

Washington Historical Society Newsletter

SPRING 2006 EDITION

President's Message

We are ready for another busy summer. The Program Committee has come up with a great list of speakers (any suggestions you have for speakers are appreciated). The Museum Committee will soon be assembling this year's display. The Barn Committee and other dedicated individuals have worked hard to restore the barn for your enjoyment.

Please remember that the museum, old school house and barn are for everyone to view. I would like to personally thank all of the people who have donated items to the Society. Gwen Gaskell and I have recorded them in the museum's database and several of the items will be included in the displays this summer. If you have new neighbors or visitors who are interested in the museum, barn, or school please call Gwen Gaskell, Tom Talpey or myself and we will be happy to accommodate you in seeing the museum during off hours.

Have you ever been in the old school house on the East Washington road? It is interesting for adults and children to see how schools actually looked over one hundred years ago. Old teaching tools are included for viewing. We need your help. Once again volunteers are needed for our open house hours during the summer. Give it a try; it's a lot of fun! You will meet new people and also be able to do a little research for your own personal enjoyment. There are a handful of folks that can always be counted on but they need a break. You can sign up for a few hours or several, your involvement will be greatly appreciated. A short orientation will be held at the museum Saturday, June 17 at 2 P.M., please mark it on your calendar.

Our society is open to all. We have several members from neighboring towns and new members and visitors are always welcome to our WHS potluck dinner held the second Monday night of the month, April - November at Camp Morgan Lodge, next to Millen Pond, in Washington. The dinner is held at 6 P.M.; there is an open meeting at 7 P.M.; and our program starts at 7:30 P.M.

At the end of this fiscal year, in August, I will have served as President for two years. The Nominating Committee has chosen Bob Evans to carry on. It is healthy for an organization such as ours to change leadership every few years. I look forward to working for the Society in another capacity after our Annual Meeting in August.

There will always be a need for volunteers and tax-deductible funds so please remember your Washington Historical Society.

Sincerely,

Charley Eastman

Charlene (Charley) Eastman, President, Washington Historical Society

WHO WAS WALDO?

Waldo Farnsworth b. Dec. 19, 1885, d. Oct. 10, 1960

Compiled and written by Gwen Gaskell

Photos all courtesy of Charlotte "Stubby" Graves. Photographers unknown.



Farnsworth Brothers

Waldo was the third child born to Elgin and Ida Farnsworth. He was a farmer, musician, and most of all a friend to everyone who knew him. He grew up and lived his whole life in Washington at the brick home built by his great grandfather, Daniel Farnsworth, at the north end of Millen Pond. His brother Caroll (b.1884, d.1986) also grew up and lived most of his long life in Washington and he enjoyed corresponding with friends after moving to Washington State to live with his son. Their older brother, Leroy, left Washington after he was married and moved with his wife to Africa as a missionary.



Waldo with a truck full of kids. Can you spot our Secretary, Ken Eastman? There are three other present members of our Society in the picture as well. (We now expect a flood of letters or email from people who knew Waldo, perhaps with anecdotes to relate!)

Through the courtesy of Charlotte "Stubby" Graves, I am going to share some of the memories of Waldo that his brother Carroll related to her. Quoting Carroll:

Musical Saw: "Waldo had an ear for music. He began to show his talent when we both got violins from Sears Roebuck. He nearly always kept both in tune. We really enjoyed it if someone would accompany us on Mother's old pedal organ. It was usually my part to play the tune, while he played the tenor or alto.

"However, it happened one day that he heard a man making some kind of a tune on a carpenter's saw. He decided that was what he would like to do, if he could find the saw. He began trying out saws, finding that no two were alike. He went to large stores and asked if he might try their saws, which they seemed glad to allow, evidently hoping to sell one, but he did not find one that suited him. In our hometown he stopped by a big house where the owner had a few items for sale and there were two or three saws. As soon as Waldo touched one of them he knew it was the one he was looking for and bought it then and there. For years after it was the only instrument he used. I have seen him seat himself before a crowd of hundreds and play a solo without the slightest error in tone. For an extra, he would tune pianos for \$5.00."



Waldo with his musical saw, giving a concert, with his brother Carroll on the violin and cousin Lessie Farnsworth White at the organ in the background. (We have no record of whatever became of his famous saw.)

[Ken Eastman recalls as a young child evenings when sweet notes would waft over the waters of Millen Pond from Waldo sitting alone out in a boat playing his musical saw. We wonder whether anyone ever recorded the music from Waldo's saw. -- ed.]

Cutting Ice: "In the early days, before refrigerators had come, at our place near the shore of Millen Pond, there was one job that we really had to wait for, that was cutting ice. The pond had to freeze and ice had to get thicker day by day and night by night until the ice was at least a foot thick. It was always hoped by we boys, that it would remain a good skating area till after the ice was cut but it very seldom did. Several inches of snow would cover it all, making it necessary to borrow a wooden scraper for the horse to drag to remove the snow. We also had to borrow the ice plow, ice saw and chisel from a neighbor. (Probably neighbors worked together to fill all the icehouses in the neighborhood. Many hands make light work.) The plow was hand-operated, till the area was marked out in shallow cuts, just showing where the deeper ones were to be. The horse then usually took [over] the pulling, making about three round trips across for each cut 6" deep. It seemed the longest part of the job, but it paid in time saved as the ice chisel would split most cakes on the cut lengthwise. The size of the ice

cakes was 14 X 28 inches, usually about a foot thick. The plow had an attachment on its side that would run in the 1" cut while the next one was made.



Waldo supervising the cutting of ice on Millen Pond.

As soon as the plowing was done a hole was chopped in a near corner where the saw was to cut along the ends of the first row of blocks, the key block at the end was next cut and pulled out, this made it so we could saw to the other end of this first row of blocks. Soon as the first row was out, then things looked a lot easier. Often 20 or more were set afloat at once, ready for the chisel to split them into single cakes. Dad usually was at the icehouse to pack the blocks in sawdust or hay for insulation, as the team delivered them. Waldo usually did the work with the horses in getting it from the pond to the icehouse. As the area opened up it was steady work to keep the cakes pulled out and away from the water as too many near the edge would settle the ice and water would come up on top and freeze the cakes down, though they were always set on end. The last time I helped the horses had no part in it. Even the plow was drawn by a small truck; I operated that while Waldo held the plow. As a cut was made, a shift into reverse took the place of turning around at each end."

Black fly control: "I was quite impressed that my brother Waldo came the nearest to knowing how to control black flies! He found that they were always attracted to anything jet-black. If he were to do hoeing in the garden, he would take along an empty 5 gal. can coated with a thin layer of black tar, set it bottom side up near his work area. Soon hundreds or even thousands would get stuck till he had to put on more sticky stuff to be sure of getting another layer of pests. He also sewed a 6" strip of screen to the brim of his straw hat, which he put tar on and seldom got a fly on his face. He wore an old white shirt too."

Maple sugaring: "Waldo loved the spring and maple sugaring. The best part of it all to him was the sugaring off parties he would put together in the summer for all of his many young friends around the pond. A sugaring-off party in the middle of the summer is something that probably no one but Waldo knew how to conduct. All the little folks seemed to know just when to be present to get their share of the out-of-season tastes of maple sugar in the cold gummy pieces from the surface of snow made from the cake of shaved ice or scraped and tamped as snow into containers or boxes. First Waldo would have to boil the syrup to the proper consistency so it would make "leather aprons" on the snow. The children would then scoop it up with sticks, spoons, forks or fingers to enjoy the delicious sweetness."



Waldo about to dribble some maple syrup into a bucket of "snow" (shaved ice) in the summertime.

Dam repair: "My brother Waldo knew that the Millen Pond dam needed some minor repairs and planned to do it himself. There was always too much water near the dam, with the small streams always coming from the pond. The pond was low so he decided to put in a sandbag dam a couple of rods above the bridge crossing. The night after getting the sandbags in and the stream entirely stopped, it not only rained but poured and the pond raised several inches and thus got a stream started around the near end, and soon a swift one running in front and under the abutment on that side which began to settle a bit and tipped forward, then fell into the running stream, thus leaving that end of the bridge with no abutment. Next morning Waldo hurriedly got into his little truck and drove down to see how things had held, even onto the bridge, which quickly went down with the truck almost standing on end! He got out without being hurt, but had to get the lifting outfit up to get the truck out. A new cement abutment had to be made with a better foundation and some repair to the bridge." (memory dated 10-20-1982)

Building with brick: "There was much activity in the old town after it was incorporated under the name of Washington. By 1830 there were nearly 1200 residents and some very fine houses were built during these prosperous years. A fine one was near the upper end of the lake that took his name. Millen. Millen was a brick maker and had his kilns there, so he could get sand and clay easily from the pond. The pond having no permanent dam, there evidently was a road along the low-water shoreline. About this time Daniel Farnsworth became the owner of the land previously owned by Proctor at the other end of the pond and began to build a nice frame house and ordered some thousands of bricks to sheath it with instead of boards, the bricks to come from the Millen pond kilns. During this time of hauling bricks, something happened that seems to be authentic. A man with a pair of oxen and an old two-wheeled cart [found that] it was a hard pull along the shore. They would soon get away from the shore so he decided to stop for a moment's rest for the team. He left for a moment but being near the water's edge and very thirsty the oxen turned into the water and the grade pushed them and the load under water. The driver heard the commotion and ran and jumped in, unyoked the oxen, saving them, the cart and some bricks. The rest must still be on the bottom of the pond."



Waldo standing in his doorway in the brick house at the south end of Millen Pond. 1943

Road building: "Millen pond was a beautiful pond with lots of springs and there were very nice fish too. There were rumors that there would be a road sometime along the northwest side and with that prospect there were several people wanting to build. In 1910 it was voted to spend a thousand dollars for the road project. Folks really laughed about what kind of road a mile and a quarter long that amount of cash would make.

First the selectmen looked the ground over setting stakes in some places, almost making a trail through the woods. My dad seemed the only one who was ready to try his luck at this figure. There were technicalities as each property owner had to deed a right of way across, with a reverting clause, if such ever ceased to be used as a road, it would then revert to the former owner, his heirs and assigns.

We boys were on the job even before Dad had the contract. Why were we in such a hurry? One thing, it would shorten the trip to town by a mile. When we were sure, we began blasting and clearing the marked trail of trees and rocks. The local surveyor had been called to find and record the direction of the road and register distance between curves, wooden pins marked the middle of the road, where the curves began. A total of 400 rods, he found. Our road crew for a while was brother Waldo, one hired man and me. Dad was away with the team getting some things needed, planks for at least 4 bridges, a rock lifting gadget which would lift a five ton rock, a ten or twelve foot tripod which had to be set over each stone to be lifted.

Blasting was our way of removing rocks, rather slow but pieces could be used filling holes and gullies. Drilling was slow too, as it took the three of us to drill each hole. My brother usually held the drill while we two did the hammering with heavy sledgehammers. Every few minutes the powdered stone had to be removed, a long-handled metal spoon was often used but Waldo's inventive mind soon found something better. A piece of 1-inch tin pipe, with one or two good puffs of breath down it took all the powder out, his hand kept the dust from his eyes. Gunpowder was the first blasting material, a fuse set into the powder then was tamped in very solidly. It was then ready for the match to touch the fuse, then all would run and wait for a big boom and watch the pieces fly in the air. The town road agent said he had plenty of dynamite so a change came soon. We liked this as there was very little tamping, only a detonating cap had to be put on the fuse end. The season went, road finished and approved on time. An automobile or two tried it out, but none were then owned by residents of the town until 1911. Dad said he did not lose money on it and was really pleased."

Memories of others: Charlotte "Stubby" Crandall Graves has spent her life on Millen Pond every summer and many weekend and vacations in the off seasons too. She says: "First and foremost, if you were to take a poll of the people who have lived or spent time at Millen Pond and ask them to give 3 memories, I bet that 99% of the people would mention at least one memory that centered around Waldo. He was probably the single most common connection between all ages!"

Like most children on the lake, I loved going on the milk route with Waldo and getting to the farm before milking so I could play hide and seek with some of the other kids from around the lake. There's nothing that can compare to scrambling up the ladder to the hayloft and hiding in the sweet-smelling new mown hay! I can't begin to guess how many children he taught to milk a cow, but imagine most all of them liked doing it as much as I did!



Waldo's house on Millen Pond, before the outbuildings were taken down and the large trees had finished their days.

Waldo had a big wooden chest with a metal liner, which held many cakes of ice that he had cut from the pond in the winter, after Lessie (Waldo's cousin who lived with him) helped him put the milk into bottles in the milk room, they were put in the chest to cool.

Not infrequently, we kids were all set to climb onto the truck and Waldo would discover that something was wrong. Never fazed, he always had a ready supply of wire and had the problem solved in no time. People used to claim that if you gave Waldo some bailing wire and twine he could fix anything.

There were always cats and kittens around the farm and Waldo would generously let me "borrow" a kitten or two for a day as my parents weren't as enamored with them as I was. Similarly he occasionally let me have one of his horses for a few hours. There was no danger of me falling off of a plow horse that took lots of prodding to go a short distance.

Waldo was a devout Seventh Day Adventist and the church was a very important part of his life. I don't ever recall seeing him work or drive between sundown Friday and sundown Saturday. He was frequently seen walking down the road on Saturday to visit some of the children he so thoroughly enjoyed.

We on the pond were especially blessed to hear him playing his saw out in a boat on calm clear evenings and if it didn't interfere with his Sabbath, he often played at some events in the Town Hall.

One of my most vivid memories is seeing Waldo walking down our road, carrying a huge bouquet of June Pinks the day Jim and I got married. To this day, 55 years later, whenever we are at camp in June and the June Pinks are out, I never fail to think of Waldo and his wonderful gift."

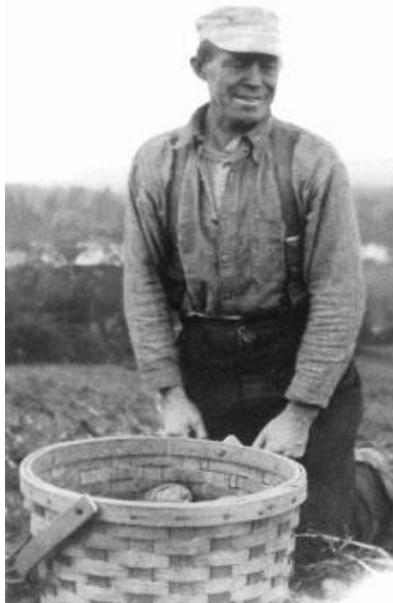
In the book "The Camps of Millen Pond" Barbara Woods shared an article she had written for the Christian Science Monitor in Sept. of 1947. These are some of the ways she described Waldo: "A lender or giver of anything from a ladder, to oarlocks, ice, vegetables, also a handyman." "Slow of speech and slower of action", "True Blue", "Favorite hobbies, cats and children, who cluster about him like so many grapes on a vine."

In the same book Alice Johnson said: "He was also famous for his sweet peas, Van Fleet roses and Dahlias, some as big as dinner plates. His pond lilies were a wonderful sight--he planted them in wooden tubs and barrels, well weighted down with rocks near his shore close to the bridge."

Everyone who knew Waldo knew of his wonderful vegetable garden and the "honor system" he had for people to help themselves and "settle up at the end of the season". His early pearl corn was the best and he loved planting, growing and harvesting potatoes up on the hill.

Gwen's memories: I remember Waldo for the many kindnesses to children, especially in the winter when there were no "pond kids" to entertain him. He would soak some wood ashes with kerosene in old sap buckets, put a couple of logs out on the ice for benches, near some of the buckets, then he would come out to the village to collect as many kids as he could to go ice skating. The buckets would be lit on fire for light and to warm cold hands. Waldo would tighten laces for anyone needing help and teach any of us to skate if we weren't getting the hang of it.

I wonder how many of the "Pond girls" would admit to getting a silver dollar when they reached 100 pounds or how many of them were embarrassed because they didn't know how to handle being given 3 roses with a note that said that each rose stood for one little word? How many hundred kids were offered a chocolate out of the pocket of his "not too clean" jacket pocket and ate it! Waldo was kind and completely "harmless" and all of our parents knew it. In today's world he might have been looked upon a bit differently. Many of us are thankful that we grew up when we did.



Waldo harvesting potatoes in his garden, Millen Pond in the background.

The Lord loved Waldo and took him to his reward while he was doing one of his favorite things, digging potatoes in the fall of 1960.

Breaking News (Beede House Move)

By Tom Talpey

Photos courtesy of the Shedd Free Library

By the time you read this, the "little red house" across from the Shedd Free Library will have been moved to its new home -- 100 feet west of its long time residence on North Main Street. The land that it stood on has been donated by the Beede family to create part of a new Wayside Park and larger parking lot for the Library. The Beedes have plans to restore it, maintaining its historic appearance and use it as a vacation cabin. It had become known locally as "The Parsonage" denoting its use in 1915 by Rev. John Henry Sargent and his new bride, Violet Viall, and again in 1933 by Rev. Kenneth L. Palmer and his bride Olive Giles. Both of these wives had close Washington ties, as readers will remember from the account in our Fall 2005 issue.

This Summer at the Museum (Summer Camps)

Have you ever heard the names Camp Washington, Camp Mahajo, Camp Tapawingo, Camp Hilltop or North Star Camp and Camp Morgan, or do you know that there was an American Youth Hostel in Washington?? We know that most of you will be saying yes to Camp Morgan but will be wondering about the others. They have all been in Washington over the years and of course Camp Morgan did last the longest, thus we have the most information on it, but they are all interesting. There will be maps as well as any pictures we can find or might have loaned to us, for the main display at the museum this summer. We have new things given to us, which will also be on display and we hope all of you will come by to see the displays which the committee will be putting a lot of work into very soon. As an added bonus, this summer there will be displays at the recently renovated barn next door with interesting displays and artifacts of the town too. We will look forward to seeing you and your friends.

Regular museum hours are Wednesday and Saturday, 2:00 to 4:00 PM.

The Slaughter Wheel

By Phil Barker

Nearly a year ago I got a call from a man in Deering, Marshall Winokur, who told me that he was selling his property and that Ron Jager had given him my name.

He had a barn with many "things" that he had to clean out, and he had heard about what our Historical Society was doing with the "Barn". He wanted to know if we would be interested in some of his things. So I went right down, without even conferring with the Board of Directors, the Archivist, or the Acquisition folks. I figured that being the Founder of the Society gave me as much interest and knowledge of what would interest us as anyone. I reported to the necessary people when I got back. Mr. Winokur was under pressure to clean everything out of his barn and needed to know what we wanted in order to find other people to take more of it. I saw enough so that I told him that we would take everything and free him of the burden. He and his wife also made the excess from their home available to us. Many nice things are now in the barn and museum thanks to their generosity. There were nine pickup truck loads and a big trailer load.

Now back to the original intent of this story. One of the larger items in the barn, and one that attracted my interest was the slaughter wheel. This is an eight-foot diameter wooden wheel on a twelve-foot wooden shaft

about eight inches in diameter. And it has wood bearings on each end. This was mounted overhead in a slaughterhouse for the purpose of hoisting animal carcasses for dressing. It would also be used to raise and lower hogs into the scalding tank for debristeling. This item I knew could be incorporated into our 'barn'. And I was eager to do it.

And now it is there! After it sat on the floor for a while (in the way). I recruited some help one night and with some equipment it was easily hoisted up into place. This was also a necessary step in order to get measurements and figure out the method of mounting, since some timberwork and joinery would be involved. My original thoughts were not going to work because the shaft was about twelve inches too short. Thus different plans were made. Now we needed two 8x8x14' timbers. Low and behold the wind blew and down came two of Jim and Gwen's big dooryard Spruce trees. Now we had the materials for the timbers and they were sawed out with Jim's help. In two different sessions Jim helped me with the joinery and the hoisting into place and fastening of the timbers and their supports. Then Jim stained the system with a special mix to match the patina of the barn interior. So now we have a fully functional Slaughter Wheel in our Museum Barn



Slaughter wheel mounted in the barn. Photo by Jim Gaskell.

In our next issue--the kitchen.

The Devil's Chair

By Phil Barker

Photos by Tom Talpey, Sept. 21, 1996



"THE DEVIL'S CHAIR" is a huge irregular boulder setting in a nest of smaller boulders which broke off of the end of the ledge on the west end of Codman Hill during prehistoric times. When it came down it rolled 90 degrees upright into the position that it is now in creating the image of the 'chair back'. It is perhaps 30-40 feet high in a picturesque setting close to the bank of the Ashuelot River. There is also a cavern created underneath the chair from the way that it sits in the boulders, referred to as "THE DEVIL'S DEN". We have had 13 people in this cavern on an excursion of Historical Society members, Sept. 21, 1996.



Phil Barker and Kitty West rediscovered The Devil's Chair from folklore and research about 25 years ago. They also relocated Serpent Rock, Compass Rock, a boulder that was mentioned as a landmark in the original Town

Boundary Survey and a Beech tree that was an original boundary corner when the first Ranges and Lots were laid out in the early 1700's for "Monadnock #8" (Washington).

By Special Request: Recipe courtesy of Phil Barker

At one of our potluck suppers last fall someone brought a delicious and unusual dish. Betty Talpey went around and asked each lady present whether she had made it, but none admitted to it. Finally she stood up, waved the empty dish in the air and asked aloud "Who brought this?" Phil Barker confessed and was immediately asked for the recipe.

Glazed Parsnips and Pears

You'll find onion jam in the specialty section of the store. Orange marmalade is a quick-and-easy alternative.

Prep: 25 minutes	Cook: 30 Minutes
2 lb. Parsnips (6-8)	Sea salt
1 lb. Pears (about 3)	Cracked black pepper
1/2 stick butter (1/4 cup)	1/2 of a lemon
2 4-inch sprigs fresh rosemary	
1 13-oz. jar sweet onion jam, roasted garlic and onion jam or orange marmalade (1 cup)	

1. Peel and quarter parsnips lengthwise (if pieces are large at the top, halve larger pieces again lengthwise). In a very large saucepan cook parsnips, covered, in lightly salted boiling water for 5-8 minutes or until barely tender; drain. Meanwhile, core pears and cut into thin wedges.
2. In a very large cast-iron skillet or nonstick skillet cook parsnips and pears in butter over medium heat for 15 minutes or until the pieces turn golden brown, stirring occasionally. Remove leaves from rosemary sprigs. Stir jam and leaves from rosemary sprigs into mixture in skillet. Bring to boiling; reduce heat to medium-low and cook, uncovered for 15 minutes or until parsnips are tender and glazed, stirring occasionally. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer to a serving platter. Squeeze lemon over mixture before serving.

Makes 6-8 servings.

Maple Sugar Memories

By Richard Crane

This time of year - Late February - I get to thinking about the coming maple sugar season and the some 75 years that I have been involved in the family maple business, which has been going on for 5 generations.

Recently the Washington Barn Museum received a donation for the maple exhibit, four early wooden sap buckets, two red and two silver or light gray. While tightening the wooden staves by gently driving down the metal hoops, my mind drifted back over the past seasons of a lifetime. I was born on April 22, 1930 in a small birthing home in Hillsboro located on the south side of the Contoocook River. My mother, Katherine Tryon Crane, and I were soon to join my father Roscoe Crane at the old family homestead sugar lot in Washington on the Newport road (now Rt. 31) near Hedgehog Pond and bordering the Pillsbury State Park. The 1930 maple season ended late with the last boiling on May 15th and cleaning the buckets, etc. came after that.

Our living quarters at the sugar lot were two lumbermen camps, each 8 feet wide and 16 feet long joined end to end, located a few feet from the original Codman house, which was the original Roscoe Crane Homestead. The house was badly in need of extensive repair and well beyond being used as a dwelling. It was now used for storage and hundreds of wooden buckets of many colors were stored upstairs in the attic between seasons. There was an old Yankee barn a short distance from the camp where the team of horses, "Bill" and "Bob", were stabled.

In later years at the same camp I remember that we had to enter by the only door to the building centered in one end of the camp. Upon entering, the old cast iron cook stove was to the left, then the cast iron sink and then a big chunk stove, which I remember got red hot and glowing in the night. On the opposite wall was a kitchen table, a large open-front cupboard for pots, pans, dishes and cooking supplies. In the far end of the camp there were 3 sets of bunk beds with a blanket hung between for privacy. A small bureau was also somewhere in the area. Thinking about it now---what a firetrap! My sister, Barbara Anne Crane, 2 years older than I was also in the sugar camp with us along with two hired men, Nate Smith and Harley Fowler. Tight quarters for 6 people with no running water or indoor facilities! Kerosene lights, two extra men and barely enough room to swing a broom. I have always wondered how my mother, a girl from an upper class family in Springfield, Mass., a girl with a college education and a normal school teacher before marriage, ever put up with such an arrangement.

Getting back to wooden buckets -- they had to be tightened each spring, hoops checked and then some of them had to be soaked so they would swell the staves and become water tight. Then they were ready to be loaded onto the horse drawn "scoot" and taken into the maple orchard for tapping along Carley Brook. The painted buckets of many colors made for a great sight hanging on the maples along the bubbling brook.

Wooden sap buckets often shrank during the time between runs and then they would leak, and we would hurry to gather those that appeared to be overflowing only to find little or no sap as the bucket had dried and become leaky part of the way up the side. What a loss. Wooden covers were scarce and seldom used, so much snow and rain had to be boiled out; ice caused problems too. The use of wooden buckets for us came to an end after the 1937 season. We had numerous tin buckets available by that time. Today wooden buckets are difficult to find as many have been used as flowerpots, wastebaskets, kindling holders, magazine holders or just dumped by the wayside.

The big sugarhouse stood in the center of the sugar lot surrounded by huge maples, which were no doubt well over 100 years old. To the northwest of the sugarhouse a short distance is the rock formation known as the "devil's chair", which sits beside the Ashuelot River. Two evaporators inside the sugarhouse had smoke stacks attached to a huge brick center chimney. When sap was flowing good father ran one evaporator and mother ran the smaller one, strained the syrup and put it into shiny square tin cans for sale.

In the early 1930's maple syrup sold for 2 to 4 dollars per gallon, if at all. As father had a lot on hand he crated up a goodly amount and sent it to a Boston Commission House to be sold. After months of anxious waiting an envelope arrived from the Commission House. Everyone quickly gathered around the kitchen table waiting to see how much money the maple syrup had brought. What a disappointment -- instead of a check there was a bill as the syrup hadn't brought enough to cover the shipping and handling. In that room the language and faces full of disappointment were so evident that to this day I remember it very well. A lighter memory I have was of Nate Smith going out to the barn to feed the horses with the lantern. Once in the barn he felt something around his feet and he gave it a kick. He had kicked a skunk and the skunk sprayed him. Nate came running back to the camp yelling at the top of his lungs. Mother opened the door and ordered him to take off all of his clothes and come into the camp where she put him in a washtub and washed him down with homemade lye soap. That was the night we all got skunked!

Yes, maple sugaring is hard long hours and the rewards can sometimes be only a few scents, yet we carry on the tradition into the fifth generation.

One day it snowed hard all day so everyone stayed in the camp. It continued to snow all night, mother made sugar on snow and then hard sugar cakes. Some was poured into an empty coffee can and it got so hard that I tried to get it out with a hammer and screw driver. Night came and it continued to snow very hard. Father got up the next morning to fire up the stoves and they only smoked into the camp. Father poured on some kerosene - No luck - it only made more smoke in the camp. Choking and coughing father took out the window, as the snow had drifted against the door so it wouldn't open. Nate went out the window and got the door opened then

managed to get on the roof. The snow was so deep that it had covered the stovepipe sticking up through the roof. We called this the great smoke out!

Note added by Tom Talpey: At a recent benefit dinner put on by the Washington Congregational Church to raise funds to help victims of last fall's flood in Alstead, I sat next to a Mr. Harrington from Langdon, NH. (Langdon is just west of Alstead and Acworth.) Discussing the present maple sugar season, he mentioned Bascom's, which is probably the largest maple sugar processing plant in New England and is located in Acworth. (Worth a visit. It's been there "forever.") This brought to mind an entry in teen-ager Nellie's 1869 diary, which readers may remember resides in our museum through the generosity of Jerry Johnson who had found it in an antique shop in Florida (See our Spring 2004 issue).

The entry reads: "Monday, August 9th. -- Minerva, Jennie & I went down to see Eva Bascom." (Note: There was a funeral in town and the mill was closed, so the girls had the day off. Eva was one of the girls who worked with Nellie in the mill in South Acworth owned by Nellie's uncle, Nathan Adams.)

Mr. Harrington told me an amusing story of when he was young man in the early 1950's and worked for "Old Man Bascom" digging potatoes for 8 cents a bushel on this same farm. He and the young fellows he was working with decided they wanted a raise and went on strike by all sitting down. Soon along came Mr. Bascom on his tractor, stopped the motor and asked why they weren't at work digging potatoes. They announced that they were on strike and wanted 10 cents a bushel. Old Man Bascom just answered "That so?" started his tractor and drove off. After a few minutes discussing the situation, the young men decided that they would rather have 8 cents a bushel than nothing and went back to work. That's the way one savvy Yankee went about breaking a strike.