

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Summer 2009

NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Second Selectmen's Book 1776-1840

This book was recently donated to the Town Archives by the late Dennis Howard. The book records general town business, meetings, elections, special committees, etc. from 1776 to 1840.

In the 18th century, town meetings were held whenever the town officials thought it necessary.

Elections were held as ordered by state authorities. In the 1770s and 1780s, all or most of the settlers lived on the west slope of Grantham Mountain on land that was subsequently transferred to Plainfield in 1856.

Meetings were held in private houses, usually in Elijah Gleason's house. Gleason was town clerk and selectman for many years; he donated the land for the Gleason cemetery which is still in operation in Plainfield.

Rather than trying to cover the whole Selectmen's book, I have here concentrated on one early settler – William Huntington. I chose him because one of his direct descendants lives in Eastman, the only person I know of connected to one of the earliest settlers. This descendant is Mrs. Jean Sutherland. Huntington lived on Methodist Hill on a farm that later in the 19th century became known as the William Gage house for a long-time owner and is, most recently, the home of Mrs. Backofen, widow of Walter Backofen. Mr. Backofen took a great interest in the history of this area, particularly of the town of Enfield.

Now to Huntington: he first appears as an elected official – selectman – on March 13, 1787. Two years later he is listed as tax collector who held a "vendue" at his house.

"Vendue" is the term of the time that described a tax sale of tax-delinquent properties. At this sale, Huntington gave many deeds to people who paid the overdue taxes.

In November 1790, he was elected moderator but served only until February 1791 when he was elected one of the road surveyors responsible for maintaining roads.

In November 1791, there was a meeting "to see what the town will do about Huntington's tax delinquency" but no further information is found about this. In 1792, he was elected sealer of weights and measures. What weights and measures were used in his day?

He was elected selectman again in March 1784 and the town gave him a lease on part of the "school lot". Re-election as highway surveyor and sealer of weights and measures happened in March 1795. The following year, he was re-elected selectman and elected as town treasurer and in December of 1796 was

referred to in the Selectmen's Book as Lieutenant Huntington, suggesting that he was in the militia. That same year, he made a strange deal with the town: he agreed to take the "town cow" for four years and then return two cows to the town. He was taking a gamble that the town cow would produce two female calves, one of which, with her mother, could be returned to the town in 1800.

Huntington was next chosen as fence viewer in 1797. The fence viewer was

an important position in early New England. He had the power to settle all disputes over property boundaries. In 1797, he was also elected town moderator and served on the jury for the May term of the county court.

The last mention of his name occurs in 1798 when he was chosen to settle the accounts of Sam Duncan. What happened to the Huntingtons? Census records give us a clue. In the 1810 census, no Huntingtons are listed but in the 1790 census we find "Huntington household": 2 white males over 16 (Huntington and his oldest son); 4 boys under 16, 2 females over 16 (Mrs. Huntington and the grandmother). The 1800 census records Huntington household as 1 boy under 10, 3 boys under 16, 1 male 16-26 (oldest son), 1 male 26-45 (Huntington), 1 female under 10, 1 female 26-45 (wife), and 1 female over 45 (probably a grandmother). In the 1810 census the Huntingtons have disappeared.

So much for the Huntington sojourn in Grantham (or New Grantham as it was known then). William Huntington did just about every job in Grantham except to found the Historical Society!

Speaking of the Historical Society, we need all members who have not paid their dues for 2009 to do so, please. And we welcome all non-members to join us. Every Friday afternoon, we're available at the old Town Office building. Drop in.

—Allen W. Walker, *President*



Allen Walker, president of the Grantham Historical Society.

HISTORY OF THE GRANTHAM DISTRICT #7 SCHOOL

Built in 1857, the District #7 School was constructed because of the growth of Grantham Village. It was not the first school built in Grantham, but it is the last remaining historic school in town.

The 1850s witnessed the growth of Grantham Village as the town's new civic, religious and commercial center, replacing the earlier town centers of Meriden Village (now part of the town of Plainfield), Grantham Four Corners (located to the northwest on the shoulder of Grantham Mountain, at the intersection of the old Croydon Turnpike and the original Plainfield road) and Dunbar Hill (located to the west atop Dunbar Hill, between the current village and the Croydon Turnpike). The lack of reliable water power in the two previous locations – coupled with its abundance in the village – encouraged settlement to migrate gradually down the hill and around the Croydon Branch of the Sugar River. The presence of a thriving saw and grist mill in the village as early as 1820 only encouraged this migration.

By the early 1850s the village had grown to the point where it included the mills, two stores, and at least a dozen new residences. Naturally, this settlement brought with it the need for a school close enough for village children to attend. In 1853 a petition was made to the town selectmen to construct a new school building for the district; by 1857 local carpenter J. W. Brown was hired to construct the new

school, and it was finished in that year at a total cost of \$339.49.

Originally constructed with two separate entrances (girls to the left and boys to the right) on the southern gable end, it was a single room within, with two entrance foyers inside both doors that served as mud rooms and which helped keep the cold out and the heat in. Heat was provided by a large wood stove placed in the center of the room.

One of the stories which survives from the early years of the school is that the students whose assigned place was close to the stove got too hot, and the students whose assigned place was close to the exterior walls got too cold. In either case, it must have made learning difficult.

By 1885 the town's original ten school districts were consolidated to four: North

Grantham, Howe Hill, Dunbar Hill and the village school. By 1900 the budget for the entire town school system was \$500.

In 1910 important changes were made to the building. The two original entrances were removed and replaced with windows, and the entrances moved to the new ell on the eastern side. At the same time, the original single room was divided

into two classrooms with a central east-west partition. The building's essential appearance has changed little since.

After World War II the number of districts dwindled further, with only the village school and the North Grantham school remaining. The North Grantham school was closed in 1968, after the town signed a busing contract with the city of Lebanon and is now a private residence.

The village school continued in operation until 1983, when the new Grantham Village School was constructed just off Route 114 in the northeast corner of the village. The building then served as the town hall until 2006, when the construction of the new town offices rendered it obsolete. It remains owned by the town, but is now the home of the town archives, which occupies what was the north classroom, and the Grantham Historical Society, which has been allowed to use the south classroom as an archival repository and museum.

Of the ten school buildings that at one time stood in Grantham, the District #7 School Building is by far the best preserved example, and the only one remaining in both public ownership and civic use. It remains one of the core buildings that survive from the mid-nineteenth century growth of Grantham Village and an essential part of its history.

—Ken Story



Village School—c. 1915



Village School—1950s

GRANTHAM HOUSE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

Our last newsletter introduced Kathi Osgood's project of doing interviews with owners of historic homes in Grantham. However, we also want information about houses that cannot be considered historic now. Someday they will be! We would like the following information: physical address, date of construction, builder, chronology of owners and what you consider to be attractive features of your home. An exterior photo would be appreciated or we can have our GHS photographer take one with your permission. Please contact Kathi at 863-4726 if you have questions or want to pass along information on your house. Thank you.

IN MEMORIUM ❖ DENNIS HOWARD

With the death of Dennis Howard, the Historical Society has lost one of its most valuable members.

The Howard family came to Grantham in the 1790s. They settled on Dunbar Hill where they were among the earliest people to live in the eastern part of Grantham and remained a notable family in town history up to the present time.

Dennis was proud of his family history and knew a great deal about individuals and happenings in Grantham over the years. In fact, Dennis was probably the best informed about local history of all the members of our Historical Society and he loved to talk at length about it. He spoke slowly and in detail but was always worth listening to. He seldom, very seldom, made any mistakes.

Dennis was also our most valuable donor of artifacts and printed matter. He gave us the Proprietors Book and the Selectmen's Book of records dating from the 1770s. Without these volumes, our early history would be little more than hearsay and guess work.



Dennis Howard and his dog

I knew Dennis and his sisters, Ivis and Amah - I went to school with them in what is now the Town Archives and Historical Society building. Dennis grew up to be an honest and righteous man. He was religious and I never heard him curse or swear; he had a quiet and rather sly sense of humor. He probably knew many secrets about Grantham and its residents but gossip wasn't part of his nature. Dennis's only vice was smoking cigarettes which contributed to his ill health in his last years.

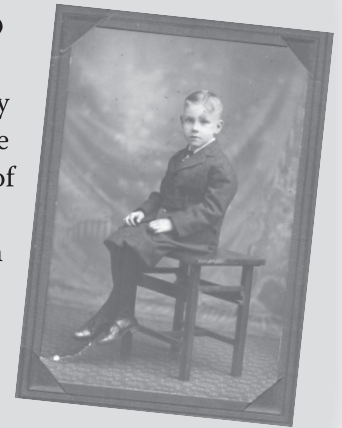
Dennis was cemetery trustee for many years; he took the job seriously. No doubt he learned much about Grantham from names and dates of tombstones, the Dunbar Hill cemetery in particular as there are many Howards buried there.

Whenever someone dies, people say, "He (or she) will be greatly missed." That saying is more true of some people than other but in the case of Dennis, it is true to the highest degree. All our sympathy goes out to Connie, their daughters and their descendants.

—Allen W. Walker

WHO ARE THESE CHILDREN?

The Historical Society has a collection of 19th and 20th century photos of people and places that have no identification. Renee Gustafson, our exhibit implementer, has developed a display of some of these in hopes you will know who they are or where they were taken. Several have been identified already. Stop in on a Friday afternoon and see whether you can name some long-lost relatives! Who are these children? A militia flag Christmas ball will be given to anyone with reliable evidence of who they are!



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 _____

A HIKE TO GRANTHAM'S FOUR CORNERS

One of my favorite walks is to hike up Miller Pond Road to "Four Corners." At one time "Four Corners," the intersection of the Mountain Road and the Turnpike Road, was the center of Grantham. The first settlement occurred on the west side of Grantham Mountain in 1767; a few years later the east side of the mountain was settled. The Mountain Road connected Plainfield to Springfield and the Turnpike brought supplies from Boston to points north. I park in the cut off on the left side at the top of Miller Pond Road and walk the hill to Four Corners. As I walk the steep hill and struggle to catch my breath, history touches my psyche. At the corner I look south and wonder how all those Bean families came to Grantham? Some old town records also refer to Four Corners as "Bean Corner." As I explore the cellar holes I wonder what the homes looked like. I see day lilies still growing in the yard at one home so I guess there was time for planting flowers, not just food to eat. But what was their day like? Was there free time? The southwest corner is where the church was located telling us of at least one day of rest. The Church was moved down the mountain in 1855 to its current location on Route 10, making it hard to find the exact location in the tangle of trees but keep searching and you will find signs of it! Just imagine two taverns or "public houses," that provided food and drink, rum, for the travelers coming down the Turnpike by stage! If you walk the turnpike to the north you will see the Currier place on your left. The bright orange netting protecting a deep rock lined well always makes me wonder, "How did they do that?" Back tracking to the intersection, walk west up the Mountain Road and watch for the path on your left leading to the cemetery.

Large trees and a well-built stone wall surround the cemetery. Signs of another path perhaps leading to the church is off to the left. If you take the time, the cemetery reveals many things: a sad story of Emily Hopkins losing two infant sons in less than three years or the connection between the Bean, the Chases and the Eastmans. A map from 1840, available at the Historical Society, will help you connect the names in the cemetery with the cellar holes along the Turnpike Road. If you want to learn more, come down to the Historical Society and look up the families.

Walk back to the Mountain Road and just on the other side of the road is the old school house.

Although the cemetery is the high point for me, walking to Lily Pond is a must. Go back to the Mountain Road and continue walking west over the mostly ledge road. The road literally runs right into Lily Pond, thanks to the beavers.

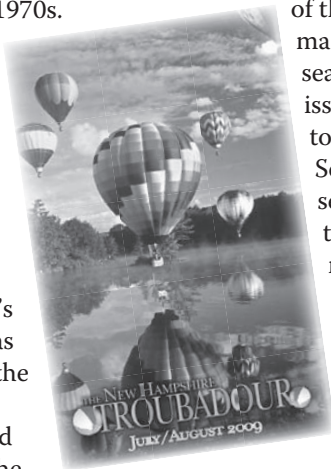
—Renee Gustafson

Ed. Note: The tour of the Four Corners on September 26 will take in all of these sites. See back page for details.

RECENT DONATION TO GHS

One of the many rainy afternoons in June allowed me to go through old issues of *New Hampshire Troubadour* and *New Hampshire Profiles* magazines donated to our library by Allen Walker. The *Troubadours* date from World War II and the *Profiles* from the early 1970s.

The *NH Troubadour*, small in size and number of pages, was first published by the Rumford Press, Concord, in the early 1930s by the NH State Planning and Development Commission - one year's subscription 50 cents- as a means of advertising the tourism industry in the state. Stories, poetry and historical tidbits were the stock offerings in each issue along with both black and white and color photographs of scenic spots



in New Hampshire. No paid advertising was used. Apparently Grantham offered no tourist attractions during the span of 1941 to 1947, the issues which we now have. However, because they covered the years of World War II, we get a glimpse of the meaning of "home" for the many servicemen and women overseas. Beginning in June 1943, each issue of the *Troubadour* was sent to every NH person in the Armed Services. Poignant letters were sent to the editor from all over the world, thanking him for the reminders of home. The *Troubadours* also included information about the state government and other organizations. For example, in June 1945, it was reported that the total gasoline tax income for that month was \$225,164. The *Troubadour* was eliminated as a budget-cutting maneuver in 1951. Recently, it has been resuscitated;

information can be found about the new edition at: www.nhtroubadour.com.

To fulfill unexpired subscriptions to the *Troubadour*, *NH Profiles* began publishing in late 1951. This magazine, however, relied on advertising mainly from real estate agencies. In 1972, a two-bedroom cottage on an island in Lake Winnepesaukee was advertised for \$24,000 - including a boat. The *Profiles* offered expanded coverage including local history, a historical house of the month and columns about collecting antiques. Our issues, from 1971 and 1972, provide a snapshot of NH life forty years ago. Of interest to us in Grantham was possibly the first published announcement in 1972 of the corporation that subsequently built Eastman.

If you would like a quick look back in time, perusal of the *Troubadours* and *Profiles* would be an easy way to do it!

—Pat Andrews

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



GHS members "dig in" at 2009 annual meeting and potluck dinner

ANNUAL REPORT

At the GHS annual meeting in May, a summary of the accomplishments over the previous year was distributed. For those of you who were not at the meeting, here is what we've done:

Building: installed protective window blinds
installed new doors and shutters
power-washed the building
landscaped the bank and flower beds
renovated the back hall for desk and storage areas

Purchases: archival storage materials
vacuum cleaner
digital recording equipment for oral histories
office and kitchen equipment
copier/scanner/printer

Contracts: NH Computer Specialists

Other: design of new logo; printing of notecards and stationery

Activities: two walking tours (village, Four Corners)
program on Corbin Park
recording of oral histories
two issues of printed newsletter
application to state and federal Historic Registers
grant to Town Archives for preservation of 1776
Selectmen's Book and Proprietors Book
exhibit on the Grantham Mountain fire of 1953

GHS NEEDS VOLUNTEER PROJECT SPECIALISTS

Lea Frey, Town Archivist, who also manages the GHS photograph collection, is looking for a volunteer to help catalogue photographs. Craig McArt, GHS Board member and volunteer, has been working for months, scanning the hundreds of photographs of Grantham people and places that have clear identification. A cataloging system for the photos has been developed. This now needs another human being to catalogue and file the photos that have been scanned. No past experience necessary – we will train you!

The second project involves exploring the holdings of the NH State Library in Concord to compare our 1776 Selectmen's book content with what is in the State Library. Lea notes that the dates of our book and the material in the Library conflict. We would like to have this straightened out by reviewing the microfilmed records, making copies as necessary and perhaps requesting a CD be made of the Grantham records. Reimbursement is available for travel from the Historical Society.

If you are interested in helping with either of these important projects, please call Lea at 863-0038 or email her at leafrey@gmail.com.



Mr. & Mrs. Ken Story

BEST WISHES TO OUR VICE-PRESIDENT

On May 30, 2009, vice-president Ken Story and Sandee Byrd were married in the Old St. Andrews Episcopal Church in New London. The reception, attended by GHS Board members, was held at Fox Stand in Springfield on one of the few beautiful days in May. Best wishes from all our members to Ken and Sandee.

NEW OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

At the annual meeting, Craig McArt of Eastman was elected as a trustee for three years. Kathi Osgood, previously a trustee, was elected treasurer. Please see back page for contact information of all officers and trustees.

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!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2009-10

GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 540, Grantham, NH 03753, 603-863-9701

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org

PRESIDENT

Allen Walker
P.O. Box 936
603-863-3484
allenwalker936@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Ken Story
P.O. Box 52
603-863-3208
kbyrdstory@comcast.net

SECRETARY

Pat Andrews
2 Hilltop Place
New London, NH 03257
603-526-2740
Patricia.Andrews@valley.net

TREASURER

Kathi Osgood
P.O. Box 246
603-863-4726
kgood246@gmail.com

DIRECTORS

Craig McArt
P.O. Box 1899
603-863-9525
CraigMcArt@gmail.com

Robert Champagne
19 Rowland Road – summer
603-863-7515
380 Grove Isle Circle - winter
Vero Beach, FL 32962
gans01@comcast.net

Renee Gustafson
P.O. Box 1097
603-863-7487
gustafson_renee@comcast.net

TOWN ARCHIVIST

Lea Frey
P.O. Box 1050
603-863-0038
leafrey@gmail.com

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.



Grantham Historical Society
34 Dunbar Hill Road
P.O. Box 540
Grantham, NH 03753

2009 CALENDAR

Check our website and posters around town for more details.

September 26, 2009

Saturday afternoon

Tours of the Four Corners area, led by Renee Gustafson and Dick Hocker, and Dunbar Hill and Brown cemeteries, led by Allen Walker are part of the NH Old Graveyards Association meeting on September 26. Meet at the Historical Society at 1:00 PM. Car-pooling to sites would be helpful. Donations of morning coffee goodies and lunch desserts will be appreciated.

October 15, 2009

Thursday evening, 7:00 PM
GHS building

A talk about Drapersville and the Draper Company in Grantham will be presented by Allen Walker and Ken Story with assistance from Craig McArt. Photos and artifacts will be on display.

