

THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS



“The South Comes North”

**Civil War Encampment and
Battle Weekend
featuring**

IN CONCERT:

THE 2ND SOUTH CAROLINA STRING BAND

A free family event!

AUGUST 7TH & 8TH, 1999
SUTTON, MASS

**STEP BACK IN TIME
FOR A MOMENT IN THE 1860'S**

It is summer during the American Civil War. The Federal troops are camped on the open farmlands of the Town. Nearby, the Confederate soldiers have also occupied a portion of the town. The two armies ready themselves for the fight, and wait in camp for their orders.

Word of an impending battle spreads. Townsfolk gather to see the long columns of troops marching off to confront each other. The armies are North against South, and the war pits brother against brother. For a moment suspended in time, the two armies turn the peaceful countryside into the brutality of war. As the deafening roar of the cannon and the acrid smell of powder subsides, the battered armies retreat to fight another day.

— BULLETIN —

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In the evening, both sides gather under the flag of truce as the 2nd South Carolina String Band strikes up a folk tune on the bandstand of the Town Common. A hoe-down and dance social ensues, and “Southern Gentility” is the order of the day. Soldiers in their best dress uniforms and women in their best ball gowns step to the lively waltzes and reels.

**MILITARY “LIVING HISTORY”
ENCAMPMENT AND BATTLE
WEEKEND**

Hosted by the 25th MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY of Uxbridge, MA Civil War re-enactors from throughout New England and beyond will be on hand to make the weekend even more spectacular! The 25th received its commission from the Governor as part of the State Militia Old Guard, and is widely recognized in re-enactor circles for its authenticity and dedication to education and historic preservation.

Two distinct camps will be set up on the former Revolutionary War Parade grounds at “FAIRVIEW FARM” in Sutton Center. Spectators may wander through the camps and see the various aspects of Union and Confederate camp life.

Battles each day will take place at nearby “WALTON THORNS” farm, also in Sutton Center.

This Pre-Revolutionary War home was once owned by John Hancock, has been painstakingly restored and is now under private ownership. There are very few 20th century anachronisms visible on this pristine site!

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A portion of the proceeds from this event will go towards restoration of the town's Civil War Cannon, received by the Town of Sutton by the Federal Government shortly after the war. Be sure to tour the M.M. Sherman Blacksmith Shop, and the Sutton Historical Society Museum. See the blacksmith at his forge, and view Civil War artifacts and the records of many of Sutton's 200 + soldiers.



Rufus Putnam Museum

Drawing by Paul Brosnihan

Report of The School Committee

Excerpts as read at Town Meeting on March 2, 1857

In the forgoing statement we have detailed to you fellow citizens, as concisely as we might, the condition of the several Schools in town, which you were pleased to place under our supervision. Your Committee have desired to feel the weight of their responsibility to you, & to the cause of education generally; & uninfluenced by any personal considerations, preference for friends, or social bias, to submit a truthful & impartial report. We have used such ability & discretion as we had in our oversight of the schools, & have endeavored to perform the duties of our office, as faithfully as the pressure of our other engagements & responsibilities would permit.

You will participate in the pleasure we feel, in being able to report, that almost unbroken harmony & quiet have reigned in all our Schools - that cases of gross deficiency & bad government on the part of teachers, & of insubordination & turbulence among Scholars, have been of rare occurrence - that no serious feuds have arisen in any of the Districts, affecting in any considerable degree the success & welfare of the

Schools, & that they have been generally, well conducted & prosperous. It may be said, almost without exception, that the common branches of an English education have been taught with commendable faithfulness & correctness in all our Schools. Besides these, some attention has been given in some of the Schools, to the higher branches, which are not required by law to be taught.

We judge it to be a fault in our Schools, that some particular branch of study, for which the Scholar has a special liking, is oftentimes permitted to be pursued to the great neglect of some other branch of equal importance. Arithmetic, for instance, is a favorite study, & is often pursued, term after term, to the neglect of grammar, a study of equal practical importance. Why is it that most of the visitors at School examinations take more interest in the exercises in Arithmetic than in those in Grammar? Is it not because they know more about the former? When they were Scholars they studied one of these branches, to the neglect of the other. May this fault attract the attention of all concerned in the education of youth, that it may be remedied in the rising generation.

We have observed also, that in some of our best schools, Reading does not receive, that share of attention to which it is justly entitled by its importance. There is a want of boldness, freedom, spirit, & distinct enunciation in the reading, which both parents & teachers, by precept & example should labor diligently to supply. Particular attention should be given to correct a tame, flat & monotonous of reading. Correct pronunciation should be both taught & exemplified by the teacher. The reading lesson should be studied carefully & thoroughly by the Scholars. It has appeared to us that many scholars stand up to read without having conned their lessons at all. It is essential to good reading that the scholar be able to read, not only the words, but the thoughts of his lesson. To be forever reading words, words, is to say the least, a very dull sort of business. We would say then, Spend more time upon the reading lesson. Reading is a highly important scholastic exercise. To read well, is a very desirable & rare accomplishment.

We come to speak of our School-houses. No one we think can doubt that the condition of the place where our children are to pass so considerable a portion of their time, has something to do in promoting the important object for which they are there convened. Hence regard should be had, to the comfort & convenience of both teachers & pupils, in the

construction & arrangement of our School houses. This regard, too, we are aware must be exercised with a discretion, which shall take into the account, the pecuniary ability of any District, where improvement may be needed. The work there fore must be gradual. But let us ever keep in view the time, & be engaged in efforts to hasten its coming, when the whole promises of our School housed, externally & internally, shall exhibit an air of neatness, taste and refinement. Our School houses generally, are sufficiently commodious for the size of the schools; but it cannot with equal truth be said, that they are generally well arranged, well furnished, or tastefully fitted up. Most of them are strangers to paper, paint, & varnish. Why are these beautifiers of other edifices, so rarely admitted into our School houses? Is it because they interfere with the whittling, spitting, destructive, propensities of young America? If so, have we not here an argument for their use? We would with all due deference submit, whether, a moderate degree of restraint upon the aforesaid propensities, would not be consistent with the democratic idea of "the greatest good to the greatest number". Let us, at least, as soon as practicable, try the experiment. We have confidence that it will work well. Our young people have evinced a readiness to forgo their lower & grosser gratifications, for the enjoyment of the higher & more refined sentiments. They intuitively perceive that what's clean, neat & beautiful, must be kept so; while the filthy, rude & unsightly, are constantly suggestive of thoughts, & actions, of a corresponding character. Let us not tempt them in the wrong direction. We would recommend therefor that a comfortable & convenient arrangement of seats be secured where it is needed, & that the Districts, also, be at some expense to beautify & render more attractive & pleasant, the places where their children are to receive early & lasting impressions.

We take pleasure in reporting, that the School house in District No. 12, which has so long & bravely withstood the combined attacks of foes from without & within, has finally surrendered at discretion, & been evacuated. It will soon be dismantled & "left alone in its glory". We congratulate the District, & especially the "young people of the District, that they are so soon to occupy their new, commodious, & attractive house. We hope our young friends in that District, will try & make it very apparent that the efficiency of the School as well as their own comfort; is greatly promoted by the erection & occupancy of the new edifice. This structure is an honor to the District & the town. We commend as

worthy of imitation, the enlightened liberality of this District, in this enterprise. In closing this part of our report; we would suggest that it is desirable the School rooms should be provided with suitable maps & other apparatus for the illustration of the various branches of study. We hope that those Districts not destitute of these, will procure them as soon as practicable.

We come now to speak of the Change of teachers. This is a subject of much importance, & is too little regarded by Prudential Committees. It is admitted by all, that one of the most essential requisites pertaining to the School room, is a good teacher. Then, when the services of a good teacher are secured, should they not be retained as long as possible? This question, for obvious reasons, must be answered in the affirmative. The advantages to a School, of a teacher who has been with them several terms in succession, are many; he is familiar with the character of his Scholars & this is a cardinal point in successful teaching; he knows their proficiency, & is prepared to carry the School forward from the day of its commencement. One good teacher should not be exchanged for another, much less, a certainty, for an uncertainty. There are no two have the same mode of teaching & it takes a new teacher, two or three weeks to get started, or to become acquainted with the Scholars, which is necessary, before much progress can be made. The loss of this two or three weeks can not well be afforded in a School which continues but ten or twelve weeks. We hope that prudential committees will consider this subject, & retain as long as may be the services of good teachers.

A want of punctual attendance is a long standing cause of complaint, in our public Schools. It exists in all of them, & with a majority of all the Scholars in a greater or lesser degree. We believe that this angry evil, can be greatly diminished, if not entirely removed. Let parents & guardians understand that the matter is mainly under their control, & let them exercise their authority & influence, firmly & steadily; let the teacher cooperate with them, by instituting a strict enquiry, into all cases of irregular or tardy attendance, & we think, it would not be long, before a marked improvement, in this particular, would be manifest. Irregular & tardy attendance upon School, is a most pernicious habit, affecting injuriously all concerned. Especially are the young, who are permitted to contract such habits, seriously & permanently injured by them. These irregular & dilatory habits will be likely to cling to them, when as men & women, they come to enter upon the pursuits, & assume the responsibilities of life; &

they will even be a drawback, to their usefulness & success. We would, therefore, urge it upon parents, to see that their children attend School every day, & that they be present in the School-room promptly, at the appointed time. We are aware, that parents may have to make some sacrifices, but the importance of the end to be attained, demands that they should be made. We would say to parents, then, you will be more than repaid for the small, seeming advantages, you yield, by the increased benefit of the School to your children, & by the convect habits they will thus acquire; & besides this, you will save the teacher much trouble & perplexity, & very materially help on a laudatory & much needed reform.

We would invite your attention to but one other subject of the appropriation for Schools. Our excellent School system cannot be perpetuated, & thoroughly & successfully carried out, unless liberal annual appropriations of money be made for that purpose. Sutton in her most liberal moods has never yet appropriated to the point of extravagance. Were it not that comparisons are proverbially odious we would exhibit the relative position of Sutton to other towns, with reference to appropriations. A shiftless policy in this regard, is to be deprecated. We hope, however, the receding wave of last years appropriation may bring in this year an advancing one, which shall reach a higher point than any of its predecessors, & that the point thus reached by the flood tide of liberality, may here after be fully & firmly maintained.

We believe it to be poor economy, to begin the work of retrenchment by reducing the appropriation for Schools. It is capable of easy demonstration, that liberal appropriations for our common Schools are good investments, financially considered investments whose rich returns augment the wealth of individuals, & "the general coffers fill". The educated farmer, & mechanic, ie, other things being equal, have greatly the advantage of others of the same occupations, who are ignorant & unenlightened. Think of the new resources, that education opens to the practical man, the new appliances of which he can avail himself, the economies it helps him to practice; do they not all show, most conclusively that education is a great producer of wealth? It is also an economist of wealth. Who are so thriftless & improvident, as the uneducated & ignorant? On the contrary, the elevated taste & refinement, which education imparts to the working man, save him in a great measure from low, gross & expensive habits. To educate the people is to put money into the public

treasury. This is a species of hoarding, which we may practice with credit to ourselves, & with decided advantage to others. Your committee believe that liberality in appropriations for Schools is true economy. We believe that to "scatter" here is to "increase", & to "withhold more that is met tendeth to poverty". May you be guided, by this precept of inspired wisdom, in voting the appropriation for Schools.

B.C. Chase
Wm. Terry
R.L. Dodge

School Committee



Hancock-Hall House

Drawing by Paul Brosnihan

EBENEZER WATERS TOMB APRIL 1, 1995

On April 1st Francis Donnelly & Bud Gurney went to the old Waters Tomb on Town Farm Road going from the West Sutton Church towards the Whittier Farm. We found the Tomb had been opened as the stone that sealed it had been removed. It would allow a person to crawl inside. We took a flash light to inspect the chamber and noticed some casket boards that were stood up on the left side also two skulls, one setting on top of a casket board, the other one below.

In the Waters diaries, Walter speaks of vandals entering the Tomb back in the 1930 period, so maybe the boards stacked on the left side were done then.

Sunday I called Mal Pearson from the Historical Commission to come to the sight on Monday to take photos of the contents. My guess is that maybe 8 people are entombed here by the count of caskets or just pieces you can count.

10:30 Mal Pearson came up to pick me up and we were taking along flash cameras, and the Video camera with the 30 watt lamp. We arrived at the Cemetery about 10:45 and got ready to do some recording for history before I cemented up the face for the final time. He took off his jacket saying he could not sneeze in there with it on. I asked him "Are you going in there". His reply was of course aren't you. Now I was caught for I have a touch of claustrophobia and this is a small opening to back into then down the steps, but I agreed so in he went followed by myself. The chamber itself is about six feet across the back side on the north wall and nine feet on the east and west walls and eight feet high.

There were caskets on top of caskets with only the bottom one on the north end in one piece, the rest of them were in various levels...bones and three skulls looking at us. The left side as we went down the stairs had some casket boards top and bottoms standing up in the corner. This shows that at one time some one has been active and put them standing up, was that back in the 1930 period or was it lately ????

I am writing these notes in the parking lot at the market as Ruth is shopping and I have picked up some cement to seal up the front of the tomb. It is 12:15 and I can still smell the musty odor that came from our 1/2 hour in that chamber over an hour ago. It is a very well built tomb with a passage way to enter through a door originally, but later sealed with stones. The sides are all plastered up...light colored and sealed tight also the floor was dry and had to be in order that the wood from the caskets lasted all these years. A credit to some old New England Yankees who built well.

The roof inside shows three very flat cap stone and there is a fourth one that hangs out over the entrance. On the left side as we entered there stood some of the casket boards as I said previously and one being the bottom board as one could see the stains from decomposition. One casket on the north wall was for all purposes intact or seemed to be so. Three skulls are seen, one setting on top of a top board, another just below and to the right, and the third was to the south east corner among some feamer bones and others I could not identify. None were disturbed. About a half hour was spent in the chamber when old Bud decided to head for the sunlight pouring through the opening. Ruth and I are now shopping for some extra cans of shaving cream to put on the grave stones then squeegee off that sets up the printed word cut into the stones. This art was shown to me by the Torrey family when they came east to photo all the family stones and it works well.

The Waters diaries only say that Ebenezer went to Boston and died but not that he came home to be buried in the Tomb. It was by a stoke of luck that I have a copy of an Auto-biography by Asa Bullard a minister that lived in Ebenezer's house. Ebenezer had a daughter Maria who was the first wife of Dr. Artemus Bullard and she died about two years after marriage. Dr. Bullard then remarried and Asa was one of his sons.

Ebenezer was called Grampa Waters and he used to come back to the house he sold to Dr. Bullard and some times help with chores. One day as Asa told in his book, Asa was playing around with a turning stick used by small boys in those days to help dry hay but was just throwing it around. Grampa Waters warned him to stop to no avail, then Asa was grabbed and shaken by Grampa. At the supper table Grampa thought he should tell the parents of the miner affair and showed them that he only shook the boy slightly, but his humiliated Asa to go through this in front of his parents.

When Ebenezer died and put in the Tomb at some time Asa's father Dr. Bullard said "lets go up to the Tomb and see Grampa Waters. So they did and when his father opened up the casket, Asa thought to himself upon seeing Grampa, "you shant shake me any more". This is the only record saying Ebenezer came home to the Tomb he built in 17—3. Per the records of the Waters by Walter Waters it shows that Ebenezer was born at the Bullard house July 3rd 1739, and he died February 2nd 1809, also it shows he was married three times, Mary Adams, Susana Thurston, and Mary Clough.

The dimensions are interesting and the construction shows how well done it was. Note that Ebenezer was a surveyor and did one of the first maps of Sutton. Proceeding through the original door one would go down six steps to the floor that seems to be cement of some sort. The walls are smooth finished in a light colored cement or mortar of some sort. When going down the steps you are facing the north wall which is about six feet across, the east & west walls are nine feet in length, and the ceiling height is eight feet. When looking up to the ceiling you have to notice three very flat cap stones that support the tons of dirt that are piled upon them out side and covered with grass and the large flat marker with all its history cut on its face.

The entrance stairwell is about 30 inches wide and the original door must have been about four foot high, but was removed then stone cemented in to seal it for good so they thought. The distance from the outside doorway to the inside wall is six feet and this is for six stairs leading down to the chamber.



Blacksmith Shop

Breezy Hill Farm

Breezy Hill Farm was in the Gerber name from September 9, 1907 until August 16, 1944. It was purchased from Roy W. and Laura H. Warner and at that time consisted of 376 acres - 100 on the north side of Eight Lots Road, and the remainder on the south side. The eight lots of land which gave the road its name were a pre-1776 grant from the King of England with all of them lying on the north side of the road. Breezy Hill Farm contained part or all of lots 7 and 8. The Warners purchased the land from Mary A. Clark on June 3, 1902.

Breezy Hill was divided in 1925 by Charles Gerber who transferred the 200 acres on the north side of Eight Lots Road to his son, Nelson, on May 14, 1925. The 276 acres on the south side of the road was sold to George and Mantle Thompson on May 16, 1925 and became Hilltop Farm, and thereby hangs a tale!

The deed was drawn for signing on the previous Friday, May 8. The lawyer was on hand for the transfer, but George Thompson would not do business on the last day of the week, as he considered it bad luck. The deed was corrected for a closing on Wednesday, May 13. Again Mr. Thompson declined to sign as the thirteenth was also an unlucky day. The lawyer had Saturday, May 16 available and told Mr. Thompson "it will be Saturday, May 16 or forget it." The deed was drawn a third time and the sale was finalized.

On August 16, 1944, Nelson Gerber sold Breezy Hill Farm (the 100 acres) to Paul I. and Mable E. Libby who farmed it well up to 1979. The Libbys loved it as a farm and searched conscientiously for a buyer who was willing to farm the land, but finding none, they sold it on March 15, 1979 to Farrow

Builders who divided the property and built many new houses. Lot 14 (11.73 acres) containing the house, barn, bun lot, upper and lower meadows, 3-acre field and the Putnam field, as well as some woodland was sold on June 7, 1919 to the Daniel Moroneys, the current owners.

The back ell of the house has been torn down. The east end of the main brick house fell with a roar in the middle of the night. It has been restored with brick of a very similar color and texture to the original. All nine fireplaces are in operating condition - the four on the east end were part of the restoration.

Ida (Gerber) Silvia, Charles' youngest daughter, painted two ails of the house as it appeared in 1907 and gave one to the Maroneys and one to her brother Nelson's son, Charles F. Gerber.

There are many Gerber family stories about life at Breezy Hill. During World War I a young French-speaking fellow (presumably from Canada) offered to work for his "keep" and a very low wage, and he continued to do so until the end of the war. The reason he gave for leaving was that Dora (Nelson's good wife) left "no room for de milk" when pouring his breakfast coffee. She filled his cup too full for him to add the desired amount of milk, so he quit.

Then there was the Cider Straws and Turkey Drumstick episode. At Thanksgiving dinner, sometime before 1925 while the farm was still altogether, there was new sweet cider. Irma, Walter, Ida (three of Nelson Gerber's siblings) and perhaps others, decided they wanted to "sip cider through a straw", so they took off for the big barn across the road to get oat straws. On the way out the door, Irma grabbed a turkey drumstick from Waiter's plate, chewed happily on it all the way to the barn and back, ran into the house first and dropped the drumstick back on Walter's plate. Walter never noticed the difference.

The Funeral for a White Horse came a little later, and occurred on a Sunday morning following an evening of reveling. The participants were Karl Berggren (Peg's husband), Joe Appelt (Elsa's husband), "Bert" Rusden (who married Irma), George Silvia (who married Ida), Nelson and his son, Nelson R. Gerber. The empty White Horse Scotch bottle was buried with all due reverence.

"Bert Rusden visited Breezy Hill Farm often when he was courting Irma. He drove a 1924 Marmon phaeton with Goodyear Allweather tires with a distinctive all-diamond tread, which left easily identifiable marks on the dirt road. Young members of the family, walking home from the school bus, always

knew when "Uncle Bert" was visiting and that some of his pocket change might be found in the easy chair.

Irma and Walter, and maybe some of Charles' other children, went to school at the Eight Lots one-room schoolhouse. They would cut-up in school until the teacher changed their seats putting one behind the other. This way Walter could do Irma's arithmetic, and Irma could do Walter's spelling.

A 1918 International Harvester 4-cylinder, iron-wheeled, tractor was purchased in 1919. The first 4-cylinder tractor in town, it was much in demand for harrowing the fields of other farmers, as well as doing the work on Breezy Hill. It was in good repair and useful right up to 1944 when the farm was sold.

Charles wanted to have all of the cattle in his herd related, so he bought a well-bred Guernsey cow with the idea of raising a herd from "Queenie's" daughters and granddaughters. There was one big problem - "Queenie" threw 12 bull calves in a row before dropping one heifer.

There were two barn fires at Breezy Hill. The first destroyed the original barns when the cow kicked over a lantern. The replacement was leveled when lightning struck. The last load of hay was in the barn along with the full set of grain and corn machinery and all were destroyed. Rebuilding in 1927 was paid for with great difficulty during the depression of the 1930's.

The hurricane of 1938 also did a great deal of damage to the buildings. Repairs to the roofs required 35 squares of wood shingles. Electric power was out for over a month. The front ell of the house had to be shortened by about 20 feet because so many of the rafters were broken when the roof was blown off. The rafters were very special, sawn on an old up-and-down sawmill like the one demonstrated now at Old Sturbridge Village.

Just as the Farm was a place where the Gerber Children spent part of their summers, so a Sunday at the Farm was a treat for the Gerber grandchildren who lived in southern New England.

There are memories of green fields, browsing cows, gardens with long neat rows of delicious fresh vegetables, hen houses with baby chicks and sometimes ducks. The big cool barn had the smell of hay, and stanchions for the cows when they came in to be milked at night. The cats stayed there, too.

Part of the Farm's excitement was seeing cousins and having "Son" (Nelson Rau Gerber) and/or "Bud" (Charles Frank Gerber) take everybody around to see what was new and interesting since the last visit.

Aunts and uncles were there and sometimes enough young uncles to get together with the cousins for a baseball game.

The big kitchen was always busy and fragrant. Over all of the hubbub. Aunt Dora (Nelson's wife), presided - unhurried and soft-spoken.

Visits to Breezy Hill were sometimes for special birthdays or anniversaries: sometimes to meet a family that had come East to visit and sometimes just a chance for everyone to get together. The last gathering was a duck dinner when Uncle Nelson dressed three ducks - the last of his flack. He knew if it got down to only one "the poor duck would be lonely" so the family was invited to come and share the dinner.

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Summer Attire

In Memorium

Shirley E. Johnson

Benjamin F. MacLaren



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