



# Spinnings

Number 19

Fall 2004

## PINE GROVE SPRINGS

Did you know that the land on which Spofford Hall now stands has a long history of resort activity?

For several years James Hart Stearns from West Brattleboro camped on the site. In 1886 he built the Pine Grove Springs Hotel. A nine-hole golf course was added in 1900. In 1898, his wife Annie drew up the plans for the cottage now owned by Jeff and Cindy Clark and had it built for the family to live in during the summer.

E. Ward Stearns, who had been a partner in the rubber business in Brooklyn, New York, ran the hotel after his father died in 1911. He hired Arthur H. Post, also from Brooklyn, as superintendent for the establishment. The farmhouse that is now the Tower Light Inn was built by Stearns; Post lived there from 1914 until 1927.

An advertisement in 1922 boasted that the hotel had 100 rooms, 2 annexes of 50 rooms each and several cottages. Ward Stearns ran the hotel until 1934, when the bank took it over during the Depression. Abe Jacobson was appointed by the bank to oversee the operation, and later bought the land and hotel.

The house now owned by Jay and Mary Jenkins in Stearns Cove was part of the hotel, and in 1941 was owned by Tillie Jacobson. It was called 'Oswego Cottage.'

The hotel property on 500 acres offered golf, tennis, boating, bathing, horseback riding, horse-drawn coach (later motoring) trips, dancing, picnics, mountain climbing, and corn roasts. It was an elegant resort providing professional evening entertainment in the Terrace Room night club.

E. Ward Stearns' daughter Lillie and her husband, Rally Dennis, renewed their vows in 1946 in the gazebo at the hotel.

The hotel burned down in 1961. It went quickly, perhaps because it had been insulated with seaweed. It was a hysterical scene, as guests ran carrying their valuable furs and jewelry. There were no fatalities.

Edward and Hazel Johnson ran a motel and restaurant on the site for a while. Later, Chris and Steve Fuller operated it as a dinner theater for three years, in the 1970s.

Spofford Hill built its present day facility in 1980 as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. It was forced to close in a very few years when the American insurance companies refused to pay for long term care, recommending instead outpatient treatment. Canadian insurance companies declined to pay for treatment outside Canada.

The present owner, Mr. John Chakalos, is having the property evaluated for future use. There are 6 acres on the lake and 76 acres across the road.

Martha Potter



Pine Grove Springs Hotel as seen from the lake 1914

## ACQUISITIONS

We have received many welcome contributions this summer. Here are a few:

From **Harlan Stone II** we received a copy of *First Days*, Journal of the American First Day Cover Society, which includes an article that wrote, "The Stone Stamp Cachets," with mention of the Chesterfield Historical Society. He also sent a brochure for an exhibit that he organized last summer at Monmouth Beach, N. J. of Agnes Harvey Stone's watercolors. This line was of

particular interest: "To her grandchildren, her paintings also reflect her strong, frugal, New England values instilled from birth in Chesterfield, N.H., the small farming village where both she and her husband were born."

**Laurie Kwader, Don Mackey, and Jane Allen** shared their collections of postcards of the town and the lake. Many were donated outright, others we copied on the scanner to add to our collection.

Earlier in the summer we received from **MARK** and **CHRISTINE(WOODWARD)LA CLAIR** from Swanzey a booklet containing research that he has done of their home, which was formerly Schoolhouse No. 7 in the Hardscrabble district of Chesterfield.

**ALVIN** and **FREDA DAVIS** donated a sugaring pail with the name "R. F. Dutton," which they had discovered. In the 1940s-50s, Dutton owned what is now the town office building.

**JANE ALLEN** gave us two books from the Arthur H. Post collection: *King Philip's War*; and *The Sovereignty and goodness of God: The Story of Mary Rowlandson*. Mary Rowlandson was captured by Indians during the French & Indian War.

**CLIFFORD WHITE** contributed to our WWII collection by bringing us some war-related items, including letters from John Castle to Ray Rowe.

**BOB SORTERUP** donated a large old Cheshire County map showing the old railway lines.

**JACQUELINE (RIENDEAU) REILLY** gave us an old [probably 1912-14] 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation

picture from West Chesterfield. Included in the small group was her grandmother Bertha Amidon (later Riendeau), and possibly Bertha Farr. We would welcome any help in identifying others in the group.

**MARY GOLD** brought us a program for a Variety Show program that had been presented at Chesterfield Central School in 1955.

Several great photos were donated by Bill Prentiss to add to our Grace Prentiss collection. They include not only Prentisses, but Robertsons, Preshos, and a portrait of Clarence Springer, as well as pictures of the Poocham Road area.

THE SOCIETY purchased a book, *Evergreen Cemetery*, Winchester, N.H., by Clifford Struthers Jr. It is a compilation similar to our own cemetery book.

A 16" x 20" mounted wedding certificate of George W. Butler & Linna E. Stoddard, January 22, 1884; also her letters to her aunt before the marriage.

**NEW CALENDARS**  
*will be on sale*  
**soon.**

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

THE CHESTERFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY has

- ...Over 90 volumes of scrapbooks, photograph albums, postcard albums, and newspaper clippings from the 1800s – 2003?
- ...167 acid-free boxes and flat files of artifacts, including old writs, church records, memorabilia and records from the old Granges and other social organizations, clothes and uniforms?
- ...Over 4000 old photographs cataloged?
- ...A collection of large maps of the town dating back to 1858?
- ...Town Reports from 1866 and Tax Records from 1787?
- ...Shelves of reference books and town histories?
- ...An 1885 County Gazetteer that tells, not only who lived on what road at that time, but their occupations, the number of cattle, horses, and sugar trees they had?
- ...Research files on varied subjects, from Barns to Spofford Lake?
- ...Genealogies from Albee to Yeager?

*and Exhibits* of local interest in the main building.

You are invited to come and visit Sundays, from 2-4 pm.  
And, if you would like to join us in our work on  
Thursday mornings, we would be very happy  
to have you do so.

**Annual Potluck Supper  
and Meeting**  
October 20 at 6:30  
*(Don't forget your Raffle items)*

***Fall Foliage [or not] Walk***  
to the Lily Pond in Pisgah  
October 24  
Meet at the Horseshoe Road trailhead at 1:30  
Call 363-8018 with questions