

THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS



The Blacksmith Shop Perpetuating an Ancient Craft

Blacksmithing began when man discovered the process of reducing and refining natural ferrous oxide into iron. For several thousand years BC, gold, copper, silver, tin, and similar metals responded to a relatively low melting temperature for casting and ductility in fabrication. Transition from stone implements to the metal age progressed in proportion to experimentation as the learning process advanced. When man determined that a forced draft would raise the temperature high enough to smelt the iron ore to produce a durable material harder and stronger than the non-ferrous ones, a new era in metallurgy was created.

Two examples of progress in the development of early steel refinement is Damascus steel and Samurai sword. Their unique structural strength and hardness characteristics were the result of fire welding several iron bars, heated again and hammered into a thin elongated unit nearly twice its original length. A complex grain structure was generated to produce flexibility and great toughness which became known in the trade as a "faggot."

The advantage of iron/steel assured many other useful applications in the community. In colonial days a small blacksmith shop on the farm sometimes became a resource to make tools or repairs. As settlements were established, the central blacksmith shop instituted itself as a service to the area. Bog iron was readily available in many New England locations to supply the raw ingredient for producing iron. The smithy forged utility articles in an endless variety that intensified in the 1600s, continuing into the early 1800s. Some of these items included kettles, cooking utensils, hardware, wagon parts, agricultural tools, weapons, etc., and on into the industrial age when iron and steel expanded into infinite applications.

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STAFF

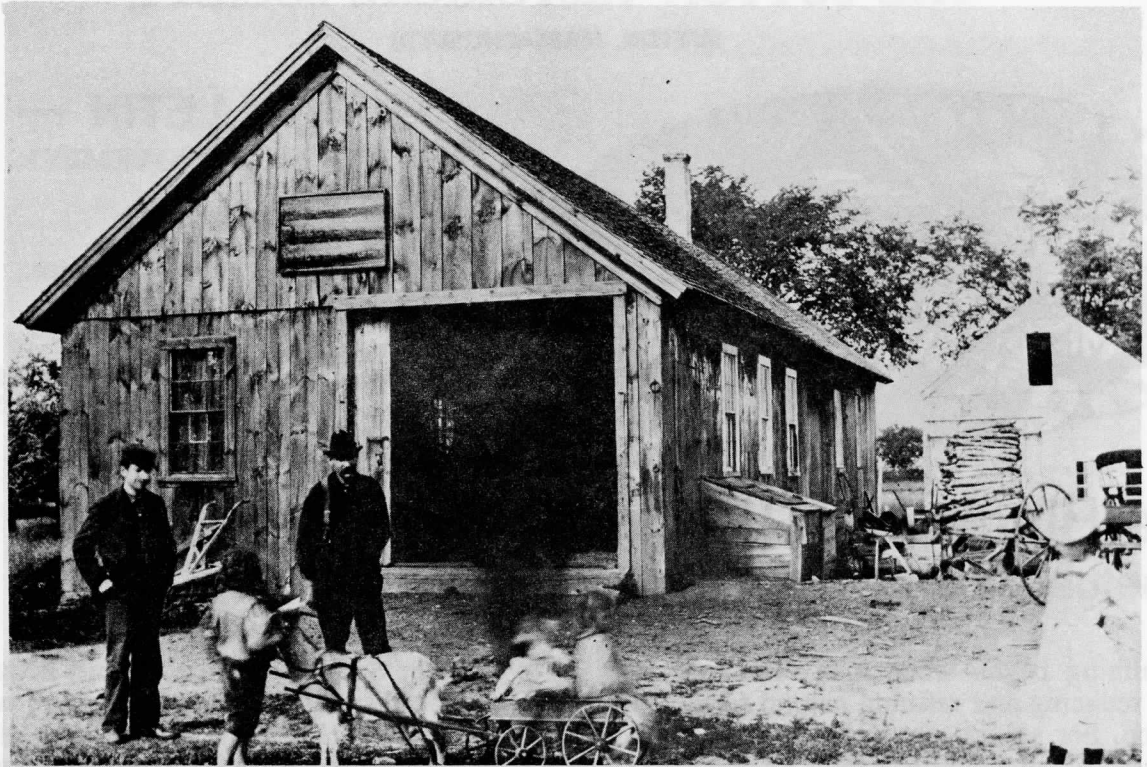
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In 1971 the Sutton Historical Society acquired the Sherman Blacksmith Shop. This structure was built c.a. 1893 by Daniel Dudley and sold two years later to Hollis Sherman. A wheelwright, George Rich, was probably responsible for the wagon construction section being added on to the blacksmith shop. Hollis Sherman's sons, Milton and his younger brother Lewis operated the shop. In 1951 Milton deeded the shop to Lewis, who ran it until 1953.

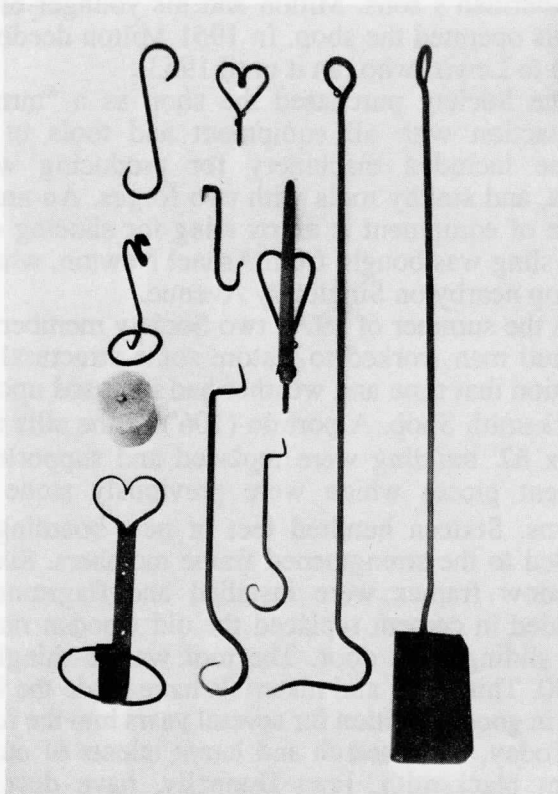
The Society purchased the shop as a "turnkey" transaction with all equipment and tools in tact. These included machinery for producing wagon parts, and smithy tools with two forges. An unusual price of equipment is an ox sling for shoeing oxen. The sling was bought from Ashael Newton, who had a shop nearby on Singletary Avenue.

In the summer of 1977, two Society members and a hired man worked to restore some structural devastation that time and weather had imposed upon the Blacksmith Shop. A portion (106') of the sills in the 24' x 62' building were replaced and supported by cement pieces which were previously stone type cairns. Sixteen hundred feet of new boarding was nailed to the strengthened frame members. Six new window frames were installed and flagstone imbedded in cement replaced the old wooden ramp to the sliding front door. The roof was re-shingled in 1990. This work and materials have made the building in good condition for several years into the future.

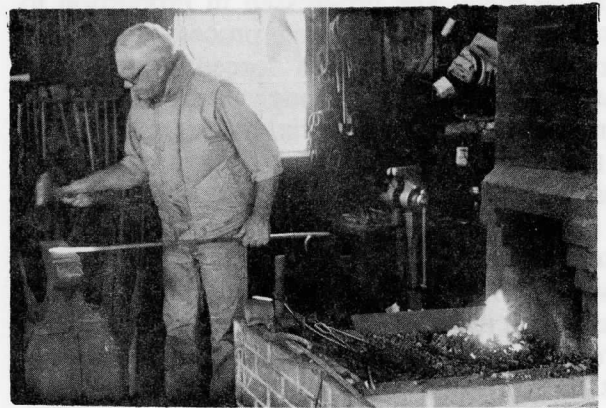
Today, the research and latent talents of our resident blacksmith, Fran Donnelly, have developed him into a skilled and competent smithy. The shop is usually open on Saturdays and Fran is always willing to discuss the equipment and tools he uses in a demonstration at the forge and anvil.



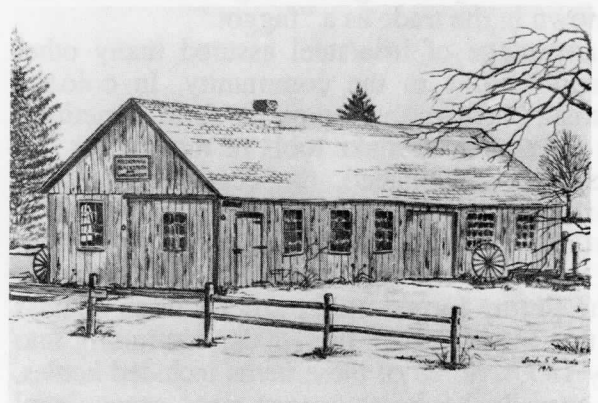
BLACKSMITH SHOP CIRCA 1905 WITH LUMBER STORAGE BUILDING TO RIGHT REAR (now gone)



FORGED ITEMS CRAFTED BY FRAN DONNELLY



'THE SMITHY, A MIGHTY MAN WAS HE'



DRAWING BY LINDA SINACOLA

SUTTON'S "PANTHER" (?)

One afternoon in the Sutton of 1908 a five year old school boy was hiking home from school through the woods when he heard a hiss in the branches overhead. He looked up and saw a great cat like animal crouching on a limb. Terrified, his first impulse was to run, but something seemed to tell him that he should not. So, he continued to walk a distance before he took to his heels.

Arriving home breathless and wide-eyed he told his story. So began the saga of the Sutton Panther, the controversy over its identity, the hunt for it and its eventual death.

The school boy was Sutton's own Daniel "Tighe" Smith who lives where the Pleasant Valley Country Club is located now and the one room school was Harback which stood where the American Legion, Dudley Gendron Post building now stands. The hunter who killed the "panther" was Frank Girard who died a few years later in the "flu" epidemic. The Smith and Girard children were schoolmates and some of them are still living in Sutton. One of Frank's sisters Minnie (Marshall of Whitinsville) remembers her brother telling the story of how he killed the "panther". When he shot it, it fell from a tree dead- so they presumed until their dog went over to investigate and received a swipe of its claws.

"Tighe" says the fact that he did not run that day no doubt deterred the creature from springing on him. And looking back, we can see that the "panther" came close to depriving Sutton of a boy who grew up to be one of its finest citizens.

Incidentally one might wonder if the name "Tighe" originated with that incident. No, it is just a coincidence "Tighe" was the name of a comic strip character of the day, "Buster Brown and his dog Tighe" was somehow transferred to this boy and stuck. Still the name is appropriate for who could better out smart a panther than a tiger?

As for the identity of the critter, was it really a panther, or was it a lynx, a cougar, a wildcat, a mountain lion, or what. the picture may verify the verdict that the Sutton Panther was in reality a large bobcat.

-Mildred Griffith-



FRANK GIRARD, CIRCA 1905
ON SHORE OF GIRARD POND
WITH SUSPECT ANIMAL OVER
HIS SHOULDER. NOTE ARROW
TO BOBBED TAIL. ALSO,
DOUBLE BARREL SHOTGUN.
ANY QUESTIONS?

SUTTON RECORDS PRESERVATION PROJECT

Early on our Town Clerk, Ethel O'Day, was extremely concerned about the preservation of the Town Documents and she has dedicated considerable efforts to develop a successful program for preserving these records. The following excerpts chronologically explain the inception and progress of this program todate. (Editor)

- excerpt let. November 30, 1988 to Town Administrator, Dexter Blois, from Town Clerk, Ethel O'Day.

"Prior to the building of the new Municipal Center these records were stored in a closet in the basement of the old Town Hall. Over the years deterioration has occurred due to exposure of unregulated environmental temperatures and constant handling.

I cannot stress how important it is to restore these records that have deteriorated because the ink has already started to bleed to the other side and will become impossible to read".

- excerpt let. December 21, 1987 to Town Clerk, Ethel O'Day, from Brown's River Bindery, Inc.

". The records surveyed are only a small portion of those in need of attention; however, these are among the oldest and had acid level ranging from approximately 4.0 to 5.0. This approximately 100 to 1000 times the accepted 'safe level' for permanent record paper.

Deacidification will be performed with either aqueous magnesium bicarbonate or Wei T's 0 non-aqueous deacidifier. All Pressure sensitive materials will be removed. Mending is done using Japanese tissue and methyl cellulose paste. Reinforcement is a heat set process using Cerex nylon web and reversible adhesive. Books are re sewn with linen thread and bound in goatskin using acid-free materials and easily reversible adhesives".

Todate, records from; 1761-1787, 1787-1813, 1813-1835, 1835-1859 and 1860- 1896 have been treated and bound into separate books. As an additional service Brown's River Bindery supplied several 35mm rolls of microfilm for research purposes. This precludes the physical handling of the old fragile documents to prevent damage. Also, vital statistical records 1710-1890 have been microfilmed onto 16mm microfiche cards.

In the inside back cover of each book is the following notation:

Treatment Report

Upon receipt, this book had been rebound. The folios were in poor condition, especially at the spine. The paper was acidic.

The book was dismantled and the folios were washed in water. After drying they were soaked in magnesium bicarbonate deacidifier. Tears and folds were repaired with Japanese tissue and methyl cellulose paste. Weak folios were reinforced with Cerex nylon and Bostik web adhesive.

The book was re sewn and backed with linen. Spine adhesive is hot animal glue. Cover material is goatskin and all fly-leaves are acid free.

Before this century cloth rags were the basic ingredient in the manufacture of paper and the required chemistry in processing resulted in a much lower acidity content than the papers of today. Newsprint

typically shows progressive aging in a few years time. An exception is the quality of paper which includes a percentage of rag content as identified by the inherent water mark visible when held up to a backlight source.

Deacidification is achieved by introducing into the paper alkaline substances which neutralize the acid content and infiltration of "buffering" agents prevent further acid contamination. Thus, deterioration is stopped and preservation is infused.

Today acid free paper is being specified for use in the Town Offices when records must have permanent stability for decades into the future. The projected archival treatment of the treated record books is expected to be for two centuries.

Our Town Clerk has instituted a dedicated program to perpetuate Sutton's official historical documents for generations to come.

MONTHLY MEETINGS-

JANUARY 8, 1991 - (omitted in June issue) The Society met in the General Rufus Putnam Hall at 8PM with thirty six persons in attendance. A Board of Directors meeting will be held January 31st. David Farnham, guest speaker reported on an archaeological project he has been involved with on the Waters Farm land in the area of Rattlesnake Hill. The feature under study is a zig-zag ground level line of stones extending several hundred feet. His video tape and slides supplemented an interesting account. He detailed the historical research that to date has revealed indefinite information as to its origin although a few Indian aspects are present in situ.

MARCH 5 - The Society met in the General Rufus Putnam Hall. The Northbridge Historical Society invited the Sutton Society to their meeting on April 1st when Anthony (Spag) Bogatti will be a guest speaker. Allen Smith, archaeologist, spoke on the Westboro, Charlston Meadow site excavation which has been very productive in Indian artifacts. His live exhibits and visuals were impressive. After refreshments, the meeting adjourned at 9:30PM.

APRIL 1 - The Society met jointly in Whitinsville with other nearby town Societies to hear Anthony (Spag) Bogatti relate his interesting life story and amusing episodes occurring in his famous store.

MAY 7 - VP Daniel Griffith opened the meeting in the absence of Pres. Malcolm Pearson away on a trip to Scotland. An ad hoc nominating committee was appointed. Daniel Griffith presented a live demonstration and discussion on the production of honey by bees. After refreshments, the meeting adjourned at 10PM.

JUNE 4 - The Society met at the Manchaug church at 8PM with 32 persons attending. A motion favorably voted to shingle the Eight Lots School building. Details of the July 6 flea market was discussed and the construction of five tables was affirmatively voted. Martyn Bowden graphically presented an account on the excavation of the Deacon Daniel Terry house site with live exhibits of artifacts, drawings and a handout report. After refreshments the meeting adjourned at 10:30PM.

JULY 2 - This meeting featured a potluck supper met at the Eight Lots School house at 6PM. The ad hoc nominating committee formed in April consisting of; Ethel O'Day (Chair), Lois Karacius, Mary B. King, Daniel Cooney, and Bette Keene was confirmed as an official group. Following an evening of congenial fellowship the meeting adjourned at 8:15PM.

AUGUST 6 - The second seasonal potluck supper was held at the Blacksmith Shop with 34 persons present. Daniel Griffith discussed details and plans for the Labor Day flea market. The July flea market raised \$580.00. The meeting adjourned at 8:30PM.

SEPTEMBER 3 - The Society met at the General Rufus Putnam Hall with 29 persons present. A special ceremony was conducted at which the Sutton Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution Regent, Virginia Kolowski, presented a flag that had flown over the Capital Building on June 15. The flag was transferred by a Cub Scout color guard consisting of bearer, Michael Fusaro, and guards, Eric Jones and Kelvin Blanchard who delivered it to the Society President, Malcolm Pearson. The speaker of the evening, Louise Lund related the life of William Blackstone and about his activities in the Blackstone River Valley region. After refreshments the meeting adjourned at 10:15PM.

OCTOBER 1 - The Society met at the Manchaug church. The following Directors were elected into office until 1994: Barbara H. Bessette, Leona M. Dona, Daniel W. Griffith, Mary B. King, Nancy M. Lavoie, Ethel M. O'Day, Malcolm D. Pearson, Scott E. Bennett, and Jack A. Perry. It was voted to send letters of appreciation to Helen Wood, DAR Flag Chairman, who was ill September 3, in recognition of the flag aquisition and to Scott Pearson for his donation of a 25" TV set to the Society for use in video tape programming. It was favorably voted to clarify the wording in the BY Laws, Art. XI, Sec. I, lines 6-7, to read: "...of Officers... and...". Elizabeth Gronelli, Franklin, MA, historian, related how the local library (first books donated by Benjamin Franklin) was restored.

N. B.- Lacking a quorum at the business meeting on October 3rd, a Directors meeting was held on the 19th when the following officers were elected: President(interim), Malcolm Pearson, Vice President, Daniel Griffith, Recording Secretary, Scott Bennett, Corresponding Secretary, Mary Arakelian, Treasurer, Mary Arakelian, Assistant Treasurer, Elinor Hutchinson, Curator, Nora Pat Small, Assistant Curator Ruth Putnam, Historian, Mary B. King.

NOVEMBER 4 - The Society met Monday (scheduled annually so as not to conflict with Election Night) at the General Rufus Putnam Hall with 11 persons present. Mrs. Helen Wood, guest speaker, in a dramatic presentation with flag replicas reveiwed the history of the American Flag. Refreshments were served and the meeting adjourned at 9:25PM.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS-

Robin M. Drumstas

Jack A. Perry

IN MEMORIAM-

Oscar Tourtellotte

Henry Walker

Everett Winslow

For Sale

"Sutton Documents 1720-1778"

with insert "300 Year Old Deed of Sutton Area, 1681"

This 40-page booklet contains reproductions of 25 original documents and their exact translations. The documents include indentures, bonds, notes and deeds, military orders, petitions, power-of-attorney, and miscellany. Fully cross-indexed.

Limited Quantity Available! • \$6.25 pp

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