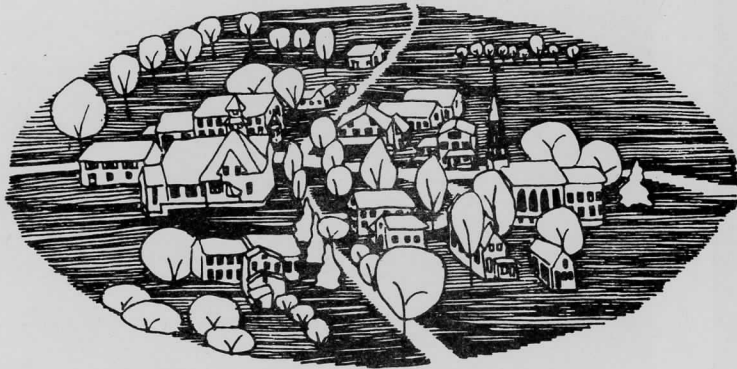


THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS



— BULLETIN —
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THE SUTTON-NORTHBRIDGE TORNADO OF JUNE 9, 1953

(KNOWN AS THE OTHER TORNADO) *BY- Kenneth Merrill*

The afternoon of June 9, 1953 started out as a normal buildup of an intense thunderstorm with blackening clouds in the west and a very sultry hazy air. Tree tops were swaying in one direction while clouds appeared to be going the opposite. A minimum of rain was involved but pockets of gusty winds started to punctuate the stillness.

Two tornado paths came through central and southern Worcester County in an easterly to southeasterly direction. The [Worcester] tornado was about 35 miles long from Petersham to Southboro causing devastating damage and horrible loss of life. About 90 perished in the Worcester area assaulted around 5:00 P.M.

The "other" tornado [Sutton-Northbridge] was about 12 miles long in approximately the same direction from Millbury to Mendon. It was first reported in the West Millbury area as cyclonic vortex which was spotted also over Lake Singletary before 5:00 P.M. The first known touch-down of the funnel ripped up some trees on the northeasterly side of Singletary Avenue and skipped over to the home of Francis Fredette on the southwest side of Route 146 just south of Pleasant Valley Road tearing the roof completely off his house at approximately 5:05 P.M. No one was home at the time. It next skipped across the highway toppling some large oak trees in back of Malcolm Pearson's home a little ways north of Armsby Road.



John D. Brigham Farm



John D. Brigham Farm



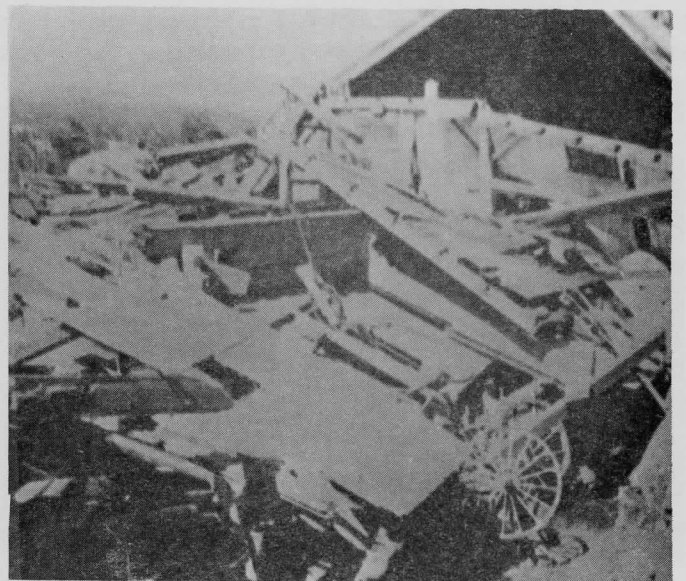
John D. Brigham barn demolished

From there it leaped like a retracting coil spring for about a mile easterly to Leland Hill Road swooping down to up root trees and destroying completely John Brigham's place (Calmer Farm). What was the equivalent of a double barn, blacksmith shop and carriage shed lay jumbled together into piles of boards and splinters scattering with debris all over the landscape. Most of the roof of the house was torn off while some members of the family were still inside, some laying on the floor while furniture and other articles were being sucked out of the blown-out windows. No serious injuries occurred. The walls of the house remained mostly intact but damaged: An automobile parked alongside the house was severely battered like an old tin can from timbers flying from the barn.

The next place less than a quarter of a mile east on Leland Hill Road was the Walter Dakin place (Ashcroft Farm). A large Elm tree with multiple trunks was blown down onto the road. The house was 50 feet in back was not damaged. The main part of the large barn across the road on the south side was totally demolished. A pregnant cow fell into the cellar as the stantion collapsed and was somewhat injured and subsequently gave birth to a calf a few days later. The funnel then "fishtailed" across the road to a barn or workshop structure where chickens were kept.

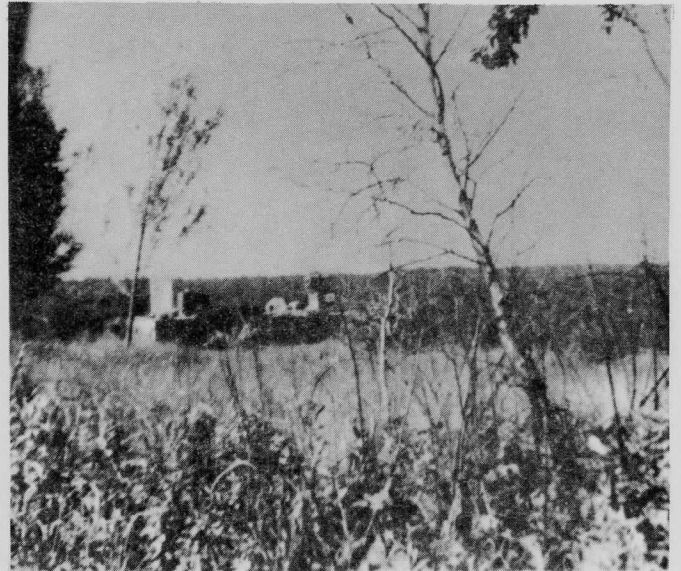


"Ashcroft" Farm- work shop



"Ashcroft" Farm- barn

The building was totally demolished along with nearly three thousand chickens, half laying hens and half young stock, which mostly "disappeared" when being sucked by the funnel. Note...[there were some chicken carcasses reported dropping out of the sky around the Foxboro area]. The shop was originally the factory or workshop of Gardner Dodge who made threshing machines. See Sutton History Volume II.



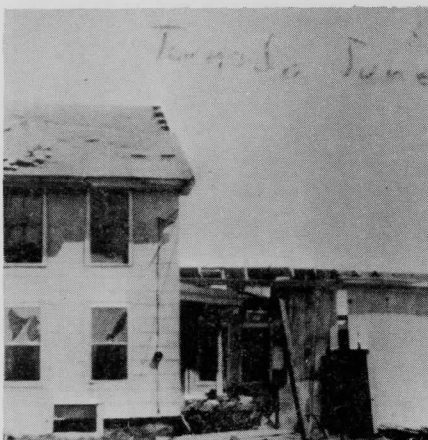
Anderson home

The next assault was on the Carl Anderson one story home on the south side of Pierce Road, pulling off the roof and side walls, scattering lumber over much of the area and much of which was never found. On the remaining platform floor was a refrigerator, stove and a couple of other items of furniture just sitting there. No one was at home.

The bottom of the funnel swished across the road to the Karl Kratschman residence demolishing the barn and ripping off the roof of the kitchen ell along with ripping off most of the sheathing and shingles backside of the main house roof. Both chimnies were also destroyed. It is not known whether anyone was at home. This farm was the former Joseph Baarda place.

After lifting, the funnel left Sutton and headed over into Northbridge where its "fishtailing" characteristics became erratic. Probably the very next touchdown was at Adam's corner, at the junction of Sutton Street and Hill Street where the top of a telephone was broken off with wires and transformer laying in the road causing oil to ooze onto the pavement. A probable turn to the south pulled off at least two roofs from farm buildings on the west side of Hill Street and dropped them into the field before veering off in a southwesterly direction towards a hill covered with pine trees where it tore up the tops like match sticks.

The next erratic switch seems to be easterly towards the west side of Hill Street across from the junction of Kelley Road where a house was lifted off its foundation and moved several feet and dropped down just south of it. The house remained intact and was placed back on the foundation and renovated.



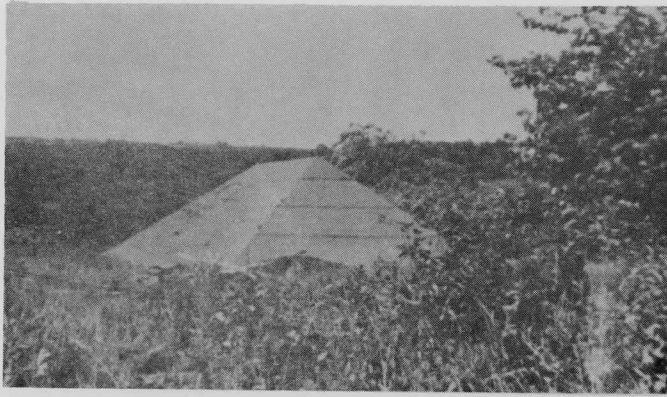
Kratschman Farm
ell kitchen roof



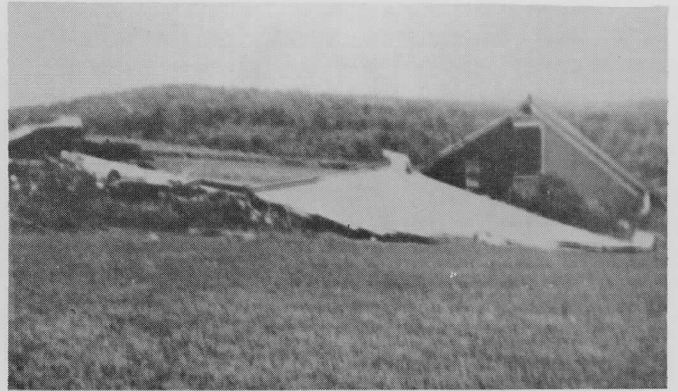
Kratschman Farm
main house roof



Kratschman Farm
barn demolished



Off Hill Street, Whitinsville



Off Hill Street, Whitinsville

As the tornado veered south again it partially lifted the roof off a farm house set back on a hill before heading to the east side of Hill Street where it completely demolished the main barn just south of Adam's Farm dairy barn and damaged the roof of a farm house on the opposite side of the road.

The next turn was westward toward the vicinity of Fowler Road and Highland Street ripping up trees and part of a covered cellar hole before heading to the Riverdale Village area. Its last known assault was on the mill at Riverdale tearing off most of the roof, causing terrific damage to the second story and destroying the top of the mill tower. From there the tornado finally disappeared over Mendon.

It was reported that much of the debris from both tornadoes after being sucked up into the clouds was scattered throughout eastern and southeastern Massachusetts as far as the Atlantic Ocean. The Sutton-Northbridge tornado was not as vicious as the Worcester storm perhaps because of shorter distances and duration at touchdown areas. There was no loss of life known to have been reported in this storm. As the storm subsided toward the southeast, staccato like cloud to cloud lightning could be seen flashing as many as one or two per second in the dark churning massive thunderheads and receding cloud banks.

A tornado is perhaps the most terrifying event in nature!



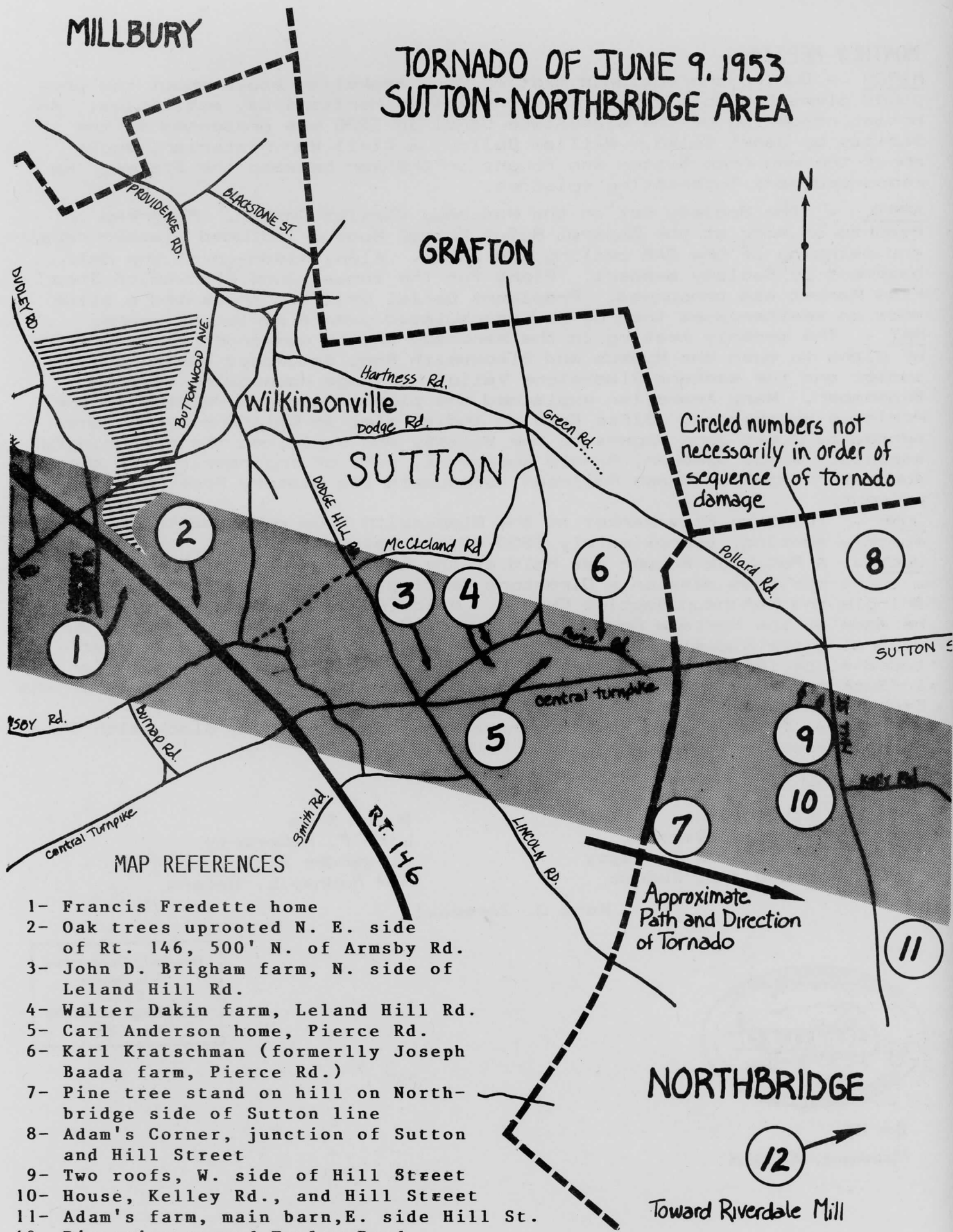
Upper Hill Street, Whitinsville



Upper Hill Street, Whitinsville

MILLBURY

TORNADO OF JUNE 9, 1953 SUTTON-NORTHBRIDGE AREA



Circled numbers not necessarily in order of sequence of tornado damage

MAP REFERENCES

- 1- Francis Fredette home
- 2- Oak trees uprooted N. E. side of Rt. 146, 500' N. of Armsby Rd.
- 3- John D. Brigham farm, N. side of Leland Hill Rd.
- 4- Walter Dakin farm, Leland Hill Rd.
- 5- Carl Anderson home, Pierce Rd.
- 6- Karl Kratschman (formerly Joseph Baada farm, Pierce Rd.)
- 7- Pine tree stand on hill on Northbridge side of Sutton line
- 8- Adam's Corner, junction of Sutton and Hill Street
- 9- Two roofs, W. side of Hill Street
- 10- House, Kelley Rd., and Hill Street
- 11- Adam's farm, main barn, E. side Hill St.
- 12- Direction toward Fowler Road

June 1987

MONTHLY MEETINGS-

MARCH - During the business meeting Mary Arakelian spoke about the proposed plans for this year Blackstone Valley Heritage Day activities. An artist rendering of the Blackstone Canal in 1838 was presented to the Society by Janet Smith. William Ballou, a Civil War historian, spoke about the men from Sutton who fought in the war between the States. He recounted many interesting episodes.

APRIL - The Society met at the Manchaug Baptist Church. Progress reports on work at the General Rufus Putnam Museum included plaster repair and painting of the DAR ceiling and walls. Also, clean-up of the Hall basement by Society members. Plans for the annual June Blacksmith Shop Flea Market was announced. President Daniel Griffith presented a slide show on weathervanes that he had accumulated over a period of years.

MAY - The monthly meeting in the Manchaug Church commenced with a review of plans to open the Museum and Blacksmith Shop Saturdays during the summer and the weekend Blackstone Valley Heritage Homecoming days in September. Mary Arakelian explained the planned program related to the Heritage observance. Gifts from an Indian girl in California were presented by guest John Rogers to the Society who explained their meaningful aspects. Guest speaker, Ronald Chezawski, V.P. of Engineering for the Worcester and Providence Railroad, discussed its history from 1847 to the present.

JUNE - The June Flea Market at the Blacksmith Shop replaced the regular monthly meeting, approximately \$500.00 was raised.

JULY - A Pot Luck Supper was held at the Eight Lots School House. After a short business session a Directors Meeting authorized a funding to re-shingle the Manchaug Baptist Church. Malcolm Pearson showed a video tape he made at the Norland Farm in Livermore, Maine, with Bud Gurney in June recording the mid-eighteen hundreds lifestyle programs they have instituted since 1973. These plans are being considered to adapt a similar one in Sutton involving the Waters Farm facilities along with the usage of the Eight Lots School House.

AUGUST - The Pot Luck Supper format was repeated at the Blacksmith Shop with general informal discussions following:

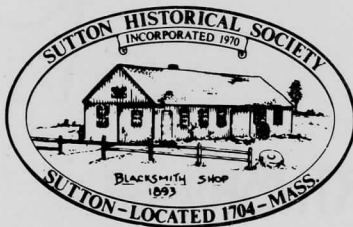
MAY TO AUGUST - WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Jessica Bagg
Howard S. Barnett
M/M William G. Casey
Edmund J.O. Eberdt

Susan Shea
Linn F. McConarty
Alexander A. Trenta
M/M Rodney L. Waters

Mark J. Zarzecki

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