



Spinnings

Number 25

Spring 2009

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our new member of the board, Monique Antaya was welcomed to the board at our February meeting. She replaces Freda Davis who chose to step down from the board. Thanks, Freda, for serving two terms and for being a great secretary. You will be missed.

Other members include: Neil Jenness, Jean Hanson, Audrey Ericson, Bill Tyler, Roland Vollbehr, David Jordan, Melissa Davidson, Les Nicholas, John Hudachek, Ray Hutchins and Skip White.

Officers present agreed to serve in the same capacity for another year, pending approval at the next meeting, when we hopefully will have a quorum, Neil Jenness, president; Audrey Ericson, vice president and secretary, Skip White, treasurer; John Hudachek—corresponding secretary with the assistance of Monique Antaya. They will be working on our web-site.

The suggestion was made that, since many people are going back to the older ways of doing things, we have a back to basics section in our newsletter.

We have lost two people important to our historical society. Sue Sciuto, who died February 9th, had been part of our Thursday morning work force feeding information into the computer. Winnie Watts Cray passed away on Feb. 19. She had written and published poetry, and much of it of family, nature, and Chesterfield.

Selectman Bob Brockman has brought to our attention the fact that 2011 will be the 250th anniversary of the first settlers arriving in Chesterfield in November, 1761. Celebration possibilities include—Old Home Day, historical skits, old houses tour. We'd be interested in hearing from anyone with suggestions and offers of help.

On June 20th we will again host the Hildreth Family Reunion with lunch, program, and tours. Their ancestors arrived in town in 1763.

Our 2009 calendar sales were strong. If you don't have yours they are available at the library, historical society, town clerk's office.

We will eventually be preparing and printing a small book of corrections, additional stories, a missed cottage photo, etc. to the Spofford Lake book. A third printing of 100 more copies was received in December and sales continue. The treasurer reported that we have made a good profit on our sales of 600 plus copies. If you don't have your copy yet they are available at the library and the historical society. (\$35)

A new programmable thermostat has been installed in a better location and we hope to have more efficient and cost saving heating in our building.

Historical Society of Cheshire County happenings---a tour of Naulaka (Kipling's Home) on April 17; an exhibit of Immigration to Cheshire County; an exhibit on County wide Education and Schools will be held in November.

C.H.S. LIBRARY A reminder that we have several shelves of research materials on old houses, tools, crafts, Civil War and New Hampshire as well as quarterlies of the NH Historical Society and historical novels of New England interest. The materials may be borrowed.

Keep in mind that we are always looking for items of historical interest of Chesterfield.

Our hours are Sundays from 2-4 p.m. and Thursdays from 9:30-12 noon. Hope you'll stop by and visit us. We can always use volunteers to help us with our projects and collections.

DECEMBER ICE STORM

We need help to add some information about this event to our DISASTERS Collection. While Chesterfield did not suffer the devastation of towns in the eastern Monadnock Region, there were many residents without power for 9 days and some as much as 2 weeks. We are interested in hearing from those involved regarding their stories of coping without power for a long period of time. Any photos would be welcome.

Perhaps the most dramatic situation was at Road's End Farm which lost about a half mile of poles and wires through the woods from Old Chesterfield Road to the farm. The equipment which rolled into town to replace poles and wires was eye-popping. The immense size of the pole setters and other equipment which arrived on big flatbeds which had to park on Rte. 63 and the church parking lot in the village after unloading was staggering.

The higher elevations in town such as Pinnacle Springs, Poocham Rd., Welcome Hill, Gulf Rd., Old Swanzey Rd, Atherton Hill, Chesterfield Hgts., suffered severe icing which downed lines and left people scrabbling to find scarce items such as generators, lamp oil, bottled water, batteries, etc.

Our local emergency management office and our firemen began making calls and house to house visits to check on people. A shelter was opened at the school (and later at the town offices) and residents were invited to come for hot food, warmth, a

place to sleep. Being the resilient Yankees we are, no one made use of the facilities, but it was good to know they were available. Some made use of the new Spofford Fire Station.

Those were the longest nights of the year with the sun going down by 4 p.m. and not really light until about 8 a.m. How long those evenings were! The sound of generators reverberated throughout many areas of town. It was most certainly an unprecedented event. Please do share your stories and photos with us.

THREE OF OUR PRE-1800 HOUSES SAVED

In the last few years, three of our old houses in town (pre-1800) have been purchased by people who have been interested in the history of the houses and have/are restoring them to their former conditions.

The Antayas have undertaken a huge task of repairing/remodeling the Cobleigh house and barn and it is exciting to see it looking loved and lovely again. Jonathon Cobleigh built what is now the ell in 1770.

On the Horseshoe Rd. in the Centre Village, David Belluscio and his son have done a fantastic job of bringing the Parker House/former Parsonage and Community Club House (built in 1782) on Horseshoe Road back to an elegance it hasn't seen for a century. It is worth the time to drive by and appreciate the great work that has restored this house. We doubt it ever looked better, more stately, than it does now.

And, we are expecting great things at the Lyle B. Chickering Farm (1792) on Poor Rd. Buddy Olsen has purchased it and is hard at work updating and remodeling. We did a little research and searched our memories and located photos to share with him as much of the history of the farm as we could. It had been the Old John Leavitt Streeter Farm when purchased by the Chickerings in the 1920s; and the 1858 map shows Ezra H. Davis living there.

A HUGE THANKS TO THE ANTAYAS, DAVID BELLUSCIO, AND BUDDY OLSEN THAT THESE OLD HISTORIC HOMES ARE BEING SAVED.

RECENT GIFTS

At our annual meeting in October we displayed several framed collections of photos and post cards relating to the lake which were a gift of Gerry Knickerbocker. If you haven't seen them they are well worth a trip to the historical society.

Skip White has given us several articles relating to the "Jackson Hill Farm", now Road's End Farm. One article that had appeared in the Keene Sentinel tells of Jay Jackson, a 19th century Chesterfield farmer and cattle raiser who kept a day book/journal of his life and activities.

Of the great blizzard of 1888 Jackson wrote: Very violent storm, high wind and fast snow..... Storm continues, high wind all night and the highest drifts ever seen here, 10 above.... storm subsides; for high wind and great fall of snow, it never had an equal here....roads all blocked up with drifts and travel with teams impossible. No mail for one week from Keene. He also mentioned shoveling for seven straight

days and then breaking through to the road with a plow and horse. In another journal entry he refers to an 8 inch snowfall as a “sprinkling”.

Also a poet of some local repute, he wrote the following in which he lamented a late spring in the 1880s—

Spring birds came late and but a few,
The fewest that I ever knew.
So cold and backward is the spring
That scarce a bird is heard to sing,
And those that sing, sing faint and low,
Denoting less of joy than woe.

HOW WE TRAVELED TO SCHOOL DURING THE WINTER OF 1909

Margaret Amidon Johnson gave us a post card showing Nellie Holman driving a horse and sleigh with students Maurice Amidon and Elsie Chickering who lived on the Poocham Road arriving at School #9 in 1909. In the background the town hall can be seen and the Chesterfield Hotel/Old Mead Tavern with barns and stables. The note on the back of this postcard sent to Maurice said ‘I like the way you always try to be on time.’ (He would have lived in the house where Jeff & Debbie Miller now live so quite a walk to the corner of Poocham and Pond Brook Rds.) Elsie would have lived in the old Putnam House which stood right there at the corner. Can you imagine your “school bus ride” being in a horse and sleigh with jingle bells? Unfortunately the photo was not clear enough to include in the calendar. It can be seen at the Chesterfield Library where it is on display.

Film: PISGAH: A PLACE APART - Sunday, May 24th

A documentary film on Pisgah’s history compiled as part of the Oral History Project at the Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place & Cultures at Franklin Pierce University. Opening on Sunday, May 24, 3:00 PM at the Colonial Theatre in Keene. Free and open to the public.

For more information contact John Harris at harrisjr@franklinpierce.edu

FRIENDS OF PISGAH STORY CIRCLE & HIKE - Sunday, April 26th

Friends of Pisgah and the Chesterfield Historical Society are inviting community members to listen to and share stories about the Arthur D. Little Research Company, a business that used land near Kilburn Pond from 1958 to the late 1960s to study adequate magazines for the storage of explosives. Skip White of Chesterfield, a former employee of the Little Company, will talk about the work on Sunday, April 26, from 1 to 2:30 pm and then lead a hike to the site from 2:45 to 4:00 pm, leaving from the Kilburn Trailhead on Rte 63 in Hinsdale.

Contact Laurel Powell (603) 336-7479 or lpowellbks@comcast.net.