

Memories of school days 50 years ago

By Carilyn Philbrook

School bells are once again ringing across our town this month and lucky indeed are the children who are able to attend school in Sutton's fine buildings.

Wondering what it was like to attend school in Sutton years ago I solicited the following memories from the Sutton High School class of 1925 who recently celebrated their 50th class reunion.

Members of the class were Phyllis (Batcheller) MacLaren; Viola (Stockwell Credit) Sampson; Olive (Stockwell) Taft; Marion (Cressy Clarkson) Chausse, class salutatorian; Jennie (Haringa) DeVries, class valedictorian; Bernard Casey; Clifford Monroe; Gordon Humes; Charles Newton; Clyde Putnam and Algott Swenson. The last four members of the class listed are now deceased.

Following are excerpts from comments of members of the class:

"The children from Eight Lots District were transported to Sutton Center School in an unheated horsedrawn vehicle. It was a covered van drawn by a pair of horses and was named 'Lady of the Lake'. We did not even have a few days off because of winter storms. There were times when we couldn't get down through Cole Hill as it would drift in during the day, so we had to walk home from there."

"We all met at Eight Lots School to be picked up and went by way of Cole Hill to Sutton Center. The drivers were Paul Clark for a number of years and then Lewis Sherman."

"Principal F.E. Baldwin taught math and sciences, Miss Arnold taught Latin and French and Rhona McElwain (Mrs. Perry) taught English and history."

"The practical use of geometry was experienced when our class went on a field trip and measured the distance across one of Sutton's lakes using our formulas learned in class. In our studies of physics I recall an educational tour of the electric power plant in Millbury."

"High school sports enjoyed were baseball, volleyball and basketball."

"When I enrolled as a freshman in 1921 basketball was nothing to brag about. We had no gymnasium. This school had the 12 grades in a total of 5 rooms. The two rooms downstairs housed grades one to eight. Upstairs there were three rooms for the high school."

(Please turn to page 13)

Fire-Wood

Beechwood fires are bright and clear
If the logs are kept a year.
Oaken logs burn steadily
If the wood is old and dry.
Chestnut's only good they say
If for long it's laid away.
But ash new or ash old
Is fit for a Queen with a crown of gold.

Birch and fir-logs burn too fast
Blaze up bright but do not last.
It is by the Irish said
Hawthorne bakes the sweetest bread.
But ash green or ash brown
Is fit for a Queen with a golden crown.

Elm wood burns like a churchyard mould
Even if the very flames are cold.
Poplar gives a bitter smoke
Fills your eyes and makes you choke.
Apple wood will scent your room
With an incense-like perfume.
But ash wet or ash dry
For a queen to warm her slippers by.

- Celia Congreve

New England

Who'er thou art, who walkest there
Where God first taught my feet to roam.
Breathe but my name into the air,
I am content, for that is home.

A sense, a color comes to me,
Of baybushes that heavy lie
With juniper along the sea,
And the blue sea along the sky.

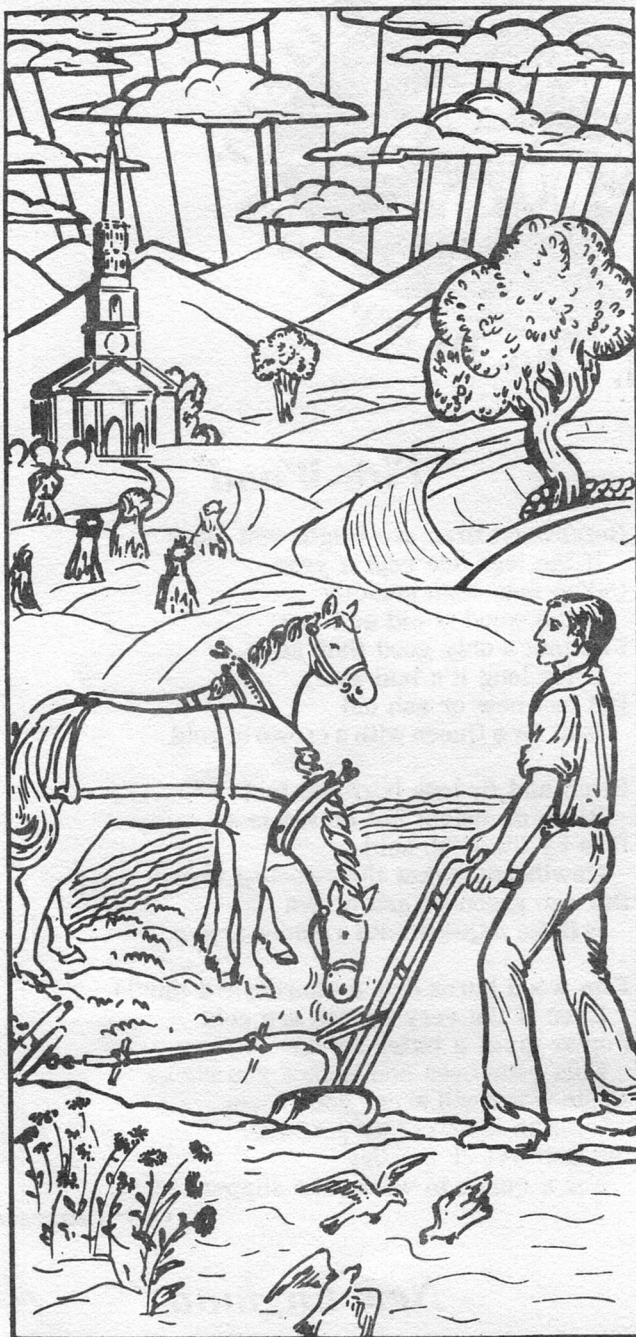
New England is my home; 'tis there
I love the pagan Sun and Moon.
'Tis there I love the growing year,
December and young-summer June

I'd rather love one blade of grass
That grows on one New England hill,
Than drain the whole world in the glass
Of fortune, when the heart is still.

- P.H. Savage

Reflections from the Sutton Hill

By Arthur K. Pope



It seemed like this little publication ought to have a place where we could pass on brief news items related to it and to the Sutton Historical Society. And so beginning with this issue and with due apologies to Yankee's "Quips Quotes and Queries" and Vermont Life's "Yankee Post Boy" here goes:

We plan to publish a Bicentennial supplement in January of 1976 entitled "David Hall and the Great Awakening" by Karen Helgesen. Miss Helgesen is a junior at Holy Cross majoring in history. This supplement to our bulletin will be in conjunction with Sutton's Bicentennial celebration - more specifically the writing and production of a play based on the diary of Dr. David Hall kept between the years 1729 - 1789. David Hall was Sutton's second minister. Marc P.

Smith, Executive Producer of the Worcester Foothills Theater, is currently writing the play.

Wednesday, November 5 beginning at 8 p.m. will be Sutton Night at the Worcester Foothills Theater. We will be seeing "The Brewster Papers" by Marc P. Smith, the taut drama of an American family (living near Worcester) entering the American Revolution with three conflicting loyalties - their monarch, their native land, and themselves. Following the production we will meet with the cast for refreshments and an important Bicentennial discussion. You may make reservations with me by calling 865-6914. Tickets are \$3.50 each.

Have you ever heard of the "Live for Evers"? This was a strange religious sect that had its roots at Sutton, Massachusetts! The group, which was active here in the early part of the 19th century, thought that if you seemed dead, faith accompanied by certain manipulations by the faithful would restore you to life. The group also believed that like Adam, every man had a wife made from one of his own ribs, and there was great danger of trouble if he got the wrong one for his wife! You can read all about these strange Suttonites in "It's an Old New England Custom" by Edward Mitchell. Our Sutton library has a copy.

I have just finished reading a very ambitious manuscript (158 pages) by Phyllis B. MacLaren on the life of her father, Fred Lewis Batcheller. What a wealth of Sutton history! We shall try to get Phyllis to allow us to print selections in future issues.

The annual meeting of the Sutton Historical Society is scheduled for Monday, October 6, 1975 at 8 p.m. at the West Sutton Baptist Church Hall.

The Sutton Historical Society Bulletin

VOL. I NO. III SEPT. 1975

Published Quarterly

Editor - Arthur K. Pope

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(Continued from page 1)

"In 1923, according to my knowledge, Sutton High had its first basketball teams. Both boys and girls had teams. (The girls certainly looked nice in their blue bloomers.) We played any of the small schools that we could. There was no such thing as tournaments in those days but we had fun."

"The school was built in 1908 in the center next to Ray's cider mill and across from Sherman's Blacksmith Shop, two institutions of learning in themselves."

"The basement of our school was separated into thirds, all of it dark and damp. One room for boys' recreation, the second for girls and the third for the town's fire engine, horse drawn. Between the boys' and girls' playrooms there was a stout white-washed board partition which was not impervious to peep holes strategically whittled out with jack knives wielded by curious adolescent boys. The game of girl-watching was ever in."



BUILDING THE OLD HIGH SCHOOL

"The privy was at least fifty feet to the rear of the school-house - and once again, large and comodious. It was all under one roof and partitioned for boys and girls, but far from sound-proof. There was a girls' path and a boy's path to it scrupulously divided by a tall board fence. A baseball diamond was well to the rear of the privy. On one side of the school itself there was a girls' outdoor playground and on the other side, a boys' playground."

"The original heating system of our school was from a hand stoked coal burning furnace in the cellar. One huge radiator three quarters of the way up on the inside wall of each classroom served as conduction for heat. A return for cold air was slightly below it. All the outside walls were drafty and the hallways frigid in winter. Our long legged union suits were our salvation, though I must say we hated them. Boots, mufflers and coats helped out in the worst of windy days. Many years later a more adequate heating system went in and flush toilets in the basement. Of the former one must admit there resulted in less chilling of the bones in winter. But of the latter little good can be said - they were awful."

"The class of 1950 was the last to complete their study in the 'old high school'. Several times public spirited groups stepped forward in an effort to interest the town in reviving the old building as a primary school but each in its turn deserted the quest when faced with abysmal estimated costs of restoration."

"And so it was doomed and ran out its last years as a storage for this and that but most of it in the dastardly fashion of a dump - except for the pigeons who held joyful sway in the garret."

"In late winter of 1970 our 'hall of learning' was burned to the ground by the Fire Department per order of the selectmen who called it a menace. The cobblestoned foundation walls were bulldozed flat. We always wondered where the pigeons went."

The Waters' House

By Dorothea Waters Moran

In 1757 Stephen Waters built the original part of this house. His father and grandfather, the original settlers of West Sutton in 1720, lived down the hill on Sutton Street.

But Stephen Waters and his bride, Hulda Flagg of Grafton, decided to build on top of the hill overlooking Lake Manchaug. It was from this house that Stephen went, some years later, to do his part in the Revolution.

His son John added the long north ell. All of this resulted in a very large house of over 20 rooms with three separate and unconnected cellars - not counting the one under the north shed used in the old days for the summer supply of ice.

Their main business was growing and selling apples. It was here that the Sutton Beauty Apple was developed, although there were also many other varieties.

The "Connecticut Orchard" and the "Rhode Island Orchard" (named, no doubt, because the original stock had come from those states) were situated on the Southeast slopes looking down toward the lake, well protected from the Northwest winds.

The finest of the apples were sold far and wide and were even exported to England.

The poorer ones were made into cider for which a cider mill had been built near the house.

Added to this was the usual farm and maintenance work. The blacksmith shop was not only a necessity for the farm animals, but was needed for the various ironwares used in the house.

The carpenter shop was adjacent to the barn and from it came many a piece of useful furniture for the house. Many of the beds in the house were made in the carpenter shop and all the H and L hinges were made in the blacksmith shop.

There are still old account books in the house, some dating back to when pounds, shillings and pence were the current exchange.

Before Sutton had a parsonage, visiting clergymen often stayed in the Waters' house and the bedroom they were given is still called "the Prophet's Chamber."

Services were sometimes held in the house on Sundays. The congregation stayed on for a dinner of baked beans, brown bread and pie which were left baking in the brick ovens during the long sermon.

Everything bespeaks long days of hard work, and yet one never reads of any complaining. What a long way we have come since 1757. The marvel is that so many of the old things are still extant. True, the blacksmith shop has gone and the carpenter shop blew down in 1938, but the house still stands solid and firm with its central chimney with seven flues, five fireplaces and two brick ovens.

Sept. 1975

The Great Fire of 1909

By Fred B. Clark

Shortly after the publication of the second issue of our Bulletin with the picture of the three buildings on the Common destroyed by fire Thanksgiving Eve, 1909, Donald King received a letter from his uncle, Fred B. Clark, who wrote:

"I remember the night before Thanksgiving, 1909, well.

I was working in Worcester at that time and living at home - Eight Lots Road. My father met me at Bramanville at the Electric Car Terminal. We started home when we noticed the reflection of the fire in the sky. We drove home through Sutton Center.

Two of the houses were on fire at the time we got there. Another fellow and I took an extension ladder and pushed in the walls of the Stockwell's house to keep the fire away from the Goodnow's house which had not caught fire at that time.

Some men were in the roof of the Goodnow's house trying to keep the fire from that house. Other men were on the Mills' house roof trying to keep the fire from that house. They succeeded.

The fire was so hot though that they could not save the Goodnow's house and that went too.

All we had to fight the fire with were pails of water passed from man to man. I got a pail of water on the head dropped by Joe Jacques who was on the ladder ahead of me. That was enough for me, so I went home.

The Stockwells' place was never rebuilt. The others were. That was the worst house fire I recall.

Several farm fires I remember were bad too, with cows and horses destroyed."

Editor's note: Mr. Clark is in his 93rd year and is one of the oldest residents of Sutton.

Join the Sutton Historical Society now!

To: The Sutton Historical
Society Inc.
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