



SPRINGFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
POST OFFICE BOX 6  
SPRINGFIELD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

March 3, 2002

### President's Message

Stephen H. Taylor, commissioner of agriculture, markets and food for the State of New Hampshire, will be the guest speaker at the April 11th meeting of the Springfield Historical Society. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the Conference Room on the lower level of the Libbie Cass Memorial Library. Mr. Taylor will talk about the history of farming in early New Hampshire. He has served as commissioner of agriculture since 1983 under five different governors, and is responsible for protecting food quality and safety, upholding commercial market standards, assuring animal and plant health, safeguarding the environment and fostering the economic security of the state's agricultural industry. A lifelong NH resident and graduate of the University of NH, Mr. Taylor speaks and writes frequently on agricultural, natural resource and rural development issues. Mr. Taylor, his wife Gretchen and three sons operate a family run dairy and maple farm in their hometown of Meriden. Please join us for a wonderful program all about New Hampshire!

### THE DAY THE HORSES RAN AWAY

*by Dickie Hopper*

Growing up, spending summers at "Hideaway" - my grandfather's farm on Philbrick Hill - was better than summer camp! Even though many of my childhood memories were set in the years before and during World War II, for us children, summers were a time of adventure, new experiences and wonderful family times. Fathers and husbands were with us only briefly each summer, since they were away working or serving in the military. During most summers, there were three boy-cousins, two aunts, my sister and myself and our mother all staying with my grandmother in the big farmhouse (now Jill and "Doodles" Barton home) and in

the cottage next door (now Phyllis Harvey's). Oscar Clemmons ("Clemmie"), our year-round caretaker and friend, and who could fix almost anything, did most of the heavy outside work. With a background in driving mule trains, he was well qualified to take care of an assortment of animals: two pigs, chickens, a cow or two, at least six cats, two work horses, and two riding horses. For a few years we raised quail, mink, and English setter hunting dogs, as a sideline supervised by Art Townley, the golf pro at the Grandliden Hotel in Sunapee who lived with us during the summer. We all pitched in with the chores. During the war years, when many of the men were absent in the town, women and kids helped keep the farms going. Yard work, gardens, animal care, and most importantly, helping out neighbors and whoever needed a hand, carried on the tradition so familiar to people in New England. We did a lot of haying in those days. I remember several times we received the urgent call to bring the rakes, horses and hay wagon over to the Pattens' or Dufour's fields on George Hill Road. The hay was cut, dry and ready to bring into the barn, and there was a storm on the way!!

Everyone had their particular job. My mother, the aunts, "Clemmie", and any other available adult would wield the pitchforks and toss hay into the wagon. My mother or one of the aunts would drive the horses, and my sister and I did the tromping in the wagon, making possible a larger load of hay as we covered the field. On a hot day, after working several hours, we'd get pretty itchy as bits of hay found its way into our underwear. We had to be careful not to stay too close to the edge of the load when it was 15 or 20 feet tall - a sudden lurch by the horses and you'd end up on your



back on the ground! A swim in the lake was frequently the end reward for sticking to the job until the last of that day's hay was in the barn. The two work horses, a matched pair of large gray Percherons, pulled the hay mower, tedder, hay rake, and wagon, as well as the plow for the vegetable gardens. The team that originally came was Nip and Tuck, but soon Nip became lazy and didn't work well, so he was replaced by Babe, a saucy female who was very playful and quite unpredictable.

One summer morning when I was about eight years old, we had a long day of haying ahead of us. The horses were hitched to the empty hay wagon and waited in the yard by the house near the drive-through "porte cochere". I climbed into the back of the wagon with my 10-year-old sister and waited for "Clemmie" to get in and take the reins of the horses for the trip to the field

Suddenly, one of our dogs bolted, barking, out from under the privet hedge between the feet of Babe and Tuck. Babe saw her chance! Pretending to be spooked, she jumped ahead and, convincing Tuck to join her, she took off at a gallop. Under the porte cochere, a quick S-turn, left across the lawn, and right into the narrow gateway into the field we went holding on to the railing of the empty wagon for our lives as we flew along hitting all the bumps. Babe and Tuck galloped full-tilt around the entire edge of the two-acre field, looking for more mischief while we two little girls played Ben Hur in the Chariot! Well, the horses eventually ran out of steam and came to a stop, while the grown-ups came running out expecting to see the horses, children and the hay wagon strewn dead in the field. What a ride! When my heart started beating again, I

remember thinking "that was lots more fun than haying!" Everyone ended up laughing, and I'm sure Babe and Tuck did too!

It's funny how one memory brings another. Maybe sometime I'll relate the one about the canoe trip on the Connecticut River . . . .

*Thank you to Dickie Hopper for sharing some of her early memories of Springfield with us. You are all making memories which become the social history of our town. It does not matter if your family has been in town for a couple hundred years or a couple of months! We would love to hear from you. Mail your story to PO Box 6, Springfield, NH 03284*

#### NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

*from Muriel Tinkham, Museum Curator*

- The museum reopens on Memorial Day weekend. We would like to remind everyone that volunteers are needed from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday afternoons to welcome visitors to the museum. Please contact Muriel Tinkham at 763-2953 to let her know what dates you might be able to help out.
- Plans are moving ahead to install shelving in the Library Historical Room to house valuable record books and documents for at least during the winter months.
- The society has acquired a microfilm reader that will also be kept in the Historical Room of the Library and will enable residents to read the vital records of Springfield that have been provided to us on microfilm from the LDS
- Several requests have come in from as far away as Wisconsin and Colorado in search of information on the Loverins, Heaths and other families. Muriel continues to stay very active helping these families with their research. We all appreciate her untiring efforts on behalf of the Historical Society and our museum..