

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Winter 2013–2014

NEWSLETTER



Ken Story

CARRIE BUSWELL AND ‘MANUFACTURIES’

In the course of writing the history of our town, a number of interesting historical sources have come to light, and none more interesting than those written by residents who provide first-hand accounts. Among the best of these is a short essay entitled “History of the Manufacturies in the Township of Grantham, Sullivan Co., NH,” written by Carrie Buswell.

The Buswell family was directly involved in the industry of the town in the late 19th and early 20th century, as evidenced by the Reed & Buswell Mill in Grantham Village; no doubt Carrie was quite knowledgeable about the history of the town’s manufacturing. However, Carrie was also a school teacher in the village and a member of the Grantham Grange chapter, for whom she wrote this article.

As is the case with much of the town’s history, the number and variety of ‘manufacturies’ is surprising, especially given the lack of industry in the town today. Among the earliest mills, saw and grist mills were well-represented, of course, but such enterprises as tanneries, wheelwright’s shops, and clothes-pin factories also operated here. Many of these were located in North Grantham, on Skinner Brook, Butternut Pond and at the outlet of Eastman Pond. However, they prospered wherever water power was available, including the east side of

Grantham Mountain, where at least two saw mills were located, and of course along Stocker Brook in East Grantham.

By the Civil War, the same types of industries continued, but generally speaking moved closer to the village. Ms. Buswell mentions the Spillers and the hame shop they owned in the village, for which the Spiller Dam was named (now long gone). This site – located immediately north of the Sugar River bridge in the village, on the east side of Route 10 – was a hame shop, then a blacksmith shop, and by the 20th century even hosted a gas station.

Of course, the mill in Grantham Village was the longest continually operating mill operation. It opened sometime after 1800 and remained in business for well over one-hundred years. Ms. Buswell gives a very complete ownership history of the mill, which is invaluable in attempting to understand the story of this vital piece of the town’s industrial and economic history. She also confirms that it functioned as a flour, grist and saw mill.

Such primary sources are invaluable for a true and accurate depiction of our town and how it grew over time. We have uncovered several other resources in the course of our project, and on a variety of topics; Carrie Buswell’s account is as valuable as any in helping us to appreciate the vital and vivid history of manufacturing in Grantham.



New Year's Day card

Horton Farm Collection

—Ken Story

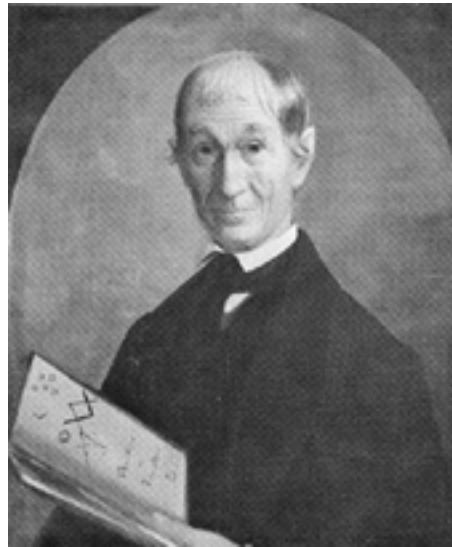
LEAVITT'S ALMANACK:

Enoch Holu has been volunteering with the Historical Society since last fall. He graduated from Colby-Sawyer in May 2013 and this year has been applying to graduate programs. When he finishes his education, he hopes to return to his native Ghana. He contributes the "youth" perspective to our Friday afternoon activities at GHS.

The Grantham Historical Society, though small, boasts of an impressive collection of historical documents. The scope of some of these documents extends far beyond our small town of Grantham. One such treasure is the Leavitt's Farmer's Almanac which is among the earliest farmers almanacs in the United States. The historical society has most of the editions of this almanac since the genesis of its publishing in 1797. The Leavitt's Farmer's Almanac offers a great window into the early years of New England. It also reinforces the legacy that the Leavitts left in all spheres of American history. The historical society will be glad to share this wonderful resource with Grantham residents and all and sundry who are interested in glimpsing New England's agricultural roots.

Dudley Leavitt, a Meredith-based farmer, teacher, newspaper editor, and a descendent of the three Leavitt brothers who were among the earliest pilgrims to sail to the New World, was the pioneer of the almanac. He infused his enthusiasm for fields such as mathematics, language and astronomy into the wildly popular almanac. The popularity of this publication was such that Leavitt was selling around 60,000 copies per annum, an extraordinary achievement in the late 1700s to early 1800s. Its only competition at the time was the Old Farmer's Almanac. The paper made Dudley arguably the most popular man in New Hampshire. Though the almanac was mainly consumed in New England,

its influence filtered through to neighboring parts of the country. When Leavitt passed away in 1851,



Dudley Leavitt Courtesy of the NH Historical Society

national newspapers such as the New York Times carried stories about his death. He was buried in the family plot near his home in the Lakes Region.

William B. Leavitt continued where his uncle, Dudley Leavitt, had left off, publishing the paper from 1857 until 1896. He was an astronomer and a student of Dudley Leavitt. Nathaniel Leavitt, the grandfather of William B. Leavitt was the first member of the family to move to Grantham. He lived in Exeter, New Hampshire for most of his life, moving to Grantham with his wife, whose maiden name was Lydia Sanborn, when he was quite old. Nathaniel Leavitt and his wife had six children including Dudley and John Leavitt, the father of William B. Leavitt who later took charge of

the publication.

It is an honor that part of the roots of this illustrious family can be traced to Grantham. Among other achievements, the Leavitts contributed fine soldiers who fought in defense of freedom and the Union. The farmer's almanac is just one of the many services that the Leavitts rendered to this country. This publication gives us a great opportunity to peep into a time when agriculture was both a means of survival and a way of life.

The Leavitt Farmer's Almanac probably was highly successful because it embraced the overarching influence that agriculture had on the New England way of life. The paper covered everything from predicting and explaining astronomical phenomena and symbols to giving information about the weather. Some of the editions even provided information on recipes, commencement dates for New England colleges, and the dates of settlement for the various states of the Union as well as the origins of the first settlers. The bottom line is that the almanac wasn't just an ordinary pamphlet for farmers. It captured all aspects of the New England past.

For people who are interested in learning more about this country's agricultural beginnings, the very foundation on which the nation was built, the Leavitt Farmer's Almanac is a wonderful starting point. And we at the Grantham Historical Society are glad to share this and our other resources with you.

—Enoch Holu

FRANCINA SMITH HALL HOUSE— DOES ANYONE KNOW WHERE IT WAS LOCATED IN EAST GRANTHAM?

From the 18th century to the present, Grantham has been home to women who, by virtue of personal talents or activism in the controversies of their time, stand out as prominent citizens of our town. *The History of Grantham or One Town Over from the River* will contain a series of profiles on some of these women. One of these is Francina Smith Hall (1844-1929) who, by “working out” (being employed outside of the home) purchased property in East Grantham where she lived alone for a time. This is a photo of her house (which we believe no longer is standing) from her 1911 book *A Story of Things Actual and Possible*. Does anyone remember where it might have been?

Please email ideas to: [grantham history@gmail.com](mailto:granthamhistory@gmail.com)



*Francina Hall Smith House
GHS Collection*

FRANCINA'S HOME AT EAST GRANTHAM, REPAIRED BY HER WITH CARPENTERS.



“FRIEND” Us!

Thanks to Sandee Story and Enoch Holu, we now are on Facebook.

Find us at:

“Facebook Grantham
Historical Society.”

**Communicate with
Town Archivist Rae
Tober directly!**

**NEW! Grantham
Town Archives
EMAIL ADDRESS:**

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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
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Thank you for your support.

Membership and Annual Dues Form

Grantham Historical Society

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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 _____

VISIT US ON THE WEB...WWW.GRANTHAMHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

UPCOMING MEETINGS

THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2014

The 2014 GHS Annual Meeting will follow our historical format - potluck supper at 6:00PM, brief business meeting during dessert and coffee, followed by the program at 7:00 PM. It will be held at the Town Hall (lower level), is free and everyone - member or not - is welcome. We are very pleased to have Allen Koop return to present another of his NH Humanities Council programs. Several years ago, he packed the old town hall with his talk on the WW II prisoner of war camps in Stark, NH. This year he will speak on the history of the AMC White Mountains hut system. This time, there will be enough seating for all!

SATURDAY, JULY 12, 2014

We welcome the NH Old Graveyards Association back to Grantham for one of their regular meetings. We hosted them in 2009 when a hike to the Four Corners Cemetery took place, led by Renee Gustafson. On July 12, there will be a business meeting in the morning, held at GHS, which is open to the public. In the afternoon, we have planned two cemetery hikes. Renee and Craig McArt will lead a group to the Leavitt Hill cemetery while Ken Story and Dwight Wilder will take another group to the Hill Dale cemetery. Everyone is invited to join these activities as well.

Call or email us for more information if needed.

LITTLE MOUNT WASHINGTON HIKE, GRANTHAM

If you move to Grantham, NH it would not be long before you hear new acquaintances or natives describing the wonders of little Mt. Washington. If you ask its' location, you get rather scornful replies, such as "everyone knows where little Mt. Washington is!". Well, I didn't until I finally met someone who responded "Oh, up Miller pond road and up beyond Lily Pond up the hill." If you are like me, that was not a reasonable answer as I did not know where those two landmarks are but I am too polite to ask for further directions. I figured that at some point I would tag along with someone who knew the way and that would take care of directions

It wasn't until I read the Fall 2013 issue of Kearsarge Magazine that I found the answer! There, starting on page 38, was an article called Take a Hike, Fat Man by Kevin Davis, a resident of Grantham (blog: <http://takeahikefatman.wordpress.com> and photos: www.kevindavisphotos.com).

He has written articles on four hikes in the area, and one of them was the hike to Little Mount Washington. It does exist!

He mentions finding a 'secret, hidden spot in the woods' - i.e. little Mt. Washington - but once the story was published, would it remain so concealed? That is okay - only hikers used to moderate trails will try it.

Here are the directions:

Travel up Miller Pond Road from Route 10, until the road becomes a snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle or

Grantham, NH
3.65 miles/2.12 hours
Croydon Turnpike

Miller Road to End of Pavement
MT. Road to Plainfield Line
Meriden Road in Plainfield
Trail to Little Mount Washington
Grantham Town Forest Boundaries

Class 6 road. After climbing a steep hill, you will arrive at the crossroad of the old Meriden Road to the west and Croydon Turnpike to the south and north. This is Grantham Four Corners and represents the first settlement in what became our present Grantham. (There was an earlier settlement in the western part of Grantham in the 18th century, but that area later became part of Plainfield.) There is a warming hut by the crossroads built and maintained by the Blue Mountain Snow Dusters' club.



Croydon Turnpike from Four Corners Photo by Rae Tober.

According to Kevin, (I haven't attempted the hike yet) the trail turns north following the old Croydon Turnpike and is wide and relatively smooth and goes through the Grantham Town Forest. When you come to a rather large body of water on the left (Chase Pond, almost all of which is in Meriden/Plainfield), the trail angles to the right off the Croydon Turnpike at the top of the hill. At this point there should be "small hard-to-spot signs, pointing to a scenic overlook."

Continue on the trail through woods until you come "to a rocky outcropping that offers some magnificent views of the valley below".

One of these days, when the snows of winter disappear, I will see those "magnificent views" from that elusive ledge. Will you join me?

—Rae Tober

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GRANTHAM'S OWN NOTECARDS FOR SALE

Renee Gustafson's highly developed talent for nature photography and interest in local history have led her to create both individual and sets of notecards with colored and black/white photos of Grantham scenes. The first cards she offered to GHS for sale to support our activities were of native flowers, ponds and brooks (all in color) as well as historical scenes of Grantham from our photograph collections.



These were followed by a series on barns of Grantham. A few cards of Eastman Lake are left; Renee is willing to produce more if someone wants them. Before the 2013 holidays, she developed several types of Christmas cards with Grantham winter scenes, surrounded by holiday borders in red

or green. All cards are blank inside so that they can be used for many purposes. The price is \$5.00 for a set of eight cards or \$1.00 for a single card. We also have packets of eight cards with the sketch of our building still available.

Renee already has plans for this year's holiday cards. The Horton Farm Collection has many beautiful Victorian Christmas postcards that she hopes

to use for the front of the card. Watch for announcements about when they will be ready for sale.

Cards can be purchased at GHS on Friday after-

noons from 1-4 PM or you may call or email us an order and they will be sent to you.



Barns of Grantham



Loyal Barton calligraphy
Horton Farm Collection

ITEMS FROM A 1938 LEAVITT'S ALMANAC:

The world has a short memory for our virtues and a long memory for our faults.

SENIOR: If you want to make a hit, my son, you must strike out for yourself.

JUNIOR: You're mixed in your baseball talk, Dad; if you strike out, you can't make a hit.

RECIPE FOR SIX MONTHS CAKE

- 2 c. sugar
- 1 c. molasses
- 4 eggs
- 1 and 1/2 c. butter
- 1 pound raisins
- 1 c. milk
- 1 t. soda
- 1 t. allspice

Mix all ingredients together; form two loaves. (No oven temperature provided). Will keep a long time.

OUR THANKS GO TO:

- Craig McArt for giving our porch a new coat of paint (back before it snowed!)
- Dan Olmstead and his wife; our sponsor, Eastman; and all who attended our second Appraisal Day in the fall; this was a huge success and a very entertaining day
- Sandee Story and Enoch Holu for starting up our Facebook page
- New volunteers, Klaran and Andy Warner, who have been a great help in cataloging the Horton Farm collection

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2014

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

Pat Andrews
2 Hilltop Place
New London, NH 03257
603-526-2740
Patricia.Andrews@valley.net

SECRETARY

Christina McKahan
P.O. Box 536
cmckahan@truetooinnovations.com

TREASURER

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

DIRECTORS

Craig McArt
P.O. Box 1899
603-863-9525
CraigMcArt@gmail.com

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

Dwight Wilder
96 Silo Lane
Grantham, NH 03753
dswldr@comcast.net

TOWN ARCHIVIST

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

2014 CALENDAR

Thursday, May 22, 2014

2014 GHS ANNUAL MEETING

Town Hall (lower level)
Potluck supper at 6:00PM
Program at 7:00 PM
Non-members Welcome

Saturday, July 12, 2014

NH OLD GRAVEYARDS ASSOCIATION MEETING

See page 4 of this issue for details.



*Gray Ledges – winter
GHS Collection*

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P.O. Box 540
Grantham, NH 03753

