

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Winter 2017

NEWSLETTER



Ken Story

IN MEMORIAM: DWIGHT WILDER, A PERSONAL REMEMBRANCE

I don't remember exactly when I first met Dwight, but it might well have been about seven years ago, at a lovely dinner party held at the home of our mutual friends, Cathy and Bob Champagne. A delicious dinner was followed by coffee

and conversation, during which we laughed, told a few stories, and enjoyed each other's company. Meg, Dwight's sweet, generous wife, tolerated our overindulgence in this newfound friendship (as did my wife Sandee). Dwight and I quickly discovered our two mutual passions: the White Mountains and American History.

I found especially compelling Dwight's deep and abiding appreciation for the life and legacy of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. TR, as he was known to many, lived a varied and vivid life, full of loss, bravery, public service and leadership. TR demonstrated great intelligence and foresight during his presidency, effectively inventing the profession we have come to know as historic preservation. He valued the past, historic and prehistoric, and decided early on to make every effort not only to protect it, but also to guide his fellow Americans toward a greater consciousness of and appreciation for their history. He loved this country dearly, warts and all, and understood the greatness of which it was capable. He also understood how much remained to be done and worked tirelessly toward realizing that potential.

The fact that Dwight would admire such a man is no surprise. Like TR, Dwight brought both his pas-

sion and his talent to bear on those efforts where he thought he could make the greatest positive impact. Whether as an educator in the vocational school in Hartford, Vermont, or an education coordinator at the historic Fells estate in Newbury, New Hampshire, or as a living history presenter bringing to life Colonel Roosevelt himself, Dwight's heady combination of enthusiasm and knowledge emulated TR himself and drew inspiration from the president's wisdom and accomplishments.



Dwight Wilder as Teddy Roosevelt

Thankfully, Dwight brought that same inspiration to his work with the historical society. He was a dedicated board member, often filling in as needed when other members were absent. He was also an invaluable member of the committee assembling the history of Grantham, due to be published this year. His writing background and his knowledge of history aided and sustained our efforts throughout, often

providing important insights into the content and the process. His robust sense of humor also came in handy on many occasions.

I considered Dwight a friend but I could have known him better. I thought I understood him fairly well but I'm not sure that's true. I'm not sure it's ever true of anyone who gives so unselfishly, who learns so thoroughly, who loves so truly. He was a good man and a great man. I will miss him in many ways, and more deeply than I was prepared for. Thank you, Dwight – thank you for that giant, grand heart you shared with us all. Vaya con dios.

—Ken Story

LOOKING FOR GRANDPARENTS

I first visited the Grantham Historical Society (GHS) in search of my fourth great grandparents Jonas and Apphia Hastings. I was promptly seated at a table and handed a large file of Hastings material by GHS director and archivist Rae Tober. As a genealogist, I had hit the jackpot. Marjerie Hastings, who grew up in Grantham in the 1930s and 40s, had done extensive research on the Hastings family and had left copies of that research with the GHS. The folder Rae handed me represented years of Marjerie's work. It included photos, anecdotes, oral interviews, and a family tree. What a find! Grateful and inspired, I contacted her, and we made plans to meet in June.

My brother Duncan and I joined Marjerie at the Farmer's Table Restaurant in Grantham in June of 2016, a month after visiting the Grantham Historical Society. What a pleasure it was to visit with her! Her stories of growing up in Grantham during the Great Depression and World War II reminded me of the stories my parents told about growing up in that time themselves, and I not only felt a reconnection to them but also a sense of kinship with Marjerie.

Not long after our visit with Marjerie, Duncan and I went to the old graveyard in Grantham where our fourth

great grandparents Jonas and Apphia are buried. The beautifully crafted marble obelisk erected in their memory in 1863 had fallen over years ago and lay on the ground in pieces. Deciding we wanted to restore it, we contacted the town, talked again with Rae (not only as a representative of the Historical Society but also as a member of the New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association), and talked also with Marjerie as a representative of the Hastings family in town.

After getting everyone's approval, we set to work. On a warm day in October, we used pipes and planks to roll the heavy pieces of marble off the grave. We excavated enough soil to add crushed stone and provide drainage for the base. When we ran out of crushed stone, we called Jeff Hastings, another cousin, and he gave us more. Then, using the tripod Duncan had built, we hoisted the separate pieces of the obelisk, placed them on top of each other, glued them with a special epoxy, and restored the monument to its original state. In the end we restored a number of other gravestones as well.

It was satisfying to find the final resting place of my fourth great grandparents, and I continue my

genealogical research in hopes of making other such discoveries. It's great fun to decipher clues like Sherlock Holmes and track down ancestors. Who knows? One of them could be the King of Scotland (better than

discovering a horse thief in the family tree!). But for me the real value of genealogy is what it means as a metaphor. A family tree is a diagram, not of separate individuals, but of individuals linked to each other in a group, individuals defined by their relationships to each other, individuals who have a place in an ongoing story greater than themselves.

This, of course, is another way of talking about history. One of the most wonderful and entirely unexpected consequences of my search for deceased ancestors has been a clearer understanding of how history can be, not just about the past, but about the present and how we can use history to create community in the here and now. Without an active interest in history, I wouldn't have met Rae and the rest of the volunteers at the Grantham Historical Society. I wouldn't have met Marjerie



Duncan Hastings and cemetery tripod



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HOWE PRINTING PRESS - A BUSINESS FROM THE PAST

Twice a day when school is in session, students of Grantham Village School pass by a HISTORICAL SITE.

On LEARNING DRIVE, between the road and the original Howe house on the right, stood a cooper shop (in a time before the Civil War) owned by Francis Howe. The shop made wooden butter tubs, and casks. Francis was called into the war between the North and South, and died in a southern hospital as the war drew to a close.

In 1895, Francis's son, James Madison Howe, converted the cooper shop into a commercial printing shop. The first printing jobs were run off on a hand press, each piece of type being hand set. "For over 30 years, Mr. Howe, with the help of his wife, Alice, and daughters, Bernice and Myrtle, operated the small business serving many businesses in

neighboring towns and counties. Tax bills, letter heads, resort brochures, calling cards, Grange bulletins, town reports, and club booklets and year-books, rolled in an orderly fashion from the press."

Over the years, a small foot power press replaced the hand press, then

a large Golding press was purchased. Steam power, a gasoline motor, and a Delco farm system supplied power to the press until electricity came to the town in the late 1930s. However, the method of type-setting did not change; each letter, number, punctuation mark, and space divider was carefully placed by hand and then locked into a form for printing.



Howe cooper shop-Civil War

In the early 1920s J. Madison Howe became ill, and his oldest daughter, Miss Bernice M. Howe, gave up her elementary teaching career, to carry on the printing business". Both J.

Madison Howe and Bernice Howe were outstanding members of the town of Grantham. They both were librarians, a post that Bernice held for 42 years. She was on the Grantham School Board and held the position of school treasurer for 34 years retiring, in 1975. Bernice also



603 Cooper Shop 1860, Howe Press 1967

was a member of the Blue Mountain Grange, the Methodist Church of Grantham and local correspondent for the Argus-Champion and the Manchester Union. She was 90 years old upon death and lived the entire time as a Grantham resident.

—Howe Press by Ella Reney

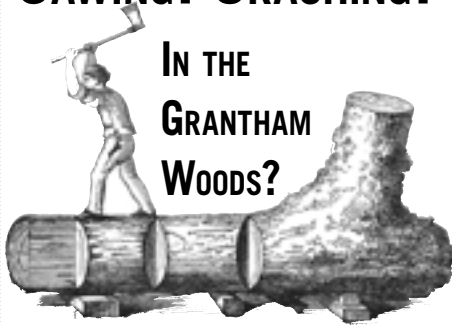
"I remember, in the days when automobiles were fewer, super highways unknown, and the dime store was a once-a-year treat...usually at Christmas time, stopping after school at the Howe Press. The western sun streamed through the front windows and the good smell of printing ink and paper permeated the room.

There Miss Howe gave us the trimming from her different jobs. Trimmings which the village children fashioned into note pads, Valentines, place mats, and sundries.

In the early hours of Thursday morning, February 8, 1968, fire slid its destructive fingers along the well-worn floorboards of the little printing shop, up the stocks of paper waiting for printed words, and out among the tinder-dry roof boards. In a few hours, despite heroic efforts of Grantham and Newport firemen, the industry of three generations was gone. Only the charred shell of the shop remained, the heat-twisted pulleys and press, ice-coated among the ashes."

Quotes from 1967 & 1976 Bicentennial Committees book compiled & edited by Amah R. Howard.

YELLING, CHOPPING, SAWING! CRASHING!



Argus Spectator Newspaper:

1896—Grantham turns out more lumber per capita than any other towns in the county.

Albert Collins manufactured two million wooden shingles.

1900—North Grantham, Mrs. Hastings and Emerson sawed up spruce for \$4000.

Burpee Mill used 25 loads of wood a day.

Isaac Reney finished a job of getting out 400,000 lumbers. He received, for 5 men and horse teams, \$1300.

1902—Reed and Buswell are about to proceed with the lumbering on Grantham Mt. (Corbin Park).

1908—Lumbermen are getting anxious for snow as present conditions are bad for business.

No Date—Moses Burpee is buying and hauling hemlock bark—used in tanning. Samuel Currier produced approximately 1,600,000 wooden clothespins annually. His shop was located on what is now RT 114.



GRANDPARENTS *Continued from page 2*

or Jeff Hastings, or gone on to some very enjoyable meetings with other Hastings in Maine later in the summer. I wouldn't have spent as much time with my brother, and I wouldn't have helped preserve a small bit of history in a 19th century



Alec Hastings digging out rock.

Grantham burial ground. I'm glad I had these experiences. I treasure them.

If you are reading this article, you must have some interest in local history yourself. Perhaps you are someone who notices a knoll overlooking a pond and wonders if it is a Native American campsite. Maybe you are a person who finds a woods road that

is no longer used and wonders who did use it and when. Perhaps you look at old cellar holes, stone walls, or burial grounds with reverence and become curious about their builders. Be careful. You can't know where this will lead. Maybe you

will find yourself at the Grantham Historical Society digging through the archives. If you do, I wish you good luck with your research, but don't bury your head in a book the whole time you're there. Talk to Rae and the rest of the GHS volunteers. People are the greatest resource!

—Alec Hastings, teacher, writer, and Hastings descendant.

THE WIT & WISDOM OF OUR "ELDERS"

At a town meeting a number of years ago, a question came up regarding the amount of money that had been spent on road maintenance. It was a higher amount than usual. Our Road Agent at the time was Alfred Holmes and he was asked to explain.

From the very back of the room where he was sitting, he proceeded to slowly saunter up to the microphone in front of the room. He leaned down and slowly announced "it snowed."

He moseyed back to his seat amid a great deal of laughter. No further questions were asked.

Ella Reney was a cemetery trustee in town. At a public meeting, someone asked about how the amount of money spent to maintain the plots. They questioned if enough was being spent for upkeep.

Ella's answer was, "Well, the residents there don't require much."

—by Kathi Osgood

NEWS FROM THE GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TID BITS OF HISTORY GRANTHAM NEW HAMPSHIRE

NEIGHBORS HOME—COW



In 1912 a Mr. Arthur Reney, lost his cow on Saturday. He found her on Monday in the pantry of a neighbor's home, where she apparently wandered in and managed to close the door as she turned around (Apparently the neighbors ate out over during the weekend.)

HOME/ RACCOON

In 1987 Stocker Pond residents were surprised when a raccoon ripped open a screen door and entered their home. The masked bandit proved partial to the homeowners' Chinese condiments and had to be encouraged to vacate the premises.



DOG/WELL

Isaac, a massive Newfoundland escaped unscathed from an abandoned well. His barks brought neighbors to the rescue.

I-89

In the 1960s Interstate 89 extended through Grantham, making it more accessible.

'JOEY' TOWN CLERK—LIBRARIAN

B. Joey Holmes was Town Clerk in Grantham for 22 years. She now dedicates much of her time to the Dunbar Free Library. The Library was given to the town in the early 1900s by Lorenzo Dunbar, a great uncle of Joey's.

STORE—RUM BROOK

In 1983 a new grocery store was opened in Grantham. Built by Will Hastings and his son, Stephen Hastings, it was named "The Store." It is now called Rum Brook Store and is owned by Mike and Mia Clavin—great supporters of Grantham activities.

CHARTERS/GRANTHAM

Originally in Chesire County, Grantham was the second town chartered in Sullivan County on July 5th 1827. The original township was six miles square but due to Grantham Mountain dividing it, the western section of town was annexed to Plainfield, Cornish and Croydon, making it two-thirds its original size. The village east of Grantham Mountain was settled after 1767 with the population rising to 1,036 in 1830.



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 _____

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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

Facebook: Grantham Historical Society

2017 CALENDAR

Save the Date! Thursday
May 11, 2017

*Help us observe the 250th
Celebration of the
Town of Grantham.*

**Attend the
Grantham Historical Society's
ANNUAL MEETING
to be held on**

**Thursday, May 11, 2017 in the
Town Hall (lower Level).**

**Potluck supper at 6:00
Program 7:00PM.**

The public is welcome.

**Rebecca Rule will deliver her
presentation on
“Moved and Seconded:
TOWN MEETING IN
NEW HAMPSHIRE.**

Rebecca Rule has regaled audiences with stories of the ritual, traditions, and history of town meetings, including the perennial characters, the literature, the humor and the wisdom of this uniquely New England institution. For two years she hosted “The New Hampshire Authors Series” on NHPTV. She currently hosts “Our Hometown” also on NHPTV.

