

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AT WORK

From time to time in this newsletter reference has been made to the newsletters published by area historical societies. We exchange letters with a number of societies, including Bethel, Lovell, Bridgton, Brownfield, Conway, Freedom, Albany, Jackson. As the editor of the Madison Historical Society letter I am always interested in learning about the work of other members of the Pequawket Historical League and the way the material is presented. It helps to realize that each of these groups - often struggling to exist - takes seriously the responsibility to preserve and to highlight local history. Sometimes early photographs are included, as they are in Brownfield, a town virtually destroyed in the 1947 fire. Early scenes are a treasure for its inhabitants. Bethel has one of the most successful and professional historical societies in New England, and a fulltime curator, and a financial base that permits the purchase and maintenance of several old buildings. The Lovell society owns an old farmhouse, with a keeping room fireplace of magnificent proportions. Some newsletters often use a page or more to list members, past and present, and highlight coming events. Albany has included old time recipes. Fryeburg has a growing collection of early records about military, political, commercial and religious life in the town.

So if we sometimes feel discouraged that Madison's society

seems to falter we can recall that we are not alone in our brave intention to document, preserve, and keep alive the consciousness of who we are, where we come from, and what we have become.

Ray Stineford

EATON/MADISON CORNER

As you read this piece the autumn weather has taken possession of the Corner (named Madison since 1852). In Atkinson Park the leaves have fallen from the old maples, and the fever few, an old fashioned allergy remedy, blankets the ground where it has spread over the summer. The roses seem healthy, ready for another year after some pruning. The brook runs quietly, draining from the hills to the north and east. A new owner in the old Atkinson store (home of Ernest and Lottie Meader years ago) is moving in. It is good to see lights there in the early dusk. The cars park along by the museum, their occupants hiking to the Cascades. David Riss and Marc Ohlson have made and trimmed the path for the Conservation Commission. Someone has ridden a horse on the trail. Please - no prints of any kind except human shoes or snowshoe/ski tracks. The museum is closed, but Becky Knowles, Priscilla Ward, and Olive Clayton have been thoroughly reorganizing the library. Lockable legal size files have been so carefully set up that one can actually find what is being looked for. The flag has been taken down; it is tattered and needs

to be replaced next year.

Now then, Winter, be our welcome guest, but please, wait your turn.

LEAD MINE ORE BUCKET DONATED

We received an unusual contribution to our collection this summer. John Smith, whose wife is the daughter of Marion Gowdy, a wellknown name in Madison, contributed a bucket or box that he had rescued years ago from the lead mine site.

It measures about five feet long, two feet wide, tapering like an old coffin, and divided into three compartments, perhaps to keep the ore from shifting while the container was riding down a trolley from the mine. The construction is of heavy planking, tarred and still sound.

MEMBERS TAKE NOTICE

The date of expiration of your membership is noted with your address. Sometimes there may be a time gap before your payment is processed from deposit to our roster. But if it doesn't show on your next issue, please let us know at once.

Address Confusion: We try to keep our out-of-state winter addresses in order, but now and then we get mailings returned. Please help us reach you - wherever you are!

NOTICE

The Madison Historical Society Newsletter, published quarterly since 1999, will need a new editor, beginning with the spring issue. Ray Stineford will be concluding his editorship, also his presidency of the Society, this year. The winter issue will be the final one unless someone is interested in continuing publication. Peggy Hoyt, who has typed every issue since beginning one, will be leaving that post at the same time.

You may contact President Mary Lucy, or Ray Stineford, for information: POB 505, 03849

WHEN A DOLLAR WAS A DOLLAR

Some interesting financial entries from a copy of the 1939 Annual Report, Town of Madison.

Town Officers' Salaries	\$509.00
Fire Department	325.00
Street Lighting	420.00
School tax	7899.26
Town Construction	2000.00

H. Young got the highest teacher salary: \$1488.72

C. Doe had the lowest: \$102.68

And this from the 1939 Superintendent's Report

"I see boys and girls come to our schools, pass through the grades, graduate (or drop out) and go into higher schools or to work; AND THEN!! Well, what then? Have the needs all been met as far as possible? Is the life well balanced? Is there proper preparation for economic and social life? Is he [she is not mentioned in this report] a good citizen? Can he meet the new problems of the day? Unquestionably the first and most

important influence in the child's life is the home - his home - and other homes, which make up much of his social environment in rural areas. According to a recent survey only 3% of the single youth now living at home expressed a preference for living away from home. Only a few said they did not want families and homes of their own."

KEEP THE EVIDENCE!

Consider this fact: Every exposed wood surface in a house built before about 1850 was planed smooth by hand, as you can easily see when the sunlight hits it. Doors, wainscot, frames, and floors - all were hand planed. The long strokes, two or three inches wide along the floor boards, tell of someone, a real living person, pressing two hands against a sharp blade. Narrower floor boards were used on the north side than on floors in rooms getting more sun. Why? I have never heard a good answer.

Every time an owner has his floor sanded in these old houses something of the story is lost, obliterated for good and every floor, with very very few exceptions, in Eaton/Madison homes, was originally painted. Paint covered bare wood as surely as clothing covers our bodies. Various forms of floor coverings over the paint was common, too. And by mid-19th century our houses sometimes were decked out in linoleum like coverings (see the Longfellow house, Congress Street, Portland, Maine, as an example). Wealthy owners, eager to sport what money could buy, sometimes painted their floors in checkerboard designs - more commonly this was done south of

where we live.

So - before you give in to the desire for honey colored flooring in your old house, remember, it may be pretty. But it ain't right.

OLD CUPBOARDS

Our museum is fortunate to have in the kitchen a handmade country cupboard, probably dating before 1860. At more than six feet high it is taller than many of these farmhouse cupboards. The double doors have a panel in each. They close on a stack of unusually low shelves, high enough to accept milk pans or skimmers, but too low for dishes other than plates. This cupboard is the stepback design: the upper half is somewhat shallower than the base.

Cupboards (a general term that includes most shapes and designs including hutches) were free standing or built-in. The latter have been wrenched out of old houses, often because the house was being torn down, and will likely show unplanned sides or give other indications of having been enclosed. The earliest, and best, will have raised panels, moldings, forged hinges, early paint (with red seldom used), and planed surfaces. Some have a slot running along the back and in about two inches - for plates to stand in. But nowadays antique dealers carry versions made out of 1890s "sheathing," or a cobbled up construction with machine cut nails (or just plain nails). And even they can carry a high price tag.

The best cupboards (and this discussion excludes the wondrous corner cupboards in the fine homes such as were built in Portsmouth) go for thousands of dollars. Even the worst fetch in three figures.

UNFORGETTABLE
BY ELWOOD BANFIELD

An experience of mine occurring over seventy five years ago is still a pleasant memory. This is what happened to a teenager born in the flatland of east central Massachusetts who had a loving father, native to the beautiful Madison-Conway area of New Hampshire. He fished and hunted in the rivers and lakes and forests where he grew up. I remember so well how he would speak slightly of Massachusetts fishing spots - "all of them have muddy bottoms," he would mutter. He was also scornful and unimpressed with the sparsity of game and upland birds in the fields and forests around our home.

One early-summer day when I was sixteen he remarked to me that he wanted me to know what it was like to climb a mountain. We had a few nearby mountains - Nobscot must be about five hundred feet and Wachusett probably seven or eight hundred, and I thought, this will be fun!

Dad had a new Buick 1926 two-door sedan, Master six. We got to Chocorua Mountain in the morning. Dad mentioned a number of trails to the top but the best one for us was the "Piper" trail. We began the trek. After what seemed to me hours, Dad said, "We are getting near a little spring-fed stream I remember." We were both thirsty and soon were drinking wonderfully cold water from that little stream.

Sometime later hunger overcame me, and I guess my father had overlooked this little matter.

Soon we were at the peak and I was astonished at the beauty and expanse of view. It was something I had never seen.

There were a young man and

woman sitting on rocks nearby and they were eating from the largest chocolate bar I had ever seen. That did nothing for my hunger!

We soon started back down the trail. After a little while I began to notice that the muscles of my calf and thigh were starting to hurt. The descent was far more painful than the upward climb. The next day the soreness was pretty well over my entire body!

The wonderful adventure with my father became a precious lifetime memory.

M.H.S. MINUTES - 9/16/04

President Ray Stineford called the meeting to order at the museum at 7 p.m. There were 24 persons in attendance.

Treasurer Becky Knowles reported that the Society currently has \$5,680 in its savings account and \$2,118 in its checking account for a total of \$7,798. \$449 was recently spent for two filing cabinets and for hanging folders. The report was filed for audit.

President Stineford announced his resignation. He will be succeeded by vice president Mary Lucy. Mr. Stineford offered to continue as museum custodian and will produce two more newsletters. In October he will address the Wakefield Historical Society on the subject of the lighting in bygone days.

Help was requested for the historical Society booth for the Madison P.T.O. craft fair on Dec. 4.

Member Jack Alexander announced that the Madison Library's Chick Room now offers art shows every Tuesday afternoon.

Becky Knowles then presented her talk on the Peak House on Chocorua Mountain, which was built by her great

grandfather David Knowles in 1892. In 1876 he had built Lakeview Cottage on Silver Lake, which Becky still operates as a Bed and Breakfast.

Peak House was destroyed in a mighty storm in 1915. The talk was illustrated with slides.

- Mary H. Meier, Recording Secretary

END OF THE SEASON

With the October program on the "Snow Village Sketches" we bring to a close the 2004 program season. Thanks are due to so many local friends and residents for entertaining and enlightening audiences. Our first program in March featured Susan Barnes who showed slides of her bike trip from the West coast to New York State - mountains, valleys, flora and fauna - fabulous photography about this big country we live in. In April Carol Batchelder shared memories of days around the Silver lake postoffice and railroad. We could almost hear the warning of the whistle of the locomotive rounding the bend as she talked. and Paulette Lowry told us about the early history of the US Postal Service and of early mail arrivals here in town. Russ Petrie and the Madison Gospel Singers brought music alive in the Baptist Church in July. In mid-summer Roger Clayton and Lee Middlekauf gave a narrated program of Madison, past and present. On the large screen at the gym, viewers saw photographs from the pre-1900s to the present. A sequel is planned for 2005. In August we put on for ourselves as actors an excerpt from "Madison-Our Town."

Programs for 2005 are now being scheduled.



FOR MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Enclosed is _____ dollars (Five for single; ten for family)

NEW _____ Renewal _____

Address:

Send to: Madison historical Society, Treasurer
Box 505, Madison, NH 03849