

“In the Country” by Robert Todd – published in the *New Boston Bulletin* in 2012

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THE WEIGHT OF LAW, PAST AND PRESENT (1/2012)

Although I have lived in my ancestral home for 48 years, I frequently discover something that I have not been previously aware of. Old books are some of that sort which have been boxed, shelved, or otherwise set aside during my life in this house. In recent times I am becoming more interested in the old books that were read by my ancestors. The content of these books gives me a focused perspective on how four generations of my family and other of this community lived.

Recently, I randomly pulled from the bookshelf a title that caught my eye, New-Hampshire Revised Statutes. The appearance of the book immediately impressed me; the title is embossed, possibly in gold leaf, on a red background at the top of the binding. On the bottom of the binding ‘1842’ is stamped in black. The binding and thick hard covers are dressed in fine-grained tan leather. Its over-all dimensions are 6” X 9 ½” by 1 ¾” and there are 555 pages of text, including the index. Despite a span of 169 years since it was printed, the book is in excellent condition and reflects uncommon beauty.

The pages within are most likely pressed from fibers other than wood because they are heavy and sound. Inside the cover are two pages without print, the first bears the signature, “James M. Gregg”, and the address, “Manchester N.H.” penned with India ink. This person may have been a former owner of this book, possibly a relative of the prominent New Boston Gregg family and a friend of my Great-grandfather, James. The first page of text is a title page that states its content to be the RSAs of the State passed as of December 23, 1842 and that the preface contains the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Hampshire. The preface also boldly presents the state seal and a statement that it was published by order of the Legislature (in Old English lettering) and that it was stereotyped and published by Morrill, Silsby & Co., Concord, N.H.

Being curious about the book’s statement of having been “stereotyped”, I accessed Encyclopedia Britannica on the internet and learned that it is a method of printing developed in the late 18th century. A stereotype is a printing plate that was used for “high speed” press runs and was formed by locking together the type columns of a complete page and molding a mat of papier-mache to them. This mat, when dried, was used as a mold to cast the stereotype plate from hot metal. The resulting plate was much stronger and more durable than the common page of type.

Reading on into the preface I began to realize the significance of the book I held in my hand. It is stated that since the Legislature began making law in 1783 there had only been irregular publications containing generalized compilations of the state laws. In June of 1840 the Legislature adopted a resolution that the Governor appoint a committee of three to revise, codify, and amend the statute laws of N.H. This was done and the first edition of the Revised Statutes was published in March of 1843 and RSAs have since been published annually to the best of my knowledge. I had not turned more of the stiff pages before I realized that I would be reading one of the first edition of such books that informed and guided the making of history.

The content of this edition contains all of the laws which governed the interactions between citizens in this state and this community under 30 different titles and 230 specific chapters. For comparison I compared this content with the on-line version of the current RSAs. Not surprisingly, we are now governed by 678 chapters under 64 specific titles. The text in one chapter in the 1842 laws that related to banking covered 7 pages of text, whereas just one of the current chapters (676) of the RSAs, on the subject of planning and zoning, contains 36 pages in a book with that is about 20% larger than my 1842 book of laws.

It is interesting to note that several titles in the 1842 laws lay considerably more responsibility and authority upon local government than do the current state RSAs. I am most intrigued by Title XII because it is the law relating to local militias. This title includes Chapters 76 through 98, on 32 pages of type bound in the 1842 law book. My Great Grandfather, James Todd, was the clerk of the New Boston Artillery Company just before the law was changed to raise the jurisdiction of militia from local control to state control. In fact, the company roster that James kept, as required by the statute, is an item I previously discovered in the attic and then gave to the New Boston Historical Society for safe keeping.

My reading of the chapters relating to the Militia provided me with a new understanding of the legacy represented by our own New Boston Artillery Company and of the Molly Stark cannon. The statutes on Militia gave the town select boards nearly absolute authority in establishing a company of artillery, cavalry, light infantry, grenadiers, or riflemen. Selectmen were empowered to direct the Captain in the Militia to enroll by draft all non-exempt able-bodied males between the ages of 18 and 45 to serve in the local company for five years. The company was required to form as part of a regiment. If the local company failed to form, then an annual tax of \$3 had to be paid by each man enrolled by the captain; half of the tax stayed with the town and the other half was given to the state.

Each company in the regiment was required to hold at least two training exercise per year and to attend the regimental muster. AWOLS were charged \$3 for absence at muster and \$2 for absence at training exercises. Each militiaman had to provide his own uniform, armaments and accoutrements. As I understand the 1842 statute, in case of attack or rebellion, the commander in chief had authority to detach a local company and put it under command of field officers at the state level. I feel that this statute had the potential to put selectmen in a position of extreme authority. I wonder how the New Boston Board of Selectmen would feel about having the same powers that their counterparts of 1842 had with respect to the military.

I notice that some of the current statutes I now work under have language very similar to the corresponding 1842 chapters. In particular, a comparison between RSA 227, the current timber trespass statute, and Chapter 207 of the 1842 statutes reflects a continuing concern about unauthorized tree cutting. Each statute provides for punitive damages in proportion to the egregiousness of the violation. Currently, the punitive relief ranges from three to ten times the value of forest products removed and the 1842 chapter provided for punitive damages of three times the value of forest products removed plus set fees for trees of certain sizes. Further, in the case of pine trees taken by trespass, a penalty of five times the value thereof was awarded to the injured party.

The 1842 laws relating to removal of stones and earth by actions of trespass are also incredibly similar to the current statute. Currently, Chapter 539 provides treble damages for cost of materials and restoration (including stonewalls), and allows reimbursement for attorney's fees and costs. In 1842 the statute provided for forfeits to the person injured treble damages plus a sum not to exceed 15 dollars according to the aggravation of the offense.

What of all the statutes which govern the use of land today which involves so much of my attention as a consultant, I mused? Diligently I searched the index to each title in my 1842 book of statutes for any regulation related to zoning, subdivision, water pollution, air pollution, excavation (gravel pits), driveway standards and permits, septic system design, timber harvesting, etc. No regulation was found on any of these subjects!

I tried to visualize our community as it existed during 1840 to 1850. I could see in my mind an eroded landscape that was depleted of its natural productivity and only 15% covered by forest. I could see many mills along the Piscataquog that discharged waste into the river. Protection of fish and game was non-existent; in fact bounties were paid for the eradication of several species. Poor agricultural practices that were the norm, such as over-grazing on steep slopes, lack of cover crops following harvest, projected a picture in my mind of an unhealthy environment. Had these paradigms persisted, I believe that the environmental laws we have on our books today would have had their roots in similar laws enacted during the middle of the 19th century. But, the great migration away from lands in our community, and from this state, changed land use and provided time for the ecosystem to heal.

The Spirits Danced When the Banner Was Raised (2/2012)

A moment before I crossed the bridge on my way to the polls I spotted a large banner hanging from Dodge's Store porch. My eyes strained and my mind jumped off its political track; could this be the long awaited moment? YES! I exclaimed and I raised a tightened fist as I turned the corner around the old store, "OPEN WEDNESDAY", read the large black letters. My heart was happy as I entered the parking lot at the school and I know a smile was on my face all the time I was voting.

I was shocked by the sudden closure of Dodges Store on Monday morning of the last week in August 2011. From that day forward I shared with everyone in this community the inconvenience caused by having to seek incidental grocery items at stores more than a few miles away. Even greater hardship for me was the anguish I felt by not knowing what the future held for New Boston's legendary pivot point. In this regard, my feelings about the icon may run deeper than those of most New Boston citizens because of my life-long relationship with the physical structure and with three generations of the Dodge family that were its proprietors. My feelings and memories nurtured at the store were heartily and jovially enriched by the breadth of characters in generations of townspeople that I socialized with while patronizing the place, to include the upstairs barber shop and the post office in which my aunt worked. Such relationships could easily fill a book ala Payton Place.

Further, my attachment to Dodge's Store is also passed to me through heredity because of the similar experiences my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents gained at this place during their lives. My Grandmother's stories etched in my mind the importance of Dodge's Store to my ancestors' lives which is confirmed by written words in diaries and papers they kept; all to become intertwined with my memories.

During what felt like a coon's age after the store closed I processed many opposing thoughts about what could happen to this edifice which has been an incubator of memories and cultural exchange since about 1887. The most repugnant thought was centered on the store building being razed and a modern market built in its place. On the other hand, I dreamed that someone local would buy the property and reopen the store sustaining

all the memories, legacies, and charm held by the original building. Now, I have a light heart knowing that indeed the property is owned by local people who care about all that flows from Dodge's Store.

While the lower level of the old store is set to continue its functional value as a marketplace it will surely continue its function as a cultural exchange center for the patrons. What of the second floor, I mused. Perhaps hundreds of times I have opened the heavy door with "Valley Hall" painted on the glass, climbed the wide spiral staircase to the second story, passed down the hallway followed by the echo of my footsteps deflected from the solid wainscoting and high ceiling, to the barber shop. In that room, formerly J. R. Whipple's business office, I sat waiting with several local men for Don Bazinet, later Henry Hunter (father of Ed Hunter, New Boston's building inspector), to cut my hair.

The barbers came to New Boston once a week as I recall and there was a pent up demand for the barber's service. There may have been from 5 to 10 people waiting in that pleasant room with the large windows overlooking the street. I remember being greatly entertained by the stories those men told. Most of them passed away long ago leaving me feeling privileged to carry a memory of them and of the era. I remember that they were truck drivers, dairy farmers, poultry farmers, road workers, carpenters, loggers, and sawmill workers; a mixture of culture not possible to assemble in town today.

But, when I went into that room in 2002, accompanied by the former owner, my mind's eye saw men sitting around the edge of the room. Where the big adjustable barber's chair was attached to the floor I noticed a ring worn into the floor boards by the barbers' shoes as they lowered the ears of their customers. While observing the ghosts of barbers and men needing a haircut, including my father, the sound of their laughter was heard again in my heart.

During those numerous occasions that I sat in the barber's chair I never realized that a great room languished on the other side of the wall. When approaching the store I often peered into the tall single lights of glass in the room over the main entrance to the store. That room is called Valley Hall. My grandmother told me many stories about her experiences in this room and I always wanted to see it and one day in 2002 the former owner fulfilled my yearning.

That day I eagerly followed the owner into Valley Hall. We entered the coatroom where huge black iron hooks lined the walls still waiting to serve the purpose for which they were made. Adjacent to the coatroom a toilet with a stool and an overhead flush closet also waited patiently to serve anyone in need.

My mind had imagined me being in another time; I was not cognizant of the present as I followed my guide through the next door and entered the great Valley Hall. I stood in amazement; the room was bright from the sunlight coming from the three large windows facing the store front and three in the wall parallel with River Road. I just stood there forcing my mind to observe and to not conjure up visions of the past.

I failed to keep from visualizing my grandmother, her sister, and two other young women standing on the stage that ran the full length of the front of the Hall. On that occasion they were members of the first class to graduate from New Boston High School in 1895. I had to deal with another vision of the New Century Club, a social, philanthropic group, locally organized by Sadie Saltmarsh. The Club had lectures and plays on the stage. I touched the old curtain still drawn back to the end of the stage, it felt fragile and I dared not pull it along the wire from which it hung. How many people sat in this Hall to applaud the numerous plays performed here, perhaps 100 to 150, I thought.

From the high ceiling hang two of the most glamorous chandeliers I ever saw. I believe that the lights were first gas burners, and then retrofitted for electricity generated and distributed by A. Page Wilson.

I thought about the old OUAM, a patriotic, social, and benevolent fraternity that met here regularly. In the attic of the Todd Homestead hangs a blue cap with a gold braid and black visor. It is shaped like a train conductor's cap and a shield over the visor contains the four initials representing the name "Order of United American Mechanics". I am quite certain that my grandfather was a member of this organization and attended meetings here.

While in a nostalgic state of mind that day, I tried to frame the time period in which Valley Hall contributed so much to New Boston's community life. I knew that there had been a corner store at this site since the 1820's operated first by Amos Tewksbury, then by James Gregg (James' name is written on the first blank page of the 1842 book of NH statutes which was the subject of this column in the January issue of the NBB). S. D. Atwood remodeled the original building and operated a store until it was destroyed by fire in May of 1887.

Valley Hall did not exist at this site until the present building was constructed by J. R. Whipple about 1888. S. D. Atwood continued to operate a store in the ground level of the new building. I reasoned that the public use of Valley Hall most likely ceased when Clarence Dodge purchased the building in 1920. I estimate that the Hall was actively used for about 32 years.

I drifted across the floor and looked out over the town just for a reality check, was I really back in 1910, or was it actually 2002 when I was allowed to visit this transcendental place? I glanced down to the busy street below. Traffic was not horse and buggy, it was cars and trucks! My mind was reluctantly returned to the present. Instead I wished that I could have danced under the chandeliers with a pretty girl to music played by a band on the stage. Did Perley and Bessie, my grandparents, dance here I wondered.

Dodge's store is one of my memory houses and I have a strong attachment to the Valley Hall and J.R. Whipple's personal office, later used as a barber shop. In light of the significance of these special rooms to the history of New Boston I wish, albeit pretentiously, they were available to public view. But, I am very pleased that the Dodge's Store is open again.

The Town's Most Distinguished Wetland (3/2012)

My inspiration for this column came from reading recent articles written by members of the Piscataquog Land Conservancy and published in this paper. Several members of PLC caringly described their favorite place in the Piscataquog River Watershed. My own favorite place in the watershed is the Great Meadow. This notable landmark is my source of connectivity with family heritage, town history, ecological awareness, natural beauty, and recreation. I would like to share with readers some of my most memorable experiences with this wetland that instilled deep feelings tying me to this place.

I was introduced to the Great Meadow at a very young age, perhaps 7 years old, when I accompanied my father on cold winter days to the red maple swamp at the southwestern part of the meadow. He harnessed Dick and Jerry, his team of Percherons, to the scoot and we went to the meadow to haul back red maple cordwood that had been previously cut and bucked into four foot pieces and split for easy handling. Dad wore ice creepers on his boots and the horses had sharp cleats screwed to their shoes for traction. For years this part of the meadow, owned by my family, was a source of firewood.

The proximity of the Great Meadow to my ancestral home at the junction of Colburn Road and Route 136 in the northwesterly quadrant of this township provided me opportunity of access to splendid adventures during my youth for nature observance, fishing, and hunting. I hunted the deer that were attracted to all edges of the Meadow. I also hunted the colorful wood duck that nested in tree cavities over the shallow water in the 2012 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

southwest portion of the Meadow. Using a long bamboo pole with line and hook baited with worms from the garden, I caught brook trout which my grandmother cooked for me. It was pretty darned good fishing where the Buxton Brook flowed between the old bridge abutments on the John Newton Dodge Road. In the summer when the Buxton Brook was at low flow I struggled upstream from the old bridge along the muddy bank of the brook and caught bullfrogs with a forked spear. My grandmother pan fried tasty frog legs, but my mother wouldn't touch them.

My connection with Great Meadow continued after I graduated from High School. For over two years I was employed as a farm hand at the Great Meadows Farm owned by Elliott and Linda Hersey. I lived in the house, owned by the Hersey family, on the north end of the Meadow.

The most awesome experience gained during that short span of my life is etched in my mind for life. On the northwesterly edge of the flowage there was a lowland area which had apparently been dry enough to support a white pine forest with trees that reached a height of 60 to 80 feet. Due to placement, by persons unknown, of earth and stone fill between the old bridge abutments at the outlet about ten years prior, the water level was raised and the pine trees died. The stems were secure and top limbs made excellent nest platforms for the great blue heron rookery that settled there during my stay at the farm.

I awoke at five in the morning to assist with milking the Holstein herd at the farm. In the spring I did not need an alarm clock. About that time there arose such a racket from the Meadow that I could not have slept anyway. All the heron mothers were busily providing breakfast to their hungry chicks, 4-5 in each nest.

The heron rookery attracted the attention of Hamilton Rice of Goffstown. Mr. Rice, an avid wildlife photographer, was interested in setting up a blind as close to the rookery as he could without interrupting the extravaganza that was staged there every morning. He engaged me to help him get set up. I was enamored with his work and became his friend. He told me that he counted fifty nests with the aid of his telescopic lens. I think of him often and wonder what happened to his collection of photos after he passed away.

In the evenings each spring there was another song from the meadow; the deep bass vocals of bullfrogs. I was amazed that creatures so small could make such a booming summons to mates. In proportion to their size it must be one of the loudest mating calls in the animal kingdom.

My adoration of this place goes deeper than the personal, up-close experiences within its environs. The history of the meadow and the cultural role it played has been tucked into my memory while researching land boundary evidence in deeds, probate records, and published histories over the past 40 years. Each smidgen of information I learned about the meadow is personally satisfying upon recall.

I came to understand the importance of the great meadow to my family and other families that lived in this part of town while doing my research. My Great Grandfather, James Todd, purchased three 10 acre rectangular lots from prominent families in the neighborhood, namely Dodge, Andrews, and Wallace. James also purchased a large upland lot bordering the west side of the meadow, once owned by Andrews. I presume that my ancestors used the upland and possibly some of the meadow as pasture.

Smith is a family name attached to ownership of the majority of the Great Meadow land traceable back to the time when this part of the state was within the Province of Massachusetts. The Province granted this town to a group of land speculators who named it Simpson's Town. That group granted lots to about 60 owners. The Simpson proprietors laid out an irregular pattern of lots stretching across the northerly portion of town from Goffstown to the west side of the Great Meadow. All the lots in this first division of lots were relatively small, except for one lot, containing more than 300 acres, that included the Great Meadow and considerable upland surrounding it. This large lot was held in common by the first settlers. For years I have

pondered why this extra large lot was laid out and what benefits it provided to the first white settlers in the period of 1735 to 1741. I think I now know the answer; GRASS.

I presume that the Simpson proprietors would have reconnoitered the area they were proposing to subdivide and sell. They knew that settlers would need a substantial area of grassland to sustain their livestock. Surely, the proprietors saw that the largest area of available grass in the new town was at Great Meadow.

I presume the proprietors observed Bluejoint grass, the most abundant species of native grass in the northeast. This plant grows well in saturated soils and tolerates short term shallow flooding (about 6 inches). It grows in clumps to a height of 3 to 5 feet and spreads from its strong rhizomes (underground stems). This grass is palatable to livestock and it sustained the early farmsteads before settlers cleared fields and planted European grass upon them.

The importance of the Great Meadow as a source of grass is documented in the History of New Boston NH (Cogswell, p.228). It reports that a body of a man was found in the early spring near a camp where cattle had been fed during the winter with grass harvested from the meadow. "Who he was or how he came by his death was not affirmed;..." Early in the town's history, perhaps in the 1750 to 1760 period a man named Boyce, from Londonderry, owned considerable acreage in the Great Meadow. As it was impractical to harvest bluejoint grass in the meadow and carry it to Londonderry for cattle fodder, cattle were driven from Londonderry to the Great Meadow and several men stayed in a camp all winter to care for the animals.

One of the first settlers in Simpson's town was Thomas Smith and he was granted a farm lot on the east side of town. He, like all the other first settlers, lost his title in Simpson's town due to a change in the Province line that put this area in New Hampshire. However, Thomas petitioned the Masonian Proprietors to allow him and his four strong sons to settle in what was the common land at the head of Great Meadow. Although there is no record of his petition being granted, Thomas and his family settled there in 1742 and the farm stayed in the Smith family 208 years. In 1950 Byron Smith sold his farm to Waldon and Lois Hersey. I still remember the pat on the back that the very old Byron Smith gave me when I was at his farm with my father. I was about 8 years old.

There is so much more I want to say about Great Meadow. Word count forces me to close soon, before doing so; I want to write briefly about the importance of my favorite wetland today in a more indirect functional role than it played 275 years ago. Then it contributed to the survival of families in town; today it is the largest wetland in the town and its functions and values, though different from what they were fifty years ago. may exceed the functions and values of all others. About 42 acres of the meadow are owned by the town and approximately three quarters of its upland perimeter is protected by conservation easements.

How does this wetland compare with other habitats in the state? The N.H. Wildlife Action Plan recognizes the Great Meadow as being part of the highest ranked wildlife habitat in NH (2010). This rank resulted from a study done by the NH Department of Fish and Game. That the Great Meadow is as highly ranked as an ecological superstar pleases me greatly. The Great Meadow has helped nurture the seed from which grew my understanding at a young age that this neighborhood is where my home is.

The Legacy of District Schools in New Boston (4/2012)

History has been on my mind lately; much to the exclusion of stories centered on nature. The upcoming family reunion, the sestercentennial of New Boston, and Steve Taylor's talk on the sheep boom at the Historical Society meeting on March 8 have put my mind on a different track. Specifically, Taylor's statement advising that he is planning a talk on one room schools in New Hampshire was a home run pitch. At that instant I knew
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what my subject would be this month. My life has been literally cradled by the legacy of the District 13 schoolhouse at Todd's Corner and my story will be told in the historical context of district schools in New Boston.

Cogswell's History of New Boston does a good job of telling us about how young people were educated in the early years. Before incorporation of New Boston all instruction was provided by private contract between families and teachers. Some families sent their children to Londonderry for a few months a year, or to other towns where schools existed. Cogswell states that the first teaching in New Boston began in a small building erected in 1769 near the first meeting house which was located in what is now the cemetery on Cemetery Road.

The district model of education began in 1773 with the Selectmen hiring one teacher to provide instruction for a few months in different parts of town. Selectmen set the standards for hiring a grammar school master who was qualified to teach language, mathematics, and geometry. The Selectmen divided the town into five districts wherein the school master would teach equally in the five. The district system expanded to a maximum of 18 when in 1856 the trend reversed and two districts were closed.

Some time after these early efforts the State Government passed legislation to support educational programs in towns. By reference to my old 1843 law book, I learned that towns were required to describe the several districts, by metes and bounds. The statutes allowed for some districts to be united with districts in adjoining towns for convenience and economy.

Each district was, by law, a body politic and corporate, with the power to take, hold, and manage property, real and personal, as needed to support the school district. Districts were to be governed by a Prudential Committee comprised of a moderator, a clerk, plus three more members. The Prudential Committee was required to hold an annual meeting in March. State law empowered the Prudential Committee to hire teachers after being satisfied the candidate was qualified to teach the required subjects of reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, and geography. I was surprised to read that the law required the Committee provide board to teachers in addition to a salary. I wonder if the candidates marketed themselves competitively to other Prudential Committees in town.

Committees were also required to provide fuel for the school building and to repair the structure. The law provided that the district schools be inspected by the Committee twice a year and if teachers were found to be unqualified, or that students were unruly, members of the Committee were to take appropriate action; dismissal being that action most relied upon. A summer and winter term (dates not given) were required to be held each year. A final Committee responsibility that caught my attention is that it was required to choose the text books, but the parents had to pay for them.

As compared with the duties of contemporary School Boards, Prudential Committees had the power to purchase, repair, alter, or remove a schoolhouse. However, the Prudential Committee could not purchase more than one half acre for a school site. In the event that a site was chosen for a school and the land owner did not agree to sell, then the Committee could petition the Selectmen to lay out a lot, not to exceed one eighth acre; taking it in the same manner as provided for taking highways. This method of acquisition was more like an easement in that if the school site was abandoned, the land reverted to the original owner or his successor.

The State's responsibility for support of local education was not overlooked even when the school statutes were first adopted. The Legislature provided for a 'Literary Fund' in the statute. This fund was a tax levied against banks at the rate of one half percent of all capital stock in each bank in New Hampshire. These funds were distributed to towns for support of education.

I gleaned New Boston town reports for the years 1870 through 1935 for information about the trends and policies of the district school program in this town and to attach names and faces to the legacy of this aspect of local culture. In 1870 there was a central school where the NBFD is located. This building had two rooms accommodating grades one through seven and it was then the only 'graded' school in town and it was the largest. Typically, the town reports held a separate report of each school district authored by its agent. Several school reports contained names familiar to me. One was Samuel Dane, Agent for district 12. Samuel Dane was the Great Grandfather of James Dane of local maple syrup fame. District 12 was united with Francestown and Lydia Langdell was the teacher. She may have lived on McLaughlin Lane, about one mile east of the school house that was located on the south side of Clark Hill Road a few hundred feet east of the town line. I surveyed that school lot about 1979 for the owner and there was no building on it then.

The 1870 report of District 13 School was entered in the record by James P. Todd, Agent. This James was my great grandfather. The District 13 School was located then at the junction of Thornton Road and Pine Road on land now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey. Emmy Colburn taught one term and Charles Shed taught a second term at the school. Emmy may have been one of the Colburn families that for over 200 years lived on Colburn Road near its junction with Route 136.

For twenty four years after 1870 the town's district school system was fairly stable. Then, in 1894 dramatic changes were on the horizon. The Town Report speaks of a significant change in the system; Districts 12 and 13 were combined and the school in District 12 was closed.

1895 brought more foreboding change to the system. The State Legislature passed a law which abolished the district school system. The Town voted to close School District 3 and to sell the building. At the same meeting the Town voted to move the District 13 school from the junction of Thornton Road and Pine Road to Todd's Corner and it appropriated \$1000 to build a new schoolhouse to serve District 13. The former District 13 school lot was sold to my grandmother and it stayed in the family until purchased by Mr. Humphrey who then passed it to his son and wife. Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey are the current owners.

By 1907 the number of one room schools had been reduced to 7. The remaining districts were having difficulty finding teachers that were willing to walk 1 to 2 miles from their boarding place to the school twice a day. In 1909 another district school was closed.

James P. Todd was Agent for the District 13 School for several years and teachers boarded at the Todd Homestead for the entire life of the school. This tightened the cultural connection between my family and New Boston's school system. I talked with Jim Dane about number 13, after I discovered in the town report that the school was closed in 1934. Jim told me he was in the first grade that year and among the names of other students that attended was Winston "Pappy" Daniels. I believe that Jim and Pappy are the only students of the number 13 School still living. I asked Jim if he remembered the teacher's name and he said it was Harriet Anderson. Harriet was my mother's sister, and she was the last teacher to board at the Todd Homestead. As I understand the triangle, Harriet introduced my Dad to my Mother. In 1935 the town voted to close Districts number 13 and 2; this ended the district school system of education in New Boston.

But, discontinuance of the School District did not terminate the legacy of old District 13 for me or my family. My Grandfather bought the school building. He gave it to my Father who had it remodeled for the home in which he raised his family. Now it belongs to a new generation, Lori and Rick Kohler, my niece and nephew.

In our kitchen hangs the large oil lamp, now electrified, that hung in the District 13 School and shined upon many students that lived in this District. Now the lantern is a treasured symbol of my families' intergenerational bonds to education and our connection to the District 13 School.

Paper Mill Village: Olden Industrial Center (5/2012)

History of the Mill Village Development: Paper Mill Village is a place name for the settlement snugly clustered on Lyndeborough Road at the nexus of Misty Meadow Lane and the South Branch of the Piscataquog. This settlement, in the southwesterly corner of New Boston, began during the era of subsistence agriculture. The village was served by a water powered gristmill and sawmill and it stepped into the industrial era with a promise to become the industrial center of New Boston. This is a story about its legacy and the confusion that surrounds its place name.

Deed research that I have done for the several boundary survey engagements by my office in Paper Mill Village indicate that Jessie Cristy started buying land in the area in 1771 and according to research done by Rena Davis, he may have built a dam across the river about 1776. This mill would have been of the same scale as the other 35 to 40 mills on the branches of the Piscataquog in New Boston at that time. They all traded in the local settlements. Trading beyond the local village was not feasible because there were no roads between towns suitable for hauling trade goods.

The mill then passed to Col. John Crombie and William Crombie according to Mrs. Davis. These lads were sons of James Crombie, a name that I also found in the land transaction records during the period of 1771 to 1781. The Crombie sons were set back by a fire in their mill, but they rebuilt it and then sold it to Henry Clark in 1813 according research. At about this time the character of the area began to take on a new look, so lets take a peek at the next chapter.

The first view of change is from the flurry of land sales in the area recorded at the Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds during the period of 1800 to about 1815. This was due to the Town of New Boston's disposition of original Town Lot 36, the so-called ministerial lot. When the Masonian Proprietors subdivided the township into lots they gave lots to the town for the purpose of supporting the ministry which became unconstitutional and the lot was sold and the money used to support the town, not the church.

With respect to Paper Mill Village, I believe a more important change was the construction of the 2nd New Hampshire Turnpike about a half mile west of the Crombie mill site during the period of 1799 until 1802. Then in 1803 Town Report chronicles the layout of a road 3 rods wide running from the bridge over Deacon Cristy's mill pond to the turnpike. These circumstances in concert facilitated the first opportunity for trade goods manufactured in Paper Mill village to be sold in distant markets. Would this result in the village becoming the industrial development leader in town?

The mill site passed through several owners subsequent to Henry Clark. They included Peter and Benjamin Hopkins (1828), Jesse Patterson (1834), Luke Smith (1836). During these ownerships the mill was progressively enlarged and the list of manufactured products expanded. Cooperage, lumber, flour, shingles, and clapboards were shipped to market over the new roads. Rena Davis's column "The Old Paper Mill" states that Luke Smith was the great grandson of Lt. Thomas Smith who settled at the north end of the Great Meadow and whose descendants lived in their ancestral homestead until 1950.

The mill passed from Smith to Jonathon King in 1853 and the industry expanded further. According to Davis, King rebuilt the mill and outfitted it as a flour mill grinding 15,000 bushels of meal annually into superior flour. In addition to his three grindstones he also added machinery to make pails.

The 1858 Hillsborough County wall atlas by J. C. Chace shows the village as it looked on the publication date. In the vicinity of this site I could count 18 black squares on the Atlas representing buildings of one sort or another. The Atlas also illustrates the location of 4 squares adjacent to the former mill pond and adjacent to a canal. All the squares are tagged with names which the records indicate were business men. I was amazed by my observation that the density of buildings and owner names at this site is greater than any other site shown on the Atlas, except for the village of New Boston. One of the sites was a rifle manufacturing shop operated by M. Woods, another was a blacksmith shop. Close to the bridge in the center of this village is noted a school house (this is believed to be the District 6 school, now a private residence). I believe this snapshot of the small businesses operating in the village represents the maximum number ever located there. The period after 1858 is perhaps when large scale industrial development occurred in the village, or anywhere in New Boston.

In her article on the village Rena Davis does not provide her sources, however her statements about the paper mill coincide with deed research that I have done in the area and her story is supported by local lore. I have heard August and Yvonne Gomes and others that lived in the village tell about its history. Rena's article states that the Union Paper Mill Company developed the site about 1866 or 1869 to manufacture paper from discarded rags (worn-out underwear and stockings, etc.). This incidental demand supported a substantial "rag-picker" economy. At its pinnacle the mill produced 260 tons of paper annually and employed 16 men and 4 women.

The mill was well advantaged by the 2nd N.H. Turnpike Road, which had by that period become maintained by the towns of New Boston, Mont Vernon, and Amherst. From Amherst the paper was transferred to the railroad and shipped to distant markets. In 1873 the company was purchased by the Valley Paper Co. and in 1880 it was conveyed to Wilder Co., but Mrs. Davis could find no mention in her research that paper was manufactured after that time.

I presume that the tall brick chimney was skillfully built about 1869 as part of the Union Paper Company's establishment. For about 100 years this chimney was an icon for 'Paper Mill Village'. It was taken down by Page Bunker who bought the old Paper Mill site in 1964. By the time I surveyed the property for Mr. Bunker in 1972 he had taken the chimney down because he felt it was at risk of falling on his home. I still have a memory of the awesome chimney in my mind; Skip Gomes and I often talk about it. Skip says the chimney was removed in 1967. Presently, the only visible remains of the mill is the massive dam structure at the outlet of the mill pond.

Confusion over Place Names: For as long as I can remember that portion of our town discussed above has been called Paper Mill Village by some and Gougeville by others. I am fond of the origin of place names because in my business such names give clues to who owned land in certain areas. My interest moved me to look for a likely source of the name, Gougeville. No source that I examined revealed any other name than the Paper Mill Village place name. Lacking a written source, I considered other sources of place names in the area. Since place names are often related to physical features on the local landscape, such as Joe English hill, the plains, great meadow, and pin ball, I decided to see if there is a similar landscape feature from which the Gougeville name could have been derived.

I looked at the USGS map and what struck me is 'the gorge'. The gorge is clearly visible from the bridge over the Piscataquog River in the High Bridge area of Frankestown. This gorge is the most distinctive reach in the entire river system in my opinion and I spent a lot of my teenage life swimming and sliding the rapids downstream of the bridge, it is beautiful! The gorge is typically marked by steep banks rising, like canyon walls, an average of about 50 feet above the river on each side and there is often white water on the steep falls ending just upstream of the old Butterfield Mill dam site.

The convergence of old highways in the area of the Butterfield Mill and the associated buildings and homes in the vicinity (in both New Boston and Francestown) located within spitting distance of a great gorge, indicates an area that is worthy of a place name. Could that place name be Gorgeville? Why not, there is only one letter difference between the two names, they sound alike, and Gorgeville could have been easily corrupted by writers spanning 250 years. I am ready to say the evidence supports the place name, Gorgeville, and that area is close to, but not the same 'Ville' as Paper Mill Village.

First Families Molded Landscape and Community (6/2012)

I hear lots of buzz recently that brings me to fill this page with reminiscences of the legacy handed to this community by families that settled here. Our town's 250th Anniversary Committee has discussed ways to recognize families that established the traditions and customs of New Boston and this subject may be featured in the 2013 celebration now being planned. The New Boston Fourth of July Association has also embraced the trend by declaring 'families' to be the parade theme of 2012. In my own family, many relatives have hit the ground running in planning the 200th anniversary of the Todd Homestead to be held in 2014. The vortex from these streams of energy has created an 'energizer bunny' approach to all these exciting efforts.

Why is all this 'look back' effort important to us as citizens of New Boston? I believe that everyone in the community groups making plans for the upcoming celebrations holds heartfelt feelings about the families that created the pattern of our landscape and our cultural foundations. My profession as a forester and land surveyor for the last 40 years has put me in touch with most of the families that settled in Town during the mid eighteenth century, but the average citizen may not have an awareness of and reverence for the folks that came before them.

I feel like I am on a first name basis with the family members that came to New Boston when it was a wilderness. They cleared the land, built their homes, and sustained themselves with crops they raised and with the animals they brought with them. Most of these families were of Scotch and Irish ancestry who migrated from Northern Ireland to Londonderry in 1720. The Londonderry area was first known as Nutfield. Nutfield's charter of 1722 included present day Windham, Derry, Londonderry, and parts of Salem and of Manchester. It is amazing that the enduring character of these families has been revealed to me through their deeds, wills, and then chronicled in the History of New Boston (Cogswell, 1864) and the History of Londonderry, (Reverend Edward L. Parker, 1851).

I am reminded of the hardships endured by these first families. Hardship was overcome by their extraordinary perseverance and skill that I envy nearly everyday as I walk along stonewalls and by the awesome remains of their dams and mill sites on branches of the Piscataquog. The cellar remains of the family homes and barns particularly hold me standing in place with a bowed head in reverence and respect for the souls that lived there, gave birth there, and died there. These reminders on the landscape are sacred places in my mind and they are worthy of reverence and respect by everyone.

Early New Boston families that I have learned about in my research are too numerous for me to introduce all to you, so I limit my introductions to the exemplary few. Thomas Smith lived on land overlooking the Great Meadow from a hill on the northerly tip thereof. He came to New Boston in 1736 from Chester and settled in the east part of New Boston while this town was part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Being displaced by Indian attacks he resettled at the Great Meadow in 1742 with four sons and established a farm which stands today. In 1949 I met Byron Smith, the last of the Smith family to live in New Boston.

Using Cogswell (1864), I calculate Byron to be the 6th or 7th generation removed from the Thomas Smith who first settled there. The Smith tenure of the farm on the Great Meadow ran for 276 years. Thomas
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Smith's great-great grandson, Luke Smith, owned and operated a mill in Paper Mill Village of New Boston from 1836 until 1853. Thomas Smith and his progeny contributed much over such a long time to this Town that they may be unequaled by any I introduce herein.

I could introduce many settlers by the name of Dodge that I have known by deed and probate records. However, there are so many of them that I have never been able to completely sort out their genealogical connections. Cogswell (1864) sketches Benjamin Dodge, born 1758, coming to New Boston and settling in the north part of Town where he raised his children. One of his children was also named Benjamin, born in 1777, who inherited the homestead. This Benjamin had a son named John Newton Dodge who married Emma Colburn in 1858 and they lived on the home farm.

I am acquainted with the three generations of Dodges introduced above and know them nearly as well as my own ancestors; their remembrances are etched on the landscape in my neighborhood and I shake hands with them when I walk the John Newton Dodge Road to the Great Meadow. This road is a class 6 highway leading from Colburn Road to Saunders Hill Road, passing over the outlet to the Great Meadow (the bridge spanning the outlet has been gone for more years than I can remember). The farm buildings and homestead site of John Newton Dodge and his predecessors is memorialized by foundations of his barn and house.

Getting back to my introduction of John Newton Dodge, I have found in my attic one of his advertisements for prized Devon cattle that he raised. I feel that I can still see in my mind these cattle being pastured on the great drumlin landform overlooking the Great Meadow from the south. I remember as a youngster herding my Dad's dairy cows from these pastures that he rented to the milking barn.

The second Benjamin, whose spirit I have known, is listed as owner of a mill, located just south of his house, on the Middle Branch of the Piscataquog River. This mill was built by James Adams and previously owned by John White (Cogswell 1864). Benjamin operated the mill for a while and then sold it to my Great-great grandfather James P. Todd. That Benjamin must also have been a talented millwright because Cogswell (1864) lists him as the builder of the dam and mill last owned and operated by David Butterfield in the Gorgeville area of New Boston.

Many other people with last name Dodge lived in this Town since the early days right up to our beloved Homer Dodge. Unfortunately, I do not know the genealogical link from past to present. In summing the achievements of all Dodges that have lived in town, there seems to be no other family with quite such a record.

If there are other early families similarly memorialized and respected, as were the Dodges, it would have to be those named Gregg. I can say that I only know David Gregg well because he married my Great-great Grandfather's sister and that he went with James P. Todd and several others from town to Sonora, California in 1850 to mine gold. Daniel Gregg and his son David operated a sawmill during the middle part of the 18th century at the site of the first mill built in New Boston on the Middle Branch of the Piscataquog. This site is now owned by Jay and Dot Marden on Gregg Mill Road. Gregg family members were also farmers; the remains of one Gregg farm is now on land protected by the Piscataquog Land Conservancy. During the last quarter of the 19th century Greggs owned the historic mill on the north side of Route 13 at the Piscataquog indicating that the Gregg name fostered the local economy for at least 130 years.

The title for longevity of residency by a family in town may be held by the Dane family. Daniel Dane came to New Boston in 1780 (Cogswell, 1864), but according to Ben Dane there is a deed recorded in the registry to Daniel dated 1776. Several generations lived on the farm. James Dane, a current resident, was born on the farm and two of his children live in New Boston. These children will extend their family's term of continuous inhabitation beyond the current 232 years. My Great Aunt Alice married one of the Dane family members.

The Colburn family may represent a close second in terms of continuous length of family residency. Isaac Colburn settled on the west end of Colburn Road in 1795 and it became a bicentennial homestead. Ephraim Colburn built a saw and shingle mill on the Middle Branch of the Piscataquog near his homestead and this mill's remaining stonework is some of the most spectacular on the Middle Branch. Members of this family and of mine became related by marriage at least twice. I calculate that Edward Colburn, a current resident, continues his family legacy and presently represents 217 years of continuous inhabitation in town.

These early families have left on the landscape a legacy in the beauty of their individual works of stone and collectively by their patterns of land development. Their places of residency, their mill remains, and their farmlands bounded by walls are sacred places to be respected. Our 250th anniversary celebrations should include respectful tribute to these families for securing our inheritance of this beautiful town.

Opportunities for Local Hiking (8/2012)

During the past decade it seems to me that there is an increasing interest in hiking and horse-back riding in the locality. Under the leadership of Kim DiPietro the Piscataquog Area Trailways group has created much interest in horse-back riding and I enjoy seeing them in my neighborhood. The Conservation Commission has built Betsey's Bridge over the Middle Branch of the Piscataquog River effectively doubling the length of the hiking potential over the town-owned former railroad corridor from Route 114 to the 4H Foundation land in the village well within ear-shot of the river song along most of this route. The section of this Rails2Trails project from Gregg Mill Road to the Foundation land is currently under improvement by the New Boston Recreation Department and the Conservation Commission with cooperation from the 4-H Foundation. Another local effort is in the planning stage with the goal of linking downtown with the Post Office site via Mill Street, a foot trail, and a footbridge over the South Branch of the Piscataquog. Further, Louise Robie has individually organized and staged a walking program providing frequent outings, mostly over town roads, which feature natural or historic landmarks. This article introduces another program being studied by a sub-committee of the New Boston Conservation Commission called the Open Space Committee (OSC) that may initiate new town policy resulting in boots on the ground opportunity.

I believe that development of local hiking opportunities utilizing latent resources appropriate for that use will provide great benefit to our community. Governor Lynch and his wife Susan Lynch MD, are promoting a program of walking for health and community building through the Governor's Council on Physical Activity and Health. This program is called "Walk New Hampshire" www.WalkNH.org and Louise Robie has agreed to brief the Open Space Committee about how the program may promote the improvement of local hiking opportunities.

I enjoy walking, however it is mostly connected with my work on client lands in scouting for property boundaries, or examining forest resources. When my work ties me to the desk for more than a day I yearn for hikes along a discontinued highway and a Class VI highway, both of these I consider to be in my backyard. The first one is to the Great Meadow and the other is the Middle Branch Road. Not only do these walks keep me fit, they also disconnect me from the keyboard and reconnect me with Nature. Often I consider how fortunate I am to have this opportunity so close.

There are other hiking challenges that attract people who favor the extreme. The ultimate hike is probably the Appalachian Trail; 2100 miles one way from Maine to Georgia. I calculate this to be about 4.5 million steps! Not a local hike and not one I would enjoy because I believe it may be an immensely long place with the same visual experiences hundreds of times over tending to dull one's senses. Then there is the problem of getting home. The White Mountain National Forest beckoned my teenaged children and several times I

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agreed to bring them into the mountains for day hikes. Enjoyable? Yes, but these hikes caused sore muscles for a few days. I do not think these long hikes promote healthy bodies and souls as much as do frequent impromptu hikes on local trails.

Recently, I was in the New Boston Historical Society building and Lisa Rothman showed me a record book which Jay Marden had donated to the Society's library. On opening this small, hard bound book I was instantly attracted to the stories it contained. The pages of this book chronicled meetings of the New Boston Nature Study Club held in the village during the period of 1913 until about the beginning of the First World War. Louise Marden was the secretary-treasure and is a relative of Jay Marden. Miss Blanche Dodge was the chair and is remembered as a teacher in the New Boston schools.

The Club minutes indicate that members were primarily interested in learning about birds and plants, physical fitness was not specified in the minutes as a goal, but the hikes described were along routes which would have definitely contributed to good health. One such walk began at the village and proceeded along the Francestown Road (Route 136) to the discontinued road leading easterly from near the Colonial Acres Farm enterprise to the Weare Road (Route 77) and back to the village along the Weare Road. That day Club members learned much about Nature from Mr. Warren, the instructor of the day, and they hiked 2.3 miles along the route. It is apparent to me that on the hikes the Club enjoyed Nature and social connection, as well as an unstated objective of physical well-being. I will read the Club's minutes again because of the unexpected connection I found to my Grandmother, Bessie Todd, a club member and regular hiker with the group. I always wondered how she gained her keen interest in ecology.

Louise Robie's success in promoting local hiking, the Governor's (read Governor's wife) program and the legacy of the Nature Study Club give rise to inspiration. The OSC has begun a study of old highways in town which may offer the public an opportunity to study Nature and to exercise close to home. The effort has begun with an attempt to locate and identify highways that fall within the several classifications of State law, particularly Class V (especially those rural roads with low traffic volume), Class VI, discontinued highways, and Class A or Class B trails if any exist. The study includes marking the location of the highway classes on a map. The map most useful for this purpose is the one generated by Wayne Blassberg, owner of First Response Computer Services.

At this time the study indicates there are about 15 miles of Class 6 and discontinued roads in town. These roads are distributed randomly over the map in no particular pattern. Some of the patterns form loops, or potential loops by including sections of roads used by vehicles. Other patterns are in the form of a 'T', 'H' or long circuitous routes crossing highways used by vehicles. In parallel with the mapping is the research effort to determine what the status of each highway is under the law. A record is being made of the source document which created the road status. This is primarily determined from study of town reports and from records at the N.H. Department of Transportation, Records Bureau. It appears that most of the unused highways are of the Class 6 type.

For understanding the OSC's study it is good to know what the several road classifications are and what they mean. I often refer to the publication titled "A Hard Road to Travel; New Hampshire Law of Local Highways, Streets and Trails" by the Local Government Center, Susan Slack Editor, New Hampshire Municipal Association (2004). A Class 6 highway is a local road that has been closed subject to gates and bars by town meeting, or that has not been maintained and repaired in suitable condition for travel by the town for a period of five successive years. Such roads may be used for public travel without benefit of town repair. The short form definition of a discontinued highway is one that has been voted by town meeting to be completely abandoned in accordance with state law. Following such a vote the road may not, in general, be used by the public. Discontinuance of very old highways by town meeting may mean that there is no highway even though it may look like one with stonewalls, culverts, and road fills still visible.

There are two road classes that may be of interest to this study; Class A and Class B trails. Any Class V or Class VI road may be reclassified by town vote to be a Class A or Class B trail. In short, a Class B trail can be used by the public subject to any use restrictions imposed by vote of the town. On the other hand a Class A trail created by town vote can be used by the public and by any vehicular use by an abutter including access to an existing building, but expanding that use is not allowed. The town may also create trails over private land using easements, licenses, and the layout of Class A or Class B trails. These methods involve negotiation with landowners about location and payments.

Several public benefits may come of this effort by the OSC. I believe that physical well being is primary. Big in my book is bringing people face to face with the well-springs of life; Nature. No less important is the connection with the past offered by hiking old roads. Stonewalls, stone culverts, and stone bridge abutments speak loudly of human effort and often lead people past adjoining building foundations that stand as silent witness of early settlers that lived there. I believe that hiking old roads may cause people to look at the future with experience of the past; an insight that may not otherwise be gained.

Our Garden: The Good, Bad, and Ugly (9/2012)

The garden plot at Todd's Corner has had several episodes this spring; each one having posed a challenge for the three families that manage this 5000 square foot plot of special real estate. This plot has been so conspicuous to passersby on Route 136 that it has apparently become a cultural icon over the past 100 plus years of its continuous existence. Mindful of this fact I feel obligated to acknowledge the many hoots and toots sounded by total strangers and neighbors alike as they passed while we worked in the garden. The crew's spirit was uplifted and achy backs were eased by this attention. Even as we went about our business at Dodge's Store and at the Post Office neighbors praised us for the garden's appearance. This should be considered our thanks for your kind words and a reciprocal greeting and well wishes for success in your own gardening effort.

Abnormally warm temperatures and abundant rainfall in mid-May emboldened us to ignore conventional wisdom and to go-ahead with planting our garden on May 19 and 20. My father, the former steward of this garden plot, lectured that there should be no planting before Memorial Day. His sage advice has always been the accepted dogma. However, our group decided to go ahead on the rationalization that the climate change phenomenon would exonerate us for our transgression. Luckily we had perfect conditions!

Several tasks had been accomplished earlier in May, prior to the week-end planting session. Rick had applied well-composted manure, purchased from Middle Branch Farm, and then he rototilled the soil. A couple of days before the planting session trips were made to Colonial Acres to obtain the young plant seedlings. Seeds were purchased at Agway and at New Boston Hardware. How convenient it was to have these sources of high quality plant materials so close by.

The plants we chose to raise this year included: broccoli; musk melons (my favorite, Burpee's High-bred); peppers (Bells, and two varieties of hot peppers); and onion sets. The seeds purchased were from a list of varieties that we have had success with in the past including: three corn varieties with staggered maturities to provide early to late picking; beets; carrots; lettuce (loose-leaf and Romaine); Swiss chard; summer squash; string beans, and; cucumbers.

The race to first ground breaking was, as expected, won by the weeds. I was thankful that the black plastic mulch, which we have used for several years, keeps weeds from growing on all parts of the plot except for the four inch wide planting strips between the rows of plastic. The downside is that the early weeding has to be done by hand, or by use of a narrow blade hoe.

Our second challenge was brought on by a flock of crows. I knew we were in trouble the first morning they woke me up. I looked out the window and saw them pulling up the corn seedlings that had just sprouted visibly above ground. These thieves pulled up the sprout and ate the corn kernels, leaving the sprouts, as they walked down the rows. It was time to call upon the classic effigy, the scarecrow, to keep the birds away. Robby constructed a very scary looking statue outfitted with a baseball cap, a tee shirt and a pair of old army fatigues. Many folks thought it was me standing in the garden and asked if I hired out. The dummy worked and we were faced only with replanting the equivalent of about fifty feet of row.

One morning Lori and I were weeding the corn rows when the seedlings were about a foot tall. She and I were on adjoining rows and were working in opposite directions. She suddenly exclaimed, "Look at this beautiful moth". At that instant I saw one, and then another of the same creature she had seen. Each was settled motionless on a corn stalk. I recognized these large moths as the adult form of the tomato hornworm and I told Lori that they had probably just emerged from the soil where they had wintered as the pupae form of this very destructive insect. This was most likely because the area now planted to corn is where the tomatoes were planted last season. I killed the moths and stated that I was thankful for having eradicated these adults. Each one possibly contained a thousand eggs and they were getting ready to fly sixty feet across the garden to where we had set eight dozen tomato plants. I cringed when I thought that there could be three thousand hungry hornworms foraging on the tomatoes that we were planning to make into salsa this September. These critters are capable of stripping all the foliage off from a plant in about 48 hours. It must have been a stroke of luck that Lori and I killed the three adult stage hornworms that day because only a few caterpillars have been seen since. One application of spray eliminated any visible damage thereafter. These worms also devour pepper plants, but this season we experienced only minor damage to pepper plants.

Other insects have not been a challenge this season. In most seasons we have a problem with bean beetles helping themselves to the plants and to the bean pods. This year we had so few beetles that it was not necessary to control them. I picked some of the early corn variety today and I have not seen any ear worms, or borers. I am confident that there will be little damage to corn from this time on.

Fungi seem to give us a much greater challenge than usual! Damping off fungi threatened to dampen our will in addition to our crops. Cucumbers, squash and melons were attacked early in the season; most of the infected plants have been replaced and now seem to be doing well. I am thankful for Roger Noonan's call warning us that early and late blight on tomatoes was becoming destructive early this year and that I should be watching for it. Based on his tip, I immediately inspected our plants and noticed some early blight taking hold. I applied fungicide and Rick has made a follow-up application which seems to have halted the threat. I am concerned about late blight becoming troublesome due to the rot I am beginning to see on the flower end of some fruit.

Perhaps the greatest disappointment we are faced with is that two dozen tomato plants we purchased this season were apparently mislabeled by the seedling supplier. I wanted to purchase the "Early Girl" variety and after planting soon realized that I had actually planted a variety of cherry tomato. Too late to bring them back for an exchange! We plant 'Early Girl' for eating fresh picked and for canning. The Rhoma variety is used for making salsa along with the right blend of green peppers, red peppers, and cilantro. Our salsa is just a little fiery. Is anyone interested in swapping fruit from 24 cherry tomato plants for a variety we can use for canning?

As I write this, August 4, 2012, I am disturbed by a heavy storm of hail stones, possibly one inch in diameter, mixed with heavy rain pelting the garden. I wonder if this extreme weather is to be another of the challenges I have not yet mentioned in this column. Will our garden be ripped and torn when I make my inspection after the storm stops?

August 5, 2012: I inspected the garden and was relieved that only the corn leaves were ripped and the stalks were tipped somewhat in the direction of the prevailing wind. Holes were punched in the large leaved plants, but, overall the damage was minor. I realize that storms like this may be the norm in the future and we will have to plan accordingly.

We have adopted a new farming practice at the 'Corner' this year. Our group has purchased young livestock to butcher and freeze. In the past few garden seasons we have placed all vegetable scraps in the compost pile for use as fertilizer on the next year's crop. Currently, weeds taken from the garden, excess plants removed in thinning, vegetable waste generated during meal preparation and waste vegetable scraps from the table are now fed daily to the hogs. We feel this practice will be economical because we will not feed as much costly grain.

Not all plants in our garden are good to eat, there are those that are just good fodder for the spirit. We have found that sunflowers and zinnias grow well in our soil and they provide the greatest show of color resulting from the least effort. We appreciate the zinnias in the garden and as cut flowers.

Let the harvest begin, most challenges have been overcome. We hope that all who have gardens enjoy the same success as have we and for the good health surely to come from them.

Old Folks Days in New Boston (10/2012)

The inspiration for this column stems from a very unusual coincidence which occurred in my office during a busy morning two weeks ago. A friend and acquaintance for more than thirty years came and hurriedly explained why he was here. I suppose that he felt guilty for not having an appointment. He said that he was ridding his house of things that he did not want to keep and when he was deciding what to do with the book held while standing in front of my desk, the "In the Country" columns came to his mind. He thought that I should have the book and he was compelled to immediately bring it here.

I accepted the gift and he promptly left with an apology for taking my time. The appearance of the book drew my immediate attention. Its beauty alone is impressive. There is not a scratch on the thick black leather binding; just slight wear visible along the edges of the cover at the binding. On the back of the binding, printed in gold, is the title and there are four narrow ridges of leather that I believe were designed to protect the printing. These ridges are decorated with gold stripes; we would now call them 'forward slash' marks. The excellent condition of the book belies its age, indicated by the publisher, John B. Clark Company of Manchester, N.H. to be 1909.

The title of the book is Old Folks Day Reports, New Boston, N.H. 1895-1909. The person or persons responsible for compiling the contents is not mentioned, but there are 14 consecutive reports of the annual Old Folks Day celebrations made by committee secretaries bound in this book. I was amazed when I examined a cloth book mark, possibly made of silk, still inside the book. This, I believe, was placed in the book by the publisher or by the compiler prior to its distribution. On the bookmark is a poem titled "On the Old Farm". My thoughts were focused on this book for the rest of the day to the extent that I had difficulty tending to my work.

At the end of the day and for several evenings thereafter I skimmed the contents of the book and studied the pages which captured my interest. Having never known that New Boston had Old Folks Day celebrations I was most interested in who fostered the idea, who worked on the committees and what activities comprised the events. Of particular interest to me was the underlying impetus for having Old Folks Day celebrations at that time in light of the fact that we seldom witness such events in recent times.

I remember reading, in sources long since forgotten, about similar customs in Japanese and Chinese cultures. I remember that in Japan there are holidays with the theme of paying respect for the aged. I have been told that China has a special day for the elderly that comes on the ninth day of the ninth month and there are blessings given to the elderly. Obviously our culture has no corresponding customs, but I do see some similar local customs in our area that are incorporated into long standing celebrations. Although I have not attended what is called an Old Home Day celebration in Weare, I have read about it in the Goffstown News. This appears to be a day when families now living in town join with members of former families to celebrate and reminisce about their associations. I frequently attend the Labor Day Celebration in Francestown which brings local families and former local families together. In attending this celebration I believe that I feel some of what is expressed in the book given to me. For as long as I can remember the New Boston Fourth of July parade presents to all bystanders along the route the oldest citizen in town. I believe this is a wonderful tradition and a grand gesture of respect for the elderly in town, though not on the scale of the original Old Folks Day celebrations here. However, our celebration and the annual celebrations in the area may be consistent with the intent of a proclamation made by our State Legislature in 1913 which established the tradition of celebrating the lives of elderly folks in our midst.

I studied several reports made by the Old Folks Day secretaries covering the 14 years that celebrations were held in town. I found that the programs in each were all similar. The 'Day' committees sent invitations to current and past residents that were 70 years of age or older. While reading this I felt that if I received an invitation to a similar celebration it would label me an 'old folk', because of being over 70, and I would be offended. It is not that I feel disrespect for old folks; I am just not ready to be considered old.

Typically the celebration started with a mingling of attendees in the upper town hall. Then the minister took over with a religious service that included singing of hymns, followed by the reading of letters from those who could not attend, but wanted to send best wishes to those present. In perceiving the morning program I was left with a feeling of gloom because the themes seemed to be focused on how to prepare for entering the pearly gates as though death was imminent. The committee members served dinner in the lower town hall followed by afternoon entertainment. People attending were offered the opportunity to present poems they had written, others spoke about the history of New Boston. Had I been there to listen to the poems I would have become depressed by their tone which suggested they were all waiting at 'death's door'. One of the speakers was Judge David Cross on the subject of New Boston's schools and the teachers that gave their service to the community. In one celebration Captain Benjamin Dodge entertained all by talking about the affect of innovation on life in town, the greatest being the wonder of electricity.

In these reports I became reacquainted with my ancestors in a way that I had not known them before. The names of my Great grand father James and Great grandmother Abigail Todd appeared on the attendance lists of several reports. The program committee for the 1896 celebration included Bessie Hill and Perley Todd, later to become my grandparents. Bessie graduated from New Boston High School that year and Perley was operating the farm after attending Amherst College. I have to wonder if the spark of romance between them was kindled in that association. They were married two years later (1898).

Since reading the Old Folks Day reports I have asked myself why the celebrations were so important to the residents and former residents of this town at that time in our history. In general I do not see such strong motivation and feeling among the populace of New Boston. The answer to my question may be revealed in a comparison of our society and culture, then and now. If those attending the celebrations were 70 to 80 years old when the 'Days' were popular, then the majority of them were born and raised in the period of 1825 to 1839. What life style typified that period in New Boston?

We know that children were educated in one room schoolhouses scattered around town that were supported by families living in the districts surrounding the schools. Food and fiber was grown, bartered, and

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consumed/used locally. The economy was driven by local farmers and local artisans such as blacksmiths, carpenters, sawmill and gristmill operators, merchants, shoemakers, masons, woodsmen, and others. All local citizens depended on each other for their welfare and the associations between families were life-long. These bonds were tightened by the local churches that served the spiritual needs of citizens.

Folks that were born and raised in New Boston during the period of 1825 to 1850 witnessed the decline in population that ensued and they became melancholy about the loss of the life style that nurtured them. I believe they missed the close association and mutuality offered by close friends and neighbors. One of the first to reverse this trend was the Joe English Grange, established during 1875 according to long time Grange member Frances Towne. The Grange promoted local agriculture, supported political activism, and offered entertainment. Then came the Old Folks Day celebrations which clearly made old hearts young for one day brought back memories of New Boston as it had been.

Reading this new book has strengthened my respect for 'old folks'. It has reacquainted me with my family tree and with citizens in town mentioned in the reports. Amazingly, many people mentioned are citizens I admired during my youth, particularly Brainard Newton, former custodian of the town hall and local schools. I shall keep this book handy as a reference and a touch stone for feeling what life was once like in New Boston.

CAN WE PROTECT OUR RURAL CHARACTER? (11/2012)

Our town has undergone unparalleled changes in the appearance and functions of its landscape during the past 40 years. The traditional landscape began a rapid transformation from a rural agricultural use pattern to nearly a suburban use pattern. This statement stems from my acquaintance with land use history in this town. I have been somewhat of a factor in facilitating this change and I feel regret in seeing the results. However, I see potential for holding on to the legacy of the traditional land use patterns while future landscape patterns evolve. I will reflect on landscapes past because I think it is necessary to understand how they developed and what rural character they represent.

In general terms the landscape was molded on the original face of the township held by a company of speculators who then hired a surveyor to divide the parcel up into lots containing about 150 acres each. These Lots were sold by the company to settlers and the sales were subject to conditions to be carried out by them under penalty of forfeiture of their property; typical conditions were that a house be built, a certain amount of land be cleared, a church built, and that a sawmill and grist mill be built. Settlement occurred in the period of about 1750 to 1763. In 1763 the town was chartered by Governor Wentworth and this is the occasion we will celebrate in 2013. It was during this chapter in the history of New Boston that ownership patterns and land use patterns were cast. All land ownership from that time forward can be traced back to an original lot in the plan drawn by the town proprietors.

During the 50 years from 1750 to 1800 our town was born. From a virgin forest homesteads were developed, land was cleared of trees to the extent that about 60% of the land was deforested and prepared for growing crops and pasturing livestock. Rocks were removed from the soil and used to build walls and in that 50 years over 400 miles of stonewall were built in New Boston. These stonewalls are now the fabric of our rural character and the greatest memorial to the fortitude of our forebears who also left the farm to fight the war that created this nation. By the close of this period nearly forty water powered mills had been built along the rivers and streams of New Boston. The first mills were relied upon by all settlers for their livelihood. A road system was also built to facilitate local trade. That system of roads, with some additions and discontinuances, is basically the same system we use today. The roads unused, on a regular basis by vehicles, now summon hikers to step into the past and observe another element of local character.

A second distinctive era in the history of our landscape is the period of 1800 to 1850. Agriculture reached its peak and then declined considerably during the latter part of this period. Most local water powered mills ceased operation; not being able to compete with the more mechanized mills built by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company and other such mills along the major rivers of this state. The increase in industrial development brought the railroad to within about 8 miles of New Boston village. The generation born in this era had looser ties to the land than did their ancestors and their ties were further strained, if not broken, in 1849 by the news about discovery of gold. New Boston men were lured from the family farms to California and some did not return. By 1850 white pine seedlings sprouted in the fields where sheep and cattle had grazed and a forest covered nearly 50% of the landscape by the beginning of the next era. But, the character of this community remained intact.

Much change occurred during the years 1850 to 1900. The Civil War disrupted families and introduced young men to the areas of the country more suited for agricultural production than were their home farms. Most of the generation in this period did not choose to operate family farms and the forest claimed more pastures and fields on the drumlins in town. The forest land increased to about 65% of the total area. The population continued to decline and agriculture was sustained primarily by the J.R. Whipple Company. Mr. Whipple's farm development brushed a new look over the landscape and jump-started the local economy. This phenomenon spiked a new dimension on to the character of this community that is manifested today by Whipple's homestead, the Dodges Store building, the creamery building, and the cider mill. Whipple's role as a leading benefactor after the fire in 1887 was cinched by monetary contributions to the town that financed reconstruction of the Town Hall and building of a high school. We have admired the heritage of this era for no less than 100 years and now recognize the structures and land uses as a loud expression of our community's rural character.

The years between 1900 and 1950 ushered our community into a world of technological developments too numerous to mention. Electricity came to the home I know live in about 1933, even though the village was served by Page Wilson's electric generation facility before 1900. My father and his brothers were of the first generation to have automobiles and to drive them on paved roads. However, the family farm continued in operation by my grandfather and my father through the era. Our Community was upset by two generations of young men and women having to fight in the World Wars, population continued to decline and the abandoned farms reverted to forest land that by 1950 covered more than 75% of the town.

Most of us have experienced life during the current era from 1950 through the portal into a new century. I do not need to mention how the world has changed and the affect that change has had on our community. The quintupling of our population, the nearly complete loss of agricultural land use, and the commencement of tract development with a suburban appearance, particularly on the southeasterly portion of town, have shown us that the character of New Boston could soon change again. Many features of New Boston's landscapes contribute to our perception of its rural character. Can we halt the forces that threaten to diminish them?

Our Planning Board recognizes that our village district has a character that must be sustained and by the time you read this I hope you will have attended the scheduled public meeting at which you expressed your opinion on how best to accomplish that. Our village reflects a desirable character because it was developed with attractive small scale commercial uses combined with residential uses on small lots. That character could not be replicated today under the land use restrictions appearing in the zoning bylaw and in the state regulations. Currently, any mixed use proposed in the village district must be approved by the Zoning Board of Adjustment; a costly and unpredictable process. I believe that mixed uses should be allowed in the village district and that the zoning ordinance should require that the architectural style for new structures be compatible with that of existing structures and that expanded uses on existing lots have adequate septic systems. The district regulations should at least provide relaxed yard setbacks and flexible parking requirements.

The rural character of the land outside of the village district which has not been subject to tract development is expressed by large lots fronting on gravel roads lined out with stonewalls. The properties are about 81% covered by forest stands stocked with large trees of mixed species. There are small open fields on these large lots that hint of former agricultural use. On many of these parcels there are homesteads built 100 to 150 years ago and these lots commonly have barns that housed livestock and poultry. Hidden from view in the forest are miles of stonewalls and numerous cellar holes. Along rivers and streams there are stone dams and stone mill foundations that contributed to the economy during the last half of the eighteenth century.

Our rural character is dependent upon keeping the undeveloped lands intact to the extent possible while meeting the demand for housing. The options for maintaining local character include purchasing development rights on the parcels that exhibit most rural character. Adoption of regulations that allow the transfer of development rights from properties the community would like to have remain as open space to properties on which the community would like to have development occur. The community can also encourage developers to set aside open space on tracts that rank high in rural character attributes by offering density bonuses on the portion of the property to be developed.

Before the next building boom begins I recommend that the Planning Board consider innovative ways to direct development efforts in a manner that preserves our rural character and sustains land that is suited for working forest land and crop land use.

A Deer Hunter's Memoir (12/2012)

At this moment I am sitting at my desk while my Nephew Rick, my Grandson Theodore, and my Cousins Ben and Jason are excitedly engaged, or soon will be, in stalking white tail deer. I am envious yet happy for them. It seems like yesterday that I looked forward to opening day of deer season with my head full of hunting strategies I would use and I saw the same consuming anticipation in them. In my youth, weeks before the season, my emotions were stirred by visions of tracking, then jumping a large buck. This buildup was sometimes followed by self doubt; would I be able to shoulder my rifle and squeeze off a shot that would make a clean kill? Many times in my life this experience was repeated with equal affect and feeling. Often it was my good luck to enjoy a tasty venison tenderloin. As I write this I realize that age related hearing and vision impairments limit my ability to be a safe hunter. Instead, I relive my hunting experiences by telling tall tales to my kin that are at this moment banking their own stories.

The youth of today have the advantage of taking state sponsored hunter training courses prior to being licensed to hunt. There is even a special hunting season for youth under the age of 16 to hunt with the supervision of a licensed adult. Such special training has captured the soul of Grandson Theodore. Last Saturday and Sunday Rick shared his Zen of hunting with Theodore during the special youth season. Yesterday, the first day of the muzzle loader season, Rick again took Theodore with him. Theodore is blessed to have three of the best mentors that I know of to sharpen his firearm handling skills and to enrich his mind with deer habits and with wisdom about the forest. He has embedded these lessons in his head to hold for his lifetime. I tell him how fortunate he is to have learned these lessons.

Contrary to Theodore's great lessons I acquired my hunting knowledge in a different way. There was no state sponsored hunter training available during my teen years. The first memory, logged in at about age 12, of seeing a deer tied over a fender was the one that my father bagged while hunting with Uncle John. This was a large buck with 10 points in his rack. This image is still lodged in my brain and I figure this was my call to be a hunter. Dad did not have time, being a dairyman, to take me hunting much and I am thankful that Uncle John passed his skills in tracking and hunting on to me. I was anxious to have my first hunting license and to be on

my own in the woods. However, I did not have a successful hunt until I was 18 years old, a proud moment in my life and a cherished memory.

Early-on I was inspired by the strong bonds between hunters in New Boston which I do not see as much today. Perhaps my impression is due to a particular place in the center of town where hunters came for morning coffee or a quick lunch before striking off to the woods for the afternoon hunt. This place was Kane's Luncheonette located in the building now occupied by Stuart Clarke Insurance Co. and by Tate's Gallery. The big draw of the establishment, aside from the homemade donuts, great coffee, and lunch specials, was a poster on which Barny Kane printed the names of lucky hunters and the weight of the deer. I can remember seeing at least thirty, possibly forty names when the season closed. Bragging rights went with having one's name on that list and I went there to hear their proclamations. Saturday from noon to about 2:00 was the best time to go and hear the usual twelve or more locals seated at tables and bar stools hooting and hollering. Typically there would be a few more lucky hunters gathered outside with jaw-dropping kills laying in the rear of their pickups (hunters were not required to take deer to weigh stations). Occasionally, Roger Griswold, a game warden that lived in town, would stop by Kane's just to say hi to the assembly and to check deer tags. I have to admit that this scenario was the magnet that pulled me closer to the sport.

I presume that my career choice was funneled through my experiences as a hunter and the strong interest I had in the forest and its wildlife. Soon after high school I signed up to take the test to become a Game Warden, however I became anxious and chose not to wait for the Fish and Game opening and entered an undergraduate program and eventually went on to graduate studies in the field of natural resources. Along the way, I peaked my own hunting skills which were enhanced by the natural science instruction gained in my formal training.

I try to pass on to young hunters, particularly grandsons if they will listen, some of what I learned over time about deer behavior and their habitat. Most of what I tell them is very basic. These animals are solitary except during the breeding season (October and November), during the winter (January to March) and when does are raising fawns. Except when spooked, deer exhibit predictable behavior. Deer travel over the landscape along regularly used trails from shelter to food and water. Hunters who study these routes will have a greater likelihood of seeing deer. These animals do not range far during their life and generally stay within 1.5 miles of where they were born. Deer populations rise and fall, but the State Fish and Game Department attempts to maintain a population of about five animals per square mile. This population density means that there is only about 1 deer in about 128 acres of habitat. This translates to an average herd population of 216 deer in the Town of New Boston. So, anyone hiking in the forest is not in risk of being run over by deer.

I tell young hunters that deer and all other wildlife require four basic habitat elements for a healthy life; food, cover, water, and space. Deer food choices vary through the seasons. In the winter food comes mostly from within the 'deer yard', or within a short walk. Our forest has thick hemlock stands scattered throughout and groups of deer settle in these areas and consume all the green foliage they can reach while standing on their hind legs. During this hard time they also nibble red maple and other hardwood sprouts. Of course hunters can not shoot deer during this period. During the hunting season, I tell young hunters to look for deer where there are numerous red oak trees, big ones. A 22" diameter red oak will usually drop about 17 pounds of acorns whereas a 10" tree will only drop one half pound.

Good forest management is generally of great benefit to deer because of the many tender sprouts that emanate from cut stumps. Many tender leafed perennial ground cover plants emerge after a recent timber harvest. Fruiting shrubs spread their offerings abundantly in these areas. Thinning of hardwood stands containing several species can increase mast production from 97 pounds per acre to 110 pounds.

The phone just rang! It is 11:45 AM and I fully expect it to be from Theodore, or Ben with a message from the forest. Laura grabbed the phone first, then I picked up the phone just as Theo said, "I got one", Laura let out a shriek of joy and my heart pumped fast. Then Ben took the phone and spoke excitedly in half sentences. "He did great--pulled up his muzzleloader just as it ran by him.....about 30'.....its a good doe.....Theo dropped her in a heap with one shot.....just like a pro!

More details of the hunt came when Ben returned to our house with Theo's doe laid out across the trunk of his '55 Chevy. Theodore's face was locked in full smile mode which did not release until the next morning. Pictures were taken and more details given between giggles and guffaws. Plans were made for Theodore to be involved with the butchering process; he would help hang the deer in Rick's barn and the heart would be removed and cooled. Then next Saturday he would come to our house and take in more training from Rick and Ben before he would actually take a knife to the deer carcass. Theo would help in separating the muscle groups, dicing up scraps for burger, sausage, and stew. The following Wednesday Theo will come and help, under Rick's guidance, to cut up, wrap, and mark the wrappers for freezer storage.

Theodore has been given a lesson in life that he will hold forever, thanks to Rick, Ben, Jason, and his own Grandmother Laura who will teach him how to cook the venison in the most delicious way because she is the best cook there is.