



Springfield Historical Society News
Dedicated to Preserving Springfield, NH's History Since 1984
September-October 2008

The President's Message:

The Springfield Historical Society Meeting will be held Thursday, October 9th, 7:00 pm at the Springfield Meeting House. Everyone is welcome. Julie Slack, curator of the museum, will present the "Quest of Perleytown." The autumn season in New Hampshire is the perfect time of the year to go on a quest. This interesting and informative program will show you how to do a quest and learn about an area's past. It could be a great family adventure. For information about a quest, please read "What is Questing?" on page 6 of this newsletter.

Needed: A Vice President:

A serious problem faces the officers and board members of the Springfield Historical Society. We DO NOT have a Vice President. The main function of the Vice President is to provide four programs a year for the society and advertise them. This year the October program is already planned, so there will be programs needed for January, April, and June. The rest of the officers and board often have ideas and suggestion to pass on to the Vice President and also help that person to set up the hall the night of the program. The other duty would be to take over the presidency IF the president is absent from a meeting, becomes incapacitated, or has resigned from the presidency. We know there are capable people out there! Please come forth and help us. The officers and board members all work together. We also lead busy lives.

Officers and Board Members for 2008-2009:

Officers elected at the July Annual Meeting were the following: President, Patsy Caswell; Vice President _____; Secretary Donna Denniston, Treasurer Brandt Denniston; Board members are Cynthia Bruss, Cynthia Lawson, and Janet Booker. Julie Slack is the curator of the museum and material.

Program Refreshments:

Barbara Garlock has generously offered to be in charge of the refreshments for the October meeting. We need a volunteer or volunteers for January. If you can help, please contact me at caswellHeath@msn.com or 401-847-6782.

Thank you:

Thank you, Donna Denniston for arranging our very popular Annual Meeting program in July. The Orzechowskii Family's Sugar River Band packed the house and there was a lot of foot stamping! Thank you also, Donna for the great refreshments.

Thanks to all of you who bought chances on the Lake Kolelemook painting that helped to fund the scholarships. Congratulations to Marge Erickson from New London who held the lucky ticket. Her plan had been that if she won, she would give the painting to Joanne Belfield. The painting was based on a photo taken several years ago by Ed Belfield!

Thank you to Ed Belfield who organizes the hosts and hostesses for the museum each summer and fills in if no one is available. Thanks also to those who did help out by hosting during July and August. They were Trudy Heath, Nancy and Bob Bower, Peter Neilsen, Walter Belfield, and Janet LaBrecht. There were visitors every Saturday and all were pleased with the pictures, and history the museum had to offer. Thank you Julie Slack for organizing a new display for the season.

New Web Address:

Brandt Denniston has announced that our new web address is www.historicalspringfieldnh.org. He plans to rebuild the site. The society's official title is now Springfield Historical Society, Inc.

Other Losses:

After the July newsletter went to press, we learned of the death of Charles Lawson. Our thoughts have been with the family. They came to our meetings when they were in town. His daughter in law, Cyndy, is now a member of the board.

One of the first members of the Springfield Historical Society, General William Knowlton (Ret'd) died August 14th. He will be fondly remembered by Springfield residents who knew him.

Membership:

If you have not paid your dues, remember time is running out! Payment of dues is from June 30, 2008 to December 21, 2008. We do not want to lose you!

Volunteers Needed:

I have not been able to continue recording the graves at Old Pleasant View this summer because I need a volunteer. It would be one or two afternoons when light is best to read the stones, the week of October 6th. If you can help, please contact me at caswellheath@msn.com or 401-847-6782. It is an interesting task with lots of Springfield history.

Julie Slack could also use some help with filing and etc. with the museum material. She can be contacted at 401-763-8909 and jorrokslack@gmail.com.

Trip to Collins (Dutchman Pond) Cemetery

The trip to Collins (Dutchman Pond) Cemetery finally took place on July 6, 2008 after a ten year delay! Unfortunately Webster Pass leading by the cemetery goes through what is now the private yard of a home. Both Dorothy Eldeen and Muriel Tinkham who had been with me on the last quest, are no longer available for such an activity, so I was hesitant to go back there as a committee of one. That was where we went in April or May in 1998 and were driven out by black flies! Finally, I had e-mails from a couple of Collins descendents who did not know each other, but were tracing their genealogy and asked about the cemetery. I decided it was now or never! On Sunday, July 6th, a couple and I made about 20 stones. Only seven stones were readable, others broken, unreadable, or both. The stone of John Collins the Revolutionary War Veteran was not found. The majority of the stones were slate. Sometime ago, the ice storm damage of January, 1998 had been removed. The cemetery committee has kept the area neat and

clean. One could tell that there were more graves in the graveyard on the side of the hill, but who they are is probably lost forever. Frank Anderson, cemetery trustee, looked for a map or chart of the cemetery in the town offices, but found none. This is sad, especially for those people trying to trace their genealogy, and Springfield who has lost part of its history. Thank you, Tracey and Rodney Gonyea for inspiring me to once again go to the Collins' (Dutchman Pond Cemetery),

The Seventieth Anniversary of the Hurricane of 1938

This a reprint from the September, 1998 Springfield Historical Society newsletter. A couple of new remembrances will be added.

On the afternoon of September 21, 1938, seventy years ago, the hurricane of '38 struck New England full force. It was one of the biggest disasters to ever hit the area with much loss of life and property. It was one of those events you remember the rest of your life if you were old enough to realize what was happening at the time

Beverly (Brown) Bacon lived with her family on a farm at the top of the hill on Hazzard's Rd, Springfield. She was about 6 years old and had the chore of shelling beans in the barn. As Mrs. Brown saw a storm approaching, she called Beverly to come into the house. Beverly wanted to finish her task, but her mother insisted. A few hours later, the barn collapsed. Fortunately, she had minded her mother!

Ella May (Carpenter) Pickering lived about a mile and a half from West Springfield village on the left side of George Hill Road. She had just turned five in August. They only had electricity for a short time and when the storm came, a large willow on the north side of the house was uprooted and tore the electric wires off the house. Later in the afternoon a huge tamarack tree on the south side of the house came crashing down parallel with the driveway along side of the house, with the top just brushing the side of the barn. After a few days, when the road was clear, the family went for a ride to Grantham. The road near the town line was still flooded, but passable. There were lots of trees down all along the road to the village store.

George Thompson was at Twin Lake Villa waiting to report for his freshman year in college. He and a friend were white water canoeing down Kidder Brook from Hideaway Rd through the golf course! This was recorded for posterity on 16mm film located in the New London archives.

In 1993, Stu Murphy interviewed several Springfield people about the hurricane of '38 in an article for The Argus Champion.

The late Carl "Chubb" Hooper who lived on the Georges Mills Road, was a road agent at the time. He and two other road agents with crews worked with crosscut saws and axes in the driving rains and wind to attempt to clear roadways in town that were completely blocked by fallen trees. There were no power saws at that time. Everything was done by manual labor. Chubb told of driving his truck along the Springfield-New London Road in the storm. As he approached the downhill grade near the town line, the road was rapidly being washed away ahead of him. Turning around he discovered that the trees were gradually toppling across the road. He had to abandon his truck and walk home. He also stated that the hardest hit location in town was the Stoney Brook Road and Baptist Pond where about a million feet of timber went down. It took four years to clear this area along with other heavily damaged locations in town. The wood was cut according to use. The hardwood along the roadways was cut into four foot lengths and given to nearby property owners to use as firewood. Straight soft wood logs were cut into six and eight foot lengths. Ramps (skid-ways) were built along the roadways to roll the logs onto the trucks. There were no fancy forklifts in those days! The sawmill business sprang up, but that's another story. Many of the logs were floated in ponds such as Otter Pond and Stocker Pond. Some of the wood was retrieved for lumber, but much of the timber became water-logged and sank to the bottom of the ponds.

Mr. Murphy also interviewed the late Hollis Heath who lived on Route 4A (the Fourth NH. Turnpike) He told how the rushing water in one location threatened to carry away a bridge. He drove his truck on the bridge so that the extra weight would save the structure.

Florence (Saunders) Baxter told Stu that she was thirteen at the time and fascinated with the fact that the metal roof of a barn near her parents' home on George Hill Road was completely blown off.

Louise (Brunell) Jacewicz told Stu that she and Mrs. Brunell feared for her father, Ed's safety. He was a carpenter working to put a roof on a cottage down at Lake Kolelemook. Leslie Richardson went to

find him and persuade him that the trees were falling fast and that they would never get home if they didn't hurry.

Miss Elsie Smith, who had previously taught in Number 9 School on the Georges Mill Road, and the year after the hurricane taught four years at Center School in Springfield, told me of her hurricane memories in Canaan. September 21st 1911 was her birth date! She was living at home and teaching in Orange. She got home from school before the old gristmill blew down by the bridges. The road from West Canaan to Canaan was under water so people had to go home by way of the (Gulf?) A couple from Providence were on their wedding trip and got as far as her home, where she lived with her parents, on Grist Mill Hill Road. Their honeymoon would be one to remember!

A few years ago, Verna Cote wrote her memories of the hurricane. She and Leon were remodeling a schoolhouse on the Stoney Brook Road. They had only gotten electricity a couple of months before the storm struck. The house was up on pipes and what would be the cellar was wide open. It was several months before they could use the new electric pump or washer. A few baskets of red geraniums were on the railing of the front porch which was covered by an awning. The awning was ripped to shreds, but not one flower was overturned! Verna was working at Bailey's Country Store in the village. She and Leon could not get home that night, so they stayed with Jane and Loren Patten in their new home in the village. The wind lifted up the end of the living room off the foundation and set it gently back down again. The lighted kerosene lamp was undisturbed on the table

Patsy (Heath) Caswell was almost five at the time. We did not know about hurricanes. My parents, Paul and Bessie Heath, and I lived in the cottage that they built at the north end of Lake Kolelemook on Four Corners Road. What a surprise it was to see trees actually tip over. When my mother got home from work at Adamsfort that night, she and Dad canned pears on the wood stove. When the electricity went off, we used kerosene lamps. In those days everyone still had them because electricity was fairly new in town. At the height of the storm, we had a chimney fire. There was no telephone to call for help and the fire burned itself out. Before the night was over, a pine tree broke off, sailed over the roof and landed in the driveway. Bernard Richardson, his wife Eva (Severance) Richardson and daughter Joan were living in a camp on the east side of our property. Somehow they managed to get to our house to spend the night with us. Until the hurricane, our cottage was surrounded by pine and the upstairs rooms in the back were dark. I remember how surprised I was the next morning to see the sunshine out the back window and all the trees looking like the game of "pick-up-sticks." It was the same on the road going to the two villages.

Adamsfort, on the hill where the Rodgers now live off the Grantham Road, was the summer home for the extended families of Adams, Downeys, Bordens, and Roberts. Several members were still there on September 21st. Fairfax Downey wrote an article "Neighbors" in the Commentator magazine telling of experiences of the Adamsfort families that long night and the days following. He reminded us that not only was there no electricity in the few homes that were serviced by it, but that also meant no radio. The telephone service was also out. At dinner, Mrs. Downey pronounced with conviction "thjs is the hurricane from Florida." Mr. Downey did not think so because they seldom came north of Cape Hatteras where they veer out to sea. About that time, a huge gust of wind shook the house. "Well," he conceded hastily, "it might possibly be the tail end of the hurricane." Just then they heard a grinding, rending noise outside the kitchen door. Mr. Downey and daughter Peggy (Downey) Knowlton investigated to find the lattice work on the back porch blown down and dragging against the wall of the house. They cut it loose and no sooner were out of the way when the top of a big pine crashed down right where they had been standing! The lower half of the tree thudded down onto the roof which withstood its weight. They decided to douse all the fires and resort to candles. The next morning they discovered a barn half de-roofed and outdoor furniture and other objects scattered far and wide. They were still ignorant of the extent of the disaster until Seeley Philbrick came up the hill from his farm (on the right-hand side of the Grantham Road leaving Springfield, just before Sanborn Hill) to see how they had survived the night. Seeley had harbored nearby cottagers who left their cottage when the pines started crashing down and also a party of Dartmouth students caught motoring along the road. [This was the main route to Colby College and girls before 1-89] Cut off by a tree falling in front of them, they had built a causeway of stones from the Adamsfort stone wall over the fallen tree! Some of the family decided to try to reach the village. The state road was covered with crisscrossed trees every few yards. Many trees were wrenched bodily from the soil with earth covered roots towering twice as tall as a man. It reminded Mr. Downey of the shell-torn woods of France in World War I. Ahead they could hear the ring of axes as Springfield people began opening the road. The family members trudged up Philbrick Hill to the Frank Colby farm. Half the roof was ripped off the barn. The Colbys had

received severe damage to the sugar orchard. As bad as things were, the Colbys shared milk and vegetables with the Adamsfort clan. That evening Raymond Beals who was the caretaker at Adamsfort arrived to do his chores after working at cleaning roads all day. He stopped to see Bessie Heath down by the lake and she said that she would manage to get through the next day to help with the housework as usual.

By noon of the second day, two gangs working toward each other finally got the Grantham Road open. Mr. Downey said that there could be no such thrill in watching a couple of governors cut a ribbon at a bridge opening! The head of the road gang had a car radio and it was at this time that they heard of the widespread ruin caused by the Hurricane of '38. Springfield neighbors worked to help each other and get life back to normal as soon as possible, although life and Springfield would never be exactly the same again. I do not believe there was loss of life in Springfield which made us very fortunate. There was destruction of buildings, especially barns, loss of roofs and it was many years before the forests recovered.

Patsy Heath Caswell

WANTED: MWMORIES (NIGHTMARES) OF THOSE OF YOU WHO WERE IN THE SPRINGFIELD AREA DURING THE ICESTORM OF JANUARY, 2008. PLEASE SEND TO PATSY CASWELL, 47 BLISS MINE RD. NEWPORT, RI, 02840 OR caswellheath@msn.com.

What is Questing?

Ms. Slack has been working with Quests for the past few years and has created a Quest in Perleytown, a forgotten section of Springfield.

Never heard of Questing? You aren't alone. Despite publishing their first Valley Quest book over a decade ago, few people have heard of the Vital Communities venture. Questing is the perfect way to explore your community and learn a bit about its history, while spending some time outside in the beautiful New England weather.

Questing gets its roots from the English tradition of Letterboxing; it's treasure hunting with a twist. Letterboxing merges treasure hunting with local landscapes, all the while requiring the participant to figure out the location of the treasure box by solving riddles. Some of these riddles, or clues, are more complex than others; they could be as simple as longitude and latitude readings or they could be as complex as a line describing where the sun hits a hill at a certain time of day. But no matter the level of difficulty, the clue leads the hunter to a hidden box wherein they find a book and a handmade rubber stamp. They sign their name and collect the stamp in their own book, a testament to their hunting abilities. Each box holds a different stamp and some boxes are more difficult to find than others making the stamps rare indeed. Questing took that concept, added historical facts and wove community involvement into the treasure hunt. Instead of just following clues for fun like Letterboxing, Questing also teaches you about your surroundings in a new, fun way.

Ms. Slack will explain what Questing is and its history as well as giving some insight into the newly created Perleytown Quest. She is the curator of the Springfield Historical Museum and has written a recent article, "Questing in Soonipi County" for Soonipi Magazine. Julie is in the Masters of Education Program at Plymouth State University.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE DUES DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31, 2008!

We appreciate your membership and do not want to lose you!

Type of Membership

Individual \$15.00 _____

Family 2 or more @25.00 _____

Lifetime per person \$125. _____

Name: _____ Winter address if different

Street/PO Box _____

City/Town _____

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