

THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS



— **BULLETIN** —

VOL. XXIV NO. 4 September, 1999
\$3.00

STAFF

Editor Emeritus	Malcolm Pearson
Editor	Paul Holzwarth
Assistant Editor	Donald King
Distribution	Mary B. King

Life in Sutton

by Donald King

I was born in Worcester City Hospital on November 17, 1913 which is 85 years plus a month ago. My mother was a Registered Nurse and she got her training and graduated from Worcester City Hospital. My father and my mother were living on the old King estate out at the end of King Road. The building is now gone. My mother did not wish to continue to live with her mother-in-law so my father had to scurry around and the nearest thing was an empty house on Uxbridge Road just in between King Road and Central Turnpike. The building is gone. It was destroyed by fire after WW II. Somebody got in there and set fire to it. The building was built around 1818 and it was where Rufus King lived. Rufus King was not an ancestor.

We lived there until I was ten. It wasn't Uxbridge Road then, the name had been changed about three times. It was called South Street. That started at Town Hall and ran to Mendon Road. Later it was called Whitinsville Road. And later it became Uxbridge Road. The house was approximately where Vanderlindens live. Mrs. Vanderlinden is a second cousin of mine. Her father is Edward King who lives at 21 Uxbridge Road. I started school near the center, that was on Singletary Avenue. The bottom floor, on the left, had the first four grades under one teacher, and on the right had the fifth through eighth grade under one teacher. The high school was upstairs. I went there for one session. The town hired Charley Hough to pick up the kids at Uxbridge Road and Central Turnpike. He had an old Dodge panel truck with canvas sides with a step on the back and fold down seats down each side. They put a chain across the back after the kids got in.



Kids walked up the hill from Kuchinski's near Rt 146 to Uxbridge Road. Some kids walked up from Purgatory Road. Another family lived over where the airport is on Mendon Road. Some walked from the Baton place (there were three farms tied together and owned by a man named Baton) on Mendon Road. Wallace King owned the farm at that time and he had a boss farmer that had children and they walked up to Uxbridge Road. They walked a mile to a mile and a half to get a ride to the center of Sutton to go to school. They walked it summer and winter, it didn't matter. They were too crowded at the center school and so they opened up Hathaway school which is over at 198 Uxbridge Road. The old school was just a one room building set upon stone piles at the four corners and in the middle of each side and end. It had one door in the middle of the front. The playground was the yard between the school and the street. When I went there they had probably fourteen to sixteen children. There weren't very many in the eighth

grade because at that time as soon as you got to be sixteen you could get a work permit and go to work. But there were primary kids. The first teacher at the re-opened school was Edith Fairfield. She came from Douglas, and she was a graduate of a Normal school and she had a teaching license. She taught the rest of the first year and the second year. I was there in the first grade. I walked to school. It was about three quarters of a mile.

School was set up so you could attend to all your farm duties and then wash up and have something to eat and go to school. School didn't start until nine o'clock in the morning and was out at three thirty in the afternoon. You had an hour at noon and two fifteen minute recess periods, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The teacher had a pitch pipe and we would sing "Hail Columbia." One time I came home from school and I said we sang and they said what did you sing and I said, "Columbus Jumped in the Ocean." That was as near as I got it.

I was disciplined with an eighteen inch rule a few times on the hand. The teacher would grab your hand and hold it and whack it. Other than that they never would touch your body. It was hand discipline. The kids behaved pretty good. It was a lot easier to go to school than to do some of the home duties that the kids had in those days. A lot of people lived on small farms and had a few cows and made butter and sold some of their milk to United Dairy in Worcester. People could make their own butter at home but at that time people were buying their butter at the store. The store was located at the red building now known as Polly's Antiques. The store owner had a man that went out with horse and buggy and took grocery orders and went back and made them up and delivered them. Telephones were coming in at that time. We never had a telephone, but there was one on the farm where my grandfather King lived. People would call up the store and order groceries and the man with the buggy would go out and deliver to them. He went out twice a week, early in the week to take orders and again to deliver on Thursday or Friday. He would stop at every house and take an order. That was done with a horse and buggy and later with a truck. That same man that ran the store in Sutton, William Davis, had a route in Worcester where he delivered products that he picked up on the farms around, beets and carrots and things like that. The man on the truck sold them and took orders if they wanted something that came in later in the season like pears. Sutton had been a supply line from the start.

Farmers raised turkeys, ducks, sheep and beef cattle and hauled them all the way to Boston to sell. By the time the Revolutionary War was going on, Boston was being supplied by towns as far out as the Brookfields.

My chores before school was to bring in the wood to the fires. You cooked with wood and you heated with wood. The house only had two rooms downstairs and a fireplace in each room. The room towards the street was used as a living room, and the room in the back was used as a parlor. There was a set of stairs that went up to a little balcony and there was a room that was just as large as the room downstairs and that is where Miss. Fairfield the teacher lived. She boarded with my parents. She was a very attractive woman and she attracted the attention of my father's cousin, Lester Johnson. Lester lived with his parents on Singletary Avenue. When Lester was courting Miss Fairfield and he stayed late in the evening, he would push his car out of the yard and down the hill to start it, so my parents wouldn't know what time he left.

The farms raised goods to sell and a lot of the barns weren't built until the 1840's. The farmer would have a driving horse, but he would not have horses to do plowing. He would use oxen. When the oxen got old you ate them. The land was very stoney and oxen were noted for their persistence and putting their feet down and getting a firm grip and they could move things faster than a team of horses. A farmer had a few cows because there wasn't a market for milk. Farmers started to build cow stables in barns that would hold twenty to thirty cows. Then they started to make milk and they had a milk route or they sold to a dairy in Worcester. When I got out of high school I picked up milk from farms in Sutton, Oxford and Auburn and Millbury and took it to the Whiting Milk Company or over to United Dairy in Worcester. I came out of high school in 1931 and there were no jobs; it wasn't a very good year. I had made some tests and I entered Worcester Polytech, but I was not qualified and didn't have the necessary background in language and I didn't last. I went through the first year. If my mother had been alive, I would have been better prepared and probably would have finished college.

My father was listed as a farmer on my birth certificate, but he didn't show any farming interest. He lived on the old King farm. Frank King farmed the whole side hill from Uxbridge Road and down to the brook that runs by Pleasant Valley Country Club. They raised beef cattle and dairy cattle. They grew various crops, oats, various grains. They had a vegetable garden

and they lived off the land. He didn't get married until he was thirty.

The Kings were Baptist when they came from Salem, town. After Frank King married Mary Johnson he joined the Congregational Church. Christmas was celebrated downstairs in the church. They put a Christmas tree in one corner and there was a package for each kid. They had lighted candles on the tree. And then after the children filed in, they would put the candles out. The same thing was celebrated in the Hathaway school house. The teacher had each child draw a name and then sent them home and the parents would select a gift for twenty five cents, fifty cents maximum. As a child you didn't have money. The only money you would get might be at Christmas time from an Uncle. You might get a fifty cent piece or a dollar. Handkerchiefs were a dime a dozen. The presents were right on the tree and the teacher had the clip-on candles on the tree. The teacher lit the candles and kids could look at the Christmas tree right there in the one-room school house full of kids with no fire extinguisher except a bucket of water. The bucket of water was for drinking. They had two ladles, one for the boys and one for the girls. They got the bucket of water from a clear spot in a swamp out in back of the school house. Of course, that was before the days of pesticides, so the water was probably pure.

At home we had a Christmas tree with glass ornaments, but I never remembered lighting candles on our tree. We had stringed popcorn. Presents would be something useful, a pair of stockings or a handkerchief. I got a little teddy bear, about six inches tall with button eyes. When I was a kid Teddy Roosevelt was very popular and teddy bears were everywhere. My brother, I remember, received a black and white stuffed cat. My brother took his cat to bed with him until he was fourteen. We hung stockings. A gift of ribbon candy was very popular at that time. A big thing with our family at that time was Necco wafers. They were considerably larger than the Necco wafers are today. Each night when we went to bed we were given a couple of Necco wafers each. The folks bought the mixed variety, so you didn't get all chocolate. We took them as they gave them to us.

The kitchen was a separate ell added on the North side of the house. There was a box step and it was moveable. A number of people who transferred from the main house to the kitchen landed on the floor because they didn't realize that they had to go down two steps. There was an iron stove with four openings on

the top. No water heater on it. Water was pulled up by rope from the well out in front of the house. They had an ice house down on Clark's pond and during the winter time they cut ice and stored it. My grandfather would hire a crew when there was no snow on the ice and they would go down. The men either got money or had so much ice they were entitled to. The ice was packed in sawdust in an ice house. Of course, they needed ice to store the beef they slaughtered.

My father was in the wood and timber business. At that time one of the big business for woodsmen was ties for railroads. The railroads bought thousands. Chestnut was a good tree in my babyhood until the blight hit it in 1919. He sold ties and he also sold telephone poles. Telephone poles were 25 ft long and the telephone lines were just tall enough to clear the hay wagon when it went into the field. I remember telephone lines that drooped right down and ran along the top of rail fences which ran along the side of the Road. There weren't any electric lines then. Another business was pilings. Boston was building on marshy land and there was a ready market for pilings. Pilings were shipped into Boston and driven into the bay and wherever they were going to fill. If they got pilings down in the water they could be there thirty or forty years.

In 1923 my father bought a house on Putnam Hill Road. It was over there on the corner of Mendon Road right right across from the end of Medbury Road. It had bay windows. It had been built in 1870. The man that had lived there was a jewelry buyer and he traveled to Europe to buy his stock. It is said that on one of the trips, his wife went with him to Paris and while there she had her face enamelized. The same thing that Queen Elizabeth the First had done. It was a way to hide the wrinkles. You put yourself in a neutral position and they paint your face with something that keeps the same complexion.

But back to the house. The outhouse was in the woodshed and thunder jugs were under each bed. We had one of those large kerosene lamps that had a round wick approximately three inches in diameter and a glass chimney and a shade. I can remember sitting at the table doing my homework while my brother played with a toy on the floor, my father reading the newspaper and my mother doing the necessary house work. The toys that my brother and I played with mostly were sewing spools. My grandmother was a seamstress and she made my clothes. I had home-made clothes until my mother's funeral. I got my first suit to go to my mother's funeral in 1928. That was the first pair of long pants that I had.

Prior to that I had these woolen knickers with the band just below your knee. I had skinny legs and my knickers were down around my ankles. The suit coat to go over that was also home made. My mother would go with her sister to the store in Worcester to buy the yard goods that my grandmother needed to make our clothing. They had a sewing machine with foot power.

When we moved to Putnam Hill, we had a telephone and it was a common line. Our ring was fifteen. One long ring and five short ones. Three long rings would be thirty and two short ones for thirty two. As soon as the phone rang, you'd grab it and the neighbors would grab it and as more people got on, the volume became weaker. At that time every phone had a black box down by the floor that had three number six dry cells in it so you would have four and one half volts of electricity to run the circuit. The bells were rung by cranking a magneto. It had enough energy if you had the door open to get a real jolt. We hadn't been there about two years when the people petitioned for the town to have an electric light line run from Shaws' farm down to Putnam Hill. The people had to sign up to pay every month for the electric light line. They wired the house with the old wide two wire system, with porcelain knobs separating the wires. The safest wiring they ever put into a home because the mice couldn't bother it and if it got warm it radiated the heat away.

My father kept a cow up on a farm up on Putnam Hill near the present golf course. The people that lived there milked the cow and I had to go up there and get a couple of quarts of milk a day and they kept the rest. I went up and picked up the milk summer and winter and my that is a cold walk back down to Mendon Road. One of the businesses my father got into was buying hay from various farms. Sometime about 1925 I was running the one horse hay rake. I raked mile after mile of hay windrows. The mowing machine cut the grass and it was my job to rake up the hay and if we got a wet spell that all had to be shaken out by hand and then raked up again. We never lost a barn by putting in green hay. We hayed the Waters farm and the farm across from it and two or three others around there. We stored the hay in the Waters barn and in the winter we sold the hay. Wally Putnam was involved in several of the deals. He had a team of horses and a sled. They never plowed the snow off the roads then because we wanted the sled to slide along. Hay was sold to people who just had a horse and they went around to visit people like the lawyer or doctor, they didn't have any farm land and they needed hay for their horses.

My father, being in the wood business, would have from one to five wood choppers in the woods cutting wood. They cut and stacked cord wood. My father paid off on Saturday noontime. Many of the wood choppers that were available were alcoholics and they took their money when they got paid and went and bought their groceries for the week and then they drank the rest of it. They weren't able to get out into the woods until maybe Monday afternoon. Then they would work their drunk off. They would cut a cord of wood in a day. My father paid a dollar per cord of wood so they might get seven dollars a week. They lived in shanties right in the wood lot. They had a kitchen wood stove and bunk beds with two men in the shanty. They had plenty of wood to heat with and the shanties were warm.

My mother being a nurse we didn't need the doctor too much. I had boils once and I had to go down the doctor in Millbury and he lanced them. If I had a very bad case of the croup they would put skunk oil on my chest. There was an old trapper who lived up in the woods about half a mile from us; he trapped fox and skunk and his living was the pelts that he sold. He recommended that they make a poultice with skunk fat and put that on. It really smelled. It kept your nostrils clear. My brother and I had chicken pox and measles. When you had measles you were put in a darkened room and it was a little too dark to read. I was fortunate at that time because my grandmother gave me a battery radio, a two tube Crosley 51, 1925 model. You had to use earphones and she couldn't stand the ear phones.

I became very interested in radio at that time and radio stations used to announce every fifteen minutes who you were listening to. I would be allowed to stay up Friday and Saturday nights sometimes till two or three in the morning. There was no interference, no fluorescent lights, no TV, no automobiles after dark. I used to listen to stations as far away as the west coast. I logged stations with that two tube Crosley in 30 of the 48 states. One of the hardest was KIDO in Idaho Falls, Idaho. I listened for a full hour before I got it right. Stations would send out confirmation cards and I would write and tell them that I had heard them. I had two sets of ear phones and I remember listening to the Gene Tunney vs. Jack Dempsey fight with my mother, a sainted lady. That's when Dempsey knocked Tunney down and he didn't go to a neutral corner. Tunney got the advantage of the long count and I can remember my mother saying, "Hit him again, Jack, Hit him again, keep him down, Jack." A nice Christian woman who wouldn't hurt a fly.

Annual Report of the Selectmen of Sutton

The Selectmen of the Town of SUTTON have drawn orders on the Treasurer of said Town, for the year ending March 1, 1848, for \$3,175.93, which is as follows:

For Schools	\$1,444.37
“ Roads and Bridges	440.10
“ Support of Poor at Alms House	382.58
“ Support of Poor not at Alms House	
“ Medical attendance on Warren Hathaway	4.00
“ Support of Louis Hayden	26.07
“ Support of Martha Putnam, S. L. Hospital, and the professional aid of Messrs. Thomas & Hill, in the case of Martha Putnam	36.39
“ Support of Olivet Hall, House of Correction, Boston	17.42
“ Support of Jonathan F. Putnam and wife	52.00
“ Support of Lucy King	26.00
“ Support of Peter Sibley, S. L. Hospital	138.56
“ Support of Deborah Blackman	5.89
“ Support and Funeral expense of Jasper Eager	9.57
“ Removal of a Pauper	15.00
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	\$330.90
“ Services of School Committee	24.50
“ Services of Assessors	50.99
“ Perambulating Town lines	19.18
“ Use of Hall	6.00
“ Use of Vestry	25.00
“ Books for use of the Town	3.95
“ Insurance on Town Farm Buildings	22.75
Oakham vs. Sutton, for support of Lot Simpson	157.34
Messrs. Barton & Bacon, counsel as above	99.62
Oliver Hall, for recording and making Returns of Militia eight years	10.00
Samuel Taylor, for defending the Town against the petition of W. Hunt and others for a Road	5.00
Commission for collecting Taxes	84.00
Recording Births and Deaths	9.76
Surveying Roads	1.50
Guide Boards	1.62
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	\$426.50

PERSONAL SERVICES.

Horace Leland, for services and cash paid concerning paupers	\$6.81
Horace Leland, for services on Roads, Paupers & c.	12.00
James Taylor, for services on Roads, Paupers, & c.	13.00
Leonard Logee, for services on Roads, Paupers, & c.	10.00
Oliver Hall, for services on Roads, Paupers, & c.	15.00
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	\$56.81

RECAPITULATION

Schools	\$1,444.37
Support of Poor at Alms House	382.58
Support of Poor not at Alms House	330.90
Roads and Bridges	440.10
School Committee	24.50
Assessors services	50.99
Perambulating Town lines	19.18
Miscellaneous Items	426.50
Personal services	56.81
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	\$3,175.93
The amount of Tax List committed to the collector for 1847	\$1,469.32
Taxes subject to 10 per cent. Discount	1,313.54
Deduct 10 per cent.	131.35
Amounts to	\$1,182.19
Add amount not entitled to discount	\$155.78
Amounts to	\$1,337.97
Deduct County Tax	\$718.93
Amounts to	\$619.04
Add State School divided	\$104.23
Add money borrowed of S. S. Parish	981.76
Add Note dated October 28, 1843 signed by Daniel Tenny	15.57
Add money paid by Jonathan Leland to balance accounts32
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	\$1,720.92
Deduct for Orders paid by V. C. Hooker	\$294.78
Amount in the hands of the Treasurer	\$1,426.14

Selectmen of Sutton
TIMOTHY MARTIN, HORACE LELAND, OLIVER HALL,
JAMES TAYLOR, LEONARD LOGEE.

Sept. 1999 (7)

IT USED TO BE

It used to be

that I wore rompers,
and leggings in winter,
and challis dresses;
rode to the barn on hayloads,
and slid down strawstacks;
drank warm milk from black and
white "Cherry,"
played the organ while cousins
pumped the pedals.

It used to be

that women wore khaki suits
when they went to Granmaw's
to wash with her new Maytag:
churned their own butter,
and made cottage cheese;
had bees to quilt and visit neighbors,
wore cotton stockings, or silk;
and were thought daring if rouged or
bob-haired.

It used to be

that men chewed tobacco,
wore black suits for good,
and felt in the winter;
milked cows by hand,
chopped wood and pumped water,
took wild honey from bee trees,
worked with horses, and "thrashed"
in crews.

It used to be

that horses pulled wagons
and buggies and sleighs,
and isinglass windows were in Model T's
that were horse-pulled out of sand ruts
and patched with "bob" wire;
and people went for walks,
and went swimming in wool suits.

By N.G. Ruonauaara

IN MEMORIAM Laura V. Fulton

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Scott C. Cashman Bert & Cathy Balderelli



General Rufus Putnam Hall
4 Uxbridge Road, Sutton, MA 01590