

# Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Summer 2010

## NEWSLETTER

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: OF GIANT SHOULDERS AND BIG SHOES TO FILL



Ken Story

As many of you know, this past spring Allen Walker, our president of seventeen years, decided to step down. This marked the end of an era indeed, as Allen, along with Ella Reney, started the Grantham Historical Society back in 1993 and guided it through its infancy. As it evolved and grew, Allen was there to lend the moral support, enthusiasm and determination required for it to survive

the growing pains suffered by most small historical groups. Those same traits were also vital to maintaining its focus and mission, and to defining its character. The historical society now stands ready to undertake tasks of a magnitude inconceivable when this all started (more on that below) and the one constant has been Allen Walker. Over the years Allen contributed mightily to his home town in many ways, performing a broad assortment of functions and holding several positions within town government; however, none was more important and of more lasting benefit than his leadership of the historical society. For that, we are all grateful.

There is much ado at the historical society these days. Due to the town's ongoing generosity, we continue to be housed at the old school building on Dunbar Hill Road, on which we have made such minor improvements as the addition of new shelving (noted in the winter issue of the newsletter) and more recently, the construction of a new porch to shelter the entrance into the historical society's half of the building. We have begun to design and assemble several audio/visual slideshows related to Grantham history that we hope we can make available to our local schools to share with their students. We are working with officials at Lebanon High School to explore the possibility of funding an annual scholarship for a Grantham senior who has demonstrated a strong interest in history. Most importantly, we have begun in earnest the work on organizing, researching and writing the long-overdue history of Grantham. This is an enterprise into which we have already put long hours of discussion and planning, and will no doubt put in many more. The goal is to publish a town history within the next three years. Elsewhere in this issue is a detailed update on what we have accomplished so far and how much truly remains to be done, but we have commenced this considerable project and look forward to producing a well-researched, accurate and engaging history of our town.

I'm proud of our historical society and how far we've come, and I'm equally proud to be its new president. It is a healthy and active organization, the product of many years of hard work and vision. Sir Issac Newton said, "If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants." It remains to be seen whether or not I will see further than others, but if I do, it will be because of those who came before me and what they built. Allen has left a big pair of shoes to fill. Hopefully I can grow into them.

—Ken Story, President



Photo by R. Gustafson

Allen Walker—2010

#### INVITATION TO ALL GHS MEMBERS TESTIMONIAL FOR ALLEN WALKER Sunday, September 19, 2010 • 2:00 PM Grantham Town Hall

To honor Allen for his many contributions to our town, you are invited to a gathering on September 19 to which all town residents are also invited. The Historical Society is hosting this event as our way of saying "thank you" to Allen upon whom we rely for so much of the town's "memory". Tributes by invited guests will be followed by spontaneous offerings from the audience. Refreshments will be served. Please come and offer your personal thanks to Allen.

## Update on the Grantham town history project

# HISTORY OF GRANTHAM: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

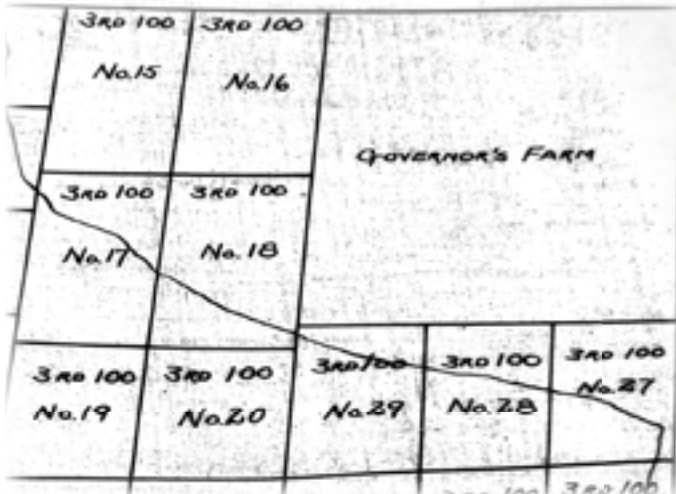
At long last, the writing of the history of Grantham has begun. And although it's in its very early stages, there's no doubt that the work is proceeding with enthusiasm and determination, even excitement.

The idea of publishing a bound history of our town is not a new one. Several histories of Grantham have been written before, including L. D. Dunbar's *History of Grantham*, Amah Howard's *Town of Grantham, New Hampshire*, and several smaller pieces in county and regional histories, and in magazines. However, it has been over thirty years since the last serious attempt was made to chronicle the town's history – and as we all know, the town has changed dramatically in the meantime.

The idea of producing a modern history of the town was first proposed in 1993, when the historical society was created. Over the years much discussion ensued but with little progress, either in terms of what form it would take or how it would be written. Recently, the historical society's executive committee recommitted itself to the effort, beginning over the winter and with work continuing into the spring. To date, a draft outline has been approved and some sections have been assigned to specific authors. Other assignments directly related to the project,

such as the assembly of appendices and the collection of historical photographs, have also been made.

However, much remains to be done. There are opportunities for writers to take on subsections from most of the chapters, depending on their interest.



Part of the original Grantham plat map with Benning Wentworth's 500 acres. Map—GHS archives

There will always be a need for researchers, who can be called upon to dig up important historical information. And anyone who has specific background in publishing could be invaluable in terms of exploring the logistics of getting this volume into print, including cost, deadlines, page layouts, etc.

And, of course, there's the ongoing appeal of original historical materials related to the town's history. Current and former residents regularly donate or loan such items as historic photographs, town records, diaries, advertisements, etc. to the society for its use. However,

having such items now, while the research portion of the project is just getting into full swing, would be invaluable. So, if you have historical items from Grantham's past, of whatever nature, please let us know so that we may at least get a copy. This will allow us to understand whatever information may be contained and incorporated into the town history.

Stay tuned for updates as this project proceeds and we better understand what will be needed to complete it accurately and professionally. As the editor I would

ask that should you want to become involved, please contact me directly at [kbyrdstory@comcast.net](mailto:kbyrdstory@comcast.net), or on my cell phone, which is 603-359-4405. We have much work to do and we look forward to getting as many townspeople involved as possible.

—Ken Story

Photo by Renee Gustafson

## 2010 DUES ARE OVERDUE!

Historical Society dues for 2010 were due on January 1, 2010. If you have not yet paid, please write a reminder to yourself to do so or cut out the form on page 3. If you are not sure whether you have paid or not, please contact our treasurer, Kathi Osgood, who will be happy to check her records. Her phone number and email address can be found on page 6. Thanks for your support!

# THE CENSUS OF 1790

It is interesting to note that as the 2010 census comes to a conclusion this year, Grantham participated in the first federal census 220 years ago.

The very first Congress wanted to know for certain how many people were in this new country.

George Washington's Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, was responsible for tabulating the first census. He ordained that only six categories nationally were to be tabulated: 1) name of head of household, 2) number of free white males over age 16, 3) number of free white males under 16, 4) number of free females, 5) other free persons and 6) slaves.

The Grantham census showed 178 males, 153 females, 1 other, and 1 slave. Three women were listed as heads of a household.

The census enumerator today is paid well to canvas the territory. In 1790, the census tabulator, Benjamin Moore, who was not from Grantham, received only 2 cents for each person tabulated. That resulted in a mere payout of \$6.68 for him, for the 333 residents counted. Enumerators were not even supplied with tally sheets; they were expected to provide their own.

It was a difficult task for Mr. Moore as many of our residents lived along Grantham Mountain. In addition, many resided on the back side of the mountain which promoted their relationship with Plainfield rather than Grantham

Of interest, the names of residents of Grantham reflected the preference of the times. They included: Ebenezer Burr, Moses Dolinor, Experience Easterbrooke, Obediah Merviel, Saluray Young, Cliphatel Adams, Bhineas Bachelor and Zarock Bloss. R.I.P.

The one slave listed in the census was the property of Robert Scott. New Hampshire was not receptive to slavery, but it was not outlawed. Only 158 slaves resided in all of New Hamp-

shire at the time, compared to 293,000 in Virginia. The black man most likely was associated with a small colony of freed slaves residing on Coit Mountain at the Croyden/Newport line.

The total count for our young nation was 3.9 million. As residents, we can be proud that our small town was part of that historic first count. The census has since been taken every ten years with the current total population projected at approximately 325 million.

Census records from 1790 to 1930 can be accessed at the Grantham Historical Society or the Town Archives. Records after 1930 are not public due to privacy concerns and the 1890 census records, destroyed in a fire, have been only partially recreated.

—Bob Champagne, Vice President GHS



Where and what was this building?  
Photo—GHS archives

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

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

New member     Annual renewal

Annual dues: (check one)

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Individual (\$10.)

Family (\$25.)

Patron/business/institution (\$50.)

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Extra contribution \_\_\_\_\_

Total check amount \_\_\_\_\_

## PEOPLE FROM THE PAST: POLLY DAVIS—1792

*Ed. Note: in future issues of the Newsletter, we plan to highlight people from Grantham's past who have been encountered during our research for The History of Grantham.*

The Rev. Eden Burroughs of Hanover Center and the Rev. Experience Estabrooks (or Easterbrooks) of New Grantham witnessed the revelations of Polly Davis of New Grantham and proclaimed them in their pamphlet "A Faithful Narrative of the Wonderful Dealings of GOD towards Polly Davis of New-Grantham, in the State of New-Hampshire", published in 1792.

Religious revivals and heightened religious experiences in Grantham have been recorded for the late 18<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries although details are few. The events that Polly relates to her minister-listeners suggest that she may have experienced the religious fervor that was going on in Grantham twenty-five years after its initial settlement and before a well-established church was present.

We know nothing of Polly except her revelations. The 1790 Grantham census indicates that the only Davis was Jeremiah Davis, the head of a household comprised of three males over the age of 16, one less than 16 and eight females. We can speculate that Polly was one of these individuals.

Polly underwent three separate religious experiences between July 1, 1790 and August 18, 1791, all of which were characterized by frightening mental imagery and rather gruesome physical ailments. Before the first one, she states that "from my youth up to my first awakening, I lived without God in the world...". On July 1, 1790, she reports that "my sins were set in order before me", accompanied by "distress and agony of soul" and "severe distress of body" that "my life was almost despaired of from day to day". After several days of intense suffering, she states that "my mind was led to a most delightful and realizing view of the entire safety of trusting in Power and Mercy...". With reference to the Psalmist and the 16<sup>th</sup> hymn of Dr. Watts's third Hymnbook\*, Polly considered herself fulfilled. This state lasted for an unknown length of time. She then found herself "joining with young people in what is usually termed civil meriment" in order not to become "an object of ridicule among them." (One wonders what type of goings-on in Grantham in 1792 were considered sinful.)

One year to the day of her first experience, Polly had a second and even more intense episode during which her family and neighbors feared for her life. She describes "being seized with convulsions" and a "cramp in her stomach". Although "speechless", she understood what others were saying to her. At the end of the episode, she appeared dead. A neighbor, however, detected a pulse; she sighed deeply and opened her eyes. She relates that she saw visions of Hell "naked before my eyes" and began to fall into the fiery pit when the "savior took me by the hand, and told me to follow him". She was led to heaven where she saw the "heavenly host" and heard "songs of praise".

Her state of improved well-being lasted until July 27, 1791 when she suffered a "cramp convulsion" accompanied by "a profuse discharge of blood from her stomach". These conditions lasted until August 18; she was not able to eat or drink during this period and, again, was thought to expire. However, at 8:00 PM on August 18, she "sprang from her bed" afterwards telling the crowd around her that a vision in white told her that she would be able to walk as soon as she got up and that "you must go up to Scott's", a homestead a mile away. The purpose of this visit was not disclosed to her. The next day she traveled to a meeting (church service) in Cornish, five miles away, and returned in good health.

Polly's ministerial male recorders indicate that following her third episode, she was "as well as usual for a female of a delicate constitution...". Among Polly's final words to the Revs. Burroughs and Estabrooks was her desire to tell people that "a sense of God's love in the heart is better than wine...".

At the remove of 220 years, what are we to make of Polly's revelations? Was she a hysterical young woman? Was she having epileptic fits? Was one of her "sins" imbibing wine in moments of "civil meriment"? We, of course, will never know. However, Polly Davis has an interesting story and may be the first Grantham resident, outside of town government officials, to have her name in a printed form that is still available to us.

—Pat Andrews

\* Isaac Watts (1674-1748) Hymn XVI (Third Hymnal):  
The Agonies of Christ

"Now let our pains be all forgot,

Our heart no more repine,

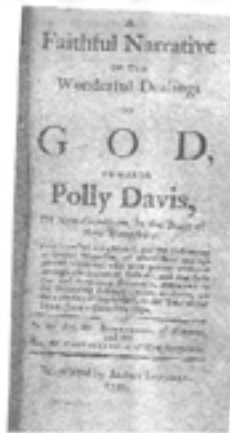
Our sufferings are not worth a thought,

When, Lord, compar'd with thine."

*Thanks to Sarah I. Hartwell, librarian at Rauner Library's Special Collections (Dartmouth College), for her assistance in obtaining a copy of Polly's story.*

### **GRANTHAM ALERT!!!!**

*We, the Grantham Historical Society, want to start a collection of "old tools" and we need your help. Please search your basement, garage, barn and any out buildings for "old tools" that you would like to donate or lend to us. If appropriate, your item will be on display with your name listed on the information card. —No tractors please!*





# NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REGIONAL BROCHURE

GHS is one of seven local historical societies that contributed to a fold-out brochure for visitors in our area interested in visiting historical societies and/or attending their events. Information about open hours, programs, exhibits and other events is provided as is a large map, noting the site of each historical society. Ron Garceau, president of the Sunapee Historical Society and publisher of Soo-Nipi magazine, produced the brochure which is available at many sites around town.

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The GHS archives holds tapes of oral history recordings dating from at least 1976 which include personal interviews as well as recordings of GHS meetings. Twenty tapes are in our collection in addition to many hours of taping done by Christina McKahan on our digital recording equipment. We have been fortunate to find a transcriptionist who is working her way through the box of tapes; about half have been transcribed to date. (She says she is learning a lot about Grantham history this way!) Two copies of each transcription are on file at GHS: one in an archival collection and another in a "working" collection that can be used for research. We expect these to be very helpful as we proceed with writing the *History of Grantham*. The following interviews are available for reading:

- Juno Pillsbury Horton .....1976
- Dennis Howard..... 1999 and 2005
- Willena Hastings Spooner ..... 2005 (GHS meeting)
- Phyllis Forest .....2005 (GHS meeting)
- Ramona Flewelling.....2006



## SUGGESTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

The on-going activities of the Grantham Historical Society are supported and accomplished primarily by the Board of Trustees. Volunteers are welcome to assist with any of the following jobs:

1. Participate in contributing to the *History of Grantham* (researchers, writers, graphic artists, fact-checkers, or by donating historical information or items)
2. Chair the Programs Committee
3. Write an article for the Newsletter
4. Assist with development of and hanging of exhibits
5. Make individual folders for the House History project
6. Help with routine housekeeping chores
7. Make signs for Collection items on display
8. Join the Collections Committee
9. Become the assistant curator for the Collections
10. Double check GHS map collection against current directory

Please speak to any member of the Board if you are interested in helping us out.



Photo by Renee Gustafson

Craig Muir and helper construct new GHS porch

## FOR SALE

### OLD INSTRUCTIONAL BOOKLETS

GHS has a collection of interesting old booklets for sale at fifty cents each. Typical examples are:

#### INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

- The Electric Car
- Electric Railway Systems
- The Slide Rule

#### US DEPT. AGRICULTURE

- House Cleaning Made Easy ..... 1921
- Farm Gardens in the North ..... 1918
- Community Bird Refuge..... 1921

#### UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

- Cheesemaking in Vermont ..... 1916
- Ice House Construction..... 1914

#### UNH EXTENSION

- Growing Watermelons in the North ..... 1901
- The Indian Tied Rug ..... 1927
- How to Select a Sound Horse..... 1919

Visit the Reney Room to see what others are available that tell us about life here in the early 20th century.

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

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2010-2011

## GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

### PRESIDENT

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

### VICE PRESIDENT

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

### SECRETARY

Christina McKahan  
P.O. Box 536  
cmckahan@truetooinnovations.com

### 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

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

Renee Gustafson  
P.O. Box 1097  
603-863-7487  
gustafson\_renee@comcast.net

### PRESIDENT EMERITUS

Allen Walker

### 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.*

Email: [granthamhistory@gmail.com](mailto:granthamhistory@gmail.com)

Website: [www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org)

## 2010-2011 CALENDAR

*Check our website and posters around town for more details.*

### October 14, 2010

Tentative Program: Allen Walker on Grantham in the Civil War.  
7:00 pm, Grantham Town Hall

### May 14, 2011

GHS ANNUAL MEETING.  
Speaker: Allen Koop, NHHC lecturer on the German prisoner of war camp in Stark, NH.

## WHAT'S NEW ON THE GHS WEBSITE

Ken Story's talk and slide show on the Cote and Reney lumber business will shortly be added to our website.

Previous programs on Draperville and the 1953 Mountain Fire are already available for viewing.

