President’s Message

On Thursday, October 10, the Springfield Historical Society will have a potluck supper at 6 p.m. and a lecture at 7 p.m. The lecture will feature Dartmouth Professor Jere Daniell whose topic will be “The New England Town”. A professor of history, Dr. Daniell is uniquely qualified for this subject and lists among his publications “Colonial New Hampshire”. He has spoken to the Society in the past and was so well received that he has been asked to return. He is also known in this area for his programs at the ILEAD [Dartmouth] and Adventures in Learning [Colby Sawyer].

The supper preceding the lecture will be coordinated by Janet Roberts [763-2469] who will try to keep a balance of dishes. Please call to tell her what you will bring. The supper as well as the lecture are open to members and visitors and will take place at the Springfield Town Hall. While you are encouraged to join us for both activities, those wishing to attend only the lecture will be welcome.

I’d like to thank Carol and Joe Demaris for providing refreshments at our annual meeting in July.

Thanks to Robbie Heath for keeping the town pound in the Old Pleasant View Cemetery cleaned out.

Steve Klein put up shelves in the NH Room at the library to hold the historical society material. It was truly appreciated.

Also thanks to Muriel Tinkham for keeping the museum running and to those helping her this summer: Fred and Terry Davis, Marilyn Heath, Susan and Keith Cutting, Joe and Carol Demaris, Ed Belfield, Walter Belfield, Barbara Garlock, Trudy Heath, Wesley Tinkham, Alice Nulsen and yes, I did my turn when in town, Patsy Caswell.

Officers Elected at Annual Meeting ‘02-’03

President: Patsy Heath Caswell
Vice President: Bob Nulsen
Secretary: Donna Denniston
Treasurer: Janet Roberts
Board - 1 year: Fred Davis
[the following board positions expire July 2003]
Muriel Tinkham: 2 year term
Keith Cutting: 3 year term
Appointed by the President:
Publicity Chairman: Don Garlock

We still welcome your stories, memories and pictures of Springfield for future newsletters. We are all making memories and that is our social history.

Patsy Heath Caswell, President

Editor’s Note: I would like to thank Muriel Tinkham for procuring the following materials from our museum for publication in this newsletter. I think you will enjoy reading them!

Poems by the “Man from Wahoo Valley”

[Springfield’s poet, the Man from Wahoo Valley, grew up at Washburn’s Corner (now at McDaniel’s Marsh). For 30 years he lived in the valley. He had 4 sons and they all served in the armed forces. Patsy Caswell has tried to identify this man. He may have been Ben Gerald or Grover Heath. Grover Heath grew up in a house located where the parking lot for McDaniel’s Marsh is now.]

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Fun and fond memories
Written by an old man
Who as a boy lived and grew
Up in the late eighteen hundreds,
When life was worth living
Amid New England Hills,
And on to the present day.
The valley much referred to
Within is about four miles long
And a half mile wide called
Wahoo Valley by the writer
From the fact that by letting out
A loud wahoo it may be heard
The entire length of this valley,
Coming back as an echo as the sound
Reverberates from side to side
Of the surrounding hills.
It was in and near this valley
That he spent thirty years of his early life,
Hunting and fishing to his heart’s content,
And leading the life of a near hermit,
And probably would have continued to do so,
But fate decreed otherwise,
But for meeting a blue eyed girl as described
In one of the lyrics within.
For he grew up without scarcely
Finishing the seventh grade in school,
Never been inside a church,
Never driven an automobile,
Or spoken over a telephone,
But by living this free life he has learned
To see the beauty of this world
As few are privileged to see it through the
Eyes of a dreamer.

Some people seem to think they have to give
their God a dollar now and then,
But my God works for nothing and so far he has
done a pretty good job for me and I rather like
him.
I was told about God at my mother’s knee.
Since I have grown to manhood.
I have a Bible and can read and moralize.
So to those people who have God on salary,
I would say if they get into the promised land,
Before I do, let them stick their head out the
window,
And shout, I told you so.

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SOUVENIR

Go roaming all over here that you will,
And no place will you find like New Hampshire
hills;
From boyhood I grew there to man’s estate,
And among them old hills I found me a mate.
She was coy, she was pretty, and afraid not of
snakes,
I know, I roamed with her way out in the brakes.
I loved her, and kept her, and think I always
will,
For she’s my souvenir of New Hampshire hills.

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TO MY VALENTINE

You are an old relic with hair like a broom,
Carass like a fence rail, feet like a goon,
Trusted by nobody, watched by the moon,
Don’t like you nohow, least not very well,
So curse your old soul, damn you to hell.

[and that’s all we have of his writings and all
we know about the “Man from Yahoo Valley”]

On the next pages you will read from an
actual report of the Selectmen of
Springfield for the year ending March,
1854. It was printed in Concord by the
Steam Printing Works of McFarland &
Jenks located in the rear of the Low’s
Block on Main St. In Concord 1854
REPORT
Of Superintending School Committee of Springfield, for 1853

DISTRICT NO. 1
Summer school was kept by Miss Sophronia V. Vaughan. Length of school, 8 weeks. Average attendance, 37. Miss Vaughan is one of the best teachers. She labored in season and out of season for the benefit of her scholars, and a very decided improvement was made. More than usual improvement was attained in all the studies, particularly reading and geography. By the exertions of the teacher and scholars a set of Outline Maps was procured for the district, and much benefit has been derived therefrom. Singing was introduced into this School.

Winter Term, of 8 weeks, was kept by F. P. Nichols. Average attendance, 28. This School was well conducted, the scholars were thoroughly drilled, and a good improvement in most of the studies was made, particularly in reading and arithmetic. This School is perhaps second to none in point of reading. The school-house in this district is getting old and out of repair, and ought to be attended to.

DISTRICT NO. 2
There was no Summer School in this District. The Winter School was under the care of R. Freeman Sanborn who succeeded in interesting the scholars in their studies, so that they made good improvement. Length of School, 6 weeks. Average attendance, 16.

DISTRICT NO. 3
Summer Term, of six weeks, under the care of Miss A. A. Thystle. Average number of scholars attending, 21. In a School of 6 weeks, it cannot be expected that a very great improvement can be made; and yet in some of the classes good progress was made. A small class in grammar had done well, and some small scholars, who had just begun to read, did exceedingly well. The discipline was rather lenient. A little more firmness would be better.

Winter School was kept by Miss Gordon. Length of School, 9 weeks. Average attendance of scholars, 20. This was her first school, and she certainly bids fair to make a very good teacher, being systematic and thorough in her method. The improvement was satisfactory. Recitations prompt and clear.

DISTRICT NO. 4
The Summer School was taught by Miss Choate. One class in geography did remarkably well. In the other branches but little improvement was made. Length of School, 5 weeks. Average attendance, 18.

The Winter School was kept by Mr. S. T. Choate. The report of the Summer School will answer equally as well for the Winter School. Length of School, 4 weeks. Average attendance, 20. Both teachers were well qualified in the branches they were required to teach, but lacked in energy.

DISTRICT NO. 5
The Summer Term was under the care of Miss E. W. Johnson. The School appeared well. Its government and mode of instruction met the hearty approbation of the committee. Length of School, 10 weeks. Average attendance, 24.

The Winter School was under the charge of Mr. Chas. McDaniel. This School was marked by excellent order, and by good interest taken by the scholars generally in their studies. Length of School, 9 weeks. Average attendance, 24. Contributed, board and fuel, $37.00.

DISTRICT NO. 6
No Summer School. The Winter School was under the care of Miss Ruth S. Chesley. The Teacher in this School aimed to do her duty, and in many respects secured a good School. The frequency of recitations secured in a measure the benefits of a longer school. But there was a lack of funds in this District on account of the school money being divided according to scholars. Length of School, 6 ½ weeks. Average attendance, 20.

DISTRICT NO. 7
No Summer School. The Winter School is under the care of Mr. H. F. Goss. This School has just commenced, and will probably be about 5 weeks. Whole number of scholars in the district, 13. School is keeping at a private house.
Is in fact a pretty good teacher. She succeeded in getting up quite an interest among her scholars. Her method of managing a School is prompt and energetic. The house in this district is badly constructed and badly located. Length of School, 12 weeks. Average attendance, 20. Amount contributed in board and fuel, $21.00.

The whole length of public schools in town, is 174 ½ weeks; 82 in summer, and 92 ½ in winter. All the summer schools, and 27 ½ weeks in winter was kept by females. The whole amount contributed in wood, board and tuition is $167.00, which is little more than was given last year.

The committee think that our schools, on the whole, were never in a better condition. There has been no difficulty in any of the schools that has come to the knowledge of the committee the past year. There are, however, some very serious inconveniences attending our schools. Nearly or quite one half of our school-houses are totally unfit for use. Some of them open or cold, and some so badly constructed that it is almost impossible to manage a school decently in them. We think this evil will in a great measure be remedied before long. School District No. 10 has made arrangements to build a very nice house early next season; and the committee have good reason to believe that at least two other districts will build houses in the course of the present year. Arrangements have been made the past year to unite or form districts 4, 11 and 13 into two districts, which it is hoped will prove satisfactory. There was no school house in No. 13, and very poor houses in Nos. 4 and 11, and if they will take hold and build two good houses, the scholars at least will be much benefited.

If there had never been more than ten school districts in town, it would have been far better; but it may, perhaps, be difficult now to get them less than twelve.

We think districts generally have been fortunate in securing the services of good teachers the past year. There has been, the committee think, as much exertion on the part of the teachers as ever was manifested in any one year since they have been acquainted with the schools. Still there are some defects.

One great defect in the instruction of our schools, is want of thoroughness. This is owing in part to the prevailing idea that a child's progress in its studies is to be measured by the amount gone over, and not by his understanding of the subject; in part, also, by the anxiety of scholars to go through their text books before the term closes; but most of all to the teachers themselves. They are often too defective in a thorough mastery of the elements of knowledge. Without this thoroughness, there can be no proper discipline of the mind. The scholar can never learn to think in a clear and connected manner. His learning will always be superficial. He may be able to repeat the rules of arithmetic, but the reason or necessity of those rules he will not see. He may solve the problems in the text book, but be unable to explain them to another; hence, unable to apply them in the daily occurrences of life.

DANIEL N. ADAMS,
JOHN C. NICHOLS,
R. FREEMAN SANBORN,
Superintending School Committee

Springfield, Feb., 1854