that for ten years previous to the downfall, the Assabet Mills had been tottering, and that a few months previous to the failure Lorenzo Maynard, realizing that the end was drawing nigh signed over property to the amount of \$250,000 to protect himself when the crash came. Closing with an appeal to the committee to allow the citizens the privilege of exercising their right to vote on the matter.

Thomas Hillis in opening for the remonstrants told of the founding of the original mill, and gave a brief history of Amory Maynard, its founder. He contrasted the size of the place when Amory Maynard first entered Assabet Valley with the size of the town when Mr. Maynard retired in 1884. He said "when Mr. Maynard first came here there were only 12 houses in the place; when he retired from business 1200 hands were employed at the mills, and the mills had a surplus of \$1,000,000 and paid 6% of its capital stock. When the town was incorporated it was given the name of Maynard, and the latter in yielding to the



wishes of the citizens made no promises of bequests or memorials in return for the use of his name. Because Lorenzo Maynard had failed was no reason why the name should be changed. Mr. Hillis said prior to 1898 no one had ever thought of changing the name of the town."

M. Howell Garfield, Supt. of the American Powder Mills, stated he had lived in Maynard 21 years ago. He believed the sentiment was against the change. As a citizen as well as an official of the American Powder Mills he was opposed to any change.

John W. Ogden, Supt. of the C.M.&H Street Railway was opposed. He signed the original petition but later asked to have his name removed, giving as his reason that he simply signed the petition to oblige the person circulating it. Personally, he had no feeling in the matter, but the company which he represented was opposed to any change.

Frank H. Harriman of Harriman Brothers laundry testified he was born in Maynard, was proprietor of a laundry employing 65 hands, and which did business with about 30 cities and towns. He was opposed to any change because any change would cause great confusion in his business. He also stated he had talked with his father only the day before and his father had never heard Amory Maynard promising to give anything to the town. He did not believe in letting the people vote on the question.

William B. Case, a resident of the town for 26 years and a dry goods merchant for most of that time, was opposed and could see no reason for a change.

Rev. Edwin Smith, pastor of the Congregational Church fifteen years ago, was called upon and paid high tribute to Amory Maynard and his wife, who said he did not proclaim deeds from the hilltops, but who nevertheless were well-known to have performed many charitable



acts, several of which were cited.

Abel G. Haynes, John Whitney and Artemus Whitney also voiced their sentiments against any change, as also did Sidney B. Shattuck who said "Maynard was good enough for him." "He was decidedly against going back to the name of Assabet." "It was an Indian name and he had no use for Indians."

The remonstrants were all questioned as to when they first heard of the plan to effect a change in the town's name, and if any such talk had been heard when the water works were being agitated or when the Nason Street school building was under discussion.

At 4:30 P.M. the hearing was closed and was continued at the State House on Friday, March 28, when the closing arguments were heard. As in the original previous sessions Michael J. Murray of Boston appeared for the petitioners, and Thomas Hillis of Maynard for the remonstrants. The session consumed two hours, Counsel Hillis speaking about one hour and fifteen minutes, Mr. Murray taking up the remainder of the time. Mr. Hillis again dwelt solely on the fact that the town was named for Amory Maynard and impressed upon the members of the committee that any happenings at the Assabet Mills since the retirement of Amory Maynard should not be considered at all.

Mr. Murray presented figures relating to the amount of money lost by the residents of the town at the time of the downfall of the old company under Lorenzo Maynard, and argued in favor of the citizens of the town being given a chance to vote on the question of a change of name. Thus the incident closed until the Legislature announced its decision.

While there are but two sides to the question of changing the name, yes and no, there is a varying sentiment in the reasons given by the supporters of both sides. Both petitioners and remonstrants



have many adherents. Among the former are many residents of the town who were heavy losers by the failure of the Assabet Manufacturing Company and who consider this to be a sufficient reason for a change. Arrayed against these on the remonstrants side are those who contend that this has no connection with the issue, but is simply an exhibition of spite directed against one who had no hand in naming the town.

The American Woolen Company is also on the side of the petitioners, giving as its reason that a change of name would greatly facilitate its business. Others feel that the failure of Amory Maynard to provide for, or erect, some substantial memorial building or make some gift to the town is sufficient reason for a new name. The remonstrants reply to this by saying that Amory Maynard never promised to give anything to the town, and did not ask to have the town named for him, but instead discouraged the idea. There is still another element, imbued with socialistic principles, is against anything and everything which is supposed to be in favor of the woolen trust.

On May 2, 1902, the Committee on Towns voted to report a bill to change the name of the town of Maynard to Assabet. At the executive session of the committee, nine of the eleven members were present. Of the nine, House chairman Cutler of Holliston, Cummings of Orleans, Felton of Bolton and Tyler of Clinton dissented. The vote was 5 to 4 in favor of the bill. There was a referendum attached to the bill providing that the voters of the town shall pass upon the proposition at a special town meeting, not to be called at less than 90 days notice, or a regular town meeting.

On May 8, 1902, by a vote of 69 to 79 not to order the bill to a third reading, thus killing the bill.