

**“In the Country” by Robert Todd** – published in the *New Boston Bulletin* in 2014

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Table of Contents

<u>Published</u>	<u>Title</u>
<u>01/2014</u>	<u><i>Unintended Consequences (deer ticks) unavailable</i></u>
<u>02/2014</u>	<u><i>A Funicular Brought People to the Mountain (Goffstown)</i></u>
<u>03/2014</u>	<u><i>Our Granite Heritage (reprinted from 1/2006)</i></u>
<u>04/2014</u>	<u>Date Stamping Memories</u>
<u>05/2014</u>	<u><i>I Still Hear the Laughter (family vacation) unavailable</i></u>
<u>06/2014</u>	<u>Those Dreadful Eternal Debits (taxes)</u>
<u>07/2014</u>	<u>Land Use Ethics and Societal Trends</u>
<u>08/2014</u>	<u><i>Paul Saltmarsh (reprinted from 10/2007)</i></u>
<u>09/2014</u>	<u>Finding and Nurturing Family Roots</u>
<u>10/2014</u>	<u>Tom Miller Rewrites the Green Legend (John Deere Expo)</u>
<u>11/2014</u>	<u>The School Bell Chimes in the Hearts of Many</u>
<u>12/2014</u>	<u>Meet Your Editor - Brandy Mitroff of the NB Bulletin</u>

Note: Italics identify columns not included in this document.

**DATE STAMPING MEMORIES (4/2014)**

Laura brought me home three from St. Joseph’s Hospital three days after undergoing knee replacement surgery. Rick and Ben met me at the front door and each took hold of an arm and practically lifted me into the house. With help I walked to the makeshift recovery room that Laura and I had prepared before my going to the hospital. Immediately I lay down on the small bed which had been strategically placed close to the bathroom; that was good because I was not steadily ambulating even with crutches. My bed was also placed in front of the three windows on the east side of the dining room giving me a grand view of the yard and the trees along its borders. This was important to me because I fully believe that Nature heals. My placement was also giving me views of the inside of the house including most of the kitchen. So, there I was positioned to spend a couple of weeks under Laura’s expert care, not doing much of anything for myself, except coping with the effects of pain killing drugs, prescribed to numb my mind and body. They sent me into a state of oblivion with little awareness of time.

During sunny periods of the days, I enjoyed the view to the trees. In my foggy state of mind, I could see myself planting those Norway Spruce trees, but I have no pictures, or any written record of completing the task. There was no ‘date stamp’ of the event, except for the naturally occurring date stamp manifested by the annual growth rings in the trees. With some difficulty I searched my memory bank and recalled the most likely time period in which I planted the seedlings. It is my guess that it was 1967 to 1968. Since that time these trees have grown to a height of at least 50 feet and to a diameter of at least 16 inches to 20 inches.

Associated with the memory of the spruce trees is that of the splendid American Elm trees that had been planted by ancestors, perhaps about 1850-1860, an event that is not date stamped. In lock step with the demise and removal of the Elms that graced the border of the town common and roadsides in the village during the 1950 and 1960 decades, so ended the lives of at least six giant Elm’s that surrounded the farmhouse and grounds at the Todd Homestead. I remember these trees vividly. I often review photographs taken here of family member standing under those Elms. Those photographs date stamp the lives of family members and, coincidentally, the life and majesty of the Elm trees. By viewing these photographs I can temporally relate the era of the Elm trees with the on-going life of the Spruce trees that have taken their place here.

Close to my bedside there is a pine table that has a special legacy. The table top boards were from a large pine tree cut and sawed into boards by my Grandfather. I have a picture of the log on a horse drawn scoot  
2014 “In the Country” by Robert Todd

with Grandpa at the rains. Twenty inch wide boards from that log were stored in the shed and when I moved into the house we decided to make a table from them. The top is 40 inches wide and it is 11 feet long. Fortunately that memory is date stamped on the under side of the top (1966). Many happy Thanksgiving dinners have been served on that table.

Night and day, as I lay in the bed healing and trying to regain contact with my senses, my eyes and consciousness locked on to the Hoosier cabinet in the corner of the kitchen. My foggy mind attempted to contact my memory bank for whatever it may find relative to the history of this kitchen appliance. Through my foggy recollection I could see my Grandmother working at this cabinet making pie crust on the bread board, or forming the dough for a batch of rolls. I used to stand by and watch her with great anticipation knowing what would soon be offered to me as a treat. I do not have a date stamp for those sessions, but it is my guess that it was when I was seven to ten years old (1947-1950). Suddenly, through the mist came a clear memory about the Hoosier.

My Uncle Aaron Todd was a skilled carpenter and he frequently modified my Grandmother's kitchen to make things easier for her in elder years. I hung around and watched him, sometimes helping, other times being in the way. On one occasion Uncle Aaron remodeled the kitchen completely; he added a new counter top to one of the work stations and he painted all the woodwork, including the Hoosier (I remembered that it was formerly dark brown). He painted the Hoosier mostly white. The black trim boards at its base and crest he painted black. This major change in the Hoosier may be date stamped in Gram's diary, but I not researched them, however correlating this event with my life, I would guess that it was done about 1951-1952.

The old Hoosier held its new face until I moved my family into the old homestead about 1966, after I graduated from college. For a short time we became close friends with the old Hoosier and many other old-fashioned appliances in the kitchen used by my Grandmother. Shortly thereafter the Hoosier and the other fixtures in the old kitchen were removed and a modern kitchen installed. Most of the old appliances were discarded, but the Hoosier took on a new duty in the shed room adjoining the new kitchen; it was used to store paint, glue, screws, and other extraneous hardware. It must have become sad by such a demotion in its service. No one would have guessed that a third noble life was just ahead.

About ten years ago the shed room in which the Hoosier was placed was remodeled into a great room, much needed living space, after the business was moved into the four front rooms of the home. Laura and I thought about refinishing the Hoosier and moving it into the kitchen. We settled on that idea after measuring it to confirm that it would fit in the only space available. Overall the Hoosier measured 7 feet in height, 3' in width and it has a lower section 3 feet in height with a working surface 19 inches wide. Just under the working surface there is a bread board that slides out for use in rolling dough. Below the bread board there is a shallow drawer for utensils and below this drawer there are two drawers on the left side of the cabinet. A door on the right side of the cabinet opens to a box that slides out. I remember my Grandmother storing her bread flour in that box. Above the working surface of the Hoosier there is a short, narrow shelf that was used to store spices. There is a tall 4 shelf unit rising above the working surface which has two doors opening out from the center. Each door has a large glass pane that allows objects on each shelf to be seen.

Having assured ourselves that our Hoosier would fit we moved the Hoosier into the kitchen and immediately decided to refinish the piece. We engaged Ben Dane to do the work. He totally striped the paint to reveal the grain of the wood that I recognized that it was made of oak. The color of the wood was as I remembered it to be before Uncle Aaron painted it white. The oak finished up beautifully and it then spoke to us about how it would be an attractive, functional addition to the kitchen. Unexpectedly it soon became a liquor cabinet, an outcome that would perhaps upset my Grandmother; she never allowed liquor in the house that I know of. I do not find a date stamp for the Hoosier, but Wikipedia states that Hoosier cabinets became popular

in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and since my Grandparents were married in 1900, it is likely that this Hoosier has been a part of the Homestead since that time.

There must be some flaw in human nature that keeps us from date stamping our memories. This fact has become more apparent to me with our work in preparing for the Todd Family Reunion in August of this year. The Genealogy Committee has been working on a booklet of ancestry with notes and pictures for distribution at the reunion. The source for the booklet included several boxes stored in the attic that contained hundreds of old pictures. Not one in 50 of these photographs were dated, nor were the subjects identified. The date stamps of those memories are locked up in the spirits of those once mortal beings. How sad this is. I know that I am also guilty of not date stamping my memories and those are lost in my own lifetime.

### **THOSE DREADFUL ETERNAL DEBITS (6/2014)**

My land use consulting work for clients in this region has resulted in my keen interest in the history of how funds are raised to support our town's services. During the 250 years of New Boston's existence there have been interesting changes in the way residents earned a living and in the ways the Town has taxed their earnings fairly and reasonably, though some would say the contrary. The following is intended to show the trends in tax policies, but it does not include all methods of taxation used in our Town. It is, of course, the role of the State to enact tax laws and the role of the Town is to apply those laws in its taxation of residents at rates that will generate funds sufficient to meet the Town's expenses.

Our town history (Cogswell) indicates that the original proprietors (read developers) of New Boston made sure that their stock in trade, a subdivision containing at least 150 lots averaging about 150 acres would sell. They used incentives reminiscent of those offered by automobile dealers. Proprietors knew that they would have to subsidize the costs of developing their new town until there were enough residents to support it. Several lots in this infant township were granted to the first Selectmen to manage and or sell with proceeds to be used for the support of schools. Many other lots were given to the Selectmen by the Proprietors to manage in support of the first settled minister. The Town Charter specified that the Town Selectmen must provide for a minister. Similarly land and money were provided to a settler who was contracted to develop the first sawmill and grist mill, and agree to operate the same for a certain number of years. The Proprietor's subsidy was also distributed by the Selectmen to each church in proportion to the number of polls (voters) attending church. The incomes from the subsidies were distributed in accordance with the Proprietor's mandate until the separation of Church and State. Cogswell states that the Proprietors' school fund was paid out as income to each school district. So ended the period of 'gifting' and the churches became self-supporting and schools became funded by the dreadful debit system.

Many of the roads now maintained by our professional highway department, which is funded by direct appropriation at town meetings, were paid for in the form of labor. The Town was divided into districts and each district had an elected highway 'surveyor' to supervise road construction and maintenance. The highway surveyors would engage men within his district on the basis of 'Poll and Estate' units to build roads and maintain them; this amounted to a tax paid in terms of said units. One pole was equal to four man days of labor and a pair of oxen equaled one man-day. The 'man' in each unit had to be at least 18 years of age and be less than 70 years old. Typically excepted from this definition were; those enrolled in the militia, ministers, professors, college students, paupers, and idiots. I presume that fees for the task of building culverts and bridges were paid in units of 'Poll and Estate'. There was apparently no allowance for hard cider consumed during the four days in which each man paid his fee in building or maintaining the early public highways. I have examined culverts in some of our earliest roads in town, now discontinued, and I can attest that they appear to be so well constructed that hard cider was definitely not consumed during the Poll.

The schools in New Boston have been funded throughout our history, after the school lots were liquidated, by appropriation of funds at Town Meeting and the dreadful debts are mailed to the tax payers. There were up to 18 district schools in operation at one time. The New Boston High School was built and opened in 1892 with town appropriation and a large donation from J. R. Whipple.

The care of paupers in Town was funded in clever ways by our Selectmen. In early times the town meeting held auctions to 'bid off' the care of town poor to the lowest bidder. New Boston, similar to most towns in New Hampshire, built a 'Poor Farm' (New Boston called its Poor Farm by a less demeaning name: Town Farm). This farm was built about 1800 with appropriated funds and it no longer exists and I do not know the cause of its demise. The Town Farm was located on the property that is accessed by Town Farm Road off Old Coach Road. Poor Farms were actually working farms with some degree of self-sustaining ability and the remaining costs were funded by town appropriations.

The lawmakers have been very imaginative in deciding what are taxable property and this process changes every time a taxable commodity becomes obsolescent. The list of commodities taxed, now or in the past, is lengthy and includes; Polls (a voter of age 21 to 70), land, horses, cattle, sheep over six months old, hogs, dogs, carriages, stock in trade, wood, cash on hand, factories and machinery, mills and carding machines, and lumber. The proceeds from a tax on these items was allocated to; county, town, and school according to annual rates. Since the dreadful debit is determined by multiplying rate times quantity it appears that there is a lot of room for error in calculating the values of each commodity owned by the tax payer.

In the period from 1901 until 1942 a law in effect authorized towns to tax the growth, measured in board feet of standing timber that stood on land owned separate from the land on which it stands. This occurs when a timber buyer owns the right to harvest timber on land of another. The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests was instrumental in having this ludicrous tax repealed in 1943. I never had to deal with this tax, but I can not imagine that it was ever accurately assessed according to the quality of the timber and of its total board foot volume. The current Yield Tax law is a more equitable way to tax forest products because it is based on actual timber cut and reported by species. This system has built in checks and balances which prevent fraud. The best part of this taxation of our natural resources is that it comes back directly to the Town at a fixed rate of 10% of the value of timber harvested.

In 1973 the legislature passed the Current Use Law that changed the way land had been taxed. With broad-based support marshaled by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests over several years of lobbying and many compromises by the interest groups RSA 79-A was passed to allow land owners to enter their land in the program for assessment at its current use value, not the traditional highest and best use value. To qualify for current use assessment properties must be comprised of at least ten contiguous acres of qualifying land. Wetlands, Farm land, and unproductive land are the qualifying land categories. Each year the Current Use Board determines the assessment range for each Current Use classification and the local assessors use those values to calculate the amount of the tax bills for land enrolled.

The Current Use Law (CUL) has shown to be successful in minimizing the conversion of the State's most productive farm and forest lands which support our local economy. Wetlands protected under the CUL maintain water quality. Of benefit to the State as a whole are the acres of natural landscape that attract visitors to the area. Land assessed under the CUL is often sold and new owners change the current use to highest and best use. This change triggers a land use change tax equal to 10% of the property's ad valorem value (highest and best use value) at the time of its conversion. The land use change tax is seen as a method to offset the ad valorem taxes deferred over the period of time the land was enrolled under the CUL.

I often wonder if the CUL can sustain its political support over time. This is based on my observation that there may be many properties that stay in current use for generations. When the use of those long held

2014 "In the Country" by Robert Todd

properties no longer qualify under the CUL the deferred ad valorem assessments will most likely amount to many times that of the land use change tax paid to the town when the land use changes. Perhaps we will see this dreadful debit item discussed in our legislature in the future. The discussion may lead to an amendment in the CUL calling for incremental increases of the land use change tax over time, thereby bringing the land use change tax more on a par with the total amount of the ad valorem tax deferment. Would such a CUL amendment also influence land owners to sustain the qualifying use of their lands?

## LAND USE ETHICS AND SOCIETAL TRENDS (7/2014)

Today I look back on my 48 year career as a land use consultant, in which I have practiced as a land surveyor, forester, and land use planner and I will tell about a trend that troubles me. I wonder if others with the same professional experience see what I will describe in this issue. I have to believe that others who provide services related to land use are speaking about it, some of these may include: real estate professionals, lawyers, land use planners, environmental consultants, and the land use regulatory personnel at the state and local level. What I see, particularly, is a transformation in the way individuals perceive the value of land. It is not the monetary value per se that I refer to, it is the functional value derived from its use.

There has always been a struggle between the owner's expression of their land use rights and the rights of the public to use land for the good of all. Once upon a time the regard of the law for private property was so great that it would not authorize the least violation of it, not even for the general good of the whole community. That regard has diminished dramatically since 1926. In that year the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the zoning by-law of the city of Euclid Ohio and the decision in that case basically established the premise that zoning directs the use of land in a manner that promotes the public health, safety, and welfare while preserving past investments. I believe that zoning does work well in mediating this dichotomy of land use. However, thousands of court cases have been necessary to maintain the balance between private rights and public benefit.

So what is my concern? I have to deal with the nuisance issue which erupts in the wide spread urban sprawl covering the landscape. In such areas families live on small lots predominately containing less than an acre, depending upon the availability of public water and sewer systems. The families living on these small lots have a hard time staying out of trouble with their neighbors. These folks fashion many ways to annoy their neighbors. I have investigated many types of nuisance in my service to the residents living in the 'burbs'. Primarily, I get calls from lawyers representing folks who are being sued for having caused a nuisance, or are suing their neighbors for their having caused a nuisance, or by other parties that have caused nuisance by entering their client's land. In these cases I may serve as an expert on trees, an expert on boundaries, in some cases both forms of nuisance have been suffered, or perpetrated. I find that such scenarios are increasingly demanding more of my time. Is this because I am becoming better known as an expert, or are more incidents being perpetrated? The latter should not be the case because zoning and building regulations are supposed to prevent nuisance.

There is one answer that I have considered, but it is not substantiated by any studies that I have read. This answer is based upon my experience in consulting practice which puts me in contact with landowners that have different perspectives on the value of land. Many think that they can use their land in any manner they choose with absolute right to do so. Others believe they must use their land as if it was part of their community and its beneficial functions must accrue to all. I have heard some folks say that because they live on the land they belong to the land.

Recently, I consulted on a tree case in a seacoast community which illustrates the two extremes of land holding attitudes mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The two parties involved live on small lots, each one being a half acre in size, that were cleared from a dense forest of hardwood trees, mostly red oak. Most of the

2014 "In the Country" by Robert Todd

trees were removed to make room for improvements, but some that were close to the lot lines were left to provide the functional value of shade and natural beauty. I was engaged by the attorney who represented the defendant in a dispute between the owners of two adjoining lots. My role was to support the landowner's right to mitigate a perceived nuisance he suffered by the presence of a large red oak tree with a wide-spreading crown. The tree is on the neighbor's land, but was only 18 inches from the common property line. The crown of that oak tree extended over the defendant's side yard lawn to within a foot of his house. Defendant complained that the oak cluttered his lawn with acorns and that the limbs could damage his house.

Defendant complained of the nuisance to his neighbor, the plaintiff, and for two years the neighbor (plaintiff) made no offer to relieve the problem and made it known that he would do nothing that would damage his beautiful tree. Defendant became very agitated and defiant about the state of affairs and proceeded to take matters in his own hands. First, he hired a local land surveyor to clearly mark the boundary line common to the two properties. Second, defendant made it known to his neighbor that he had hired an arborist to cut off all the limbs of the subject tree at the property line extended upward from the line to the base of the crown and through it to the top of the crown. This action is allowed under the law provided that the health of the tree is not adversely affected as a result. The plaintiff continued his defiance of the defendant's threat and he eventually filed a law suit.

I arrived at the Rockingham County Court on the morning of the bench trial and was ready to testify for the defendant. However, I sat in a small room most of the morning, making small talk with Mr. and Mrs. Defendant while lawyers met with the judge and then with their clients. Late in the morning defendant's attorney told us that the judge had instructed that the experts in the case had to meet on the properties and develop a management plan for the subject tree that would reasonably satisfy both plaintiff and defendant while sustaining the health of the tree. Accordingly, the other expert and I drafted a plan in about 30 minutes that was delivered to the judge; he then wrote his order which mandated that the defendant and plaintiff manage the tree in accordance with the experts plan. The judge's decision was not challenged. I think this case demonstrates how silly it is to spend the many thousands of dollars it took to resolve an issue that could have been easily and reasonably settled by the land owners using the ethical approach directed by the judge. I think that judge did the right thing and I applaud him for his insight.

I believe that the land ethic issue our society struggles with can be significantly improved through our educational system. A great example of a curriculum that exists less than 20 miles from here is the High Mowing School in Wilton. This school has a curriculum that instills in its students the value of land and its resources and how to manage them to create in a sustainable society. To my knowledge the land surveying course taught there is unique to the Waldorf style of education used throughout the world. I have learned through my experience with the school as a member of the Board of Directors and as a guest speaker in the surveying class room that graduates of the school understand land ownership and land use protocols. They understand land surveying, conveyance of land rights, land use regulations and the ethics of ownership.

High Mowing has a program in which students learn plant science which points out the fact that our food does not magically come to us from a supermarket. Students work in the greenhouse on campus and there experience the wonder of plant growth and the process of preparing plants for consumption. Students grow plants in the greenhouse, process them in the school kitchen and then serve them in the school cafeteria. Additionally, students learn how trees grow and the value of the forest to wildlife ecology, to the hydrologic system, to clean air and climate moderation, and the contribution of forest products to the economy and comfort of society. I have witnessed the value of this type of education and truly wish that it could be available to a greater portion of our young people. Perhaps there would resultantly be fewer land use conflicts such as the one I described herein.

At its annual meeting last December the New Hampshire Land Surveyors Association recognized the High Mowing School for the outstanding program taught in its high school. The coveted Land Ethic For Tomorrow (LEFT) award plaque commemorating the occasion is now on display at the school to inspire students and faculty members.

### **Finding and Nurturing Family Roots (9/2014)**

It was about mid-summer of 2012, when several of my cousins and I were gathered at a function, that the idea of having a family reunion came into casual discussion. In a few minutes the casual tone turned into excitement and energy that gave real life to the idea. An ad-hoc committee was formed to plan and organize the event. Other relatives were polled by email and telephone to test the level of support that could be expected from them. Suddenly the family reunion prospect became an objective.

I became excited about looking at boxes in the attic containing pictures, programs, address lists, and correspondence relating to the reunions that were held in 1981 and in 1985. I realized that many of the addresses appearing in the old documents would now lead to 'dead ends', literally and figuratively. However any contact made would likely be a link to other contacts not on our old lists.

At the first committee meeting a chairman, secretary/treasurer, and activity chair persons volunteered to help in giving life to the reunion planning process. Some tasks were recognized as having priority over others. The most important task was to re-connect with folks that attended the last two Todd Reunions. One of our committee agreed to take on that task as he had proficiency with computers and software that could facilitate the task of gathering the names and contact information of family members. Over the next few months this effort paid off and many contacts were made. These responses sparked the committee members.

I took on the task of re-acquainting myself with historical facts that I had gathered years ago. One source that 'spoke' to me was the History of Londonderry by Rev. Edward L. Parker, Perkins and Whipple (1851). This book tells the story of the first inland settlement (away from the seacoast) in what is now New Hampshire by the parishioners of Reverend James McGregor. The settlement, called Nutfield, began in 1720 and many Todds in New Hampshire are descended from Scotch-Irish families that emigrated from Northern Ireland. The emigration was made to escape the difficulties Scotch Presbyterians faced at the hands of the Irish Catholics over a period of about 80 years since the Scots were encouraged to immigrate to Ireland from Scotland by the land grants given them by King James I.

The Scotch-Irish that are the roots of our family tree are descended from the Todds that came to Nutfield in 1720 with Rev. McGregor, particularly James Todd and his wife Rachel Nelson. According to Parker, James Todd died in Ireland and Rachel immigrated with her family and I have traced my ancestry to Rachel's son Andrew, one of four children. Andrew grew up in Nutfield and served several terms as Town Moderator and he became a Colonel in the militia during the French and Indian Wars. In his elder years he lived with his son who had established a home in Peterborough where he died in 1777. My research indicates that I am 8 generations removed from Andrew's son James.

Parker's history lists several Scotch-Irish immigrants that settled in Nutfield and re-settled in New Boston; their surnames include; Clark, Crombie, Wallace, Mcurdy, McCollum, and Gregg. Parker also lists names of many Nutfield families that settled in other New Hampshire towns. I get the feeling that a significant number of residents of New Hampshire today are descendants of Scotch-Irish immigrants.

I pulled from my files records related to my Great Grandfather's gold rush adventure and the impact it had on his life and mine. James P. Todd went with David Gregg, Aaron Loring, and several other New Boston men to what is now Columbia where they operated a mining claim from 1850 to 1854. They also engaged in 2014 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

other pursuits including the sale of water to other miners from a well discovered on their claim. A company named "Todd and Reynolds" operated a freight line. In the two past reunions I have presented the Gold Rush story and have also presented it to members of the Gregg Family reunion. I prepared myself to present the lecture as part of the current reunion program.

I traced deeds in the chain of title, relative to the Todd homestead where I live, back to 1814. This was a point of interest for our reunion because the house has been owned by Todds continuously since 1814 and may now be the only 'bicentennial homestead' in New Boston. This fact became a source of pride for the people that attended the reunion and I observed that it also motivated the reunion committee.

Throughout the time leading up to the reunion the committee held many meetings at the Homestead. At each of these meetings there was so much energy generated that it was difficult to keep a lid on the discussion. Members impressed me with their talk about using computer power to facilitate communications and in genealogy study. At one meeting I suggested that we hire a photographer to document the activities of the day and the committee members giggled, then indicated that there will be at least 10 pictures taken by everyone there with an iPad. The members did agree that a professional should be hired to make the group picture.

Computers were utilized to capture for distribution hundreds of old family pictures that were found in the attic. Pictures were identified to the best of our ability and then they were scanned on to a disk to be made available to all reunion attendees. I assisted with this program as members worked for months identifying persons in old photographs. I had to wonder why these deceased family members did not write names and dates on the back of the photos. Did they really believe they would come back from the grave to identify the people in the pictures, or that they would live forever? Victoria Stanhope used her computer to prepare a beautiful 2015 calendar with pictures of people and places. Sue Wason and her daughters Mary and Victoria made a complete genealogical record of family members back to 1720 which they charted on large panels of cork-board that they set up for all to view during the reunion. Family members used the charts to determine how they were related to other people in attendance. This record was also put on a disk for each person at the reunion.

Preparations of the grounds and buildings for staging the reunion party at the Homestead began several months in advance of the three day event and the intensity increased as the event approached. Our grandson Theodore, cousins, sisters, nieces, son, daughter-in-law, and even volunteers helped raise the big tent on the first day of the reunion, all under the direction of nephew Rick Kohler who was steadfast throughout the summer in making the Homestead ready for the occasion. My Sister Linda and her husband Mark Young set up an exhibit of old furniture and of clothing dating to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rick Kohler and Theodore displayed on a table in the barn a collection of old hand tools used by blacksmiths, carpenters, and farmers. Jim Dane spent time at the tool display identifying items for people who were interested. I guided folks on a narrated walk-about to show the locations of buildings that no longer exist and the importance of them to 'old timers' who utilized them while making a living on the farm and in the blacksmith shop.

Heather Strong planned and staged a driving tour to historic sites in New Boston and Francestown that were important to our family history. When the folks returned from the tour, teams were formed and tested about the sites they had seen. This game was formatted by Heather to mimic the 'Jeopardy' TV show and winners were awarded a prize (a small stone). Lori Kohler topped off the entertainment with a skit she developed using costumed actors chosen from the group to perform in front of a clever set she made. Lori's script was based on the 1944 armed robbery of Hagland's drug store in New Boston Village that was a historical event in our family history.

Richard Joyal, our neighbor and an experienced chicken barbecue chef volunteered to help with the noon meal on Saturday. My son Rob, also experienced in chicken barbecuing teamed with Richard and

Theodore and the result was a taste treat that was praised by many. The crew made a lot of smoke that tickled our taste buds and wetted our pallets even before the chickens were ready to eat.

The three day reunion event was proudly proclaimed to be an educational, entertaining and loving event. I can not close this piece without crediting my wife, Laura, for her part in planning, and staging the Reunion from beginning to end. She was literally tireless in planning and preparing the lunches and meals during the event. Can you imagine the time and energy that went into preparing cold slaw for 85 people?

### **THE SCHOOL'S BELL CHIMES IN THE HEARTS OF MANY (11/2014)**

On October 11, 2014 former students, some accompanied by husbands or wives who may not have attended the New Boston High School, streamed into the New Boston Central School just as if they were summoned by the bell that hung in the steeple of the original school building. The first High School also held the grade school and it stood on the property at the corner of Meeting House Hill Road and Mill Street during the period of 1892 to 1965 and is now occupied by the New Boston Fire Department, The New Boston Historical Society recently sponsored the installation of a granite monument on this site. The appropriate words cut into the stone and the picture of the original building etched in metal are certain to cause a resounding chime in observing hearts. I am also certain that all who attended that day just passed shared the same heart-felt feelings that were obviously expressed during the eleven previous reunions staged by the long-standing greatly devoted members of the School Reunion Committee.

A collection of many issues of the Joe English Echo, our annual school yearbook, displayed on tables aligned along the wall in the Tom Mansfield Gymnasium reawakened our memory banks and sparked personal discussions filled with nostalgia. Small groups answered each other's queries such as "I wonder where he, or she, is now", or "remember when Mrs. Bartlett tried to keep us in tune during music lessons", and "can you guys still make the orange muffins Mrs. Teft taught us how to cook in the home economics class required for boys?" As usual, Alfred Woodbury inspired many of the guys (and gals) by wearing his well preserved, still well fitting, blue and gold sweater commemorating the year that the NBHS baseball team won the Class 'S' State Championship. Go forever Blue and Gold! Several of us guys, read old men, talked and laughed about being disciplined in the Principal's office: the consensus was that one never forgets being disciplined by Principal Neal Andrew! Sadness also became apparent when sentimental inquiries were made about friends that are now deceased. I brought happy thoughts back to my mind by mingling with other groups around the auditorium. I have to admit that in some of the groups I was embarrassed by being greeted by a 'hi Bob' and not being able to remember the name of the person who made the warm greeting. The letters on name tags should have been larger; then perhaps I would not have needed recall assistance so often! Thankfully, these folks understand, having experienced the same embarrassment minutes before. The 'mix and mingle' portion of the agenda passed too quickly, but during about two hours I heard the high school bell chime loudly which indicated that my memory of high school days worked better than the usual recall about what I had for breakfast. I also envy and thank those I mingled with for having such perfect recollections of high school days which awakened the neurons responsible for my memory.

Dean Card filled the role of master of ceremonies for the first time, though he has been a regular speaker since NBHS reunions began. He spoke to outline the program for the rest of the celebration and acknowledged the work of the Reunion Committee. Dean is well suited for the task because his voice projects clearly and loudly so that he is understood by the aging ear drums in the audience, mine included. I was made proud by the invocation given by my sister, Edith Jennings (class of 1965). Edie is one of several present that were members of the last class to graduate from New Boston High School and among the last to actually hear the school house bell chime to give notice of the beginning of each school day and at the end of recess. During discussions about the New Boston High School I like to tell those in my audience about my family's heritage connected with the 2014 "*In the Country*" by Robert Todd

old school. Indulge me if you have heard or read about this story before (I am sure that it has previously been a subject of this column). Edie's Grandmother, Bessie Hill Todd, was one of a few in the first class to graduate from New Boston High School in 1892. Since there have been several generations of descendants of Betsey and Samuel Todd who settled here in 1814 (see September issue 'In the Country') there have been many family members that matriculated in New Boston, including my father and his siblings. James Dane, a descendant of said Betsey and Samuel Todd, was one of the two third oldest (Frances Town was the second) in attendance at this reunion.

In accordance with the scheduled program the dinner was served promptly at 5:30 by members of the New Boston Community Church and let's not forget that the kitchen facility in the N. B. Middle School was utilized to prepare the meal. The Church team has provided this service for the number of years there has been a class reunion in the School. As always, the Church crew satisfied all attendees with a delicious menu served promptly with caring and efficient service.

As swiftly as it was served the Church crew cleared the tables for the program that followed. The first item of the school day at NBHS was the roll call, so it was the first item on the 'formal' reunion program. Arlene Dodge (1960) and Edith Jennings (1965) read the roll of those attending by the year each class graduated. The roll started early in the School's history and Howard Towne (1938) was the oldest graduate in attendance, with Clem Lyon (1941) being the second oldest. Frances Town and James Dane (1945) share the honor of being the third oldest graduates. Roll calls continued with progressively more standing as the rolls were read forward. It was interesting that the rolls were read for classes that have graduated from the New Boston Central School even though they may have graduated from Goffstown High School or other secondary schools in the area after attending New Boston Central School. Is this a sign of the future?

Dean Card (1957), Chairman of the Reunion Committee, introduced members of the Reunion Committee which includes: Arlene Dodge (1960) Treasurer; Edith Jennings (1965) Secretary; Barbara French (1960); Clem Lyons (1941); Philip Lavalley (1950); Linda Rollins (1967); Carol Belanger (1960); and the volunteer members (not graduates of NBHS) Richard Hall, Verna Elliott, and Ruth Lyon. Arlene Dodge introduced those who travelled the greatest distance to attend. Betty Lou Wilcox came from New Mexico, the furthest of any. Mr. and Mrs. Tom Bose came from North Carolina and those coming from Florida included Bill Mason, Dotty Daniels, and Bob Bose and his wife Carol. Arlene then went on to read interesting excerpts of letters from those who sent their regrets but attended in spirit. They too hear the chime of the old school bell. Following are memories that they keep in their hearts; "missed the fall foliage", "has great memories of his life in the wonderful town of New Boston", "recalled the great baseball teams and a Class S championship", "so many memories of boys and girls basketball teams riding together in the bus to and from games and sometimes stopping on the way home for snacks, and the record hops in the Town Hall".

I have to mention and applaud the voluntary efforts that Andrea Card (1962) and Paula LeBaron (1970) have put into documenting our school's history. Guided by her sharp eye for capturing memories, Andy has taken numerous photos at these reunions including the picture that is part of this column. Paula LeBaron is to be applauded for her research abilities, particularly her work in commemorating the NBHS graduates who have served their Country in the armed forces. Their work is self motivated and I hope the results of their efforts are as rewarding to them as it is so inspiring and nostalgic to us who observe it.

As I conclude this column I want to comment about some statements that I heard at the reunion. One suggested that perhaps there is no need to continue having school reunions because using social networking by computer makes it much easier to stay in touch than ever before. Do you think Facebook networking is as nostalgic as a genuine face-to-face conversation, or from that would we hear the school bell chime? However I do believe that this media may be a great tool to plan and organize the real thing. Another comment I heard at the reunion has since stuck in my head. That was; 'it is wonderful to have attended and graduated from a small  
2014 "In the Country" by Robert Todd

school'. The retort that I held unspoken is that NBHS was certainly small in capacity, but it was huge in quality of education and fulfillment of exemplary character traits. I feel fortunate to have graduated from New Boston High School, class of 1958.

### **MEET YOUR EDITOR (12/2014)**

Seldom have I asked Brandy Mitroff a personal question that I did not already have a pretty good idea what her answer would be. This certainty stems from my long association with her since she moved to New Boston in 1972. I have interacted with her as neighbors, in her duties as a town official, as a volunteer member of local organizations, as an employee in my company and a sub-contractor photographic surveying services. More revealing than all of the above levels of acquaintance with Brandy is through my column in her New Boston Bulletin (NBB) for nearly 18 years. On the question of her accepting my idea to write this column about her my certainty of her reply sank, in fact I was not at all sure she would agree, so I first asked the question to Jack, her husband. His reply bolstered my courage to ask her straight out. Brandy's reply to my phone call was surprisingly quick and unequivocally positive and we scheduled a meeting to talk about her life in New Boston.

Shortly after my call I met Brandy at my office and I opened the discussion with my recollections about our interaction that began about 1975 when she was a member of the New Boston Planning Board and served as its Secretary. She was an employee of Plastic Techniques Company from 1973 to 1978. During that time I established my consulting business and regularly presented Brandy with subdivision applications for her to administer. In our discussion she told me that she kept the whole planning department in a cardboard box because there was no office space at the Town Hall. Her duties as Planning Board Secretary became more encompassing with her part in writing the first New Boston Zoning ordinance.

Brandy stated that as early as grade three she developed a love of horses. She worked in a stable to help offset the cost of riding lessons and the boarding fee for her horse. At this early age she may have realized that she enjoyed competition and that she was also becoming athletically inclined. Early on Brandy took up the sport of Motorcycle racing on obstacle courses. As a training exercise for competition she would ride along the top of a stonewall on her property. In a state of disbelief I asked how that could be done. Her explanation was that the cycle was run slowly with low air pressure in the tires. In the sport of cycle racing Brandy became so skillful and competitive that she became the first woman in the US to qualify and compete in men's cycle racing events.

During the period beginning in the late 1970's to 1987 she operated a stable on her property where she taught the Hunter-Jumper style of horsemanship. The buzz is that her stable became one of the top stables in New Hampshire. Being so strongly attached to the equine world she was inspired to do of free-lance writing for national and regional horse magazines. After 1987 Brandy applied her photography skills to covering horse shows throughout the area and also speculated on sales of aerial photographs she took of homes and public buildings.

Following her love of horses, she served as managing editor of the Northeast Equine Journal until 1992. Then Brandy and Jack started their own publication named Racing Northeast. Several articles in this publication gained national acclaim. They shut this enterprise down in the fall of 1997 to edit and publish the NBB and it hit the streets in January of 1998. Consistent with the Mitroff's proclaimed accomplishments in the past, in 2002 the NBB received an award from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. The Council recognized the great contribution made by the NBB in advancing the creativity of our students.

Though out of context, I choose now to share a quip about Brandy's contribution to my consulting firm. In 1985 she approached me, or I approached her, I am not sure how that worked, but we agreed that she would 2014 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

manage my new office at Todd's Corner. That was a hook up that greatly benefited my company and it fit in well with Brandy's other endeavors described above.. At that time my business was considering the addition of areal photographic mapping of the landscape for use in designing development projects. Close range photography for use in mapping of large buildings was also considered. She and I worked out a sub-contracting agreement and photographic mapping became part of our consulting business under Brandy's management. When Brandy was not taking pictures from the plane or on the ground she was a key member of my staff because of the business management skills she previously learned.

Brandy and I share the humor of one of her experiences in the field. Her tasks included placing large plastic targets on the ground at the aerial mapping site. The placement of targets was planned prior to going to the sites so that they would be visible from the airplane when the pilot flew over the site while Brandy operated the camera and assisted the pilot in staying on line. Obviously, open areas were chosen for target locations. A particular job was a memorable event that Brandy and I laugh about. A target location she had chosen was in a farmer's pasture and she and her assistant went right to the chosen spot, not aware that the patriarch of the herd was watching them. Just as they completed the task they heard stamping hooves and throaty grunts coming from a very large black and white bull approaching them. Brandy and her assistant made a speedy departure.

I believe that it would be a wonderful thing if other news publishers followed Brandy's model for presenting the news with integrity. The NBB takes the pulse of the Town in several ways that appeal to me. First, all niches of the Town are included every month. Every grade in our school is featured in story and in pictures. Reading about their class activities and seeing their pictures has to be an exciting and inspiring experience for students. How proud it must make parents to see their children learning and then displaying their achievements in the NBB. Teachers and School Board members must be pleased and rewarded to see the results of their policies.

I enjoy seeing the smiles on faces of elder citizens that attend the frequent activities sponsored by the New Boston Recreation Department. These citizens must be uplifted to know they are remembered and supported by the citizens in the town they once served. I think that the Recreation Department must feel real good about how their programs bring happiness to older citizens who would not otherwise be given the opportunities they now enjoy.

How else could we keep track of our local governmental offices than through the Editor's independent and impersonal reporting of the activities and accomplishments of all? I can understand the reports and know that they are accurately presented. This policy has to give our local boards faith in the reporting by the NBB.

Local organizations including the Whipple Free Library, the New Boston Historical Society, the New Boston Community Church, and the new Boston Baptist Church all have their announcements and activity schedules included in each issue of the NBB free of charge. Other local non-profit charitable organizations also have access to this publication. The NBB includes features that tie us to our community. Personal accomplishments and announcements link individuals to the community as a whole by keeping us all up to date on the status of friends. I do not use Facebook, so I appreciate this feature. Marie MacDonald's monthly columns Meet Your Neighbor takes this idea to a higher level and may introduce to us an acquaintance not known before, good job Marie!

Brandy told me that she manages the publishing of NBB in a way that keeps advertising rates low for local businesses. This is a policy that must be a positive boost for local entrepreneurs. I know that I appreciate this policy. The notes I took during our discussion speak to Brandy's personal ethics as a publisher. Her main objective is to print Good News, the truth, and to maintain a high standard for publishing editorials.

Our Editor has distinguished herself as a volunteer member of the New Boston 4<sup>th</sup> of July Association and as a public servant to this Town. In addition to her early work on the Planning Board, serving as its secretary, and in drafting our first zoning ordinance described herein, Brandy serves diligently and insightfully on the Finance Committee which can take up her time every Thursday night for long periods during the year. Further, she serves on the Capital Improvements Committee. In these duties she brings her experience and intelligence to the table to keep our Town's budget within affordable limits without spikes in any one year's budget.

Brandy has made out-standing contributions to this Town and its citizens through her constant diligence and endless devotion. Thank you Brandy!