

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Fall 2015

NEWSLETTER



Ken Story

OLD ROUTE 10: THE DARTMOUTH COLLEGE ROAD

For a number of years, the overland road we know as State Route 10 was also known as the Dartmouth College Road (in some places it was also called the Dartmouth College Highway). Formally created by the state highway department in the early 20th century, this road extended from the Massachusetts border all the way to its intersection with modern Route 302 in Woodsville. Like most of the state routes established after the arrival of the automobile, Route 10 incorporated a number of local roads to create a state-maintained road connecting a number of communities. Route 10 was one of three ‘trunk’ lines established by the highway department that ran north-south through the western, central and eastern sections of the state (the other trunk lines were Route 3 and Routes 16/25). It was named after Dartmouth College as the college was located on the road near the center of its length and helped identify it as the westernmost of these trunk lines.

Until World War II, Route 10 was a much narrower and more winding road, designed for lower speed travel. Before and after the war significant construction occurred along its length to straighten, widen and improve the driving surface. Modern Route 10 has changed rather little in Grantham Village, covering almost the exact same ground it always has; north and south of the village, the road has changed significantly. Fortunately, in both instances, important remnants of the old roadway survive.

South of the village and just north of the Croydon town line, the original Route 10 survives today as Bouldervale Road. Hugging the base of Sherman Hill the entire way, the original roadway was designed to take advantage of the most level section of the valley that was also the furthest away from the Croydon Branch of the Sugar River, thereby avoiding seasonal flooding. Bouldervale Road connects the historic Howard Farm in Grantham with the historic farm just across the line in Croydon, which is now the sheep farm so visible from the modern Route 10. Along the way a nar-

row concrete bridge spans Willow Brook. The bridge hardly seems wide enough to allow one car to pass, much less two. The historic road seems more like a narrow country lane than a highway, particularly to modern drivers. Thankfully, it retains all of its rural charm.

Just before its intersection with the interstate, the road now known as Yankee Barn Road is the first segment of the original section of Route 10 north of the village. Substantially altered after the construction of Interstate 89, the road originally looped gradually toward the east and ran in front of the historic Horton Farm; in fact, a small piece of that roadway remains between Rum Brook Market and the Horton farmhouse.

The existing North Grantham road – also known as Old Route 10 – picks up just beyond the farm and continues with rather little change all the way through North Grantham until it rejoins the interstate at Exit 14. However, the old roadbed continues to the north beyond the right-angle turn that leads to the interstate and has been incorporated as part of the modern bicycle path. Like Bouldervale Road, Old Route 10 is narrower and runs close to several historic farms and residences, and clearly was not designed to accommodate modern vehicular traffic. Significant historic properties include the Hastings home, located on the west side of the road immediately after Miller Pond Road and just before it crosses beneath the interstate, and the two barns on the eastern side of the road just south of Exit 14, which are all that survive of the old Kidder farm. The Kidder residence, now demolished but formerly located on the west side of the road opposite the barns, was a wood-frame, single-storey residence that probably dated from the mid-19th century.

The remnants of this early state highway remain an important part of the historic fabric of Grantham. Their preservation is of the utmost importance, both in terms of retaining our town’s rural character and allowing us to connect with a time when building a new road, even for automobiles, meant designing for ease of access for residents rather than convenience for drivers.

—Ken Story

PART II OF RECENT HISTORY OF 2551 STONEY BROOK ROAD, EAST GRANTHAM, AKA THE HORACE GREEN HOMESTEAD

In the first part of this exploration, Linda Bohrer described the outside, the porch room or summer kitchen, the kitchen, the bathroom, the living room, and the back bedroom/office. Now on to the:

Master Bedroom

Passing the door to the closed-in stairway and the front door (which we never use for entering) is the master bedroom. The original wide pine plank floors are here and this room also had gold wallpaper stained and torn. The beams in here were exposed and we left them that way. We applied plaster over the wallpaper and did not insulate or remove walls. The floor was simply painted. We also have two old oak wardrobes that were here when we came. They may have been here in the house for generations since there are no closets downstairs. There is a bookshelf here that is built in and original and butts out into the office room on the other side.

Closet (Baby Room)

The last tiny room downstairs is one we haven't gotten to yet. It needs insulation and new walls and ceiling. It has the original plaster with horsehair and the lathe behind it. Right now it is a playroom for my grandchildren but it was a tiny bedroom for the babies we had at one time. We think it may have been a birthing room where mothers had the babies sleep to be close by for middle of the night feedings. It is a very cold room. All of the bedrooms are and we always had our babies wear two pairs of sleepers and winter hats at night. Water placed on the floor in winter would freeze in a glass. We have worked to insulate and weatherproof the house a little at a time.

Upstairs Bedrooms

Upstairs there are two rooms with sloped ceilings and minuscule doors. We put in a bamboo floor in one room where the original flooring was hard to save but under the bamboo the floor is still there. This room has the one closet in the house. A slope ceiling space with original wallpaper and linoleum on the floor. The closet leads out over the kitchen downstairs through that door in the ceiling. We took down the walls and insulated in both

rooms using the blue insulation sheets and exposing the heavy dark beams in both rooms to get additional room space. The original walls went in much further. The little doors are original. And so small that we had one piece of furniture that was stuck in the room when we moved in. The entire doorway had to come off including the trim to remove it. Then it would hardly go down the stairway.



Hand Hewn Raker, GHS collection.

We ended up letting it crash down the entire flight of stairs and out through the open front door. It is residing with Jim Stamper now, I believe. It was a wardrobe and quite old and valuable since two antiques people offered to buy it. It had elaborate veneer inlays and many small drawers. It may have been valuable but it was ugly and I was happy to have it go. There is a small landing--dangerously small and a railing that is original that leads off the landing to the at-

tic crawl space. The stairs are tiny, narrow and very steep which is a common feature in older homes. The stairs and flooring on the landing are original wide board pine. There is a tiny square opening in the ceiling of the landing leading to the space under the eaves. When removing the original horsehair plaster upstairs we noticed that strips of birch bark had been use for insulation.

While recognizing the historical significance of a home so old, we still have to make our home more livable and to that end covering over some floors and replacing walls was a necessary adjustment for warmth and comfort. Still because we did the work ourselves we know what it looked like and what we did. And lack of funds probably kept this house closer to original than many others.

Ghosts? Maybe or maybe not.

When we first moved into the house our young neighbors Lisa and Elaza Hitchcock were quick to tell us that the upstairs bedroom was haunted. A woman had died there they informed us. [On April 9, 1880, Lucy Green was found dead in bed.] I would not ever claim there are ghosts here but I will tell you of a few things that we have had happen and some we have not been able to explain. Perhaps you can?

Continued on page 4

GHS ORAL HISTORIES—TAPES, TRANSCRIPTIONS AND THUMB DRIVES

The Grantham Historical Society, like many others in New Hampshire, has more collection items than there are people to catalog and care for them. While this remains true for us, we are happy to report the completion of one major project in August, 2015 – the transcription of all our oral history tapes. These dated back to the 1970s. Not only were the tapes deteriorating but the technology to listen to them is disappearing fast.

Since 2010, nineteen tapes have been transcribed, most by Sue Thomas of Hopkinton, New Hampshire. A few others had been transcribed in earlier years, usually by the interviewer but a standard format had not been used. (We are grateful that they were transcribed, regardless of the format!) Now copies of all transcriptions, audiotapes and a thumb drive containing all the transcriptions done by Ms. Thomas can be found in a large box in the Archives Room. These are available to read. (Each has a copy on archival paper as well as another copy on regular copy paper.)

Tapes of GHS meetings at which there were “round tables” or multiple people speaking were, in general, too inaudible to be transcribed. These tapes have been kept although the means of listening to them may disappear in the near future.

In 1999, sixth grade students at the Grantham Village School interviewed Grantham residents for their project “Grantham Revisited”. We have 12 tapes and transcriptions from these interviews (Phyllis Horton Forest, Wilfred Hastings, Joey Dunbar Holmes, Juno Pillsbury Horton, Dennis and Connie Howard, Bill Hutchins, Barbara and Francis Mutney, Ella Reney, Hap and Elinor Reney, Jean Sutherland, Francis Tucker and Allen Walker). Five other recordings come from Allen Walker, president of GHS for many years and long-time resident of Grantham. These cover the Hurricane of 1938 (written by his mother

Gladys), his experiences in World War II and an interview about the history of his house on Rt. 114.

Programs at GHS meetings over the years for which we now have a record include: Jutta Cords’s life history in Nazi Germany, Phyllis Forest’s reminiscences of life on the Horton Farm, Judy Pelliteiri on the Grantham Village School in 1998, Merle Schotanus on “People, Places and Politics” in 2002, and Willena Hastings Spooner on the history of North Grantham.

Others have documented life in Grantham from the late 19th century to the present time: Albert Flanders (life in 19th century Grantham), Tony Hanslin on the early development of Eastman, Henry Howard’s interview by his daughter, Amah, on life in 1900 in Grantham, Nellie Stack Mutney interviewed by her son, Francis on early 20th century life and a car “tour” with Ella Reney up Howe Hill Road noting the changes brought about by the building of I-89.

Gathering oral histories is a task not limited to the past. We have a list of current Grantham residents who could offer much about the Town’s history if they were interviewed. GHS is always looking for volunteers who would be interested in pursuing more oral histories. Email, call or stop in on a Friday afternoon and we will be happy to talk with you.

—Pat Andrews

It is *better* to give.

Your membership fees and end-of-year donations will help the Grantham Historical Society develop programs, exhibits and educational materials for anyone interested in the history of Grantham. All donations are tax-deductible and include receipt of our newsletter.

Please mail to:
Grantham Historical Society
P.O. Box 540
Grantham, NH 03753

Thank you for your support.

Membership and Annual Dues Form

Grantham Historical Society

Name _____

Mailing address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

New member Annual renewal

Annual dues: (check one)

Individual (\$15.)

Family (\$25.)

Patron/business/institution (\$50.)

Extra contribution _____

Total check amount _____

STONEY BROOK ROAD, PT. II *Continued from page 2*

My brother was visiting in the early days of our residence and we entered the master bedroom to show him the space. It was not a windy day. There was no storm outside but just as we entered the window toward the cedar trees on the side of the house shattered inward. Just exploded.

Many times light bulbs had done the same particularly in the bathroom and kitchen area. They explode when turned on. Faulty wiring? More than likely.

Things have disappeared. Odd things. A really large pot lid. A new package of English muffins set out to defrost. They have NEVER turned up.

We have heard things often. When my children were young the house was unbearably cold when it was below zero outside and I would bring my children into the big four poster bed with me to stay warm under the covers. We would read or nap because it was too cold to be anywhere else. So we were napping all together one afternoon, my two little girls and I. No one else was home. From upstairs we heard a loud sound. As if a large trunk was being dragged across the floorboards. It was loud enough to wake all three of us and my children were crying and afraid. I did not go to investigate. I have no idea what it could have been.

Another time I was writing letters at the kitchen table. My children were out of the house and my husband, Gary was in the living room. I heard him get up from his chair, cross the living room and come to stand by the kitchen door. His steps were loud and familiar. I didn't look up, but kept writing. However, I did begin to talk to him. I was waiting for him to respond to a question. Waiting and growing impatient and very annoyed. He didn't answer even though he was right there. I asked again. No answer. Now I was steamed! Why wouldn't he

answer me? I finally looked up. There was no one there. He was soundly asleep in his chair in the living room when I got up to look.

Some people have seen things in our house that they cannot explain. There are people who will no longer sleep over for that reason. Sane, logical people. My brother-in-law and his wife were staying over once and sleeping on mattresses on the living room floor. They woke up after hearing a noise. My brother-in-law saw the five cats we had staring into the kitchens so he looked in that direction too. He saw something moving in there as did his wife. He doesn't speak of it much but he always leaves before bedtime when he comes by and has never slept there again.

My youngest daughter is afraid of the bedroom upstairs to the left. She will not sleep there if she has a choice. She doesn't speak of what she saw either.

The pantry door opens by itself all the time. Windows shut. Lights flicker. All of these are part of living in an old creaking house.

The noises we hear might be ani-

mals—we have had many come inside of the house over the years. Uninvited always. A raccoon wandered into the house and made a huge ruckus until we got it back outside. An opossum baby came in one really cold night and played dead when we shone a flashlight on it hiding in the back room so it was actually much easier to get this little guest back outside. Moles have lived under our kitchen stove and we have watched them travel blindly along the wall. And I heard clattering toenails one night while we were sound asleep. Those steps belonged to a skunk who came in when the basement door opened wide in the wind. I began to laugh while my husband swore. He shooed it out the front door with a laundry basket.

An old house has stories and smells, creaks and groans and the histories of generations of my families. It takes years of work to "improve" a house to a state that makes it right for the current owners.

And it will be "right" until the next owner comes along with their own improvements.

—Linda Bohrer

RESERVE YOUR LIMITED EDITION GRANTHAM ORNAMENT
Please come in to the Historical Society Fridays from 1 to 4 pm to see it in person.

Yes, please reserve _____ ornaments with stand @ \$35.00

Yes, please reserve _____ ornaments without stand @ \$30.00

Name _____

Phone _____ email _____

Sorry, we don't take credit cards, but cash or check will do.
Return to GHS, PO Box 540, Grantham, NH 03753

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VAULT AND A SAFE?

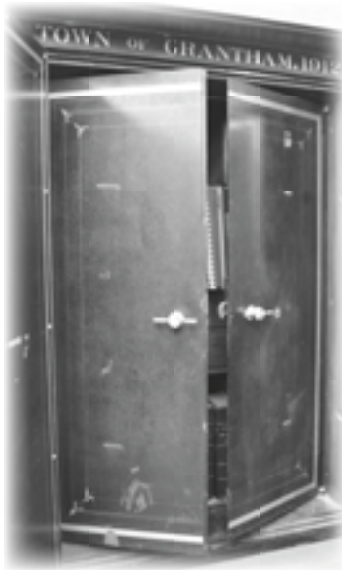
Do we have any in Grantham?

You bet we do. Both banks in town have vaults, where safe-deposit boxes to be used for securing items of customers are kept.

A vault is a large room used for storage of objects and papers to be secured when space larger than a lockable drawer is required. A safe is generally smaller than a vault and is often on wheels. Vaults or large safes are used by town offices, businesses or individuals who have records or objects that need to be kept secure.

The Grantham Town Archives and Grantham Historical Society share a large vault measuring 8 by 10 feet. It remained as part of the building after Grantham built the new town offices and is now used for storage of historical photos, as well as town government records dating from the 18th century such as selectmen's books that date from 1776 and re-

cord annual warrants for town meetings as well as the results of the votes taken. In addition, both federal and local records of births, marriages, deaths and poll taxes beginning in 1771 are kept in the vault. Most of the items in the vault are required by New Hampshire state law to be kept forever.



In the 1990s, Grantham was awarded a Moose grant from the state of New Hampshire, (money raised through the sale of special license

plates). Many of the oldest town records were professionally restored and bound for long-term preservation thanks to this special grant. To examine an old book, white cotton gloves to protect the fragile pages must be worn. Originally the Methodist Church probably had a safe when the town of Grantham paid for and used the newly built


ground floor as the town hall, after the church was moved down Dunbar Hill in the mid-1800s to its present location. The whereabouts of this safe are not known.

The Dunbar Free Library has a small safe on wheels that is set into the wall. The first Selectmen's office was located in the newly-built library. The size of this vault reminds us of the limited number of records that towns were required to keep in the early years of the 20th century.

Rumor has it that the safe was not used very much because papers locked inside became moldy. Also the door of the safe is carefully kept open because no one knows the combination. This safe weighs between 1500 and 1800 pounds which discourages thieves. The safe will be removed from the Library during the renovation of the Library. Who will use it in the future? That is a very moldy question!



—Renee Gustafson, Rae Tober and Pat Andrews



ORNAMENT FOR CHRISTMAS 2015

The Gourmet Garden at 195 Main Street in New London is selling a series of ornaments called Kearsarge/Lake Sunapee Ornament Series for non-profits to raise money. "Exclusively designed for Gourmet Garden, these year-round ornaments are perfect for tabletop display with the optional stand, in a window or will look beautiful on a tree during the holidays. Each ornament comes boxed and ready for gift giving"¹. Recently an ornament was designed for Grantham with these sights: the Church, Boulder-vale Farm, Chapel at Old Farms, Eastman sign, Maxwell Inn, Grantham Village School House, Dunbar Free Library and Fowler Mill grist wheel stone. The ornament is approximately 3 1/2" square. You may buy an ornament at Grantham Historical Society, Gourmet Garden or use the order form on page 4.

¹ Gourmet Garden Website, 9/2015

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2015

GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 540, Grantham, NH 03753, 603-863-9701

PRESIDENT

Ken Story
P.O. Box 52
603-359-4405
kbyrdstory@comcast.net

VICE PRESIDENT

VACANT

SECRETARY

Christina McKahan
P.O. Box 536
mckahanc@gmail.com

TREASURER

Kathi Osgood
P.O. Box 246
603-863-4726
kgood246@gmail.com

DIRECTORS

Rae Tober
P.O. Box 625
603-731-9790
raetober@gmail.com

Nate Carey
P.O. Box 27
Grantham, NH 03753
603-863-2915
ncarey@my.fairpoint.net

Dwight Wilder
96 Silo Lane
Grantham, NH 03753
603-865-5345
dswldr@comcast.net

TOWN ARCHIVIST

Rae Tober
P.O. Box 625
603-731-9790
granthamarchives@gmail.com

The Grantham Historical Society and Town Archives are open on Friday afternoons from 1:00–4:00 PM or by appointment. The building is located at 34 Dunbar Hill Road.

Email: granthamhistory@gmail.com
Website: www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org
Facebook: Grantham Historical Society

SAVE THE DATE!
Thurs., Oct. 22, 2015

**Did you miss him in
Springfield? Eastman?
Don't miss him AGAIN!**

Grantham Historical Society presents:

BEN KILHAM The Bear Man



This program will be about New Hampshire's black bear. Mr. Kilham's understanding of bear behavior is astounding. He has given over 450 lectures, has written articles for *National Geographic*, is the author of *Among the Bears—Raising Bear Orphan Clubs in the Wild*, and has appeared on National Geographic's TV production of "Bear Man." Ben speaks freely, without notes so every lecture is different.

**BE THERE! at 7 PM Lower Level
Grantham Town Hall.
Free and open to the public.**

