

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Spring 2009

NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Spring has come and summer is not far behind. The Historical Society has been busy working on our building and preparing for what lies ahead this summer. We cordially invite all Granthamites (members and non-members) to visit us on Friday afternoons to inspect the work done and changes made. We hope people will be pleased with what they find.

We will have our annual meeting in May at the New Town Hall, beginning with a potluck supper at 6:00 PM. Our building just does not have enough room or facilities to hold the Annual meeting at the Historical Society. (See back page for details.)

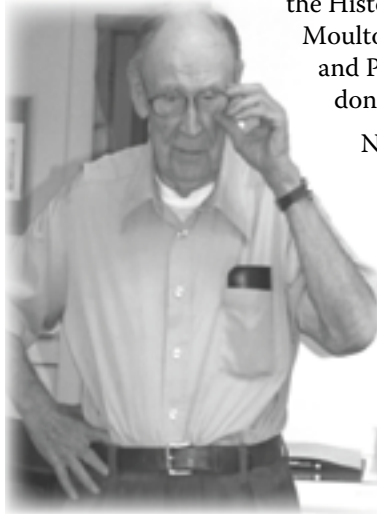
In June there will be another walking tour led by our vice-president, Ken Story. The itinerary may be somewhat different from previous tours and may be one of the last of the Village that will be done. (Future tours elsewhere in town are being considered.) Kathi Osgood is researching the history of various Grantham buildings – the age, the builders – as well as occupants and owners over the years.

If there is an Old Home Day on July 4 this year, we will be present with items to sell or simply to show what we have been up to.

We are planning a summer meeting on July 25, 2009. Bob Champagne, Board trustee (see separate article), has been preparing a presentation on an important incident during the Revolutionary War when Alexander Knox, an auto-didact artiller

ery expert, organized the transport of captured cannons from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston.

I want to thank everyone who has given or lent items to the Historical Society recently, particularly Geraldine Moulton, Joey Holmes, Dennis and Connie Howard and Phyllis Forest. Forgive me if I have left out other donors.



Allen Walker, president of the Grantham Historical Society.

Now thanks to the people who have worked to improve the Society in their own way and with their own talents – Pat Andrews, Renee Gustafson, Kathi Osgood, Ken Story, Phyllis Forest, Barbara Rodgers. And our town archivist, Lea Frey, who does such a fine job preserving paper and photographic materials, putting in many extra hours. Barbara Mutney assists Lea and never misses a Friday afternoon. Craig McArt has taken on the task of scanning our large photograph collection into the Archives computer.

And I must thank Bob Osgood for always being available to handle any problem – plumbing, electricity, heat, alarm system, or snow and ice. No one is absolutely indispensable but Bob comes very close.

So come on down and visit us.

—Allen W. Walker, *President*

Oops! I almost forgot to mention our peerless oral recording lady, Christina McKahan, who is interviewing older residents to develop an oral history collection for the Society.

NEW GHS PROJECT – WE NEED YOUR HELP! CALLING ALL GRANTHAM HISTORIC HOME OWNERS

If you are an owner of one of the many historic homes in town (at least 100 years old), we'd like to talk to you. We are compiling information regarding the age, architectural styles, previous business uses and any other interesting facts about these properties. Did you know that the Grantham Post Office had at least 4 other locations in the village? It was also once located in North Grantham. This information and lots more will be available at the Grantham Historical Society for anyone doing research, or who is just plain curious about our town. We'd love to come take a picture of your home and talk with you about its history. If you have not yet been contacted to share your information, please call Kathi Osgood at 863-4726 to set up an appointment.

HISTORY OF THE FREDSON C. REED HOUSE, A.K.A. MAXWELL'S INN

Grantham Village was a bustling hub at the turn of the century, as it was located at the intersection of the east-west roads that connected its main thoroughfare – modern Route 10 – with Meriden and Plainfield to the west, and Springfield, New London, and Sunapee to the east. The major commercial enterprise in the village was the saw and grist mill located just to the south of the church/town hall. Employing about 15 men, it was easily the town's biggest employer. From dawn to dusk, horse-drawn wagons hauling away thousands of board feet of finished lumber trotted back and forth on Route 10, adding to the din of the whining saws and the shouting drivers.

The mill was here by 1820 and passed through a series of owners in the nineteenth century, including such names as Fowler, Dunbar, and Buswell. In 1897, Fredson C. Reed (a.k.a. 'Fred' Reed), a native of Boothbay Harbor, Maine and an experienced sawyer, purchased an interest in the mill. It

became known as the Reed and Buswell Mill, and Reed moved into the millhouse located on the property.

As legend has it, Reed saw a unique opportunity to enhance and expand

his burgeoning business, and it was located virtually across the street. The Clement family owned a small wood-frame cape on the opposite side of Route 10, at the southeast corner of Route 10 and the Springfield Road (now Route 114). Reed and his wife Lena purchased this property in July of 1899, promptly demolished the cape, and began construction of a new residence. Built in the popular architectural style known as American Foursquare and featuring an attached carriage barn complete with built-in three-hole privy, Reed used his new residence to advertise the quality millwork of which he was capable. The wraparound porch, which features an assortment of carved and turned wood detailing, is echoed by the side porch, which itself is supported on turned posts with turned balusters. Inside, the doors and windows are trimmed

with milled pilasters and headers that terminate in corner blocks with incised roundels. Perhaps the finest original feature is the built-in china cabinet in the dining room, which is the only room that retains its original dark, stained finish. Reed was so proud of his work that he used a diamond to scratch his signature, "F. Reed," into the room's north window.

Unfortunately, in 1907 Reed suffered an accident at the mill that injured an arm and forced him from this profession. In 1908 he and Buswell sold the mill to Edwin Heath; at the same time Reed sold several woodlots in North Grantham.

By 1914, the village was approaching its peak as the commercial and civic center of Grantham. In addition to the sawmill, there were as many as five stores, a post office, the church/town hall, a school, at least one blacksmith shop, and a printing press. Furthermore, its status as a major local intersection brought a significant amount of traffic from all directions. This only increased by the second decade of the twentieth century with the introduction of the automobile, after which Route 10 came under jurisdiction of the fledgling state highway department as the state's westernmost north-south trunk line. Given the village's location at the approximate half-way point between Newport and Lebanon, it made sense for the establishment of an inn. This is exactly what Annie Maxwell did.

In late 1914 Annie Maxwell purchased the house from Lena Reed and promptly opened what became known as Maxwell's Inn. It is not known if Annie was married or ran this alone, but she operated an active inn and restaurant. One weekend in 1915 the inn served over three dozen diners, including several overnight guests.

Annie operated the inn for the next six years, during which the Draper Corporation came to town, first purchasing the saw and grist mill and then establishing Draperville, the company town located at the northwest corner of Eastman Pond that produced bobbins for the mill industry. The Draper Corporation brought significant prosperity to Grantham as it became the largest employer in town and many young

families settled here. Unfortunately, the Draper Corporation went through a significant contraction in the early 1920s and left town by 1924. Perhaps Annie Maxwell saw this coming, as she sold the house to Sophia D. Thornton in 1920.

The Draper Corporation's departure marked the beginning of the decline of the town and the village, as many families moved to seek work elsewhere. Apparently Sophia Thornton maintained the house as a private residence for the next ten years, when she sold it to Lillian A. Reney, who was the first to operate the village post office out of the house. In 1935 Eva and Glenn Hudson purchased the home and Eva became the new town postmistress, a position she occupied until her retirement in 1962 (she operated the post office in the south end of the cape portion; it was accessed via a door which has since been replaced with a window). The Hudsons remained here for the next eleven years, until 1946, when they sold the house to Everett "Mike" Reney and his wife Evelyn. The Hudsons relocated their residence and the post office to the wooden cape they built across the street. The Reney's – and the Storys, the current owners – used it as a private residence thereafter.

The relative quiet that now characterizes Grantham Village belies a busier, noisier past, when various businesses prospered within a few steps of each other, and a residence at such a central location also functioned as a show house, an inn and restaurant, and a post office.

—Ken Story



Maxwell Inn , 1915



Main Street—Maxwell Inn in center.

GHS TRUSTEE PROFILE: BOB CHAMPAGNE

This is the first in a series of GHS Trustee profiles. We want to acknowledge Bob Champagne because of the substantial annual financial contribution made to GHS by Aetna in recognition of his commitment to community services in general and GHS in particular. Bob was sent a list of leading questions from which a profile would have been developed. However, his own biography is so much better than anything we could construct, it follows here in its entirety.

Bob writes:

I am originally from the original Hartford -not the one in Vermont but in Connecticut.

I was raised in the Frog Hollow area of the city in an industrial area that housed thousands of laborers who worked for manufacturers such as Underwood Typewriter, Royal Typewriter or the behemoth Pratt and Whitney. It was a proud community buttressed with other financial giants such as Travelers, Connecticut General, Aetna, The Hartford and many others.

I started at Aetna at age 16 in the mailroom and finished forty years later as Assistant Vice President in the claim department. I loved every minute of my career. I did take time off to serve as an infantryman during the Korean War. This enabled me to take advantage of the GI bill and to attend the University of Connecticut from which I graduated in 1959.

Cathy Hickson, who was raised in Torrington, Connecticut, is also a long-time GHS member. We were married in 1962.

I have always been keenly interested in history. In 1965 I began keeping a log of my readings-I continue this to this day. It serves as a self-discipline and a reading incentive. Non-fiction books provide me with 95% of my reading enjoyment.

Upon retirement in 1993, we moved to Grantham, buying the Silo House in Olde Farms. Our "office" is literally in the Silo part of the house.

We joined the fledgling Grantham Historical Society in, I believe, 1995. Michele Daigle was president, and Ella Reney and Allen Walker were active founders of the Society. We met in the church hall; our meetings often consisted of locals sharing with us the historical lore of Grantham.



Bob Champagne

In the late 1990s, GHS received a tattered and deteriorating militia flag. The flag, its origins in the 1840s, had been wrapped in newspaper in a resident's barn for probably 50 years. We conducted an extensive region-wide search for a restoration firm.

Textile restorers in Massachusetts and Philadelphia were consulted. One firm guaranteed a first class restoration and framing at a price of \$19,000. At the time our net worth was approximately \$3000. No sale. One of our members, Jutta Cords, suggested a local firm. Allen Walker and I met with Deborah Bede from Bradford, NH who turned out to be a restorer of national prominence, right here 20 miles from Grantham. Ms. Bede took on the task of restoring, refurbishing, framing and protecting our flag from future deterioration. We were all proud of the result as this is the most cherished of Grantham artifacts. Today the flag is on loan to the Town and is mounted under controlled conditions in the Jerry Whitney room in the Town offices.

In early 2000 our other accomplishment was to secure recognition of GHS as a federally recognized tax-free organization. Much paper-work led to this approval. Today benefactors can contribute to GHS and receive tax advantages similar to those extended to large foundations.

I became a director of GHS in 2003 and continue in that capacity to this day.

I worked on the committee responsible for the design and approval of the new Town offices. When that facility opened in 2006, the Town graciously provided us with our first per-

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 _____

PROFILE *Continued from page 3*

manent home in the old Town offices on Dunbar Hill Road. We struggled to make that our home when we unexpectedly received the Jeremy Brown bequest of almost \$125,000 in April 2008.

We felt blessed with this benefit, but it challenged the Board to manage those funds responsibly. Meetings were held to identify “wish lists” and turn these into priorities. A dynamic Board of Allen Walker, Ken Story, Pat Andrews, Phyllis Forest, Kathi Osgood and Renee Gustafson worked as a team to use these funds judiciously for the benefit of our Society. To me, this was our finest moment. Money is one thing, but it takes responsible leadership and yes, much sweat labor, to use it wisely. Today, our home looks like an historical society. Refinished flooring, new shades, cabinets, appliances, landscaping, and display cases take their place alongside an original school desk, blackboard, historic photos and other items of past Grantham history. The Board judiciously set aside \$100,000 of the bequest as an endowment for future GHS needs.

My experiences as a member and Board member have been challenging but at the same time rewarding because of my association with unselfish Board and Society members dedicated to preserving and displaying Grantham history for the education of our residents.

—Bob Champagne



Croydon Peak—Photo by D. Hocker

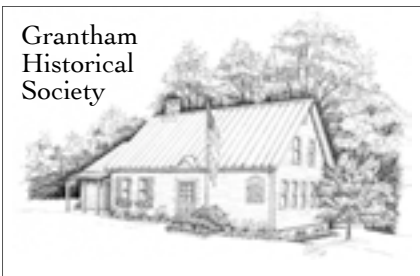
Grantham

“Need I tell thee, dear old Grantham,
How my heart is bound to thee?
Need I tell thee, quiet village,
Thou are strangely dear to me?
For in the wild woods, O Grantham,
In thy maple dells around,
Sweet has been the holy stillness
In thy bosom I have found.

Till the sun shall climb no longer
From thy pinnacles to Heaven;
Till the river ceaseth glowing
With the crimson fire of even;
Till the lilies all are faded
From the lakes so dear to me, -
Till my heart can cling no longer
It shall fondly cling to thee!”

*Old Home Day Souvenir Booklet
August 30, 1899*

Grantham
Historical
Society



**HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
NOTECARDS**

\$8 for 8 cards per packet

For sale at GHS or visit web site:
www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org

RESOURCES AT THE GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Do you have ancestors who fought in the War between the States? GHS's small library holds a variety of materials on the Civil War. In 1995, the Dunbar Library donated a number of regimental histories and related books to us. Allen Walker, GHS president, has loaned his collection of regimental histories as well. We now have the following histories available for research: 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 18th Regiments of NH Volunteers.

The Soldier in Our Civil War: A Pictorial History of the Conflict, 1863-1865 (Vol. II) was donated to our collection by Mrs. Chick Pillsbury in 2007. It is a 12x17 inch book filled primarily with engravings of battle scenes of the Civil War. Maps of battles, biographies of officers, narratives of battles, a chronology of events 1863-1865, a page of colored corps badges of the US Army and miscellaneous statistics can also be found in this well-preserved volume.

Other resources of information about New Hampshire people who served in the Civil War (or War of the Rebellion as it was also known) include Ayling's Register of NH Soldiers and Sailors: War of the Rebellion, 1861-1866, published in 1895; Granville Conn's History of the NH Surgeons in the War of the



Walker Store

Rebellion, published in 1906; and Copp's Reminiscences of the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865, published in 1911.

Our library is located in the Reney Room. Everyone is welcome to use these resources during our open hours, Fridays from 1:00 to 4:00 PM.

VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS NEEDED!

The Historical Society has enough projects to take us into the 22nd century. We always need help and have large and small independent projects as well as opportunities to help the current volunteer staff with on-going work. Call an officer or Board member or stop in some Friday afternoon—we will always be happy to see you!

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We are looking for a few back issues of Town Reports to make our set complete. If you have any of the following and wish to donate them to GHS, we would be very grateful: 1927, 1982, 1996, 2002 and 2007. If you give one of us a call, we will pick them up or they can be dropped off at GHS on Friday afternoons.

Thanks to a number of people who have offered assistance over the winter:

Craig Muir for his conversion of the back hall into a storage and work space

Paul Osgood for many finishing details to the Reney Room

Dick Hocker for help with our electronic equipment and photographers for this issue of the Newsletter

Brian McKahan for converting videos of GVS events to DVDs

Thanks very much to each of you.

GRANTHAM RESIDENTS!

Stop before you throw anything old away! The Grantham Historical Society collects objects, photographs, personal papers and other items. If you are not sure about whether we would be interested, call us at 863-9701 first – before you throw it away!

*Design and Layout by Susan A. Janicki,
SmartWoman & Co., Bradford, NH
603-938-2829*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2008-09

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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.
The telephone number is 603-863-9701.*

2009 CALENDAR

Check our website and posters around town for more details.

Thursday, May 21

Rebecca Rule, NH Humorist, writer and speaker—“Tell Me a Story” sponsored by NH Humanities Council, preceded by annual potluck supper and meeting at 6 pm, new Town Hall

Saturday, June 27

Village walking tour led by Ken Story 1 pm at Methodist Church parking lot, \$10/Adult . Rain date: June 28

Saturday, July 4

Grantham Old Home Day

Saturday, July 25

GHS Open House and talk: “The Knox Trail: Transport of the Fort Ticonderoga Cannon” by Bob Champagne, GHS Trustee at 2 pm.

Saturday, September 26

All-day Fall meeting of the NH Old Graveyards Association at the Historical Society. Cemetery walks to the Four Corners Cemetery and one other Grantham cemetery will take place in the afternoon. Grantham residents welcome!

Thursday, October 15

“Draperville – Its Grantham History” talk by Allen Walker and Ken Story at the GHS building at 7 pm.



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P.O. Box 540
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