



Washington Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2003 EDITION

President's Message

Taking a clue from the U.S. president's "State of the Union Address", I would like to comment on my perception of the "State of the Historical Society". I would say that the Washington Historical Society is in a very healthy condition. For a town of our size, attendance at meetings is outstanding. The programs that are offered are of the highest quality. Financially we are sound. We have an excellent museum. We are in a position to receive more property with a barn built in 1800. We are blessed with hard working members. What more could an organization ask for?

For me personally what stands out in my mind was the last "Mystery Meeting" in November. As we sat around the table and shared meaningful events in our lives as symbolized by the objects we displayed, punctuated with much laughter, there was in our midst a warm, nourishing human spirit. It is that spirit that gives life to our society.

However, being a human organization, we are burdened with our shortcomings and human frailties. Perhaps because we are not discouraged when we encounter these and continue as part of the society, we become part of the living history of the Washington Historical Society.

Marcellus Liotta, President

Breaking News



We are pleased and excited to be able to report to you that the Society has been given the Bruen Barn, which abuts our museum property on the east. This is a most welcome gift from the Bruen family and is greatly appreciated. We have been looking for more space for our artifacts. The timing could not have been better, because we have just received some wagons and farm equipment from a former Washington farm and had no place to store them.

We have also received an anonymous grant of \$10,000 to be used for a matching barn fund. This means that for each dollar given it will be matched up to a total of ten thousand dollars. It is our hope that we can count on you to help us achieve this goal. The barns in New England are fast disappearing and this is a pre-civil War building, which does need some preservation work, as well as some inside alterations to meet our needs.

In our spring newsletter we plan to provide a history of the barn and the results of our "Barn Fund Drive."

Jim Gaskell, Vice President

Old Mills and Quilts

Story by Gwen Gaskell

The displays at the museum this past season were about the old mills that used to be in Washington and a collection of old quilts. As most of you receiving this newsletter did not, for one reason or another, get to visit the museum, I thought and hope you will enjoy reading about it.



Old Mills

The area, now known as Pillsbury State Park, was known by different names over the years. Cherry Valley, an early name for the area has remained familiar. During the 1940s and 50s the area was called "The Reservation". It was an area of biological experiments and a game preserve of over 5,000 acres of wilderness, open to hiking and family picnics and recreation.

Early in the settlement of Washington this was farmland and was a major lumbering center. The streams were an excellent source of power and at different times 6 or more mills operated there. Whole villages popped up, a school was provided and for a few years there was even a post office. Boarding houses provided housing for the workers who were alone and there were "cottages" for those who brought their families with them.

The first mill was built about 1780 approximately 150 yards upstream from the present dam visible from Rt. 31 and the beginning of the Ashuelot River. It seems that mills were in the area for 10 to 20 years until the timber ran out. Mills would burn, due to sparks or lightning strikes and would often be rebuilt in the same place or somewhere nearby. When the timber ran out, the land would be farmed again, and then would sell again about the time the trees would have grown back. Each time trees were cut another type of tree replaced it. John May was one farmer in the area, and operated a tavern beside the Croyden Turnpike before the present entrance to the park. He later moved to the village, on the hill going out of town toward Hillsborough. Thus the names "May Pond" and "May Hill" came into being. The Butterfield Mills were operating in 1854 near the present dam site and in addition to lumber they made shingles, spade and hoe handles and probably bobbins too. They had up and down saws but did have a 36" turbine wheel, invented by George Mellen of Washington. Water passing through the turbine generated more power than could be obtained from the old water wheels. The Butterfield mills operated until about 1915. A descendent of Mr. Mellen lives in Washington today.



David Gove operated a mill at the site of the present picnic area in Pillsbury State Park. The mill was built in 1842 and operated until 1859. The boarding house remained until 1959 when it was torn down.

The Gove mills were sold in 1883 to the Cheney Company of Manchester, owned by Person C. Cheney, who had been the NH Governor 1875-1877. The company acquired more land and water privileges and began to use steam for power. They had a large operation for the time and began to manufacture boards to hold bolts of cloth for the Amoskeag Co. in Manchester. In 1905 the school and post office closed as the mill moved away, taking the workers with it.

Mr. Albert E. Pillsbury purchased the property in 1920 and gave 2,400 acres to the State of New Hampshire. He was one of the founders of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. In 1975 the state bought land adjoining both Pillsbury and Sunapee State Parks.

Today the Monadnock- Sunapee Greenway hiking trail goes through the park. There are many camping sites, other hiking trails and boating, as well as hunting and fishing. In the winter the trails are used for snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. Deer, moose and small wildlife can be enjoyed as well as loon and the beaver, which have done a great job of maintaining water levels.

Mills were also built and operated on the brook coming out of Half Moon Pond; one was a large stocking factory that made wool socks from the wool sheared from the many hundreds of sheep grazing on the steep and rocky Washington hillsides. The Dickey Mill was across from the East Washington road. There were Dole mills further down Rt. 31 and other mills on the brooks in East Washington. There were other mills as well and their story is told in the Washington history books and the booklet entitled Historic Pillsbury by Ron and Grace Jager.

Old Quilts

There were several lovely old quilts on display this summer, ranging from the early 1800s to 1976. The most sentimental was a quilt top made by Mary Elizabeth Safford when she was 4 to 8 years of age. She died when she was 11 and the back was added to it years later by her family.

A quilt with lots of Washington residents' names written on by one person, believed to have been the quilt of Mrs. Morey, who lived on the low side of "Crams Corner", was on loan to us. The very interesting and unusual thing about it was that there were Indian names listed in conjunction with local names and it was disclosed that those people had connection with the Spiritualist movement in the town in the mid to late 1800s.

Another quilt which we were fortunate enough to have loaned to the museum for the summer, was the Washington Quilt made by a group of friends, all residents of Washington in 1976, who got together weekly and shared fabric and ideas and developed squares depicting different scenes and buildings within the town. The squares were connected with navy blue fabric, which was quilted making a king size quilt. It had been raffled and the money was given to help with a project at the Congregational Church.



Quilt Documentation Project 2003. Photo by Sue Hofstetter.

There were other lovely quilts, some on loan and others owned by the society, which will be on display some other year in the near future.

Our new acquisitions are on display each season and the consignment gift shop always has items of interest and any member is welcome to contribute to the variety of items available.

I hope you will visit the museum next summer. The committee works hard to make it interesting for our guests.

The Second New Hampshire Turnpike

by Tom Talpey



Sign on the 2nd NH Turnpike in the center of Lempster, where the road turns to the southeast to head over the mountain towards Washington. Photo by the author.

As mentioned in an article in our last Newsletter, there were two turnpikes which passed through Washington in the early 1800s. The Croydon Turnpike was the subject of an essay in our Spring 2003 Newsletter. In this issue we deal with a longer road, the Second New Hampshire Turnpike, which passed through the center of Washington-entering by what is now Route 31 from Hillsboro and leaving via the present Lempster Mountain Road. The Proprietors of the Second NH Turnpike wished to provide a link for roads from Montreal and Vermont to roads passing through Amherst, NH, thus eventually leading to Boston and Portsmouth. When it was finished, the turnpike was a little over fifty miles in length and (according to the 1823 edition of Farmer & Moore's New Hampshire Gazette) cost about \$80,000 to build. The prevailing theory at the time was to build the road as straight as possible, over hill and dale, not worrying too much about the unfortunate beasts who pulled the wagons.

The State Legislature authorized the construction of the Second New Hampshire Turnpike by a charter granted on Dec. 26, 1799. Previously, the turnpike proprietors had evidently alerted towns along the proposed route and asked permission of the voters. The Town of Washington had given its approval for "a Turnpike Road leading from Windsor Bridge through this town to Amherst" in a unanimous vote at a town meeting on November 18, 1799. On the same date, the Town of Claremont had voted "to encourage a Turnpike through Claremont, Unity and Amherst." Francestown voted "not to remonstrate against the Petition for a Turnpike Road" and Antrim "voted the Town have no objection." Generally, the proposal was welcomed as a public benefit.

The southern terminus of the turnpike was at "the village green in Amherst, near the court house." At that time Amherst was the Hillsborough County seat. The turnpike road headed northwest in a straight line across the plain and up the steep slope of the Mont Vernon ridge, passing through that village and the corners of New Boston and Lyndeboro, thence through the center of Francestown and the southwest section of Deering. It crossed the northeast corner of Antrim and continued on to Hillsboro Lower Village, passing the Franklin Pierce homestead, then through Hillsboro Upper Village, the northern tip of Windsor and through the center of Washington. An article in the July 1932 issue of New Hampshire Highways magazine comments: "The straight six-mile course across this skyline township (Washington), with its fine group of old public buildings-town

house, Congregational church, school, hotel (torn down since 1932) and general store-is one of the choicest displays of turnpike scenery in the state. At the summit (of Lempster Mountain) beyond the village, the road is 1800 feet above sea level." From there it went on through Lempster, made a right turn to cross the center of Unity and thence on into Claremont, paralleling the Sugar River southwest of the center and then heading along what is now Chestnut Street, down Broad Street, across the Sugar River on a bridge east of the mills and heading out of town along North Street. Near West Claremont it again paralleled the Sugar River, this time on the northern shore, roughly along what is now Route 12.

The northern terminus of the turnpike was just north of the "Lottery Bridge," which crossed the Sugar River north and west of Claremont, about a half a mile from where it empties into the Connecticut River. There was an old New Hampshire road, which has since become Route 12A, which ran along the Connecticut River from Charlestown to the long-covered bridge crossing into Windsor, Vermont. Just south of the present intersection of routes 12 and 12A was a covered bridge known as the Lottery Bridge, built with funds generated by a public lottery about 1785. In 1892 it was replaced by an ordinary type bridge and today a modern concrete and steel bridge spans the Sugar River there. Judging from an old map of Claremont, made in 1805, the turnpike ended near this intersection with the public road (now Route 12A), just north of the old Lottery Bridge.



Lottery Bridge, across the Sugar River in West Claremont. The 2nd NH Turnpike terminated just north of this bridge where it joined an existing road, which ran long the Connecticut River. Photos of this bridge are hard to come by as it was replaced in 1892. The roof of the bridge is barely visible as a long white line in the center of the picture. Photo courtesy of Colin Sanborn from the Claremont Historical Society collection.

The State Charter also set various requirements. The right-of-way was to be four rods wide and the proprietors were given the right, by State law, to take land when necessary to lay out their route. And they were given the right to erect toll gates along the road, placed wherever the proprietors wished but generally spaced about 8 to 10 miles apart. Tolls could not be charged over any section until a minimum of \$800 per mile had been spent on that section (vs. \$600 in the case of the Croydon Turnpike) and the first tolls were levied in 1801. A provision in the charter mandated an accounting of expenditures every ten years to the court, which could adjust the tolls to keep the net profits between 6% and a maximum of 12%. (Croydon Turnpike profits were limited to 9% but neither turnpike ever came close to these limits.) Tolls per mile for the most part were identical to those given in our Spring issue for the Croydon Turnpike, except that for every ten sheep or swine they were set by the State Charter at one cent and for ten cattle or horses at two cents, twice as high as the State later set for the Croydon.

As on all the New Hampshire turnpikes, the Corporation was not permitted "to demand toll of any person, who shall be passing with his horse or carriage to or from public worship, or with his horse, team or cattle or on foot, to or from any mill, or on the common and ordinary business of family concerns within the same town."
(Quoted from the State Charter.)

If my reckoning is correct, there were a total of nine tollgates on the Turnpike. According to the History of Mont Vernon (published in 1907 by a committee of the town), the first one north of Amherst "was in the north-westerly part of Mont Vernon, and was kept by James McCauley forty years." There were two tollgates in Francestown, one at each end of town. The southern one, according to J. R. Schott's History of Frances' Town (1972), was "a little south of the Duncklee Homestead near the corner where a road branches off and proceeds to New Boston." The northern one in Francestown was located just below Gibson's Tavern, where its cellar hole can still be seen on the western side of the road. The next one was in West Deering at the junction of Holton Crossing Road, just before the turnpike crossed the Contoocook River, according to Evangeline Klee Poling in Welcome Home to Deering, NH, published in 1977 by the Deering National Bicentennial History Committee. The road then passed through Hillsboro Lower Village, through Hillsboro Upper Village and at the junction with Stowe Mountain Road another gate was originally erected. However, because travelers took to diverting onto Cooledge Road a little south of there in order to avoid the toll, it was moved south to a location between the Lower and Upper Villages just north of the cemetery. A photograph of the toll gate property, as it looked in 1983, appears near the end of this article. The original toll gatherer's house (which has since been torn down) is at the right side of the picture and it is evident that the structure had been refinished and added onto a number of times.

I have not been able to find documentation of a tollgate on this turnpike in the Town of Washington, although in the 1805 map collection in the State Archives a gate is shown nearby in Lempster, near Richardson Brook, on the Washington side of Lempster Mountain. (Also cited in the History of Lempster published in 2000 by "A Gentleman at Harvard") No traces of this tollgate apparently exist. Northwest of this, in Unity, a toll gate was kept by Daniel Bingham and is thought to have been located on the west side of the road just up the hill from the present Will's General Store. The original toll gatherer's record book of this gate is preserved at the NH Historical Society's Tuck Library in Concord and is discussed further below. (For some reason, which I have not been able to fathom, this was called "toll gate #5" in the record book, although it appears to have been the eighth one north of Amherst.) There was also a tollgate in Claremont, which, according to James Romer of the Unity Historical Society, was located where there is presently a brick house on the north side of Chestnut Street just before its junction with Broad Street. These are all the tollgates which I have been able to document, although there may well have been others. Colin Sanborn of the Claremont Historical Society thinks there may have been another one near West Claremont, but I have not been able to verify this. Unfortunately, it is difficult to piece together the detailed history of the Turnpike Corporation as the corporate records of the company have been lost or mislaid, although they were known to exist in 1937 and were inventoried at that time in a Historical Records Survey by the WPA. According to the Turnpike's Charter, the directors were required to file an accounting every ten years with the Hillsborough County Superior Court and a search of those records, more meticulous than I have been able to do, although tedious, might yield some useful information.

The Second New Hampshire Turnpike formed part of the main route from Boston to Montreal, via Burlington, VT. The fare from Boston to Windsor, VT in 1827 was \$4 and Boston to Burlington was \$10, plus of course meals and lodging along the route. The trip to Burlington took 4 days, with overnights in Francestown, NH, Royalton, VT, and Burlington. And the trip was no picnic. The stage left Boston at 7 a.m., arrived in Francestown at 6 p.m., left the next morning at 4 a.m. and left Royalton at 4 a.m. the following day, arriving in Burlington at 4 p.m.-provided the stagecoach was on time. The ride was anything but smooth and there were frequent stops for fresh horses and meals, probably a welcome respite for the passengers. In bad weather passengers occasionally might have to walk while the horses pulled the carriage up a steep hill along a muddy road. In good weather the dust of the road was frequently a nuisance. The carriages held six to ten passengers, with their luggage strapped behind or on top, and were pulled by teams of four to six horses. It is interesting to

note that one of the proprietors of this line to Burlington was Edmund Lawrence of Washington, whose father, William, once kept tavern in town and was an early proprietor and at one time Treasurer of the Croydon Turnpike Corp.



Roadbed of the 2nd NH turnpike, reputed to be somewhere near Hillsborough Upper Village, before the advent of automobiles. Note the carriage wheel tracks. Courtesy of the NH Historical Society Tuck Library.

An amusing incident is related in G. Waldo Browne's 1921 *History of Hillsborough, NH*: "...the stage stopped as usual at the post-office at Francestown. It took longer than common to change the mail, or the driver [Edwin Foster] had an extra story to tell, for the three spirited spans of horses became uneasy, and started off at the top of their speed with eight or ten passengers aboard. Upon hearing the thundering of the wheels the driver rushed out of the post-office to see the coach just disappearing behind a cloud of dust in the distance. Without hesitation Foster commandeered the nearest team from among the dozen or so hitched in the yard, and gave furious pursuit. It proved he had taken a fleet horse, but do the best he could it was impossible for him to get near enough to stop the runaways until Gibson's tavern had been reached, fully three miles on the route. According to custom the well-trained stage horses turned into the yard and swung as accurately along the side of the stone steps as if they had been guided by their master. There they stopped with their usual abruptness, and not one of the passengers knew of the runaway until told."

The Old Farmers' Almanac of 1818 gives a list of stage stops along the route to Vermont. Near Washington, with the names of the tavern keepers, were

Franeestown	Gibson
Hillsboro	McNeil
"	Philbrick
Washington	Farnsworth

Lempster	Brainard
Unity	Chase

In the book by J. R. Schott, the Gibson Tavern is described as elegant and "widely known for its boisterous atmosphere, where mugs of flip and gills of rum were gaily dispensed, and where dancing and other entertainments were continually provided the exhausted traveler and fun-seeking local." This former tavern is now on the Tory Pines Resort property in Francestown. The Hillsboro stop was probably at what is now the Franklin Pierce Homestead, where John McNeil, Benjamin Pierce's son-in-law, kept tavern for many years. In the center of Washington, at the Lovell House, operated at the time by David Farnsworth, travelers could transfer to the Croydon Turnpike if they wished to proceed towards Dartmouth or if they stayed on the Second NH Turnpike they could stop at the Brainard Tavern in Lempster. (Capt. Brainard later ran a tavern, which burned down in 1833, at the junction of the 2nd NH and Croydon Turnpikes in Washington.) The tavern kept by Mr. Chase in Unity has recently been restored and now houses the Unity Town Offices, the Unity Free Library and the Unity Historical Society. It can be seen behind the firehouse in the center of Unity. Upstairs, running across the whole building in front of the present library, is a large room which was the ballroom of the original tavern and no doubt the scene of many a gay evening.

The record book of Daniel Bingham, the toll gatherer in Unity, yields some interesting facts. The first few pages are missing, but the daily tolls collected at the gate from 1803 through 1824 are listed, with monthly audits signed by the Treasurer of the Turnpike Corporation, Josiah Stevens. Totals for the months of January and February were generally the highest, in the early years in the neighborhood of \$200 per month. This may have been due to the ease of sled travel in winter months compared to wagon or coach travel at other times. With farm work at a lower level in the winter the transport of farm products may have been easier and more convenient at that time. Consistently, from year to year, the lowest tolls were collected in April, sometimes not even totaling \$8 per month. (Was this perhaps due to "mud season" even way back then?) The first four years of this record the annual totals were in the neighborhood of \$1000, but beginning in 1807 they started to fall and by 1812 they averaged just slightly over \$400 per year and remained at about that level or lower to the end of the book. It is tempting to speculate that this may have been due to the opening of the Croydon Turnpike about that time, which may have provided a "shortcut" to the northern sections of Vermont and Canada with perhaps lower tolls and diverted some of the 2nd NH Turnpike's traffic. Toll totals for other gates have not been found, but by extrapolation it would appear that the total tolls gathered over the whole turnpike road might have been just under \$9000 per year. This doesn't seem profitable enough for an estimated initial cost of \$80,000, considering the upkeep of nearly 60 miles of road and bridges, wages for toll gatherers, salaries for the officers and directors and possibly dividends to investors.

Due to lack of profits and tolls the Second New Hampshire Turnpike thus fell into disrepair and on July 4, 1837, its charter was repealed by the State and tolls were no longer able to be charged. The roads then became the responsibility of the towns through which they passed but subsequently the State took over maintenance of most of them. Washington town records indicate that the town took over "putting the road in suitable repair" at a town meeting in August 1837 and at another town meeting in March of 1838 "voted to accept the report of the selectmen on the subject of laying a road on the ground of the old 2nd NH Turnpike." In many towns stretches of the road are still labeled "2nd NH Turnpike" even though deviations have been made. Parts of the route taken through Washington by the turnpike road can still be seen, although improvements in route 31 and Lempster Mountain Road have altered its course here and there. Similar remarks can be made about other towns along the turnpike's route, although careful observation will reveal many long, straight sections typical of early turnpike design and construction. This is particularly true along the old route near Francestown and south to Amherst, with allowances for the deviations of modern highways to avoid steep grades.

In addition to the people mentioned above, I want to express my appreciation to Gwen Gaskell, who provided inspiration for the article and to Marcellus Liotta, who accompanied me on several excursions while researching the route of the turnpike.



The accompanying photo was taken at the Mont Vernon Historical Society Museum in a tour arranged by Sandra Kent, their Curator, for Tom Talpey and Marcellus Liotta, whose hand can be seen depositing a (modern) penny in the box. The little tin box was given to the Daland Library by Clarence Shedd, through the courtesy of Frank and Bernice Blood, and eventually found its way to the Mont Vernon Historical Society. It is reputed to be the box used to collect tolls at the tollgate near the town line between Mont Vernon and New Boston. According to the History of Mont Vernon, published by the Town in 1907, this was the first tollgate north of Amherst. Local lore has it that the gate was tended by Hitty Cole, a Portuguese woman hired by the official toll gatherer, James McCauley who lived nearby. The toll was three cents for pedestrians and six cents for carriages or teams. A letter from Mr. Shedd states:

"The Toll Gate was located right near the road, not way over to the [Trundy] cottage which was built after the toll gate was discontinued. The Hitty place was a little old, never painted, wood colored house, and Hitty sat at the window faithfully and watched the road up and down to see that no team sneaked by without a toll pay. Hitty smoked a TD pipe filled with strong tobacco mixed with dried tea leaves." Hitty lived at the gate long after the turnpike was discontinued.

Following the Museum visit, Mont Vernon Historical Society Vice President Russell Stacy took Marcellus and Tom on a short walking tour of the center of town. He pointed out the route of the turnpike as it came up the hill from the plain towards Amherst, through the center of town and northwest towards Frankestown. The former roadbed of the turnpike is now overgrown with shrubs and rather large trees, but the bordering stone walls, spaced four rods apart, are still in evidence. The road is quite steep at this point and there was a small stream

meandering down the roadbed, which must have made for frequent washouts of the traveled surface and consequent difficulties for the horse teams.



Former toll collector's house along what is now route 31 below the Pine Hill Cemetery in Hillsborough Upper Village. The original house has since been torn down. Photo courtesy of Gloria Houlton Lugtig who grew up in the original house at the right of the picture.



The Gibson Tavern, along the old 2nd NH Turnpike north of Francistown, as it looks today. The left-hand

section may have been added later. It is now called the Tory Pines Resort, and is a public golf club and inn. Across the road and a short distance south is an old cellar hole, which may have been the location of the toll collector's house and tollgate. Photo by the author.



Route of the 2nd NH Turnpike (now Route 31) as it entered Washington from the south, up May's Hill. The large barn at the far right in the picture is next to the Historical Society's Museum. The barn was formerly a carriage house museum created by Edward Bruen, a long-time member of the Society. It has recently been deeded to the Society as a gift from the Bruen family. Circa 1900 from a postcard in the Washington Historical Society's collection.

Dog Pelter -- Quoted verbatim from the *History of Antrim* by W. R. Cochrane (1880):
In 1793 the distinguished office of "Dog Pelter" was instituted in this town, Hon. John Duncan, Samuel Dinsmore, James McAllister, and Dea. Joseph Boyd being elected to that responsible position. The duty of this officer was to sit near the door with a cudgel, and lay it on to every dog which attempted to enter the church. Sometimes these officers were armed with a long staff having an iron point, or hook, at the end, to be used in severe cases. It is related that one dog pelter struck the hook into the back of a rebellious cur, and swung him, howling, over his shoulder. This would be very interesting to the audience and helpful to religion, of course. An occasional wake-up in the process of a two-hour sermon would certainly have its uses... It will be observed that some of the most responsible men in town were promoted to this office. The salary is not mentioned. But these men were willing to remain in office year after year, as the annual record is, "Voted to continue the old Dog Pelters." The fact that these men's pews were near the doors, may account, in part, for their annual election to this office of trust and honor. Dogs were plenty, every farmer having one or more. They made considerable disturbance in church, with a dogfight in the aisles at any time possible, and various uncleanly demonstrations at the corners of the pews. To prevent these insupportable trials, dog-pelters were first chosen But the object of silence was scarcely attained, since often all business had to stop through a tremendous howling, till the officers cleared the aisles. One person remembers seeing Samuel Dinsmore, who sat with a heavy cane leaning over his pew by the west porch, when a big dog came in and proposed to stop a minute at his pew door, strike him a blow that sent him, with inconceivable yells and howls, clear up to the pulpit. The audience were all waked up!

