July, 2005

Dear Residents and Property Owners:

The Springfield Historical Society will soon be facing a crisis. Who will carry on the Historical Society? Why is the society important?

The Springfield Historical Society is 21 years old. During this time, it has been mostly the same group of people who have been at the helm. We have always encouraged young and old to become involved, and we encourage new ideas. The time is fast approaching when these senior citizens will have to retire. We know all the excuses because we have also have had occupations and raised families. We are still busy. We have "hung in there" because we do not want to see the historical society go the way of other organizations and businesses in town.

With the changing times, Springfield has lost the centers that once drew the people together over the years. First we lost the schools, then we lost the fraternal organizations, next we lost the church, and this last year the country store. Springfield is fast becoming a bedroom community for the Route 89 commuters. Left is the Libbie A. Cass Library, a gem, of which the town’s people can be proud, and the Springfield Historical Society which presents worthwhile programs pertaining to the past and modern day.

Why is the historical society important to you? Marcus Garvy once said, "A man without history is like a tree without roots." Often the young think, "Who cares about the dead old past?" But as we get older, we want to know more about the history of our town, home, ancestors, and how they lived. The historical society is like the roots of a tree. For twenty-one years, we have been preserving the history of people involved with the town. The present is tomorrow's past. Who will continue to preserve it until the next generation appreciates it? The historical society is an educational institution preserving the past for you and your children. As G.K. Chesterson said, "Education is simply the soul of one generation as it passes to another."

The people of Springfield have been very generous with gifts of pictures and items to the museum, and helping when asked, but have not joined the organization. The town needs your membership, ideas and participation if the Springfield Historical Society is to preserve the past for the next generation. Do you want to help preserve your or your children's heritage and memories? Have you always wanted to participate in something worthwhile for your town that is not as time consuming as public office? Do you want to meet your fellow town’s people? If the answer is "yes," we need you to become members of the Springfield Historical Society. It does not matter how long you have lived here full or part time, Springfield is part of your heritage. Feel free to contact any of the officers and board members.

Sincerely,

President, Patsy Heath Caswell, 1-401-847-6782
Vice-President, Don Garlock, 1-603-526-4843
Secretary, Donna Denniston, 1-603-763-9302
Treasurer, Trudy Heath, 1-603-763-5046

Board: Marilyn Hopper, 1-603-763-2948
Bob Nulsen, 1-603-763-4413
Muriel Tinkham, 1-603-763-2953
Springfield Historical Society’s Annual Report, and Treasurer’s Report will be distributed at the Annual Meeting.

Thankyou:
Thanks go to Barbara Garlock for the great refreshments at the April meeting. Thanks also go to Steve Klein, who makes us welcome at the library and helps to rearrange the room for the historical society meeting, no easy task. Thanks, Dickie Hopper and Trudy Heath for helping to move our historical society material from the library back into the museum for the summer.

July Program:
The July Annual Meeting will be held July 14th, 7pm, at the Town Meeting House with a reception following at the museum next door. “A Real Look at History” will be introduced by Cynthia Bruss. The Friends of the Gile Forest Ground Crew have been discovering and mapping the long ago cellar holes that are over a hundred years old when Springfield had a far larger population. They have been plotting and mapping the GPS locations of the cellar holes and other points of interest. The crew, Cynthia, Ken Aldrich, Dan Allen, Daphne Klein, and Don Hinman will tell you of their findings.

Life in Springfield During the 1920s-1930s
No matter where Verna Philbrick Cote lived over the years, her heart was always in Springfield and for several years before her death, she wrote interesting letters of her memories. Verna grew up in the first house on the right of Main St. after the meeting house, going west toward the village. Her parents were Leighoun and Ruth Willis Philbrick. She had one brother, Willis. The following are excerpts from her letter of August 9, 1994.

Springfield must have been a beautiful spot in the 1840s when farms were all over the place and the land was cleared. By the 1920s (I was born in 1917) the woods were creeping back in. Then, we too berried on many deserted places which meant the farms were going especially in the 4A section. My Dad took a milk pail, the biggest clean thing we had, and we picked blackberries about this time of year [August] at Willow Corner (where 4A and Four Corners Road meet and the willow trees hung over the bridge.) We went right on the turnpike toward what was the Heath’s sugar house and down into Fowlertown. It was all dirt road and not exactly in the same place as the current highway.

When I was three or four years old, my father bought a heifer from Will Colby, who lived up past Hilda Clough’s on the Old Grafton Rd. [turn right before Barden’s Cemetery and go around the hill where a mica mine was on the right.] After Sunday dinner, we started and he hitched the animal to the back of the buggy and I worried all the way home that she was going to climb up our backs! The last thing on her mind was hurrying anywhere, of course. We did not get home until dark. For several years, we had some loose garnets which came from that mine...

[Verna’s mother, Ruth, kept very busy.] She sewed on her treadle sewing machine in between her chicken, turkey, and vegetable raising, grafting apple trees, canning and teaching us how to swim at a very early age. After that, we spent a great deal of time at the pond [Lake Kolelemook] on our own every day. She was a leader in the 4-H and extension service when the government started it. She let me make a yellow cotton dress for myself when I was maybe eight years old … otherwise we used the machine threadless to draw pictures on writing paper.

My father worked his one horse on the road scraper early in mud time and later for haying and getting up wood for two stoves. We needed at least 10 cords for a year. So on Sundays he did not like to take him out of the barn— a day of rest even for animals—and Dad would “leg it,” as he called it, up over Nichol’s Hill past what is now Broadley’s to Meyette’s in what is now Start Lake Farm, to get his order for the week’s paycheck.

It seems that before electricity and use of cars all year ‘round everything was determined by the seasons. Fall was best helping to fill the cellar, getting the wood shed full, school starting, and as it got colder your
meat, mostly pork, was salted, and brined. We shared the liver and heart immediately with the neighbors and helpers. Thanksgiving really had meaning when the barns and cellars were full.

Christmas meant getting together with the community to speak our pieces and receive your bag of popcorn, hard candy, and an orange in the bottom. Winter and deep snow made everything warmer. We slid on a "scooter" barrel stave sanded off with a 2 foot 2x4 and a cross piece to sit on and a good hill — plenty of those! [Part of the memories were] getting wet through every afternoon and hanging clothes all around the big kitchen stove to dry for the next day.

Clothing, itself, was a problem. In lower grades, I was wearing an underwaist to which garters were attached to long, usually black, stockings. Bloomers were made by mother from bleached cotton grain bags. In winter you added long underwear which had to be folded just right to be able to get the stockings over them. One pair of good leather shoes came just before school started and worn until about May 1st when it was barefoot time. Before winter set in, girls got black canvas overshoes with four buckles and clasps, which were forever undone or flapping or broken. One year, I had a new sheepskin coat, brown canvas on the outside, of which I was real proud. One early morning in January when the snow was deep and there was a good hard crust, I went to the top of our field for a slide before school. I skidded on the ice and couldn't turn the steering and landed in the barbed wire fence at the edge of the field with a great big tear in the sleeve!

School started for us at 9 am and got out at 3pm with two recesses and a half hour at noon. My brother and I used to run home for lunch, but everyone else brought buckets. [They went to Center School, now the Springfield Historical Society Museum.]

Spring meant tapping a big maple tree up in our field. We gathered sap after school and my mother made enough syrup for us on the kitchen stove. Decoration Day meant garden planting and cows were let out to pasture during mid May. It was our job to get them to and from the pasture morning and night.

Summer was nice, berries, Fourth of July Parade, swimming, helping to can food, papering the walls and painting woodwork. It was visiting time because the fires did not have to be kept burning.

*When it came time to attend high school in the early 1930s, Verna lived with her aunt, Christine Philbrick Morgan, in Simcoe for three years, going home on weekends and summers. Sadly, her mother, Ruth, died as Verna was entering her senior year. Verna and Sam Howard rode to Towle High School in Newport with Guy Wheeler where she finished her senior year, and kept house for her father, Leighton, and brother, Willis. A few years later, Verna married Leon Cote.*

**Officers for 2005-2006**

President, Patsy Heath Caswell, Vice President, Don Garlock, Secretary Donia Denniston, Board, Marilyn Hopper. The following officers have another year to serve: Treasurer, Trudy Heath. Board, Bob Nulsen, and Muriel Tinkham. NOMINATIONS MAY BE MADE BY ANY MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO THE ANNUAL MEETING WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE CANDIDATE. Springfield stories are still available. SEE BELOW.

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SPRINGFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FOR JULY 2005— JUNE 2006
Types of membership: Individual $15.00, Family (2 or more) $25.00, Lifetime (per person) $125.00. Business (your discretion)
NAME ____________________________________________
STREET OR PO BOX __________________________________
CITY OR TOWN ______________________________________
STATE ______ ZIP ____________________________

ORDERING: NEW COLLECTION OF SPRINGFIELD STORIES @ $20.00 plus $2.00 postage or PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SPRINGFIELD @$20.00 plus $2.00 postage.