

THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS

— BULLETIN —

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STAFF

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Assoc. Ed. — Myra Pearson
Reporters — Rae Johnson (West Sutton)
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Jean Stockwell (Sutton Center
and Eight Lots)
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and South Sutton)
Distribution — Donald King
Circulation — Elizabeth King
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The SUTTON TOWN FARM

By Charles M. Plummer

In the late 1800s and early 1900s before the advent of nursing homes, towns throughout New England provided facilities for the care of the destitute.

These facilities were known under various names such as "Town Asylum", "Poor Farm", "Alms House" and "Town Farm."

The Sutton Town Farm was purchased in 1837 according to the Town History and remained active until early 1940.

My grandparents, Erastus and Louisa Plummer were in charge of the farm from 1898 to 1907 and from 1912 to 1923. I do not know the exact acreage of the farm, but would estimate that it had about 150 acres with about two-thirds in cultivated land and the balance in pasture. The land was approximately one mile north of West Sutton on Town Farm Road.

The buildings on the farm consisted of a long two-story frame building, one end of which was for the Warden and his family and the other end for the poor and crippled of the town. In the earlier days, mental patients were also confined at the "Town Farm" as there were three or four rooms with barred windows and doors. During the time I can remember these were never used.

The building had no modern conveniences other than running water which was piped from a wooden tank high up in the barn across the Town Farm Road. This tank was filled by a small steam driven pump that was located about three hundred feet below and south of the barn. I used to watch my grandfather "fire up" this little steam engine and when steam pressure was right, turn it on. I expect this little red and polished brass engine is now reposing in some "dump" in Sutton.

The barn was large with room for 25 to 30 cows, a bull (usually mean) and four horses plus room to store enough hay to feed the animals. There was also a large silo and a room that had a cement water tank to cool the milk. Several pigs were raised each year, some of which eventually provided ham, bacon, etc. There was also a large flock of chickens which provided eggs and numerous Sunday dinners.

Other buildings were an ice house, which was filled with ice each winter and a large shop, part of which was open on one side to store farm equipment.

While my grandparents were there the farm was self-supporting to a great extent. Salmonsens Dairy from Worcester would pick up several cans of milk each morning. In the late summer, grandfather would leave the farm at 2 A.M. and drive a team of horses and wagon to Salem Square Farmer's Market (in Worcester) with a load of sweet corn, cauliflower, cabbage etc. and he would return to the farm in time to do the morning milking.

All the work on the farm was done with the help of one hired man. One I remember was Ralph Gurney, Sr. Help was also obtained from some of the able-bodied inmates.

I remember two of the inmates very well. One was Mr. Lebo, a blind man who was very kind to us kids. His chores were to keep the wood boxes full in both ends of the house and store wood in the woodshed for winter. This he did very neatly and willingly. Another was Mr. Bassett who was crippled by polio. He worked in the barn.

The cellar of the house had a dirt floor and was usually quite cool. One side was lined with shelves. Here canned goods were stored. The other side had several large bins where apples from a small orchard on the farm were stored for winter use. The other bins contained potatoes, squash, cabbage and other vegetables that could be stored for winter use, all of which was grown on the farm.

In the spring maple sugar trees were tapped and several gallons of maple syrup would be made. In the early years of the 1900s, there were many wild berries which were picked and made into pies and also canned for later use.

During haying, cutting silage and storing ice, the farmers in the vicinity exchanged labor with each other.

After the crops were harvested, and as both ends of the house were heated with wood, my grandfather and his helper would leave for the wood lot after the barn chores were done and cut wood for the following year's wood supply. The wood would be stacked in cord piles and left to dry until the following summer when as time permitted, it would be hauled to the farm. When all of the wood was at the farm, Ed Leonard, Sr. would be engaged to bring his saw rig to cut it into stove lengths. The saw rig was mounted on a wagon and powered by a one cylinder water-cooled gas engine. At one time the wagon was pulled by oxen.

Three meals a day were prepared by my grandmother and a hired girl. Everyone in the house ate the same. About the only items that were used in cooking and that was not grown on the farm were flour, sugar, salt, coffee, tea and spices. There was one luxury my grandfather indulged in and that was a "wheel of New York Cheddar Cheese", which had to be real "nippy" to please my grandfather. Each morning before doing the chores, he had to have a slice of cheese and a couple of doughnuts from a crock that was always kept full by my grandmother.

The farmers back in those days were hard working, but seemed to always find time to help out a neighbor.

SUTTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

An open meeting to which the public is cordially invited will be held March 21 at 8 PM in the Sutton Municipal Center. The current status of the historical site survey project which the Commission is conducting will be reported. This survey is being coordinated under the auspices of the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Its purpose is for local preservation planning, protection against environmental intrusion, funding, provision for comprehensive community historic record, end etc. A short historical movie will be shown.

"WEST SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS"

By Walter N. Waters

March 1941

Old West Sutton's hills and sales!
Thy fond memory never fails!
Summer's softness, winters snow:
Friends and scenes of long ago.

Hills enchanting never changing:
Vistas near, and views far-ranging:
Blue Wachusett. Paxton Hill:
Douglas Woods, secure and still.

Manchaug Lake and hills beyond
Rattlesnake Hill, facing the Pond:
Pigeon Hill where sleeps the dead,
Safe from harm, in narrow bed.

Putnam Hill and Lackey Hill:
Sandy Beach, where Jack and Jill
Bring their friends to bathe and frolic:
Baptist rites, claimed apostolic.

Wildcat Cove and "Collicumps"
Echoed once the muffled thump
Of the Red Men's signal drum:
Arrow heads still found by some.

"Beecher Spring" near Oven Orchard,
Now with vines and briars tortured:
Water trickling over the stones,
Pure and sparkling, in silvery tones.

Here the trysting place discover
Of Eunice Bullard and her lover.
College student, Harry Ward Beecher,
Soon to become the famous preacher.

West Sutton Post Office and Hotel,
In stage coach days none did excel.
The white church bell peals forth its call,
See Parson Chapin's heavy gray shawl.

Cucumber Row and Triphammer Brook:
Hotel Pond fisherman, baiting his hook:
Graveyard greeting the bright morning sun:
God rest the souls whose race is run!

Climb the steep road, up Poor Farm Hill,
and enjoy the view, with breathless thrill:
Then turn to the left, past Whittier's home,
And visit a graveyard, tiny and lone.

Kenney and Gibson: Phelps and Shaw:
Stockwell and Sibley: Sherman and Dorr:
Bullard and Waters: Wallace and King:
Putnam and Freeland: let their names ring!

Brigham and Leonard: Dodge, Davis and Hall:
Humes, Rich, and Luther: Why try to name all?
Each one did his best to serve the old town
Let all be remembered with lasting renown!

Dead and gone, by many forgot!
Now many new names and notions. I wot.
Newer and better? Ah! We'll wait and see!
But old Father Time won't spare you and me.

I'VE HAD IT!

"There's something that needs to be said about this country. And since no one seems to have the gumption to say it, I guess it's up to me.

"I've had it up to here with persons who are trying deliberately to tear my country apart. And it's way past time to throw at me that tired old wheeze about being a Flag-waver. You're damned right I'm a Flag-waver, and I got the right to be one the hard way.

"I've had it with pubescent punks, wallowing in self-pity, who make a display of deploring their birth into a world which—to use their sissy expression—they didn't make.

"Well, I didn't make the world I was born in either. And neither did the men I know who are worthy of respect. They just went about and made something out of it.

"The men I grew up with were fetched up in a logging camp. They were immigrant sons of every cast-off race there is. And they didn't have a hell of a lot of knowledge at home to start them off, either.

"But I can write you a song about the son of a Po Valley coal miner who became a nationally renowned physicist; about doctors, lawyers, teachers, forestry specialists, conservation experts and men of the cloth—in the Seattle-Tacoma area—who came out of that logging camp. And about the son of a Danish mechanic who is one of the best friends I've got.

"So don't give me your whining, whimpering, self-pitying clap-trap about how this country is letting you down.

"I've had it with hippies, brainless intellectuals, writers who can't write, painters who can't paint, teachers who can't teach, administrators who can't administrate, entertainers who fancy themselves sociologists, and those who castigate the very men who have done the most to demonstrate to all of us the most important quality in America . . . individual enterprise and responsibility.

"I've had it with those cerebral giants who think it's smart to invite drug advocates to lecture in their classrooms, and with teaching curiosities like that one in the Mercer Island School District who invited a revolutionary spokesman to dispense a lecture on Flag-burning.

"I've had it with people who are setting about deliberately to rip up mankind's noblest experiment in decency.

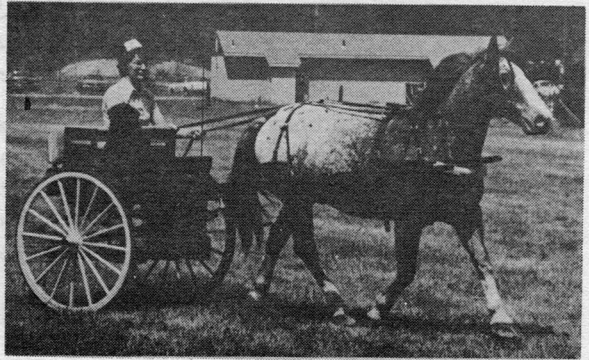
"And I'm going to tell you something. If you think you're going to tear down my country's flag and destroy institutions my friends and members of my family have fought and died for—you're going to have to climb over me first.

"And buddy, you'd better get up awful early in the morning."

CHIPS STORY

By Alyse Hoover Aubin

Editor's Note - *Alyse Aubin is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Keneth Hoover (past Treasurer of Sutton Historical Society.) The horse is stabled at the Hoovers and grazes in meadows overlooking Manchaug Pond during the winter months.*



"CHOCOLATE CHIPS"

A gentle, kind horse for me and my children was the order ten years ago. "Chocolate Chips," a then ten year old Appy gelding with a heart of gold and no inclination to hurry, filled the bill.

As the years passed, we did endless miles of trail riding and a bit of driving together. My three kids and many others learned to ride on Chips as well as several adults. Stablemates came and went but he stayed. All this he took with good will. The kids outgrew horses and I bought a faster horse for myself, so Chips served as the "extra" loaned to many friends.

Two years ago disaster struck. Gradually Chips' eyesight failed due to moonblindness. My blind horse was a problem. A period for adjustment and making decisions was needed so he spent nine months lawn-mowing the Grandfolks field while I decided what I would do about him.

Since driving was becoming more popular I decided to give Chips another chance in harness. He had always been good on the road and seemed to feel safe in the shafts.

The happy ending to this tale is at 20 years Chips is back to vigorous work pulling me and my ancient dog along roads and woods trails allowing the reins to replace his eyes. People we meet on our drives can't believe he is blind and sneak peeks into his eyes to see if I'm fibbing.

The companionship of years has been happily extended.

Dr. William B. Brierly
1912-1982

In a rarefied environment of human compassion and of generous servitude to mankind, this gentle gentleman was an institution unto himself.

His intellectual interests were manifested in diversified fields through study and research. A doctorate in geography was the basis of service in geo-medicine and remapping expertise for the military.

Biology, archaeology, and historical avocations generated an almost encyclopedic knowledge in these areas.

His undaunted capability for detailed research on a historical project is legendary. The BULLETIN has published several articles which he authored. There were several others in preparation - especially his Cold Spring Brook series. With dedication and exactitude he has accomplished a milestone in perpetuating our local heritage. His presence in the community will be long remembered.

THE HARVEY DODGE FARM

(An article given to the Society by Mrs. Lottie H. Goddard found in her grandfather Reuben R. Dodge's old scrap book about his brother's Farm written up in "Country Gentlemen.")

It is situated in northeast part of Sutton and comprises 93½ acres; 10 acres in Woodland, 22 acres in pasture, 6 acres in corn, potatoes, and carrots and balance in orchards and mowing.

The Worcester Agricultural Society awarded Mr. Dodge a premium for the best managed farm in the past five years in the country. He was amongst the first farmers to invest in a mowing machine, and horse rake.

Six acres were in fruit trees, apple, pear and some quince bushes already bearing in 1848. The largest item credited to the farmer was 900 bu. onions selling for 75¢ per bu., 500 bu. carrots selling for 25¢ per bu., 25 tons of hay were sold at the farm for \$15.00 per ton, of course a great many tons of hay was consumed by live stock kept on the farm.

Formerly, Mr. Dodge boarded his help but recently built some rather inexpensive cottages on the farm where they now live. His foreman who has been with him many years, now receives \$312.00 per annum.

[Country Gentlemen 1848]

EXCERPT FROM THE CHAPTERS AND GENERAL LAWS OF THE COLONY AND PROVIDENCE OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY 1641

AN ACT AS TO DRIVING CATTLE AND RIGHT TO FEED THEM IN OPEN SPACES.

It is ordered by this court and the authority thereof, that if any man shall have occasion to lead or drive cattle from place to place that if far off, so that they be weary, or hungry, or fall sick or lame, it shall be lawful to rest and refresh them for a competent time in any open place that is not corn, meadow or inclosed for some particular use.

SMOKE SIGNALS

[The view from Mumford Hill, Manchaug]

A homely sight it is to see smoke rising
From each chimney across the waking town below.
With every signal smoke I know life is bestirring
In the dawn, and a hearth and house are warm.
But, in this small community, I find
It of concern to me, that my neighbor
Just across the way sends up
No reassuring smoke today.

Mildred Griffith

MONTHLY MEETING REVIEWS - By Betty Pentland

JULY - The annual picnic was held at the Eight Lots School House on July 7. The business session was held to a minimum. No formal program was presented nor required as good fellowship prevailed in conversational reminiscences.

AUGUST - The Society was the guest of Gary and Judi Vaillancourt. Following an out-door pot luck supper groups were escorted for a tour of their reconstructed colonial home previously reported in the BULLETIN.

SEPTEMBER - This meeting was held at the Manchaug Baptist Church (acquired by the Society as a historical building), September 7. Announcement was made of the upcoming Waters Farm Day program featuring; antique cars, concert and roast pig supper. Billy Carter from Douglas enumerated many historical applications of solar heat over the centuries for the evening program.

OCTOBER - This meeting was also held at the Manchaug Baptist Church. Being the annual election meeting the following officers were elected.

President, Charles I. Pentland

Vice President, Wilfred Stockwell

Recording Secretary, Betty Pentland

Corresponding Secretary, Donald King

Treasurer, G. William Holst

Curator, Rae Johnson

Historian, Mary King

Directors, Malcolm Pearson, Rae Johnson, Mary King
and Barry Chase

Program Committee Co-Chairman, Daniel and Mildred
Griffith

The program featured old time musical instruments. Before demonstration of the many items on display, the audience participated in a popular song sing-along with Henry Baker at the church antique Franklin organ. Among the instruments exhibited was a fiddle (1895), an 1895-1906 Edison phonograph by Wilfred Stockwell, another Edison phonograph by Charles Pentland, a child's violin by Dorothea Moran, an 1875 music box by M/M Barry Chase. An exceptional interlude in the program was the emotional harp renderings skillfully played by Sharon Moore on a beautiful harp that formally belonged to the Lund Estate.

NOVEMBER - This meeting held in the Manchaug Baptist Church was presided over by Wilfred Stockwell in the absence of President Charles Pentland. Treasurer William Holst reported the renting of a bank safety box for the security of Society deeds, insurance policies, etc. The program featured Robert Carter of East Douglas, who spoke on "Railroading." He related a brief history beginning in 1830 to 9000 miles of track in 1850 to the present 337,000 miles employing two and one half persons employed in that industry which services twenty million persons riding daily.

DECEMBER - After a brief business meeting on December 7, the annual auction with auctioneers Donald King, Dan Griffith and Rae Johnson in persuasive action, the sale of donated items resulted in a gain to the treasury of \$270.93.

JANUARY - Forty-two persons attended the meeting in the West Sutton Community Hall. The speaker of the evening, Russell Sanborn of Worcester, gave an illustrated lecture on "Lighthouses of New England." His collection of slides included sites from the Canadian border on the Maine coast to the New Jersey coast line. He provided historical data of these lighthouses which included light sources such as whale oil to powerful incandescent lamps with optical lenses to intensify the light source. Selective narration of individual lightkeepers's heroics in rescue missions along with the lonely hardships made the presentation quite dramatic.

1982 - JULY TO DECEMBER - Welcome to New Members

M/M Chester Flinton
M/M Fred C. Girard
Edith F. Johnson

M/M Roy Lovell
Jean Rudolph
Carrie Sabourin
M/M Edmund H. Wheelden

IN MEMORIAM

*William Brierly *Grace Brigham *George Edwards
*Stanley Johnson *Delina Picard

IN SEARCH OF ... ON GOING

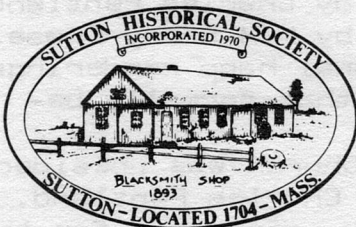
Our urgent need for BULLETIN articles is a Damascus sword always in suspension. Articles are the life blood to sustain continuous publication.

Any incident of past human experience or historical nature having community identification is interesting to our readers. Your reporting style does not require professional rendering - just write details and we will do the transcript for publication. Please respond positively with material for others to enjoy and share.

The lead article in this issue was submitted in reply to our recent appeal. Our BULLETIN produced by the Historical Society in a town of less than 6000 population is mailed to over five hundred members and two hundred fifty others in twenty-eight states. May we hear from you?

Editor

From



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Manchaug, MA 01526

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