President’s Message

The speaker for the April 13th meeting of the Springfield Historical Society will be local resident, Bob Nilsen. Bob and his wife Alice have summered in Springfield for many years and have lived here permanently since the early 90’s. A Vietnam veteran who served as an advisor to the Vietnamese Rangers in ’62 and ’63 and as an Infantry Battalion Commander in ’66 and ’67, Bob will discuss and show slides of a trip he and wife Alice made back to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in May of 1998. He will cover a short history of Vietnam and Southeast Asia, briefly discuss his two tours of duty in Vietnam during the war and will show slides of the interesting places visited during their three week, three country tour. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. in the Libbie Cass Library Conference Room. Please join us for this outstanding program!

Paint the Museum Fund

Donations continue to trickle in and we wish to thank each and every one of our contributors. However we have still not come close to reaching our goal and we really need your help. Please mail your donation to the Paint the Museum Fund, Springfield Historical Society, PO Box 6, Springfield, NH 03284.

Thank You to Verna Cote

The society just received from Mrs. Verna Cote a compilation of observations and anecdotes covering material in the recently published Pictorial History of Springfield. Look for this in upcoming editions of our newsletter. Verna spent most of her life in Springfield and her memories and knowledge our town and its residents are truly fascinating! Thank you, Verna, for your time and effort in making all this information available to us!

News from the Museum

from Muriel Tinkham, Museum Curator

- Display cases for our museum are being made by Sherman Heath. The cases are a gift from Nancy Bower in memory of her father and uncles, members of the Belfield family.

- Keith Cutting is chairman of a committee that is currently meeting to assess the space needs or our museum.

- Even though the museum is closed for the winter, requests continue to come in via email and letters requesting genealogy information. Muriel is currently working on research for three such requests.

- The museum reopens on Memorial Day weekend. We would like to remind everyone that volunteers are needed from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday afternoons to welcome visitors to the museum. Please contact Muriel Tinkham at 763-2953 to let her know what dates you might be able to help out.

- Donations of family information, anecdotes of life in Springfield and old photos are always welcome additions to our museum collection. Photos can be copied and the originals returned safely to you.

- The old school desks are now securely in place in the museum. Some restoration work will be needed in the future. We are truly grateful for this gift.
WHAT'S IN A NAME?
[Donna Denniston, who does such a great job publishing our newsletter each quarter, has asked me to write about the information in the talk I gave at the historical society's January meeting. Despite the cold night, we had a good turnout, but there may be others out there who will be interested.]

As years go by, we tend to forget how or why certain geographical features in town had or have a particular name. Some of these names have been changed by later generations or even by circumstances such as “Willow Corner”. We will begin our tour in the northwest corner of Springfield and proceed from there. [See attached map at end of newsletter for reference]

George Hill runs between Enfield and Springfield. One of the seven Heath's who came to Springfield after the American Revolution, married Samuel George, “commonly known as “King George.” They lived somewhere on George Hill. This MAY be the source of the name. We now have a George Hill Road. I don't remember many of the roads having names when I was growing up. We all knew where we were and where we were going! We might name a person or house or say “on the road up to George Hill”. Many of the names we officially have today came with the advent of 911 and are probably a good idea.

McDaniel’s Marsh is located at Washburn Corner at the foot of George Hill. It was named for Charles McDaniel who owned a large farm on the right a couple of miles up George Hill not far from the Enfield town line. For five generations the property was in the family, beginning with James who arrived in Springfield prior to 1794. His great grandson, Charles, was prominent resident of Springfield. He wrote the History of Springfield as part of the Sullivan County History series. He farmed in the summer and taught at the district schools in the winter. Charles later became superintendent of schools in Springfield. He was a selectman and overseer of the poor. In the early 1900's the property was sold to another family. The compound was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. The property, without buildings, is still farmland and is owned by Dallas and Malcolm Patten.

Washburn Corner is at the foot of George Hill and the Bog Road intersection. Coming from the village, the Washburn house was a large colonial style house first on the left going up George Hill and bordered by the Bog Road on the left side of the property. The original house was sometimes called the Betsy Washburn House. It was owned by the Dufords in the 1940's when it burned to the ground and was replaced by a Cape Cod style house. The Washburns had a mill by the brook at the foot the hill in the 1837 era. In 1851 a road was built to the left of the existing Bog Road, from Washburn Corner to Grantham. It no longer exists.

At the top of Town Farm Hill on the left side coming from the village, at the intersection of Hazzard’s Road west, setting back from the road was the Town Farm. A committee was set up in 1832 to purchase a farm to support the poor. This was accomplished in 1837 even though the first agent, James Noyes, was chosen but refused to serve. The same year the town bought stock for the farm. By 1852 the town farm did not work out so it was voted to sell the Town Farm and all personal property. In the future the town paupers were kept by the lowest bidder until the Sullivan County Farm was built in Unity, NH.

Hazzard Road crosses the Town Farm Hill at the top and the eastern end comes out on the Four Corners Road in the lower Springfield village. James Carr Hazzard had lied about his age when he enlisted in the American Revolution at age sixteen. He was at the battle of Bunker Hill among other battles. In 1787 he married Betsy Greeley from Salisbury, NH and they moved to the farm that was later purchased for the Town Farm. Betsy was Springfield’s own Apple seed Betsy! Betsy sowed apple seeds from her father’s Salisbury apple orchard and planted her own apple orchard. Betsy also managed to raise eleven children as well as apples!

Philbrick Hill was originally names Stevens Hill. Samuel Stevens lived where the Nulsens of Faraway now live. Samuel was a Revolutionary War Vet who eventually moved off the hill. Bob Nulsen discovered when tracing the history of the property, that Samuel's will was dated a year after he died. He also believes that one of Samuel's granddaughters married a Philbrick. In 1793 two brothers Jedidiah and Abraham with mother Sarah Sanborn Philbrick, widow of Samuel Philbrick, came to Springfield (Proctedworth) from Kingston, NH to settle on an original land grant of the town. The old homestead became Clover Ridge Farm. Leona Philbrick Colby and her husband Frank Colby inherited the property. Their daughter Maybelle continued to farm and live on the property until the early 1970's when she died. Having no immediate family of her own, she
deeded the property to the Dashners who were relatives of Maybelle’s good friend Florence Melendy. Another part of the original grant at the intersection of Grantham Rd and Sanborn Hill Rd is still in the Philbrick family, presently being lived in by Mrs. Elvin Philbrick.

Sarah Philbrick was a Sanborn. There were several other Sanborn families who settled on the hill that once connected the Grantham Rd with the Stony Brook Rd and now Sanborn Hill Rd is a dead end. Mahala Sanborn married William Colby and lived on the left going west near Sanborn Pond. Their son Frank married Leona Philbrick and lived at Clover Ridge Farm already mentioned. Joseph Sanborn lived in the last house across from the Colby farm on the right side of the road going west, just before going down the hill that is now blocked by rte 89. It was a two story colonial style house. These houses have since been torn down. Also probably living on the hill were Abraham, Jonathan, Reuben and Robert Sanborn. One of the Sanborn houses on the hill is now used as a barn by Bobby Lane. The Lane family lived in several of the Sanborn houses in the 20th century.

Going across town toward the east, we come to Col. Sanborn Hill. This can be confusing having a Sanborn Hill in the western part of town and a Col. Sanborn Hill in the eastern part of town. Col. Sanborn Hill is the hill in back of Springfield Four Corners village. Richard Sanborn was born in 1797, one of the ten children of Reuben and Sarah Worthen Sanborn who came to Springfield prior to 1790 from Sandown, NH. Richard lived in Springfield until his death in 1875. He was town treasurer in 1837, a state representative in 1838 and selectman in the 1840’s for several terms. Richard married Alice Collins. His home was on the old King’s Highway that comes down Col. Sanborn Hill and crosses over the Four Corners.

The King’s Highway was built in 1773. It was to be one rod wide and 6 ½ miles long. It started near Mud Pond (on what is now 4A0, ran west over what became Col. Sanborn Hill, through Springfield Four Corners, by the cemetery where it veered off to the right, not following today’s Cemetery Rd, to a point in West Springfield village near the intersection of George Hill Rd and Town Farm Hill Rd. From there it followed a westerly course to Grantham village.

There actually was a Four Corners. The King’s Highway came down Col. Sanborn Hill and crossed what is now the Four Corners Road, making Four Corners. The eastern part of King’s Highway is not much more than a trail today (1999), and the western intersection where the road went down a steep hill has been blocked off since the 1960’s when Lorent Drive was built connecting the Four Corners Rd with what is now called Cemetery Rd.

The Bowman Rd has always been called that since I can remember. Deputy Bowman (that seems to have been his first name!) and his wife Sarah Philbrick, sister of Abraham, and a daughter of Sarah Sanborn Philbrick, lived on a farm where the Ableson or Vartanian property is today. The road connects the Four Corners Rd with Webster Pass and the New London Rd. Sarah came to Springfield from Kingston, NH two years after her mother and brothers settled the Philbrick land grants.

Two Sawyer brothers, Stephen and John, came to Springfield from Plainfield, NH. They settled in the last farmhouse on the right side of Four Corners Rd leaving the village (1999). The property is now owned by Lena Beals. The hill just below this house, going down the Four Corners Rd to 4A, was named for them. Until the highway was improved in the 1960’s, the hill was steeper and could be tricky to ascend in bad weather.

Willow Corner is the name of the intersection at the foot of Sawyer Hill and 4A. The corner was lined with large willow trees and a wooden bridge crossed the brook. This was probably a little north of the intersection today. Even though the willows are long gone, there are some of us who still call it Willow Corner!

The Fourth New Hampshire Turnpike is now known as 4A. I think the original name was much nicer. It was surveyed in 1801 and toll houses and gates were set up March 2, 1806. Lt. Sam Robie and Philip Colby were prominent in building the road. It was the main route of transportation from Boston to Hanover in this part of the state. The turnpike was never profitable, and after about twenty years, the tolls were abandoned. The section passing through Springfield was purchased by the town on October 23, 1849, for $383.00. This was probably one of Daniel Webster’s several routes to Dartmouth. After leaving Dartmouth, he gave his first speech to the proprietors of the Fourth NH Turnpike in 1801 in Andover, the year it was surveyed. Over the years it became almost impassable to automobiles especially in mud season until it was rebuilt as 4A in 1955.
On the right side of 4A going toward Enfield is Shad Hill. It is a short distance before the Springfield-Grafton town line. Our ancestors probably did not name the hill after a fish! The early Massachusetts settlers named a bush that blossoms in the Spring and resembles cherry blossoms, the “shad bush” because the bush blossoms at the same time that the shad run up the rivers of Massachusetts. The New Hampshire towns along the border had once been part of Massachusetts and many of Springfield’s early settlers came from these towns. There were probably many shad bushes on the hill at one time. They can be found throughout the town. In this area the shad bush is also known as the sugar plum bush. They are also called June berry.

The Springfield-Grafton town line and the Sullivan-Grafton County line goes through the top of Aaron’s Ledge. In 1794 a group of Kinsmans, Capt. Ephraim, Col. Aaron, Deacon Stephen, Asa and James Riddle lived in the part of town now called Fowlertown, then Kinsman Corners. They had lived there several years before 1794 not knowing about the Springfield (Protectworth) settlement until Sam Robie and their compass from Springfield discovered Kinsman Corners. Aaron Kinsman is probably the person for whom Aaron’s Ledge is named. Aaron Quimby married Hannah Heath and may have lived in the Shad Hill region which is in the foothills of Aaron’s Ledge and fairly close by the road and trails used then, but my bet is on Aaron Kinsman.

Sam Thorp of Beverly, MA came to Springfield with Ephraim Morgan and cleared land near Morgan Pond. The pond was named for Ephraim and the hill for Sam. None of Thorp’s descendants remained in town. Ephraim and his wife had seven children, several of whom settled in surrounding towns.

Hoyt Hill was probably named for John Hoyt who married Elizabeth Little, daughter of Nathaniel and Mary Carlton Little who had arrived with their younger children around 1790. That is the hill and high ridge in back of the town swimming beach and Route 114. In the last few years, the western side of this hill has been called Nichols Hill. Justin Nichols once had a farm on the western side of the hill. It burned to the ground in the late 1940’s. Justin was very involved in town affairs holding many offices.

Hogg Hill was settled by Charles Hogg who, with brother Robert, was among the early settlers.

Charles’ descendants did not stay in town, but those of brother Robert did. Around the 1820’s the state of New Hampshire allowed people with name Hogg to change their name. Some of the Springfield Hogs retaining Hogg and others changed their name to Johnson.

Phineas Messer and family from New London cleared the land near the New London Road on the hill where their family resided for many years. The family cemetery is at the foot of Messer Hill not too far from the New London Road intersection.

We will conclude our tour back in West Springfield village. Howard Ave. was the western end of Main Street before going down the hill toward Philbrick Hill Rd. It was once lined with pine trees which were used to panel Center School when it became the library. Rev. Lewis Howard, from the Grantham Howards, moved into the area from West Bridgewater, NH. Lewis married Sally Stone and they moved to Springfield where he played a prominent role in town office, taught school and farmed. Later in life, he became a Methodist minister and served in many towns throughout the state before coming back to Springfield in 1879 to become minister of what became Howard Memorial Church. His home was the large colonial house on the right (1999) leaving West Springfield village and the beginning of Howard Ave. where the Stuart Murphys live today. (1999)

These are only a few names of the geographical areas of Springfield. If you have other names and their origins, please let me know.

Patsy Heath Caswell

We want to hear from you with stories and anecdotes about your experiences and memories of life in Springfield. Send your story of life in Springfield to:

Donna Denniston
PO Box 184
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