

September, 2004

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

The October meeting of the Springfield Historical Society will be held Thursday, October 14th, in the Libbie Cass Library Conference Room at 7:00pm. The speaker will be Michael Tougias who will speak on "Four Hundred Miles of the Connecticut River." He has written a book for the Appalachian Mountain Club, "River Days: Exploring the Connecticut River from Source to Sea."

THE COLLECTION OF SPRINGFIELD STORIES are now available and we hope that you will enjoy them. They will be \$20.00 each plus \$2.00 postage. See the end of the newsletter. This is also a good time to thank all of you for the \$3,090.00 that was raised through the appeals letter. We had reprints made of A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SPRINGFIELD and that is also available for \$20.00 plus \$2.00 postage.

Please don't forget that the dues for 2004-2005 are due. The red dot means that we have not received your dues!

Thank you Donna and Brant Denniston for the great refreshments at the annual meeting.

The officers and board members of the historical society for 2004-2005 are the following: President, Patsy Heath Caswell, Vice-President, Don Garlock, Secretary, Donna Denniston, and one year board member, Dickie Hopper. The following were not up for re-election this year: Secretary, Trudy Heath, and board members, Bob Nulsen, and Muriel Tinkham.

Winner of the Lake Kolelemook painting was Benjamin Keene who has a cottage on Lake Kolelemook.

THE SPRINGFIELD TOWNHOUSE

The story of the Springfield town and meeting house has been told many times over the years. A brief history of the Howard Memorial Church (meeting house) was included in the July 2004 newsletter. This paper will concentrate

on the changes to the town house and use made of the building over the years.

Back in the days when Springfield was still called Protectworth in 1788, it was voted to build a meeting house high on the hill in the south east corner of what is now the Old Pleasant View Cemetery. It was somewhere near the stray animal pound and where the unknown soldier is today. The committee in charge was Israel Clifford, Capt. Reuben Hoyt, Timothy Quimby, Ens. Nathaniel Little, and Samuel Robie. Nothing was done until after Protectworth was incorporated as Springfield on 24 January 1794. On 10 March of 1795, it was voted to send Ens. Philip Colby as agent to get the plan of the Salisbury meeting house. (We are not sure which plan was used. There were two meetinghouses in Salisbury at the time and both were extensively remodeled in the 1800s.)

By 7 September, 1795, the selectmen accepted the plan brought back by Ens. Philip Colby.

In 1797, they were holding town meetings in the building. Previously they had been held in the houses of Capt. John Quimby and Samuel Clay. The building was dedicated in 1799. It was a two story building. The pews were sold to the highest bidder, ranging from 9 to 30 pounds. The pews in the gallery sold for 3 to 7 pounds. It was not easy to raise funds and they were still seeking sources in 1801.

In 1851, it was voted to move the town/meeting house from its original location down to what is now (2004) called Cemetery Road about one half mile to a more central location in the Grove by the grist mill, which is today (2004) the west end of Four Corners Road. As we have mentioned in the July 2004 newsletter, forty yoke of oxen were used. The building was set on logs and they almost lost control coming down

the hill! Joseph Nichols was chosen town agent for moving and repairing the building and fitting the lower story for a town house. A floor was added on the upper level which originally served the gallery for religious services. The town hall has been continuously used for town meetings since its construction in 1797. There was a long shed with horse stalls across from the building and a building to house the town hearse on the west end of the town/meeting house side. These were all torn down in the 1950-60 era.

Town meeting day in March was a big day in Springfield. There were horse sheds across from the town house where the early birds could hitch their horses. People came in from all over town and it lasted from early morning to mid afternoon. First was the town's business. Then there was a break for dinner. The menu always seemed to be ham, home baked beans, brown bread, cole slaw, and pies, usually apple or pumpkin with coffee. The ladies of the town would bring their food contributions. The meal was organized as a fund raiser by the church ladies. After dinner, once there was only one school committee instead of one for each district, the school business for the year would be undertaken. The eighth graders in the late 1940s were allowed to attend for the day. This was our introduction to civics.

Organizations also met at the town hall. Beaver Grange 283 was organized in 1899 and met at the town hall as long as it existed in town. Beginning in the early 1950s there was also a juvenile grange.

The Protective Lodge NO. 69 of the Knights of Pythias met at the town hall for as long as the organization existed.

Among the fund raising dinners held at the town hall in the early 20th century, oyster suppers were very popular. In recent years, the Recreation Committee

and the Fire Dept. have held many types of fund raiser meals. The Historical Society, with the help of Protectworth Catering, held several well attended dinners, and later held October pot luck dinners with their October meetings.

The Springfield Historical Society has held several meetings at the town hall when larger crowds were anticipated.

During World War II, the County Agricultural Extension Service decided the ladies of Springfield should learn to make mattresses! Well, they did. There were yards and yards of ticking, cotton twine, and batting!! The local chiropractors had plenty of business for weeks from the Springfield ladies with "bad backs." P.S. We still have one of those mattresses sixty years later. Maybe we should donate it to the historical society...

There were times movies were shown at the town hall. I don't remember why or the main feature. All I remember are the newsreels with airplanes, bombing, etc. My head was hidden. It must have been the 1940s Battle of Britain, etc. There were also Punch and Judy shows.

Every generation has put on plays at the town hall. The following are some of the examples. Hollis Heath tells of one he took part in when he was a young man. In 1948, the eighth grade class put on a play about "The Little Red School House". In 1967, a group put on a play to benefit the hospital. It was called "The Hanging at Sinimin City."

As long as there were Center and Maxfield Schools ending in 1947, there were eighth grade graduations. The two schools combined for the graduation. It was a big deal because it was not until the late 1950s that just about everyone went to high school. The last few days before graduation, the eighth graders would decorate with crepe paper and June flowers.

Every year there was a Christmas Program and party for the town children. There would be skits, songs, and "pieces to speak". Bessie Heath, age 93, can still remember her speech about baking a cake! I was always supposed to be an angel in the manger scene. My mother would make me a beautiful costume and almost every year I would get tonsillitis and someone else would get to wear my wings.

Let us not forget the Saturday Night Dances that were held for many years and people of all ages went, knew the songs, and the steps. There would be "three round" dances and "three square dances." A good time was had by all. There was the Gardner Orchestra with Eva Gardner at the piano, and later, Gladys Walker. As a young teenager, Wibur Grace learned to call square dances, and many years later is the leader of the Night Owls

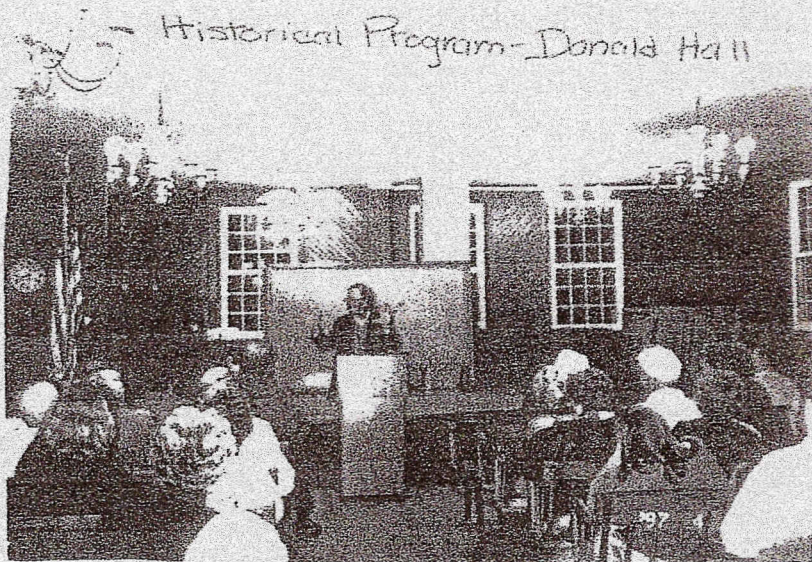
Keeping up with the times, changes were made over the years to the town hall. A few will be mentioned. In 1877, pews were removed from the town hall and settees used instead. In 1923, chemical toilets were added. They wore out their welcome and were replaced with modern plumbing in 1989. The stage was added around 1929. Electricity came in 1930. In 1957, a forced airheating system replaced the chunk wood stove and running water was installed in 1966.

Through the effort of dedicated Springfield people, the Springfield Town/Meeting House was entered into the National Register of Historical Places 5 June 1986.

A few years later in 1989, the town house and meeting house were restored to the beautiful condition we enjoy today. The celebration took place 10 February 1990 with an open house followed by a dance. Many of the Springfield people were involved.



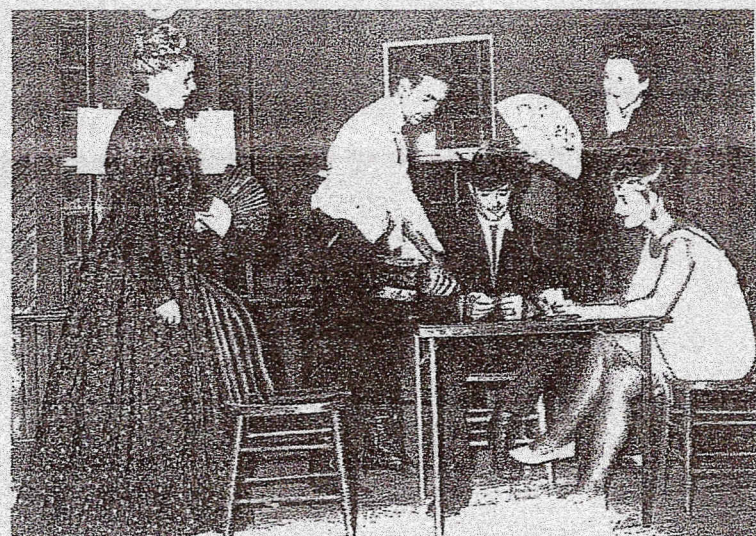
WENT TO VOTE -- Voters in the town of Springfield, N.H., arrive at the voting booth in the 1930s



Historical Program - Donald Hall



School Programs - Kindergarten, 1997

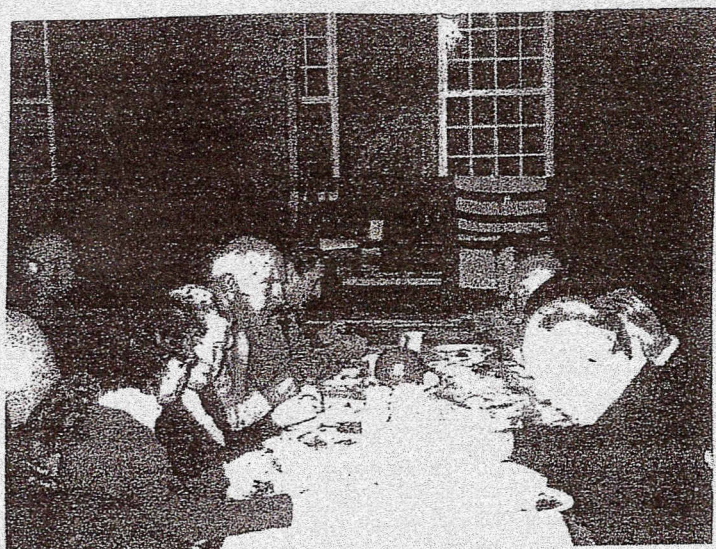


Plays

WESTERN MELODRAMA TO BENEFIT HOSPITAL. Residents of Springfield are ready for their benefit performance of "The Hanging at Sinimin City" to be presented at 8 p.m. tomorrow in Springfield Town Hall. Left to right, Amy Waddell as one of the ladies from Philadelphia; Bradley Butcher, bar tender; Dennis George, card shark; Mrs. Cheryl Patten, one of the ladies from Philadelphia, and Mrs. Mary Ann Ansart, dance hall girl.

Argus: Aug 8, 1967

Photo by Whitney Studio



Historical Society Pot Luck