

# Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Winter 2011

## NEWSLETTER

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



*Ken Story*

Part of the fun of pulling together the history of our town is uncovering a past that has disappeared, whether it be a building, a road, or even an entire neighborhood. The historical society has already focused a certain amount of attention on Draperville, the former mill town that stood at the northwest corner of Eastman Pond. However, it is just one of several communities within the town boundaries that has vanished over time. The area that used to be known as Stockertown is another.

If you drive east on Route 114 toward Springfield, you can't help but notice the large, bouldered foundations that stand immediately to the north of the road along Stocker Brook. Not long after, you cross the old Burpee Hill Road/Stoney Brook Road as you approach the Cote & Reney lumberyards. The two or three historic homes around this intersection might tip you off that this used to be the heart of a separate area; then again, you probably pass right through it without a thought. But this was a neighborhood indeed and in fact stood quite apart from Grantham proper for some time, as it was a relatively self-contained community for a number of years.

Originally part of the town of Springfield (a section known as the 'Gore,' a reference to the triangular-shaped tract of land that was located between the boundaries of Grantham and Springfield and which Springfield claimed until part of that tract was given to the town of Grantham by an act of the state legislature in 1858), Stockertown got its name from William Stocker, an early 19th century settler who lived near the brook and who operated a small factory for making wagon wheel hubs. He also lent his name to the pond and the brook that runs west from it.

The area grew through the nineteenth century, and by the Civil War could claim Samuel Currier's clothespin factory (the precursor to the Collins shingle mill and the first incarnation of the Reney lumber mill), a Christian

*Continued on page 2*

### NEWS OF ALLEN WALKER



*Allen and his family*

Allen has spent much of the winter in the Assisted Living unit at Brookside Nursing Home in White River Junction. (Mailing address: Brookside Nursing Home, 1200 Christian St., WRJ, VT 05001. Tel: 802-295-7511). As of the last week in January, he expected to return home in early February and will have a home care assistant there during the day. (Mailing address: P.O. Box 936, Grantham, NH 03753). We suspect that he welcomes notes and cards. These photos were taken at the testimonial the Historical Society sponsored for the town on September 19, 2010.



*Senator Matthew Houde (District 5) presents Allen with a citation.*

*Photos by Renee Gustafson*

## HISTORY OF GRANTHAM UPDATE

The work proceeds on the town history. Among the recent developments is the setting of the bi-weekly meeting schedule for all who are currently involved in the project and any who would like to be. These meetings will be dedicated to work on the book and will be opportunities to discuss issues, ask questions and conduct research. All meetings will occur on Saturday mornings, 9:00-11:00am, at the old Grantham Village school building (which some remember as the old town hall) on Dunbar Hill Road.

The schedule for the spring and summer is as follows:

- March 5, 19
- April 2, 16, 30
- May 14, 28
- June 11, 25
- July 9, 23
- August 6, 20

It should be noted that this is a preliminary schedule, meaning that should the work require us to meet more often, a new schedule will be issued once that decision is made. Also, people for whom the Saturday morning times do not work are free to contact Ken Story at [kbyrdstory@comcast.net](mailto:kbyrdstory@comcast.net) (cell: 603-359-4405) to set an appointment for another time. As many of you know, I live just down the hill in the village center and can easily meet in the evenings or at other times during the weekend.

Our goal is to get as many of the townspeople involved as possible, whether it be through a donation of their time, or historical materials relating to the town, or their energy in completing the myriad tasks that go into such a project. Of course, just becoming a member of the society also greatly supports our work – so if you're not already a member, please check the membership information elsewhere in this newsletter and join us!

## Sugar Mapling in Grantham



Photos from the GHS Collection

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

*Continued from page 1*

Baptist Church, a barber shop, a cooper's shop, Orlando Corliss's store and Horace Green's cider mill. The town map of 1892 indicates the location of the church at the eastern corner of the intersection of Rt. 114 and Stoney Brook Road, directly in front of the modern-day lumber yard, and the presence of a fairground, located near the modern I-89 overpass. Apparently the fairground was abandoned by the 1930s, as Ella Reney remembered July 4th celebrations occurring in Barton's Field, located to the east of Stocker Pond, where one could get a ride in a two-seater plane for \$1.00. School #10, a single-storey, gable roof, wood-frame building also stood on part of what is now the Hilldale Cemetery.

With a store, a cooperage, a mill, a church, and a school, Stockertown offered all the basic industrial, mercantile, social, educational and religious institutions needed for a 19th century town center. There is even

a story that the first automobile ever assembled in Grantham was built in Stockertown. However, by 1885 the population loss that struck so many small towns in northern New England had begun to take its toll; the closest school to Stockertown was located atop Howe Hill, to which the students were required to walk almost a mile each way.

The Hilldale Cemetery on Stoney Brook Road is one of the last vestiges of Stockertown. Early residents William Stocker, Samuel Currier, Orlando Corliss and Horace Green are all buried there. Containing a number of elaborate grave markers and well over two-hundred burials, the cemetery bears mute witness to the size of the settlement that formerly surrounded it. As we proceed with the research on Grantham's history, we will no doubt turn up more information on the extent and character of Grantham's other 'centers.'

—Ken Story

# GRANTHAM DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION 1929 TO WORLD WAR II

*As we continue to document various aspects of Grantham history for a History of Grantham, the article below is chosen as our next example of what the contents may include. Bob Champagne, author of this article, based its content on a recent interview with Allen Walker. Do you have memories of the depression in Grantham to add to this? If so, either call us and leave a message at 863-9701 or email us at granthamhistory@gmail.com. We will make arrangements to gather your information.*

The Great Depression began on October 29, 1929 (Black Friday) with the crash of the stock market; its impact was felt almost immediately throughout the country. Hard hit by this economic crisis was the Northeast and the farming communities of the Midwest.

Grantham's population, which was 495 in 1920, had already been adversely affected by the 1924 closing of the Draper Corporation mill. In 1930, only 302 people lived here. When the Great Depression reached New Hampshire, Grantham was already a struggling community.

Farming in Grantham never recovered from the exodus that started in the nineteenth century. Sheep farming was history. In the 1930s, some of the small farms on Grantham Mountain and elsewhere in town were simply abandoned. There was no market for what little they produced.

The Roney Lumber Company was able to survive by milling special wooden planks used for piers in many eastern seaboard cities.

The Great Depression was not accompanied by food stamp programs, mass federal welfare handouts or what we call today Stimulus programs.

A national movement was started by Dr. Francis Townsend of Illinois, calling for the federal government

to pay any person over age 60 a sum of \$200 a month. It was felt that this would prime the economy. Even Grantham formed a Townsend Club that met in the Methodist Church/Town Hall, urging the government to implement such a plan. The Townsend Plans, however, lost momentum when the New Deal Social Security Plan was enacted in 1937 although this only paid out about \$20 monthly to eligible elderly retirees.

There were food banks and pantries run by private groups in Newport and the destitute could obtain some relief there.

But what saved Grantham from absolute poverty was its own resourcefulness and Yankee ingenuity. Everyone, independently, conceived of ways to help themselves and their families survive through this difficult period.

Chickens were raised all over town. Cows appeared, one or two, in small pastures. Those with larger pastures let their neighbor's cow share the pasture. Vegetable gardens abounded. Maple syrup taps were visible all over. One man became a weekend barber. Another bred dogs. Boys collected scrap metal that was sold to salvagers. Alder trees that were still widely sought were harvested. Christmas trees were cut and sold to out-of-state middlemen

*Continued on page 4*

## 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 (\$10.)

Family (\$25.)

Patron/business/institution (\$50.)

Extra contribution \_\_\_\_\_

Total check amount \_\_\_\_\_

# GRANTHAM DIARIES

Have you ever wondered what life was like for the early settlers of Grantham? Their cellar holes always make me think about daily life for the first families who settled here. Was there ever free time? What kind of social life existed?

While we do not have written documents from the 18th century that answer these questions, the Historical Society is fortunate to have several collections of diaries from later eras. Recently we received an anonymous donation of a collection of diaries written by Edith and Loren Miller, covering the years 1896 to 1942. Loren Miller (1867 - 1935) was married to Edith Hastings (1868 -1947) on September 28, 1895 and they lived in North Grantham. Their property is now owned by the Earle family.



Miller Diary

Photo by Renee Gustafson

The diaries are small – about 3 by 5 inches - and are called “Standard Diary No 31”. Each day provides a space for the weather which would most likely set the agenda for the Millers’ activities that day. It is fun to come across familiar names and places recognized by us 21st century readers. The pages are full of engaging entries:

- Monday, January 17, 1910 “Papa and I have been to the Hollow this afternoon” (Grantham town center was called the “Hollow.”);
- Tuesday, March 15, 1910 “ found the first little lamb this morning”;

## GREAT DEPRESSION

*Continued from page 3*

for 10 cents a tree. Small game hunting now became a necessity. People produced anything that could be consumed, sold or bartered.

Fortunately prices were low. A quart of ice cream during the Depression, sold in a red/white/blue package, cost 15 cents in Newport.

The Great Depression eased over time. New Deal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps helped but only the looming threat of America’s entry into World War II brought an end to this dismal decade.

—Bob Champagne

- “been to Butternut Pond got 12 perch”;
- “fishing on Eastman Pond - got nothing”

Some entries mention places like the Smith mill, the bobbin mill, activities such as going to Lebanon for a Mason’s Meeting and events like the stage changing its runners to wheels for the summer season. There was lots of visiting back and forth and the men would often work together to cut wood or haul ice. Medical care was very local: “C. S. had an operation for appendicitis at her home this afternoon.”

Opening and reading the diaries transports you to a another time and place...

And then you close the diary and return to your everyday life and perhaps you, too, can say as Edith does, “Not anything going on only the chores.”

—Renee Gustafson



Earle's Barn

Photo by Renee Gustafson

## APPRAISAL DAY

We wish to thank all the volunteers who made our first annual Antique Appraisal Day in December such a success. Our appraisers, John Holden and Steve Young, really knew their stuff and gave some people great news about their items. The soup makers, Nate Carey, Dean Jarvis, Ebba McArt, & Kay Smith, along with the dessert providers, Renee Gustafson, Jaime Hastings, Loreen Osgood, & Rae Tober kept our tummies happy.



What's it worth?

All the volunteers, Dick & Noreen DeNatale, Dick Hocker, Connie Howard, Craig McArt, Paul Osgood, Merle & Helen Schotanus, Ken Story, and Cindy Towle did a super job. This was a great fundraiser and we really appreciate all your help!

—Kathi Osgood



Our version of Antiques Roadshow

Photos by Renee Gustafson

## NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### AMERICAN PICKERS

Our own Warren Kimball is featured in an episode of the reality show about two men scouring the countryside (mainly the Midwest) for valuable objects from people who "collect". The Grantham episode features Mike riding Warren's 19th century high-wheeler bicycle around the yard. A copy of the DVD has been donated to GHS. If you have not seen this "in our own backyard" event, please visit the Historical Society on a Friday afternoon to view it.

### Thank you to:

- (belatedly) **the Garden Club** who planted and maintained our beautiful window boxes all summer and fall;
- **Barbara Rodgers** for her years of support and involvement in GHS; (she and her husband John have moved to Blue Bell, PA);
- **Rae Tober** for joining the Collections Committee
- **the Town** for repaving the parking lot after our new porch was built;
- all the **attendees** who made our Appraisal Day on December 11 a great success.

## DO YOU KNOW THIS CHILD?

The Historical Society is looking for any information about the tombstone in the photograph accompanying this story. The epitaph reads:

Olive O.  
dau of  
Lorenzo &  
Sarah Dow  
died Feb  
14 1840  
aged 2 yr  
11 month

It came to us from the storage space of the old police station in the basement of our building. Research to date does not reveal a child by this name of this age in Grantham in 1840. Perhaps the tombstone belongs in another town. If you have any ideas about who the child is or where the stone might belong, please get in touch with us.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2011

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Allen Walker

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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](mailto:granthamhistory@gmail.com)

Website: [www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org)

## 2011 CALENDAR

*Check our website and posters around town for more details.*

**May 14, 2011**

GHS ANNUAL MEETING.  
Speaker: Allen Koop, NHHC  
lecturer on the German prisoner  
of war camp in Stark, NH.

**December, 2011**

2ND ANNUAL APPRAISAL DAY  
Watch for date.

## WHAT'S NEW ON THE GHS WEBSITE

Three slideshows produced by Craig McArt for GHS are available for viewing on the website. These include the 1953 Grantham Mountain fire, Draperville, and Allen Walker's life in photographs from the September 19th testimonial. Previous issues of this Newsletter are also available on the website.

Our thanks go to Laurajean Whitcomb of Howling-Beagle Communications for continued maintenance of our website.

