

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Summer 2011

NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: PICTURE THIS!



Ken Story

As the research, writing and production proceeds on the History of Grantham, many hands make light work. The Executive Committee continues to devote its talents and interests toward the assembly of this considerable endeavor, including extensive

research extending statewide. They are

joined by a number of devoted members, all of whom volunteer significant time and effort toward digging through extensive published and archival sources to find the real story of our town, or commencing the writing that will make it all plain. And yet, as hard as they work, their accomplishments are of necessity incomplete. And that's because we need you.

Take a look at the photograph that accompanies this article. On the left is Glenn Hudson, on the right is Clifford Sherman, and in the center is Allen Walker, better known as Sam, the father of our founder and president emeritus, Allen Walker. Although the photo is undated, it probably dates c. 1920. Many of us who grew up here in Grantham remember both Glenn Hudson and Sam Walker, as both were active members of the community and men who had more than a few stories to tell. However, Clifford Sherman remains a mystery, at least to some of us. The Sherman name is not at all unknown here in town, and surely some residents recognize him, but for many of us, he remains a stranger. To whom was he related? What was his profession? How did he know the other two men? Did they grow up together? All of these questions are important, or might be, but we'll never know until we answer them.

The townspeople of Grantham have been remarkably generous in terms of gifts to the Grantham Historical

Society, whether we're talking about historic artifacts, important town papers, or just great stories of people who used to live here and who contributed to our town in countless ways. We've made every effort to record and catalog these donations, treating them with the appreciation and gratitude they deserve. But the next version of

our town's history is a task to which we're committed in a very thorough way, and if there's a chance that there's more out there to know, we'd feel remiss if we didn't ask.

July will be a busy month indeed for the historical society. Old Home Day on July 4th and the celebration of the work of our town's retiring archivist, Lea Frey, on July 9th kick off the month in style. But perhaps our most exciting event will be our 'picture party,' to be held in the basement of the new Town Hall on Saturday, July 16th, from 1:00-4:00pm. We're inviting anyone with historic pictures of Grantham to bring them that afternoon. We'll have two scanners set up to make copies of any and all photos, and we'll also have volunteers who will take down information about the photos themselves so that we'll gain as much knowledge from them as we can. And the best part is, once we're

done scanning, you take your pictures home with you, so they never leave your possession.

Summer is a precious thing here in northern New England – and so are the memories of those with a connection to Grantham. Please take a few minutes to come join us on July 16th and bring your treasured historic photos with you. We can promise you an afternoon of fun, and reminiscence, and deeply felt gratitude from all of us who want to give Grantham's history its most complete consideration.

—Ken Story



Photo courtesy of Nate Carey

GRANTHAM'S FIRST TOWN ARCHIVIST RETIRES

In the early 1990's, Lea Frey began volunteering for the town of Grantham when several small trunks containing Selectmen's papers from the 1800's were found. (The trunks are now in the collection of the Grantham Historical Society.) With Francis Rutter, Allen Walker and Jack English, she guided the work of organizing and cataloguing these papers which became the nucleus of the Town Archives. Limited space in the Town Offices, then in the old #7 Village School, was provided for working and minimal storage. After a time, what is now known as the "closet", to the left of the main door, became an area which provided for secure storage of records. Lea noted that as townspeople became familiar with her work, they began donating papers, photographs and objects which tell the story of Grantham's history.

The Grantham Historical Society was founded in 1993 and Lea was an important supporter of its activities and growth. In 1995, she was asked to become the Town Archivist and because she found the work that she was doing so rewarding, she accepted the position. Town funds to support purchase of archival materials for her use were first approved in 1995. Lea and her husband Conrad donated computers and shelving which were needed to maintain the growing collections. In addition, she sought out training in archives management on her own. Lea's first report to the town was part of the 1995 Town Report. She urged residents to offer up historic materials so that the history of Grantham could be better understood.

Lea has always felt that family information, reflected in the town's vital statistics and censuses, should be a resource for both residents and non-residents looking for information about family members. An early effort was to develop a database of Grantham names which, by 1996, had grown to 10,000 entries. She has always been very generous in helping visitors to the Archives as well as those who contact her by letter, phone or email to find genealogical information. Donations from individuals who have appreciated her help have been used to support the Archives.

A visible measure of Lea's work over the past twenty years is found in the Town Archives building at 34 Dunbar Hill Road. Metal shelves holding box after box of files and papers relating to every aspect of town history are found in the Archives Room and can be used by anyone seeking information. It is impressive to see them neatly labeled and organized; the left-hand shelves contain town government records and the right, materials which document Grantham organizations and events. The second measure is found in the vault where, in addi-

tion to shelves of boxes containing catalogued photographs, early town records are resplendent in their red leather bindings with gilded titles.

These records, from the 19th and early 20th centuries, were in fragile shape which limited their use. Lea, with the assistance of Rita Eigenbrode, Town Clerk, and Kristina Burgard, developed a grant application for the so-called Moose Grant monies

which are used for the benefit of New Hampshire's natural, historical and cultural heritage. These funds come from the sale of special license plates. Grantham was awarded \$10,000 to be used to stabilize and bind the old books and ledgers as well as microfilming their contents. This was successfully completed in 2006 and microfilms were deposited in the NH State Library.

As a testament to Lea's great investment in the history of Grantham, in 2000, she was named a NH Municipal Association Volunteer of the Year. This award recognizes New Hampshire residents who are models of "hard work and serious commitment" that "town and city governments need to continue functioning" (*Argus Champion* 11/27/05). It goes without saying that unless Lea had taken on the enormous task of organizing and overseeing the Archives, Grantham would be all the poorer in its lack of accessible documentation



Some of the town records restored with the Moose Grant.

Photo by Rae Tober



Lea Frey Award

Photo by Rae Tober

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THE MEMORIAL GARDEN...

Things are moving rather slowly with the garden. Everything takes time: getting the GHS board members to settle on one idea, getting Becky Newton and the Select people to give an okay which they always do except for the time I asked Tina Sterns if I could shut down Dunbar Hill Road while I dropped a tree. Imagine: she said, "No"! However, now with the help of Warren Legacy, we are moving ahead. He has removed the sandy, rocky soil and replaced it with topsoil mixed with some magic ingredients and we are hoping that by next spring to have the makings of a long strip of wildflowers in among the crabapple trees. Our plans are to add a curved rock wall to soften the straight line of the seeded area. We are open to any suggestions that will make the garden a special place: perhaps a chair to sit in and remember the people who have given so much to the Historical Society or perhaps a bird feeder? Please give us your thoughts.

By the time you read this, our plaque naming the Garden and memorial signs for each tree should be displayed. It is very important to remember people who have given their time and talents to make the Grantham Historical Society special. Isn't "remembering" what historical societies are all about? Now we have a special place in which to do that.



Photo by Renee Gustafson

—Renee Gustafson *Work continues on the garden.*

GHS HELPS EASTMAN CELEBRATE

As part of the 40th anniversary celebration of Eastman's founding, an exhibition exploring the history and development of the community was mounted in the lobby of the South Cove Activities Center. It featured 64 photographs and several artifacts from the Grantham Historical Society's collection in four displays: Draperville, A First Look, The Planning, and The Early Years. The exhibit was to remain through July 16, the publication date for a Valley News commemorative edition celebrating 40 years of the Eastman Community.

—Craig McArt

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 _____

TEDDY ROOSEVELT TO VISIT GRANTHAM!

New Hampshire History Day, October 20, 2011, was declared by Governor John Lynch earlier this year. To celebrate this event, the Historical Society will welcome President Theodore Roosevelt who will speak about some of the many interests that filled his life above and beyond politics. Please join us at the Town Hall, 300 Rt. 10 South, at 7:00 PM to hear about historical changes that came about due to his efforts in such wide-ranging areas as "literature, ornithology, ancient history, government and even technology." We don't know whether he will mention the time he visited Corbin Park but we hope so!

BAD CRIME IN GRANTHAM—

APRIL 17, 1902 *Argus Champion*

One of the most heinous crimes that ever took place in this section of New Hampshire was perpetrated in Grantham last Sunday morning when one Charles Brooks entered the dwelling of Mrs. Betsy A. Sargent, a most estimable lady of about 75 years of age, and made an assault on her.

He entered by way of the shed at about four o'clock and nearly as soon as Mrs. Sargent, who was in bed, knew of his presence, she was in the grasp of a powerful assailant. He left the house by the side door instead of going out as he entered, and the terror-stricken old lady hoped she was rid of her terrible visitor. In a few moments, however, he reappeared and asked for his hat, which had been left behind. Almost in a state of unconsciousness from fright, Mrs. Sargent told him she would get it. She lit a light and searched for it but was unable to discover it and so informed him. Brooks then went into the house and searched for the hat himself by the aid of the light, but was not successful. He then left the house and as soon as Mrs. Sargent dared to venture into the yard, she proceeded to the house of Daniel Ide, a neighbor, and informed the family of what had occurred.

Mr. Ide informed several persons and steps were at once taken to discover the criminal. The lost hat was finally discovered under the bed, and was identified as one that had been given to Brooks a short time before. Mr. Ide then drove to the village and had papers made out for his arrest.



WHAT IS IT?

This item was a recent donation to the Historical Society along with some other tools. It has two wooden handles, 7 ½ inches long, which are connected by a metal strip. Laid over the strip is a piece of leather that works like a watchband, allowing the distance between the handles to be shortened or lengthened. Total length is 9 ½ inches. Please submit your ideas to granthamhistory@gmail.com.

BAD STORM IN GRANTHAM—1949

Argus Champion

The worst electrical storm of the season came low over the village Sunday evening about 7 o'clock. A streak of lightning entered the house of Allen Walker, evidently by way of the water pipe, and crossing the kitchen went into the next room where it set fire to the curtains and pillows on the couch. It was fortunate that the family had returned the day before from a two weeks' absence. At Ralph Barton's, it entered the kitchen, went down Mrs. Barton's arm and side, removing her shoe. She was stunned for a time but not injured.

ARCHIVIST RETIRES *Continued from page 2*

of the town's history.

In 2005, the town offices moved to the new building and allowed the Old Village School to serve as space for the Archives and the Historical Society. Lea took on the next challenge of sorting, organizing and cataloguing many Town papers and maps which now easily filled the expanded storage space.

As the Historical Society takes on the writing of A His-

tory of Grantham, Lea's work over the past twenty years will be recognized every time we search for specific information about a topic in a file, we remove a box from a shelf to see what papers have been collected, we need to verify a family relationship, or we use a map to locate a Grantham site. Her efforts will provide the foundation of what we write and for that, the Historical Society and the town will be ever grateful.

—Pat Andrews

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEW REGIONAL BROCHURE

Our Society was one of fourteen regional historical societies that joined together to develop a brochure about our activities, points of interest in each town and open hours and contact information. One was done last year but described only summer of 2010 activities and could not be used again. This second issue has a calendar for 2011-2012 meetings, programs and other activities. A center map of the fourteen towns notes spots where town historical buildings or other sites will be found. In addition, each historical society has a space for a photo, contact information and descriptions of historic sites. The new brochure has been mailed to all GHS members, has been distributed around town and can be obtained from GHS by calling or emailing us.



Photo by Renee Gustafson

Identifying Grantham locations: Craig McArt, Allen Walker, Rae Tober

2010-2011 ANNUAL MEETING

A large crowd tested the seating capacity of the old Town Hall (Methodist Church) for a presentation of "Stark Decency", the story of a German POW camp of WWII in Stark, NH. Dr Allen Koop, professor of history at Dartmouth College, illustrated his talk with historical photographs of the camp as well as prisoners and townspeople. He focused on the positive relationships that developed between the Germans and their Yankee "hosts" during the camp's existence. He was instrumental in organizing reunions in Stark in recent years attended by both ex-prisoners and Stark citizens. He has written a book about his research, also called "Stark Decency".

At the business meeting, Kathi Osgood was re-elected for a two-year stint as treasurer. The Executive Committee of GHS is extremely grateful to Kathi for dealing with all the financial complexities that have arisen regarding reporting of our financial status to state and federal agencies. Rae Tober, now a regular Friday afternoon worker at GHS, was elected to three years as a Director, taking Renee Gustafson's place. We recognized Renee's many contributions during her time on the Board with thanks and a rose bush for her new home.

A change in dues for individuals was passed. Individuals will now pay \$15.00 per year; the other categories remain the same.

VETERANS PROJECT

GHS is developing a database of names of people who have served in the military, starting with the Revolution and ending with the Middle East conflicts that are on-going. So far, 27 sources of information have been used. There are many differences in these lists with some known omissions, lack of agreement from one list to the next and confusion caused by different spelling of names. We welcome your input for our lists. There are two categories: veterans who were either born in Grantham or lived here when they enlisted or were drafted and others who lived in Grantham at some point during their lives. We appreciate having full name, rank, branch of service and dates served. Please call the historical society, drop in on Friday afternoon or email us the information.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF GRANTHAM BUSINESSES

Rae Tober and Pat Andrews are making a catalog of all the current businesses in Grantham, both commercial and home with color photos. This will document which businesses provided services at one point in time in the town. If you would prefer not to have a photo taken, please let us know. The catalog will be maintained in the Historical Society's computer files.

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2011

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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

2011 CALENDAR

Check our website and posters around town for more details.

Sat., July 2, 2011

Old Home Day
Visit the GHS table!

Sat., July 16, 2011

Bring your old photos to be scanned and returned to you
Town Hall • 1 to 4 PM
Refreshments served
Watch for notices.

Sat., August 6, 2011

Walking Tour of Town Forest
led by Renee Gustafson.
Meet at GHS parking lot at
9 AM; bring lunch.

Thurs., October 20, 2011

A Visit from Teddy Roosevelt
Town Hall • 7 PM

Sat., December 17, 2011

2ND ANNUAL APPRAISAL DAY
Town Hall • 10 AM to 2 PM

