

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Fall 2011

NEWSLETTER

TO THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE...AND MORE

One of the tasks falling to any author/editor pulling together a community history is an assessment of what's already been written. Typically such earlier treatments are invaluable sources of information and perspective, and chronicle how local history was viewed at another time. The historian stands to benefit greatly from familiarizing him/herself with these sources before beginning a new endeavor.

As small as Grantham is, several informative histories of the town survive. The earliest known treatment was written by Claremont's Edwin A. Charlton, who included a short historical profile of the town in his 1856 *Gazetter*. Significantly more informative was the 1886 contribution to *The Histories of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties, New Hampshire*, written by Grantham's own Lorenzo Dunbar. Dunbar chronicles the names of many early settlers and details the activities in which they were involved, whether civic, commercial, religious, etc. In 1927, the Rev. Ned Witham, pastor of the Grantham Methodist Church, presented an address on the history of the town that was published as part of the Sullivan County Centennial Celebration. Naturally, it focused more on the history of the church, but Rev. Witham himself was an important historical figure in Grantham, so his writings take on added import. More recently, in 1994 the late Walter Backofen of Plainfield wrote an examination of the historical connection between the towns of Grantham and Plainfield that chronicled how closely the two communities are intertwined. Finally, Plymouth State University student Delia Anderson wrote a history of the town (undated, but probably around 2002) that focused on the major economic, population and civic forces that shaped the town over its history.

Equally valuable – if not more so – are the twentieth-century histories written by Grantham residents. Premier among these are the series of articles written by the late Ella Roney. Ella, a founding member of the Grantham

Historical Society, began her interest in local history in 1940 with an essay originally written for a presentation to a Neighborhood Library Meeting on June 25 of that year. She continued to write articles about the town thereafter, in addition to her work as the town's correspondent to *The Argus-Champion*. Grantham native and long-time resident Dennis Howard contributed several essays on various aspects of Grantham history, all of which are rich with detail. In 1967 – and again in 1976 – his sister Amah Howard oversaw the preparation of the first formal town history, first as part of the town's bicentennial and again as part of the national bicentennial. Filled with photographs and a thematic approach to the important trends in town history, it has proved invaluable as a starting point for future work. Since its founding in 1993, members of the historical society have attempted to continue this tradition with various publications, most recently for the 2005 trolley tour and the 2007 walking tour of Grantham village.



Ken Story

As the work has begun on the current history, we attempt to carry on this considerable legacy. Bob Champagne, long-time member, former officer and devoted participant in many of our activities, has contributed mightily to this effort. He has written over thirty essays on a number of themes, including such varied topics as post offices, town boundaries and the Grantham "aerodrome" on Route 114. His work will serve as the foundation upon which we will build. Other authors like Laura Jean Whitcomb have also written important sections of the book, and we couldn't be more grateful for her talent and commitment. However, as we move forward, much remains to be written. We look forward to making significant progress over the fall and winter with our current team of writers and researchers, but strongly encourage anyone interested in writing to contact me directly. We welcome your enthusiasm and interest, and will graciously find plenty for you to do!

—Ken Story

A BRIEF BACKWARD GLANCE: GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE JANUARY 2009

The GHS Executive Committee began holding monthly meetings in June 2006 as the move of the town offices from the Village School #7 to the new Municipal Building was completed. The thrice-yearly GHS meetings were not considered to be frequent enough to manage the details that arose as the Town Archives and Historical Society expanded into the old building. At about the same time, a very large legacy was received (unexpectedly) by GHS from Jeremy Brown which required even more attention from the Society as decisions about the use of the money and investments had to be made. Keeping GHS members aware of what the Executive Committee does is accomplished by availability of meeting minutes, reports at regular Historical Society meetings held three times a year and via the quarterly newsletter. An annual report of activities is handed out at every annual meeting in May.

In order to help the Executive Committee and membership have an overview of our activities since January, 2009, the minutes of every meeting have been reviewed. Below is a summary of the work that has been completed and activities that are in progress or on-going.

COMPLETED TASKS:

Governance

- Monthly Executive Committee meetings (except August)
- Policies:
 - Conflict of Interest (new – required by IRS)
 - Access to oral history tapes and transcriptions (new)
 - Keys (new)
 - Collections (revised)
- Executive Committee retreat in October 2009 to outline a five-year plan
- Summary of previous year's work distributed at Annual Meetings
- Annual approval of dues structure at each Annual meeting
- Report on GHS in each Annual Town Report
- Commission of new logo for stationary and newsletter
- Safe deposit box rental
- President Emeritus description developed; Allen Walker promoted to this position

- Honorary Memberships established
- Allen Walker nominated for Association of NH Historical Societies of NH award; awarded 10/17/09

Building and grounds

- Our "wish list" from 2009 completed (many items related to updates and improvements of building)
- Establishment of a perennial garden next to parking lot
 - Application for nomination of Village School No. 7 to National Historic Register (denied)
 - Addition of new porch for entry to the Reney Room
 - Consideration of an alternative layout and storage for the Reney Room
 - Establishment of the Memorial Garden above the driveway into the Town Offices off Dunbar Hill Road

Program activities

- Three regular meetings per year (Spring Annual Meeting, summer, fall)
- Speakers/programs:
 - May 2009—Rebecca Rule (NH Humanities Council)
 - July 2009—"The Knox Trail" by Bob Champagne
 - October 2009—Draperville by Allen Walker, Ken Story and Craig McArt
 - May, 2010—David Stewart-Smith "Native American History In NH" (NH Humanities Council)
 - September 2010—Testimonial for Allen Walker
 - October 2010—Cote and Reney history by Ken Story
 - May 2011—Allen Koop "Stark Decency" (NH Humanities Council)
- Two village walking tours led by Ken Story in 2006 & 2007
- Hosted fall meeting of NH Old Graveyards Assoc. 9/26/09
- Hosted regional historical societies meeting 3/16/10
- Participation in Grantham Old Home Days
- Clean-up of Four Corners Cemetery
- Walking tours to Four Corners Cemetery and Town Forest led by Renee Gustafson
- Testimonial and reception for Allen Walker 9/19/10
- Retirement reception for Lea Frey 7/9/11
- First annual Appraisal Day 12/11/10
- Picture Party 7/16/11
- Participation in developing 2010 and 2011 regional historical societies informational brochures
- Regular digital recording of all speakers



Grantham Village School c. 1890s, GHS Collection

2012 GHS CALENDARS ARE ON THE HORIZON

We are producing a 2012 calendar of historic photographs of Grantham that we want members of GHS to enjoy for free with our thanks for the support and interest that the membership provides. Additional copies will be available for sale, probably less than \$7.00 each. These will be available at our October 20 meeting, the 2nd appraisal day in December, at GHS on Friday afternoons and at other holiday events in November and December in town.

THANKSGIVING IN GRANTHAM : 1920

November 25, 1920

“This is Thanksgiving Day and a pretty good day only not very good traveling.... little Henry and I went up in our woods rabbit hunting a little while but didn’t get nothing. Nina, Mildred, Henry and I eat our dinner alone. We had the baked chicken, white and sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, cheese. Mince pie and cracker pudding. Could have had pumpkin and apple pies but we didn’t care for them. We had onions, squash and turnips. We wish everyone had had as good a dinner....”

—Miller diaries



Elvis in 1958; Photo courtesy of Bob Osgood

AN ELVIS SIGHTING!

This photo of Elvis came to light at our July Picture Party. Bob related that he was stationed at the US Army base in Fort Hood, Texas in 1958 at the same time that Elvis was there. He notes that this was before Elvis became the world-wide idol of his later years. One day, he saw Elvis emerging from the building in the background and asked if he could take his picture. Permission was granted with the result that you see on this page. Bob was also able to get his autograph on several occasions. Nice work, Bob and thanks for letting us use your photo.

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 _____

GRAVESTONE OF OLIVE O.

In a previous newsletter, we asked for information about a small gravestone found in the old Grantham police storage area last year. Thanks to the Croydon Historical Society for their response. With some embarrassment, we announce that Olive O. Dow was very likely born in Grantham c. 1837 and died here in 1840. Genealogical research revealed that her father, Lorenzo Dow, was born in Lyman, NH in 1811 and her mother, Sarah (last name unknown) was probably born in 1815. Sarah died of "childbed fever" in Croydon in 1858 at age 43. Olive O. was very likely their firstborn, followed by Sarah Celina (b. 1838), Lorenzo Dexter (b. 1840), Silva C (b.1845) and Olive F (b. 1847). The family is recorded in the 1840 and 1850 Grantham censuses. Lorenzo paid road taxes in Grantham in 1845. He remarried shortly after Sarah's death and had several more children, in addition to being stepfather to his second wife's three children. They were all living in Springfield, NH by the 1870 census and had moved to Penacook some time before Lorenzo's death in 1889. We are now trying to identify which Grantham cemetery might be the site of her burial. No death certificate was found in New Hampshire Vital Statistics.

Many thanks to Dean Jarvis (Grantham) and Steve and Sue Thomas (Hopkinton) for their research assistance.



Photo by Renee Gustafson

Gravestone of Olive O. Dow

ACCOMPLISHMENTS *Continued from page 2*

Finances

- Submission of IRS documentation re Brown legacy
- Accountant hired and computer service contract in place
- Transcriptionist for oral history tapes hired
- Monthly review of our financial status

Technology

- Purchase of second-hand computer set-up for public use
- Purchase of video camera and recording equipment
- Purchase of portable scanner
- Purchase of new laptop

ON-GOING TASKS AND PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

- Maintenance of GHS website (with assistance of Laura Jean Whitcomb)
- Regular exhibits on Grantham History at GHS (Renee Gustafson)
- Scanning of photography collection and new additions (Craig McArt)
- Transcriptions of oral history tapes
- Production of video on Grantham history (Craig McArt, Christina McKahan)
- Documentation of Grantham houses (Kathi Osgood)
- Documentation of Grantham businesses (photos) (Rae Tober, Pat Andrews)

- Maintenance of collections and additions of new items (Pat Andrews, Rae Tober)
- New GHS sign at Dunbar Hill Road and Route 10 corner (Ken Story)
- Search for new members (all)

- Search for volunteers (all)
- Research and writing for the History of Grantham (all)
- Development of 2012 calendar for sale (Kathi Osgood)
- Start of discussions about celebration of 250th anniversary in 2017 (all)
- Maintenance of flower garden and Memorial Garden (Renee Gustafson)
- Quarterly Newsletters (Pat Andrews)
- Regular open hours at GHS on Friday afternoons, 1-4 PM



Grantham Village School 1967, GHS Collection

This summary represents the hard work and hours of volunteering on the part of the Executive Committee. Most of us are at the Historical Society every Friday afternoon to welcome visitors and help with their research as well as to respond to emails about Grantham history. We would love to have more volunteers, both for Friday afternoons and on-going projects. Any one of us can be contacted (see contact information on page 6) or drop in on any Friday afternoon.

—Pat Andrews

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society accepts with regret the resignation of Vice-President Bob Champagne for health reasons. Bob is one of the original members of GHS and has been a steadfast and committed Board member from the very beginning. He has also completed over thirty chapters for our History of Grantham. We all wish him well.

GHS President Ken Story has just been appointed interim selectmen until the next election. We are very pleased that the skills he has brought to the Historical Society will now be apparent to the town. Congratulations, Ken!

The business photo project being done by Rae Tober and Pat Andrews has been completed. We now have visible documentation of the Grantham business community at one specific point in time in the 21st century.

The Croydon Society held an open house and regional meeting of historical societies on Wednesday, August 24 at their house museum on Route 10 South in Croydon Village (large yellow Colonial on the right). Most of the members of our Executive Committee attended. Their museum is filled with Croydon artifacts and the architectural details of their 18th century house are intact. They are open on Sundays.

Laura Jean Whitcomb continues as our expert manager of the GHS website (www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org). She has provided information about the "hits" we have gotten between June and August 2011, based on weekly data. There has been an average of 60 visitors per month, 91% of whom are new. The length of visits lasts 11 minutes. During the last week of August, 23 people visited our website. Half entered via our website address and the



Photo by Rae Tober

Joey Holmes, Christina McKahan, Craig McArt and Kathi Osgood add old photos to the GHS Collection.

other half by using a search engine. Of the 23 visitors, 12 came from the US, 5 from Russia, 3 from Canada, 2 from the UK, and 1 each from Australia and Tanzania. The three month totals: 182 visitors of whom 166 were new; number of pages viewed: 463.

In July, two successful events were sponsored by GHS. A farewell ice cream social was held on July 9, 2011 on behalf of the town to thank Lea Frey for her years of work dedicated to the Town Archives. The following weekend, a picture party was held, an opportunity for Grantham residents to bring in old photos that could be scanned and returned immediately. Please see page 3 for a winner!

FALL GHS MEETING

The regular fall meeting of the Historical Society will be held on October 20, 2011 at the Town Hall (lower level) at 7:00 PM. Theodore Roosevelt will be making a special visit to Grantham to talk about his Presidency as well as the many interests he promoted during his political life and as a private citizen. Landmarks during his Presidency include building the Panama Canal, establishing national parks and creating legislation which protected consumers. His personal interests were broad – naturalist, rancher, soldier, writer, big game hunter. He was a visitor to Corbin Park, then a private hunting preserve, in 1902 where he shot a boar that was later stuffed and mounted for his office. Perhaps the boar was in the Grantham section of Corbin Park? Please come on October 20 to show support for one of our outstanding Presidents.

NEW ITEMS IN OUR COLLECTIONS

Over the summer, eight new items have been added to our Collections. These include three record books from Bouldervale Farm from Connie Howard, an oil can and cane from the Dunbar House, square-cut nails from the Currier House on Howe Bill Road which is being dismantled and a matchbox from Tallulah's, Eastman. A major donation is the 1755 Jeffrey's map of New England, given to us by the Dunbar Free Library. More in the next newsletter about this gift.

GHOSTS IN GRANTHAM?

Author Marianne O'Connor has contacted GHS to ask whether there are any well-documented mysteries, ghost stories or hauntings (or curses) in Grantham, now or in the past. These need to have occurred outdoors as her collection in her first book, *Haunted Hikes of New Hampshire*, provided locations at which stories took place and could be reached by hiking to the spot. If anyone in Grantham has a story that might interest her, she can be contacted at ocnorm17@comcast.net or by contacting us and we will send the information on to her.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2011

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PRESIDENT EMERITUS

Allen Walker

TOWN ARCHIVIST

VACANT

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—2012 CALENDAR

Thurs., October 20, 2011
“Visit from Teddy Roosevelt”
Town Hall (lower) • 7 PM

Sat., December 17, 2011
2ND ANNUAL APPRAISAL DAY
Town Hall (lower)
10 AM to 2 PM

Thurs., May 24, 2012
GHS ANNUAL MEETING
Program “Abbott and
Downing’s Concord Coaches”
Town Hall (lower level)
Potluck supper at 6:00 PM
Meeting & program at 7:00 PM



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