President's Message

Patryc Wiggins will be the guest speaker for the October 8th meeting to be held at the Libbie Cass Library Conference room at 7 p.m. This program is being sponsored by the Humanities Council of New Hampshire. Patryc Wiggins' topic will be her 6 x 13 foot tapestry project about the mill culture in Guild, NH. She has been working on it for ten years. It takes about an hour to do a square inch. Ms. Wiggins studied with the world renowned weaver Jean Pierre Larochette while living in San Francisco. She has lectured at the Smithsonian and around New England, and has served on the grant review panel for the National Endowment for the Arts. At least four generations of her family have lived in the shadows of and worked for the Dorr Woolen Mill in Guild. Ms. Wiggins was the subject of "Unfinished Tapestry", an article by Howard Mansfield which appeared in the Spring 1998 issue of Yankee Magazine. For many years, members of Springfield families have worked in the Newport mills and we should therefore really relate to Patryc Wiggins and her project.

Special thank you to the following:
Bill and Jan Wesson for providing July refreshments
The wonderful turnout of volunteers at the museum
Dick Eldeen for taping our programs
Dorothy Eldeen who will be helping Muriel with our acquisitions at the museum.

Newly Elected Officers 1998-1999
President- Patsy Heath Caswell
Vice-President - Bob Nulsen
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Board of Trustees:
Muriel Tinkham 1 yr 1998-1999
Marilyn Heath 2 years ends 1999
Keith Cutting - finishing Bob Nulsen's 3 yr term 2000

The Hurricane of 1938

On the afternoon of September 21, 1938, sixty years ago, the hurricane of '38 struck New England full force. It was one of the biggest disasters to ever hit the area with much loss of life and property. It was one of those events you remember the rest of your life if you were old enough to realize what was happening at the time.

Beverly (Brown) Bacon lived with her family on a farm at the top of the hill on Hazzard's Rd, Springfield. She was about 6 years old and had the chore of shelling beans in the barn. As Mrs. Brown saw a storm approaching, she called Beverly to come into the house. Beverly wanted to finish her task, but her mother insisted. A few hours later, the barn collapsed.

George Thomson was at Twin Lake Villa waiting to report for his freshman year in college. He and a friend were white water canoeing down Kidder Brook from Hideaway Rd through the golf course! This was recorded for posterity on 16mm film located in the New London archives.

In 1993, Stu Murphy interviewed several Springfield people about the hurricane of ’38 in an article for the Argus Champion.

Carl "Chubb" Hooper who lives on the Georges Mills Road, was a road agent at the time. He and two other road agents with crews worked with crosscut saws and axes in the driving rains and wind to attempt to clear roadways in town that were completely blocked by fallen trees. There were no power saws at this time. Everything was done by manual labor. Chubb tells of driving his truck along the Springfield-New London Road in the storm. As he approached the downhill grade near the town line, the road was rapidly being washed away ahead of him. Turning around, he discovered that the trees were gradually toppling across the road. He had to abandon his truck and walk home. He also stated
that the hardest hit location in town was the Stoney Brook Road at Baptist Pond where about a million feet of timber went down. It took four years to clear this area along with other heavily damaged locations in town. The wood was cut according to use. The hardwood along the roadways was cut into four foot lengths and given to nearby property owners to use as firewood. Straight soft wood logs were cut into six and eight foot lengths. Ramps (skid-ways) were built along the roadways to roll the logs onto the trucks. There were no fancy forklifts in those days! The sawmill business sprang up and that’s another story. Many of the logs were floated in ponds such as Otter Pond and Stocker Pond. Some of the wood was retrieved for lumber, but much of the timber became water-logged and sank to the bottom of the ponds.

Mr. Murphy also interviewed the late Hollis Heath who lived on Route 4A. He told how the rushing water in one location threatened to carry away a bridge. He drove his truck onto the bridge so that the extra weight would save the structure.

Florence (Saunders) Baxter told Stu that she was thirteen at the time and fascinated with the fact that the metal roof of a barn near her parents’ home on George Hill Road was completely blown off.

Louise (Brunell) Jacwicz told Stu that she and Mrs. Brunell feared for her father’s safety. He was a carpenter working to put a roof on a cottage down at Lake Kolelemook. Leslie Richardson went to find him and persuade him that the trees were falling fast and that they would never get home if they didn’t hurry.

A few years ago, Verna Cote wrote her memories of the hurricane. She and Leon were remodeling a schoolhouse on the Stoney Brook Road. They had only gotten electricity a couple of months before the storm struck. The house was up on pipes and what would be the cellar was wide open. It was several months before they could use the new electric pump or washer. A few baskets of red geraniums were on the railing of the front porch which was covered by an awning. The awning was ripped to shreds, but not one flower pot overturned! Verna was working at the Bailey’s Country Store in the village. She and Leon could not get home that night, so they stayed with Jane and Loren Patten in their new home in the village. The wind lifted up the end of the living room off the foundation and set it gently back down again. The lighted kerosene lamp was undisturbed on the table.

Patsy (Heath) Caswell was almost five at the time. We did not know about hurricanes. My parents, Paul and Bessie Heath, and I lived in the cottage that they built at the north end of Lake Kolelemook on Four Corners Road. What a shock it was to see trees actually tip over. When my mother got home from work at Adamsfort that night, she and Dad canned pears on the wood stove. When the electricity went off, we used kerosene lamps. In those days everyone still had them because electricity was fairly new in town and not everyone had it. At the height of the storm, we had a chimney fire. There was no telephone to call for help and the fire burned itself out. Before the night was over, a pine tree broke off, sailed over the roof and landed in the driveway. Bernard Richardson, his wife Eva (Severance) Richardson and daughter Joan were living in a camp on the east side of our property. Somehow they managed to get to our house to spend the night with us. Until the hurricane, our cottage was surrounded by pine and the upstairs rooms in the back were dark. I remember how surprised I was the next morning to see the sunshine out the back window and all the trees looking like the game of “pick-up-sticks.” It was the same on the road going to the two villages.

Adamsfort, on the hill where the Rodgers now live off the Grantham Road, was the summer home for the extended families of Adams, Downeys, Bordens and Roberts. Several members were still there on September 21st. Fairfax Downey wrote an article “Neighbors” in the Commentator magazine telling of experiences of the Adamsfort families that long night and the days following. He reminded us that not only was there no electricity in the few homes that were serviced by it, but that also meant no radio. The telephone service was also out. At dinner, Mrs. Downey pronounced with conviction “this is the hurricane from Florida.” Mr. Downey did not think so because they seldom came north of Cape Hatteras where they veer out to sea. About that time, a huge gust of wind shook the house. “Well,” he conceded hastily, “it might possibly be the tail end of the hurricane.” Just then they heard a grinding, rending noise outside the kitchen door.

Mr. Downey and daughter Peggy (Downey) Knowlton investigated to find the lattice work on the back porch blown down and dragging against a wall of the house. They cut it loose and no sooner were out of the way when the top of a big pine crashed down right where they had been standing! The lower half of the tree thudded down onto the roof which withstood its weight. They decided to douse their fires and resort to candles. The next morning they discovered a barn half de-roofed and outdoor furniture and other objects scattered far and wide. They were still ignorant of the extent of the disaster until Seely Philbrick came up the hill from his farm (on the right-hand side of the Grantham Road leaving Springfield just before Sanborn Hill) to see how they had survived the night. Seely had
harbored nearby cottagers who left their cottage when the pines started crashing down and also a party of Dartmouth students caught motoring along the road. (This was the main route to Colby College and girls before I-89.) Cut off by a tree falling in front of them, they had built a causeway of stones from the Adamsfort stone wall over the fallen tree! Some of the family decided to try to reach the village. The state road was covered with criss crossed trees every few yards. Many trees wererenched bodily from the soil with earth covered roots towering twice as tall as a man. It reminded Mr. Downey of the shell-torn woods of France in World War 1. Ahead they could hear the ring of axes as the Springfield people began opening the road. The family members also trudged up Philbrick Hill to the Frank Colby farm. Half the roof was ripped off the barn. The Colbys had received severe damage to the sugar orchard. As bad as things were, the Colbys shared milk and vegetables with the Adamsfort clan. That evening Raymond Beals who was the caretaker at Adamsfort arrived to do his chores after working at cleaning roads all day. He had stopped to see Bessie Heath down by the lake and she said that she would manage to get through the next day to help with the housework as usual.

By noon of the second day, two gangs working toward each other finally got the Grantham Road open. Mr. Downey said that there could be no such thrill in watching a couple of governors cut a ribbon at a bridge opening! The head of the road gang had a car radio and it was at this time that they heard of the widespread ruin caused by the Hurricane of '38. Springfield neighbors worked to help each other and get life back to normal as soon as possible, although life and Springfield would never be exactly the same again. I do not believe there was loss of life in Springfield which made us very fortunate. There was destruction of buildings, especially barns, loss of roofs and it was many years before the forests recovered. **Patsy Heath Caswell**

**Visit to Star Lake Cemetery**

On a cloudy July 8th, 1998, Alberta Putney O’Day escorted Muriel Tinkham, Dorothy Eldeen and Patsy Heath Caswell up Star Lake Road where we turned left just past the last house on to Stryker Road. The cemetery is on the left not too far from the intersection. The Ice Storm of '98 and time have damaged the stones. Some are broken in half and a couple have crumbled so that nothing much is left. We found 11 stones or the remains of stones, but we believe there are a few more graves located there due to the mounds in the ground especially along the east wall. Alberta knows of a relative of hers who died when a baby and was buried somewhere in the cemetery in a saltbox. It was a cloudy day and the pictures taken are not the best quality. Some of the stones were so bad that we had to rub them to read them, but we recorded the information found on nine of the headstones. The earliest gravestone still readable was that of Maryette Abbott, daughter of AS and Mahala Abbott, who died April 19, 1848, age 7 mo., 9 days. The last burial was that of Helen Avery Robinson, a sculptress related to C. B. Robinson who once owned Star Lake Farm. Helen’s unusual stone is dated 1977. It is a plaque on a boulder. Gilman S. Hezelton died March 17, 1849, age 17 yrs and 8 mos. The following is his epitaph. Death may dissolve the strongest tie/ And bear away the dearest friend/ But there’s a life above the sky/ where death and sorrow both shall end.

P. H. Caswell

**Museum Notes**

The Springfield Historical Society wishes to thank the following people who volunteered their time this summer to welcome visitors to our museum on Saturday afternoons.

**Patsy Heath Caswell, Marilyn Heath, Trudy Heath, Keith and Susan Cutting, Don and Barbara Garlock, Ed Belfield, Walter Belfield, Rich and Carol Rollinson, Alice Nilsen and Muriel Tinkham.**

The museum has received inquiries from out of state for genealogy information on the Colcord family and also the Hazelton family.

**IMPORTANT NEWS !!!!!!!!

THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SPRINGFIELD IS DONE! The committee has been hard at work on this project for two years and we think you will really love the results of our efforts. It is available for you to purchase for only $10 and an additional $2 for postage if you need us to mail it to you. The book has 122 pages and over 250 photographs dating from 1767 to the present. There are chapters on the history of Springfield, The Early days - people and past events from 1767-1870, the houses of Springfield, public functions (includes all the BIG events, photos of the old schoolhouses, Bicentennial celebration and tons more), the Businesses of Springfield from the early days to the present, Summer Residents (inns, boarding houses and summer homes) and last of all, some wonderful old maps of our town. This book is a treasure and something you will want to own and share with your family. The state of NH has requested a copy as have many others who have previewed it. Copies are limited so be sure to order yours.
while supplies last. They are sure to be great Christmas gifts!

TO ORDER YOUR PICTORIAL HISTORY
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If you wish to purchase your book locally for just $10, they will be available at several locations including The Country Press, Morgan Hill Bookstore, Coburns and Flash Photo in New London, The Country Store and Libbie Cass Library in Springfield.

We still want to hear from you with stories and anecdotes about your experiences and memories of life in Springfield. You don’t have to be a polished or professional writer! We are interested only in the subject matter. You can leave the spelling and grammar checks to us and the computer. We’d love to hear from you! We can scan photos into the computer also and would be happy to return them to you when we’re done.

Send your story of life in Springfield to Donna Denniston, PO Box 184, W. Springfield NH 03284