

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Spring/Summer 2014

NEWSLETTER



Ken Story

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Over the past twenty years the historical society has been blessed with the contributions of many volunteers who have given generously of their time and talent. From our founders, Ella Reney and Allen Walker, to Mort Shea, Lea and Conrad Frey, Bob Champagne, Renee Gustafson and others too numerous to mention, we are extremely proud of the heartfelt commitment made to our mission by these caring fans of Grantham history. Our annual meeting this past May brought a new fan as long-time Grantham resident Linda Bohrer joined our board. Linda agreed to fill the position formerly occupied by Grantham and Eastman resident Craig McArt, who served as a GHS director for the past five years.

I use the phrase “fill the position” rather than the word “replace” as it would not be fair to Linda to expect her to replace Craig, nor would it be fair to Craig to assert that he can be replaced. Craig came to GHS through his work with Lea Frey when she was the archivist for both the town and GHS. His frequent presence on Friday afternoons, when he worked in both the town and GHS collections, led us to believe that he would be a welcome addition to the society’s executive committee. Thankfully, he agreed. And were we ever right. Craig used his experience as a professional designer and his ‘computer literacy’ to great effect in a number of ways. Craig worked with our secretary, Christina McKahan, on the development of a video on Grantham history to be shared with our school children at Grantham Village School. He regularly assisted other town

archives and GHS volunteers in the cataloging of our photographic collection, providing scanning and labeling expertise so that irreplaceable images from Grantham’s past are not lost, and are also much easier to find and access.

Craig’s greatest gift to GHS may have been the focus and patience he displayed working with the rest of us on the History of Grantham book project. This has been a long and involved effort, made only more so by the society’s decision to devote a serious and abiding commitment to high quality research, writing and publication. Craig has stuck with us through thick and thin, continuing to assist with the illustrations and organization, and giving certain of us (myself in particular) much-needed nudges along the way to stay ‘on task’ and focused. While Craig no longer serves on our board, he has graciously agreed to remain an active and vital player in the book project through completion, and for that we remain most grateful.

As much as we appreciate Craig’s contributions to various GHS projects, I would be remiss in not also recognizing him and his wife Ebba for the generosity and kindness they showed to Allen Walker during the last few years of his life. They truly took Allen under their wing, visiting him frequently and providing assistance of all sorts. The society – and the town – owe them a clear debt of gratitude for the genuine caring and love given to one of our town’s native sons.

While Craig will continue to volunteer for the society, he will also continue to study and write about the Eastman community, in which he has lived for almost



Craig McArt—*Thank you!*
Photo by Rae Tober

History of the Town of Grantham Volunteer Fire Department

The first annual meeting¹ of the Grantham Volunteer Fire Department was held at the Town Hall on April 15, 1954. There were 14 men present, including Arthur Carver, newly appointed Fire Chief. This meeting was the initial step in organizing the Department. There was much to do: officers to elect, rules and regulations to be drawn up, establishing a meeting place, and a host of other matters that would befall this small group of men who wanted to establish an organization that would be an asset to the town for the protection of persons' life and property and be recognized by the State Fire Marshal's office.

As the year progressed, so did the Fire Department. As early as the 15th of May [1954] there was a full complement of 25 men. By this time, all matters of organization had been completed and thoughts were turned to the building and acquiring of equipment. The old trailer pump that the Town of Grantham turned over to the Department was mounted on the rear of a half-ton Dodge chassis, which made a very useful and mobile piece of equipment; later a ton and a half Ford pump with tank was purchased after a very successful fund raising campaign by the members of the Department.

In June, thoughts turned to recreation and a softball team was organized, a manager appointed and a schedule drawn up to play the teams of the

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EARLY GRANTHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT

Before 1954, if a building in Grantham caught fire, the chances were good that it would perish. There was no Fire Department. If neighbors saw smoke, they would have rushed to help but without equipment and any source of water, the inevitable occurred. State Fire Wardens attended fires but came from a distance. After the formal organization of the Grantham



Fire Department 1950s; GHS Collection

Volunteer Fire Department in the spring of 1954¹, the chances for saving buildings increased. Francis Mutney, a 50 year veteran and Honorary Lifetime Member of the Department recalls that the first equipment they had was a war-surplus generator mounted on a trailer. Someone's truck was needed to tow it to the site of the fire. Even then, there may not have been a ready source of water. Things could only go up for the Fire Department from there.

The first fire station was built with two bays by the firemen in the mid 1950s on the site of the current church parking lot. A third bay was added by 1976.

A siren on top of the building alerted the town to a fire but could only be heard in the village. Francis Mutney recalls that "if the wind was right", he could sometimes hear it in North Grantham. Prior to having a siren, townspeople were alerted to fires by the ringing of the church bell. Joshua Dunbar, who lived across the street from the church, had the only key. According to his daughter, Joey Dunbar Holmes, their first telephone was installed so that he could be called in the event of a fire. Calls were also made to Reney's Store where a "telephone tree" was initiated to rouse the firemen. If the Grantham volunteers

needed help, Newport was called.

The old Fire Department building was used until 1983 when the current building was constructed. (The siren

on the old building was moved to the new one.) The front of the old building and the Department's "best truck", according to Francis, were demolished in 1968 when a truck carrying blocks of granite

lost control on Route 10. In order to avoid hitting a passing truck, it crashed into the fire department. The damaged areas were rebuilt and the building continued in use until 1983.

The recent donation of minutes of Fire Department meetings to GHS from its inception in 1954 to 1976 document the commitment of the volunteers who gave up their time and money to keep Grantham safe. Not only did they maintain the financial base for the Department with creative fund-raising, they demonstrated Yankee frugality in their purchases of equipment and vehicles, usually buying second hand trucks from larger communities who were purchasing replacements.

In 2004, the Fire Department celebrated fifty years of service to the Grantham community. A booklet donated to GHS with the minutes describes the evolution of the Department with a detailed list of the equipment purchased between 1954 and 2004, the addition of the FAST squad around 1979, the activities of the Ladies Auxiliary (the "Cup and Saucer Brigade"), the Firemen's Association and a list of all of the chiefs of the Department up to 2004.

Our thanks to Francis and Barbara

Continued on page 4

RHUBARB FOR BERNICE: WHERE IS SMALL HOE?

UPDATE ON THE HORTON FARM COLLECTIONS

The vast collection of artifacts at the Horton Farm has slowly been cataloged over the past two and a half years. Thirty –one separate codes have been developed to categorize everything from tintypes to teapots. Lists of the items in each category are kept; these lists contain probably more than a thousand items. Joe and Patty Forest and Kitty Brown have been very gracious in letting GHS catalogers into their home to continue work on the uncatalogued items. Volunteer Klaran Warner is attacking box after box of magazines, newspapers and farm journals, many from the 19th century. Complete issues from many years have been saved. Recently, copies of the Boston Post from World War I were uncovered. Diaries from the 19th and 20th centuries reveal the day-to-day activities and concerns of a family in a small agricultural community. These diaries only rarely note national and international happenings but the important news of Grantham is regularly included. The collection of silverware

dates from the early 19th century and includes coin silver spoons made by well-known New Hampshire and Boston silversmiths. Hundreds of books reflect what a well-read family this was. Hymn books, sheet music and a large collection of 331/3 records testify to their interest in music as well. Several family members were teachers and thus, school books, especially 19th century, and other teaching materials are well-represented. Interesting items like a piece of wood chipped from a Newburyport, Massachusetts meetinghouse in 1853 will probably never be explained. The genealogy of the

Horton Family and their predecessors has been fleshed out by reading old papers, bills, letters, receipts, account books and other ephemera that have never been thrown out. The farm family members were frugal. Many small account books which noted daily or weekly expenses and income were later used as scrapbooks for newspaper clippings, for doing math homework by young children or for keeping lists of things to do. “Rhubarb for Bernice; where is small hoe?” is one such list scrawled on the back page of one of these account books. GHS now has a brochure about our nine cemeteries developed by Rae Tober.



Juno Horton with Happy the Cow; GHS Collection

—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 _____

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PLEASE CHECK ONE:

New member Annual renewal

Annual dues: (check one)

Individual (\$15.)
 Family (\$25.)
 Patron/business/institution (\$50.)

Extra contribution _____

Total check amount _____

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Continued from page 1

Eastman community, in which he has lived for almost fifteen years. Please take a minute to read Craig's frequent articles in Eastman Living, wherein he explores a broad assortment of topics relevant to Eastman Pond, its history and its environment. For all you have done and continue to do, thank you Craig!

—Ken Story

FIRE STATION

Continued from page 2



*Barbara and Francis Mutney,
GHS Collection*

Mutney for organizing and donating the records of the Fire Department and for being interviewed for this story.

—Pat Andrews

¹ *Founding members were Kenneth Barton, Roger Descoteau, Joshua Dunbar, Eugene Eaklor, Peter Forest, John Mohla, Leon Mayo, Edwin Phetteplace, Maurice Reney, David Reney, Mark Traegde, John Tucker, and Henry Swenson, Jr. Chief was Arthur Carver.*

CORRECTION TO WINTER 2013-14 ISSUE

On page 5 of the Winter issue in the article about the cards available for sale through the Historical Society, the editor made an error in stating that the

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LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD VOLUNTEERS (WITH A FOCUS)

GHS welcomes new volunteers to assist with our on-going activities and projects.

We currently need help with:

- Our newsletter
- Cataloging our photo collections
- Interviews for our house history project
- Oral history interviews
- Assisting our garden volunteer with Memorial Garden and flower beds
- Library
- Friday afternoon hosts for visitors and helping to develop new exhibits

Please contact Kathi Osgood if you can help with any of these interesting activities.

FIRE STATION HISTORY

Continued from page 2

Newport league. This proved to be a very popular pastime with the members of the department playing and the residents of the town as spectators.

All during the summer regular meetings were held, some devoted to theory and instruction on fire fighting and others to drill where the members used the equipment under test and simulated conditions.

In September it became evident that a permanent building to house the equipment was needed and plans were put underway to attain this new goal. After many generous contributions by the townspeople and the acquiring of a piece of land from the Selectmen, the building was started in late September.

Towards the end of the year another fund-raising campaign was started to supplement the funds of the Department; this was to end with a raffle and dance in February and proved very successful.

Late in January, with the safety of the young people in mind, and also to provide recreation, a flooded ice rink was made available through the efforts of the members of the Department and the use of the small pump. This proved to be a very useful and appreciated project by the Department.

With a very successful year behind us and a challenging one ahead, we turn to this, our [second] annual meeting, to elect new officers and start out on another eventful and successful year.

— (Signed) John Mohla
Clerk of the Fire Department

¹ *This report is about the very first organizational meeting of the Fire Department which was followed thereafter by annual meetings each spring. This was written in the spring of 1955.*

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2014 GHS ANNUAL MEETING

On May 22, 2014, new Board members were elected, the 2014-15 dues schedule was approved, and a tasty potluck supper was enjoyed. We welcomed back Allen Koop who presented a program on the history of the Appalachian Club's White Mountain hut system which was supported by a slideshow of scenes of nature familiar to New Hampshire



Potluck Diners Photo by Renee Gustafson



Dwight's Painting Renee Gustafson

natives and historical photographs dating from the earliest construction of the huts. The NH Humanities Council co-sponsored the program. Dr. Koop had spoken to an overflow audience several years ago when he spoke about the German prisoner camps in Stark, NH during World War II. Dwight Wilder, GHS Trustee, exhibited his original painting of the first AMC hut which has been featured on one of their postcards.

PLAN AHEAD — 2014 CHRISTMAS CARDS COMING IN OCTOBER

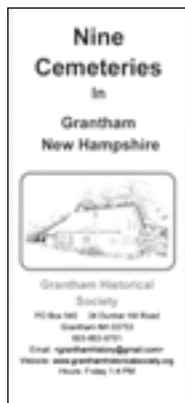
Last year, Christmas cards with Grantham photos designed and produced by Renee Gustafson sold well at both the Christmas Fair held in November and at GHS on Friday afternoons. This year, Renee has created beautifully-colored cards using 19th century Victorian Christmas postcards from the Horton Farm Collection. We expect these to be ready for sale by October. They can be purchased on Friday afternoons from 1-4 PM at GHS or by request. The cost is \$1.00 per card or \$5.00 for 8 cards.



SUMMER MEETING—GRANTHAM GRAVEYARD VISITS

The NH Old Graveyards Association held their summer meeting at GHS on Saturday, July 12, 2014. Since we were competing with a beautiful summer's day and many other local activities and events, we were happy to have about 15 people present. NHOGA last visited us in 2009. After a short business meeting, four GHS Board members gave brief presentations on some of the Grantham cemeteries: Pat Andrews on the Plainfield "Grantham" cemeteries, Craig McArt on Leavitt Hill Cemetery, Rae Tober on the Littlefield and Dunbar Hill cemeteries, as well as on some mystery gravestones in Grantham, and Ken Story on Hilldale cemetery. After a brown bag lunch and desserts provided by GHS, tours of Dunbar Hill, Littlefield and Hilldale cemeter-

ies were taken. Littlefield, on Cote Road, is the only raised cemetery in Grantham and is surrounded by a stone wall overhung by huge spruce trees. There are only five burials here. Hilldale Cemetery originally belonged to Springfield until the "Gore" was given to Grantham; thus, families from both towns are buried there. The headstones bear the names of many 19th century citizens of our town including members of the Goss and Horton families (Horton Farm), the head of the Howe Press, J. Madison Howe; Francis Howe, the only Grantham veteran buried in Arlington National Cemetery and storekeepers, mill owners and farmers who were pillars of the community one hundred and fifty years ago. The Historical Society now has a brochure.



CORRECTION *from page 4*

earliest notecards made by Renee Gustafson for us were of local native flowers. These were not made for us but for the Grantham Garden Club and are available from them. Our apologies to Renee and to the Garden Club. We have her cards of historical scenes, Grantham brooks and ponds, barns of Grantham and holiday cards for sale at the Historical Society on Friday afternoons from 1-4 PM. We are very grateful to Renee for her efforts to support our fund-raising in this way.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2014 GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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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

THANKS GO TO:

• Renee Gustafson for care of our gardens and the Grantham Garden Club for planting and caring for the beds and pots around our front door.

• Laura Jean Whitcomb for donations of four books including *Dartmouth Veterans: Vietnam Perspectives*, Phillip G. Schafer, editor, and a variety of office supplies.



Two cats

GHS Collection

The GHS Newsletter is designed by Susan A. Janicki

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