

Spinnings



Chesterfield Historical Society Newsletter

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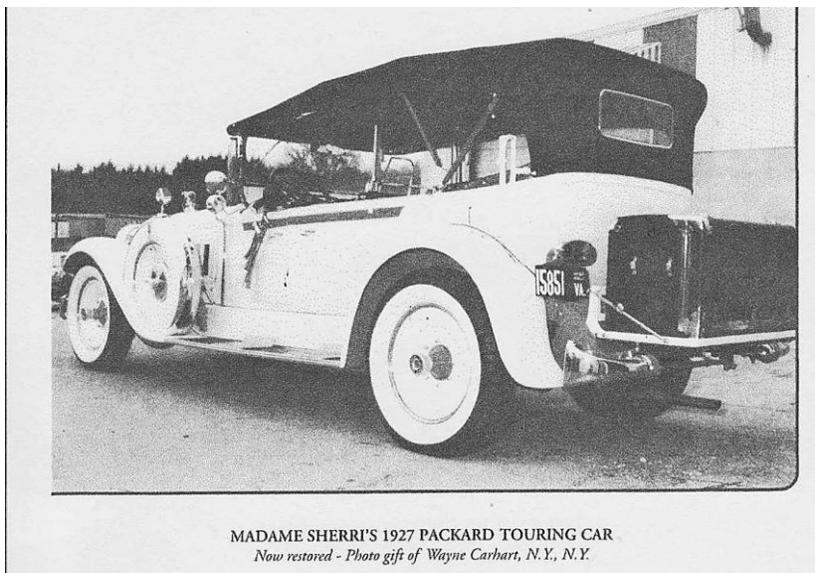
Fall 2015

CHESTERFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

Our Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 21st at 6:00 P.M. at Town Hall. Please bring a casserole or a salad to share (dessert will be provided) and a small item for our auction. We will have a short informative program and our traditional auction following supper. Our dessert will be a birthday cake in celebration of our 40th anniversary. Come and help us celebrate this special occasion.

TRAVEL HISTORY ON DISPLAY

On August 15th the Historical Society had an Open House in conjunction with the Library's vintage car show. This was the first event held to celebrate our 40th anniversary. For the Open House we added some interesting displays such as photos depicting the history of transportation as well as several photos of hotels and camps that were located on Spofford Lake. Stop by the Historical Society to check out our many displays. Our hours are Thursdays from 9:30 A.M. – 12:00 noon and Sundays from 2:00 – 4:00 P.M. We look forward to seeing you!



OUR 2016 CALENDAR

We know many of you look forward to purchasing our calendar each year. Audrey Ericson is presently completing the information and photos for the 2016 calendar and it should be available for sale soon.

CELLAR HOLE TOUR

On Sunday, October 25th those interested in taking the Cellar Hole tour will meet at 1:00 P.M. at the Chesterfield Gorge. The tour will take place from 1:00 – 4:00 P.M. Please dress appropriately (good walking shoes, slacks and if raining, some rain gear). In case of rain the walk will still take place but it will be cancelled if it is raining heavily.

Who Built the “Old Stone Place”?

(An inquiry into an interesting remnant of Chesterfield history.)

Across from the Stones Mill Road junction with Old Swanzey Road is an old road going east into the woods. Down this road and across a bog it leads to a cellar hole, somewhat more complex in its structure than many, and connected to at least three stone corrals about a half acre each in size. As is quite common in such old homesteads, a barn foundation and well are nearby, but quite uncommon are a series of carefully constructed stone piles scattered through the surrounding woods. The purpose of these stone piles, as well as the identification of the builder of these and the stone corrals, since they add some uniqueness to this property, will be the subject of future research. Just finding the builder of the house/cellar itself proved to be a substantial task and this report will focus specifically on that outcome.

This homestead is located on Map 18 Lot A6 on the Chesterfield tax records and the old road and some of the stonework is found on sheet 4 of Block 33 of the White Pine Blister Rust Control maps dated February, 1939, as well as on several survey maps.

There were at least four possible starting points for this project: (1). look on the 1858 town map to see if there was a house at that location at that time; (2). consult the town history to see if there is any reference to the location (a tedious task since I hadn't yet found the reference to "the old Stone place" of the title!); (3). go to the Registry of Deeds and try to track the chain of ownership for the location; and (4). consult "New Hampshire Highway Department Right of Way Source Records, Town of Chesterfield, NH 1752 - 1938", compiled by Oscar Jewell.

There was no house at that site on the 1858 map so #1 was out. I had no idea how to use the town history (#2) for this project as it is primarily useful if one has a name; at this point I didn't have a name! Approach #3, the Registry of Deeds, seems very obvious but old deeds are often not very helpful regarding the presence or absence of buildings. And in the early days land was divided into lots and ranges and it is often quite difficult to convert from current tax map locations to lots and ranges.

I got the first real hit using #4 (which I'll refer to as "highway records"). In that book the road records are keyed to a location in town. For the key number in the middle part of Old Swanzey Road (the general area in question) there was a reference from an 1899 Selectmen Meeting to "... discontinue the old road from the Jackson turn, so-called, to the old Stone place." Was this the "old road" from the first line above? Perhaps it was a man named Stone who built the place

(after all, Stone was capitalized in "old Stone place"). For further evidence that my old road might be the "old road from the Jackson turn, so called, to the old Stone place", I needed to find out more about the exact location of Jackson turn.

Neither the town history nor anyone I consulted with knowledge of town history had any reference or knowledge on "Jackson turn", so I went back to the Highway Records and the Registry of Deeds. Using these two sources I found additional evidence that the location of Jackson turn was at or near the intersection of Old Swanzey Road and Stones Mill Road. Although circumstantial, these gave further credibility to the idea that someone named "Stone" was the builder (see note at the end for a fuller explanation).

Returning to the Registry of Deeds (#3) and spending considerable time tracking down the parts of town habituated by the various Stones at various times in the latter half of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries, I found a deed to property brought by Amos Stone as parts of Lots #7 and 8 of the 3rd range; in fact, the location of the cellar hole! These were purchased by him in 1814. The two lots were sold to David Holman in 1834 and the location of the cellar hole is on this property, a property that some recent survey maps actually still refer to as the "Holman Lot"! The Town History says that Amos Stone arrived in Chesterfield in 1810 and "removed" from Chesterfield around 1835. These three bits of information are consistent.

While tracking land in the vicinity of the subject property I found a reference from an 1821 deed (Robertson to Robins) whose lot and range put it on land just to the west of the subject property, the reference being to " ... a log bridge where we now travel toward Amos Stones House". If one looks at a topo map one sees that the only stream that would require a log bridge near this deeded land is to the east of the deeded land crossing Otter Brook ; in other words, in the direction of our subject property!

The above information, although all circumstantial, suggests that it is likely that Amos Stone was the builder of the house on the cellar hole between 1814 and 1821, probably closer to the former.

(Note: A fuller explanation with supporting documents can be found in the new Cellar Hole Locator notebook at the Historical Society.)

Tom Duston