

# Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



FALL 2012

## NEWSLETTER



Ken Story

### No VACANT LOT

A favorite saying among archeologists is “there are no vacant lots.” Every property has a story to tell, no matter what it looks like today. Changes in transportation, technology and settlement patterns take their toll on all things, even human occupations that at one time seemed destined to abide forever.

Nowhere in Grantham is this truer than the overgrown lot located between the Sugar River and Route 10, immediately south of the residence next to the Methodist Church in Grantham Village. Historic photographs, archival sources, and yes, even archeology tell the story of a property that was the lifeblood of the town at an earlier time.

Local folklore maintains that a mill was located on this site as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the road that would become Route 10 was first laid out through the southern part of Grantham. Little is known about the extent of the mill operation for most of the first half of the century; however, it clearly grew into a significant enterprise during these years. By the 1850s, maps indicate the presence of the T. F. Fowler Sawmill/G. W. Buswell Grist Mill. Using the water power provided by the Sugar River – which was aided by the construction of a dam and mill races, remnants of which survive to this day – two separate mill operations functioned on this site. The saw mill produced dimensional lumber and millwork for construction and the grist mill ground corn, barley, oats and wheat for local residents.

In the late nineteenth century the mill operation increasingly favored the sawing of lumber over the grinding of staples. This was at least partially the result of such

advances in transportation as the railroads that connected even small, relatively

isolated towns like Grantham with statewide, national and international markets, significantly reducing the need for a local grist mill operation. The sawmill continued to thrive, however, resulting in the construction of a millhouse (the mill owner’s residence) and associated carriage house on Route 10, the foundations of which can

still be seen. Historic photographs from the era show a large, two-story mill building with connected wings, and a two-story millhouse.

In the early twentieth century, the saw mill adapted quite nicely to the arrival of the automobile era, as motorized trucks seamlessly replaced the horse-drawn wagons that had hauled the finished lumber to jobsites throughout the area. During these first decades, the mill operation was easily the largest employer in town. Photo-

graphs reveal up to fifteen men working here at any given time, which for a town of just a few hundred people was a large number of workers at one business. The remarkable growth of the timber industry in Grantham and the success of this mill operation was one of the factors that inspired the arrival of the Reney family in 1902, who under the tutelage of Donas Reney quickly became major players in the town’s timber industry.



Photo by Rae Tober

Millstone from Fowler’s Mill



Fowler’s Mill, early 19th century Credit: GHS collection

Continued on page 4

# THE NORTH GRANTHAM METHODIST CHURCH- PART II

The North Grantham Church (Methodist Episcopal) was built in 1855 when the church on the mountain at the Four Corners was abandoned as families moved down the mountain into Grantham village.

The Historical Society has in its Collection one copy of



Photo by Rae Tober

*Main foundation stone....*

“Harvest Home,” one of three newsletters distributed by the North Grantham Church. The first newsletter, “The Grantham Register,” appeared

in December 1882 which contained church history. (The Historical Society does not have a copy of this issue.) In December 1883, “Harvest Home” was published and was supported by advertising from Lebanon businesses, Rufus Hall’s dry goods store in Croydon and Imla S. Brown, agent for the “Farm Journal” in North Grantham. (This is the one in the Historical Society Archives.) The second issue of “Harvest Home” came out in December 1884. Rev. George Tyrrel’s 19th century handwritten history of the Methodist churches in Grantham noted that this issue “was not a large sheet on account of the business depression of this Conference year.” (This suggests that the Methodist Conference, the Methodist organization at the state level, paid the printing costs for these newsletters.) He speculated that these newsletters were probably the “first Grantham papers” (i.e. newspapers).

Reverend Tyrrel’s detailed history of the Grantham churches ends in 1891 with his pastorate. He subsequently returned as an interim pastor several times but added only brief notes to his history. Therefore, we do not have details about the decline in church membership and the consequent loss of income that took place over the next two decades. When the membership could no longer support a minister and building, a decision was made to sell the church and land on which it was built. These were sold in 1911 to E.R. Heath. From our archives: “Committee appointed to sell the North Grantham Church give following report:

Sold church and land to E.R. Heath	\$175.00
One stove and funnel to Barton Sanborn	\$3.00

One stove and funnel to Charles Howe	\$3.00
One table to Mrs. N. Fisk	\$2.00
Four settees to Blue Mountain Grange	\$5.00
One sofa to Mrs. E. Fale(?)	\$1.00
One Estey organ to O.J. Faunce	\$1.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$190.00</b>

## EXPENSES

Paid J.M. Howe Printing auction bills	\$1.00
Paid Republican Champion printing notice of auction	\$0.75
Paid Argus & Spectator printing notice of auction	\$0.65
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2.40</b>

Put \$200.00 in Sugar River Savings Bank, Newport, to M.E. Church, Grantham.

Committee: G.G. Thorton  
James M. Howe”

## ABSENCE OF THE CHURCH

In 1920, Edith Miller, living with her husband Loren on their farm in North Grantham, noted in her daily diary on Sunday, May 23, 1920: “I have been to the Hollow to church the first time a long while”. The loss of an active church in the neighborhood clearly had an effect on how North Granthamites spent their Sundays.

### 10 Grove Street, Newport

The demise of the North Grantham church had an unexpected resurrection in a newly-built home for an



Photo by Rae Tober

*10 Grove St., Newport*

undertaker in Newport. The materials from the church building were recycled by Mr. Heath in the construction of a house, still located at 10 Grove Street in Newport. It was built for Dixi C. Newton who followed in his father’s business as an undertaker and funeral director. In the 1899 Newport City Directory, Dixi Newton is listed as an employee of David A. Newton, undertaker. In a later

## BLUE MOUNTAIN SNOW DUSTERS LOOKING FOR INFORMATION TO WRITE THEIR HISTORY –

Merle Schotanus and Marty Hastings are currently writing a history of the Snow Dusters (which we hope can be contributed to The History of Grantham) but are frustrated by the lack of documents, written or photographic, especially for the years 1980 to 1995. If you have material that you think would be useful, please contact Merle (schot@comcast.net) or Marty (mhastings27@comcast.net). Documents can include minutes of meetings, posters, maps or publicity as well as photographs. You may also drop off materials at the Historical Society on Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 PM.

## 2013 GHS CALENDARS COMING!

For the second year, GHS will selling calendars with 12 new historic views of Grantham for 2013. This year, the price is \$5.00 per calendar (\$4.00 for members) and will be available at the November 8 GHS meeting. They will also be available at Rum Brook Market (no member discount here), at the Christmas Craft Fair on November 18 or at GHS on Friday afternoons. We sold out last year, so plan to get yours early!

## SALE TABLE.....

A table with items for sale has been set up at GHS. We have sets of new note-cards with historic Grantham scenes, done by Renee Gustafson, Christmas balls painted with the militia flag, Xerox copies of the 1967/1976 History written for those celebrations, old maps, and odds and ends that have collected over the years. Stop in on a Friday afternoon and have a look.

## NOTICE RE WINTER/SPRING ISSUE:

The GHS Board has agreed that in order to free up more time to work on The History of Grantham, the next issue of the newsletter will be a combined Winter/Spring issue. Watch for it in late February!

## FIND YOUR FAMILY'S HISTORY WITH A WINNING RAFFLE TICKET FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

Vast Branches (www.vast-branches.com) has donated a certificate worth \$99.00 for the winner of our raffle who will receive four free hours of genealogical research on his or her family tree. Tickets are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. These will be available at the November GHS meeting on November 8 and at the Christmas Craft Fair on November 18 at the Town Hall. The drawing will take place at the end of the Craft Fair. Tickets may also be purchased from GHS Board members (see page 6 for contact information) or at GHS on Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 PM.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

## MILL *Continued from page 1*

The saw mill continued to operate through the first half of the twentieth century, but overharvesting of the town's timber resources and the increasing availability of high-quality dimensional lumber from other regions of North America sounded the death knell of such local saw mill operations. The mill shut down after World War II and the buildings were removed not long thereafter.

It was around this time that the property came into the ownership of 'Sam' Walker, the father of Allen Walker, co-founder of the Grantham Historical Society (it remains in family ownership to this day). In 1997 Allen gave permission for a group of sixth-grade students from Grantham Village School to conduct an archeological dig on the site, under the supervision of an archeologist who taught the students proper excavation technique and how to evaluate artifacts. An assortment of glass and metal objects were recovered, all consistent with an active mill business and the domestic pursuits in the millhouse. These remnants will help tell the story of how this site functioned on a daily basis.

However, the largest single artifact surviving from the mill is the millstone that for years sat in the yard of the late Allen Walker, just off Route 114. Travelers along this road could not help but notice the large stone wheel, the top half of which protruded from the ground. The heirs of Allen's estate have generously donated this millstone to the historical society and it now resides in the memorial park the society has established just off the access road to the new town hall. We hope it will serve as an important reminder to all of what used to be the noisy, vibrant hub of Grantham Village.

—Ken Story

## FROM THE GHS PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION



*Methodist parsonage c. 1970 after removal of the Community House*

*Sawmill workers, 19th century, Grantham (mill site unknown)*

## GRANTHAM CHURCH PART II *Continued from page 2*

newspaper, probably from the early 1900s, the following ad is found:

Dixi C. Newton  
Undertaker and Funeral Furnisher  
Motor Equipment and Flowers for Funerals

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42 Main Street  
Residence, 10 Grove St.  
Telephone 113-W

The present owners of the house have graciously allowed photographs to be taken.

### REMAINING VESTIGES OF THE NORTH GRANTHAM CHURCH

Long-time residents of Grantham, Francis and Barbara Mutney, led several of us on a tour of the area on Route 10 North where the church once stood. The only remains of the church itself are several large granite stones in a field that to the casual passer-by would not resemble a foundation at all. An aerial map, prepared by Rae Tober, indicates the location of the church as well as several other historic sites in North Grantham. Additional photos by Rae and Barbara Mutney give a broader perspective of the church's remains.



Photo by Barbara Mutney

For at least forty-five years, *Remains of North Grantham Church* the North Grantham

Church served the farming families in the vicinity at a time when attending church elsewhere in Grantham meant a long walk to and from the village. The Historical Society is fortunate to have a few sources that tell the church's story, not in the detail that we would like, but enough to recognize its importance to the community.

—Pat Andrews

# NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 2<sup>ND</sup> GHS ANTIQUES APPRAISAL DAY A SUCCESS

The GHS Board wants to thank all the volunteers who made our second Antique Appraisal Day on September 16th a great success.

Our appraiser, Dan Olmstead, from Newfields, NH, did a fantastic job of giving all the participants, volunteers and visitors great information, colored with funny stories about a wide variety of people's treasures. He kept the crowd informed and entertained for three hours without a break!



Photo by Renee Gustafson

*The crowd hangs on Dan Olmstead's every word.*

Our soup makers, Carolyn Simon, Brenda Watts, Ebba McArt, Christina McKahan, Pat Andrews and Kathi Osgood, along with dessert providers Lorene Osgood, Rae Tober, Renee Gustafson and Pat Andrews kept us full and happy. Volunteers Merle and Helen Schotanus, Bob and Tink Osgood, Craig McArt and Ken Story helped to make all run smoothly.

This was a wonderful fund raiser and we thank volunteers and attendees for a great job!

—Kathi Osgood

## SO MANY PEOPLE TO THANK.....

The Historical Society benefits from the thoughtful contributions of free labor and time from our members as well as many townspeople. Since the last issue of the newsletter, we are grateful for the following:

- Allen Walker's family for their donation of the millstone which, thanks to Paul Osgood, has been moved to our Memorial Garden. Allen's family has also loaned us ephemerera and photos for copying and has donated books, papers and photographs which expand our collections and will serve to remind us of his commitment to the Historical Society for many years;
- Joyce Barton for the loan of many Grantham photographs which have been scanned;
- Peter Ericson at The Complete Website who has donated his time in setting up and maintaining our website;
- Francis and Barbara Mutney and Joey Holmes for their time in helping to identify people and places in Allen Walker's photographs;
- Vast Branches for their donation of four free hours of research for our current raffle;
- Renee Gustafson for maintenance of our gardens during the summer and for her regular trips with our recycling to Mt. Trashmore; and
- An anonymous donor of archival materials left at the Town Offices.

## ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTIONS

The Collections Committee has had a busy summer with many new items added to our various collections. The millstone or grindstone from Fowler's Mill which stood in Allen Walker's yard was given to us by his family (see story on page 1). This is a very concrete representation of Grantham history and we appreciate the generosity of Allen's nieces and nephew. Thanks to Connie Howard's frequent donations, we have started a "Bouldervale Farm Collection" which contains many farm-related and Howard family materials. Marjerie Hastings visited us this summer from Maine, bringing three family diaries (which she had already transcribed – thank you so much!), a photo of the Brown farm on Burpee Hill Road and a written memoir of her life in Grantham. Joey Holmes brought us the bill for mortuary services for George Dunbar as well as the newspaper bill for his obituary and an autograph book belonging to her father. The Newport Historical Society passed on documents and photos that came to them from the Claremont Eagle. The Rutland, VT Historical Society has sent us an 1853 letter from Sarah Nichols written in her old age to a family member in Manchester.



Photo by Rae Tober

*Eastman lantern  
GHS Collection*

At our Appraisal Day, a lantern already in our collection from the Dunbar house barn, embossed with "Eastman" and containing exchangeable red and green glass inserts, was identified by our appraiser as one used in early darkrooms (late 19th, early 20th century) during the process of developing photographs.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2012

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*The Grantham Historical Society and Town Archives are open on  
Friday afternoons from 1 to 4 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)

## 2012 CALENDAR

Thursday, NOV. 8, 2012

STEVE TAYLOR:  
NH's One-Room  
Schools: *Romance  
and Reality*



7 PM—Town Hall

Sunday, NOV. 18, 2012

**CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR**

Town Hall • Visit our table!

Drawing for raffle of Vast  
Branches family history package

Thursday, MAY 23, 2012

**GHS ANNUAL MEETING  
AND POTLUCK SUPPER**

6 PM Grantham Town Hall  
Program to be announced in  
Winter newsletter

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