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Olive Stockwell-Taft Remembers



Olive at age 96

I lived at 96 Eight lots Road. We had chickens across the road that I had to feed every day. We had gardens that I had to weed. The farm I lived on is called The Silvermine Farm. I think they found some silver up the hill one time. We had work horses and a horse that we used to go downtown with. We used to go to the store in Millbury. The store owner's name was Hans and the store was in Braminville. In the winter we went in the sleigh. I remember driving the horses and raking hay in the summer. We grew all our own food and canned everything we could. We had pigs under the floor in the shed next to the house and we had a door in the

floor and we would put table scraps down that door.

At Christmas time we would have a tree and invite some of the people to the house. My mother had old ornaments. We had a barn across the road where my father had a motor that he used to make our own electricity. We had a well outside by the step with a pump and we hauled the water into the house. Monday was wash day. Tuesday was ironing day. Wednesday was visiting day. Thursday we cleaned upstairs and Friday we cleaned downstairs. Saturday was baking day. We baked enough to last a week. On Sunday we sometimes went to church. We had to go up Cole hill to the church in the center of town.

We had a washing machine. We did the wash way over by the barn. We had to heat the water and lug it from the kitchen to that washing machine. We sometimes made our own soap. We had a hand wringer on the edge of the tub that we used to wring the clothes out. Then we had a Sears & Roebuck machine.

We had seven or eight cows and we would take the milk down to the next house and someone would come and take it. I guess they took the milk to Worcester.

I walked to Eight Lots School every day and I attended all six grades at the school. Alice Freeland was my first teacher at Eight Lots School. I remember she gave me a good lickin. Got my legs all black and blue. My father went down and talked

to her. I guess it was because I wouldn't talk, I was shy and I wouldn't speak up. All my life I was shy, I belonged to the Grange, the Womens Club of the church and I used to go and have a good time but I never said too much. Now I'm talking all the time. I also had Eunice King and Wolf Malloy for teachers

The desks at Eight Lots were for one person and made out of wood and the legs were metal. We slid down Cole hill in the winter. I was afraid to go across the road down by the lake because I thought there might be bears.

The high school was in Sutton Center. They had two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs. The High School was up stairs. There were 8 or 10 people in my class. In those days we used to cut the mountain laurel and decorate the inside of Town Hall for our High School Graduation Ceremony.

I remember calling people on the telephone. You had to crank it to call someone. We had what they called a party line and we shared the phone with several other families. We used to listen in on calls a lot.

Oldest One-Room Schoolhouse in Blackstone Valley Revived in Sutton

Reprinted from The Advertiser August 11, 1971

By Roland Lapointe

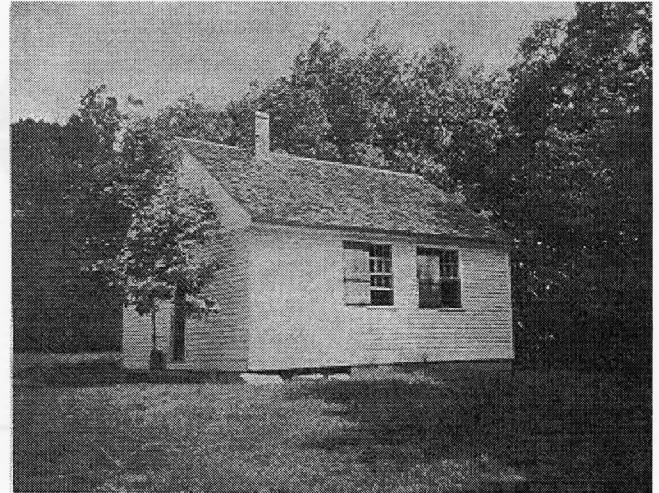
SUTTON - The cornerstone of education in colonial America was the one-room schoolhouse. The Eight Lots School Association of Sutton maintains as a museum the only remaining one-room schoolhouse in the Blackstone Valley area. The school is appropriately named the Eight Lots School.

Last Sunday the association opened the doors for visitors to walk back in time and see life in the early days, when the "AB ab's" were a way of life for the young pupil.

Association secretary Mrs. Edwin Riley took us on a tour explaining some of its colorful history.

"The school was built before 1773 on land that was given by Col. Timothy Sibley. The school was operating in 1773, but "the privilege to maintain a school on said land" was not officially recorded and

deeded until 1799. At that time the land, which had originally been part of Sibley's cow pasture, was officially designated as land to be set aside for public education.



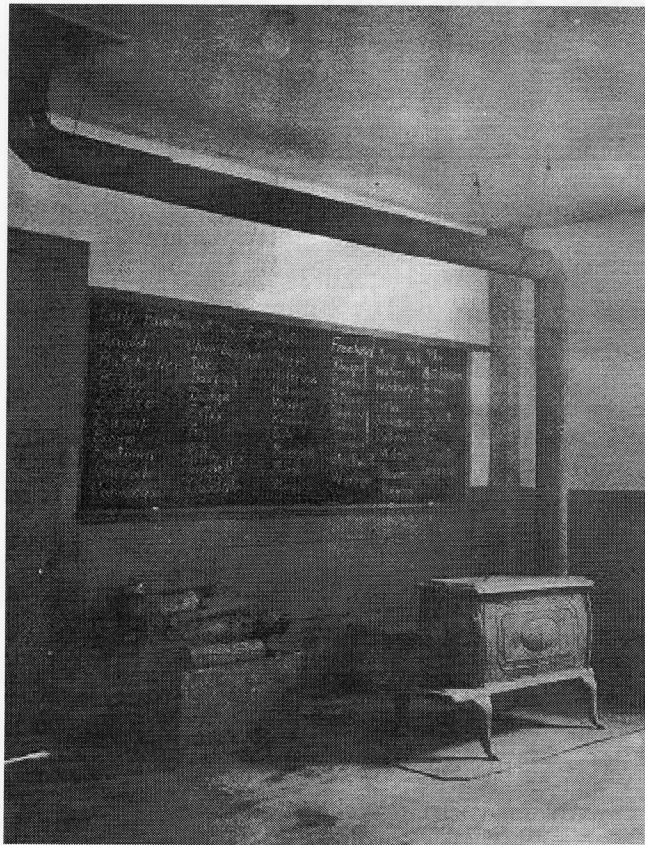
Eight Lots School in Sutton - 1971

Prominent Area Names

"The school serviced the children of some of the original Sutton settlers from what was called the Eight Lots region. This was a tract of land that apportioned eight, 40 acre lots to settlers. The families that settled and farmed this land were some of the more famous Sutton forefathers. Among the more prominent were: Stockwell, Freeland, King, Huchinson, Woodbury, Welch, Cullina, Marsh, Sibley, Severy, Dodge, Griggs and Batcheller to name a few." "The school boasts having educated 38 Revolutionary War soldiers, the most famous of which was General Rufus Putnam, who was born not far from the school in this district."

Mr. Riley, herself a former teacher for 44 years, spoke of education in the good old days at Eight Lots. "From as much as we can tell, readin' took a back to seat to 'ritin and 'rithmetic. Books were expensive and with the exception of the Holy Bible, little or no reading was done here.

"Writing exercises were rare, since paper was also expensive. Penmanship was practiced in the early days, however, and the more flowery and ornate it was, the more accomplished the writer. We have many examples of those early exercises. Letters were learned by rote.



The pot-bellied Stove

“Teachers were hard to get in those days. Five dollars a week was a high wage. One of the first schoolmarms of which we have documented information was Nabby Leland, who began teaching about 1811 at Eight Lots.

“Nabby was the daughter of Solomon Leland. She had no formal teacher training but came from a learned family for her day. Her father had more books than any one else in Sutton at that time. A bachelor uncle gathered and wrote the oldest history of Sutton and its early settlers. There were also several ministers in the family. Nabby must have learned all she knew from them. We have some Reward of Merit cards, sort of an early report-promotion card, signed by Nabby. They're quite unique.

“Noteworthy is Miss Fanny Freeland, who was a pupil and later a teacher (1871-1872) at Eight Lots. She gained national prominence in her later years as a poet.

6 to 8 Week Sessions

“Other teachers were divinal students who boarded out at the homes of their pupils, doing odd jobs. to supplement their income. School sessions

ran about six to eight weeks. At one point in the history of Eight Lots, sessions ran in the Spring and Fall only. Boys were the prime concern of the family. They had to be education. However, their education could not interfere with the planting and harvesting. School was suspended during these crucial times. There are even records of the teachers helping with the harvesting.

“Sutton at one time had 14 such schoolhouses, each servicing a 3-4 mile district. Each district's school was built by the local residents, who served as school committee, made all decisions about what was taught, and most importantly, paid the bills.

“All of these schools, except Eight Lots, have been destroyed or have been incorporated into private homes. Had it not been for the children of Irish immigrants who studied and loved this school, it too would have passed into oblivion.

“The school was functional from 1773 to 1896.

It was not used again until 1911 'til about 1918. Since that time it has been kept as a museum of early education in America. Some claim it to be one of the oldest standing public schools in New England.



Mrs. Edwin Riley

Mrs. Riley attended eighth grade classes at Eight Lots in the 1911-1912 session. She taught in a one-room schoolhouse for 28 of her 44 years experience in Manchaug, Sutton, Sandgate, Vermont. She never taught at Eight Lots however. “My first teaching job was at the Hathaway School in Sutton. I had all eight grades and some continuation students. Those were the days, I'll never forget them”

PUTNAM LETTERS 1835-1935

Transcribed Verbatim by
Marcia Putnam O'Shea

Most of these 55 letters are correspondences between members of the Peter and Augusta Putnam family, including Peter's mother Hannah Bigelow Putnam, and other members of the extended Putnam family. Peter and Augusta (and Hannah) lived in Anoka, Minn. in the late 1880's and early 1890's with five of their children. They farmed there and kept a store. Two children were yet unborn and two older sons remained in Sutton when they went West. Many of the letters are to Hannah B. Putnam from her sisters, and several are from Nora or Cora to their parents who had returned to Sutton in the mid-1890's while the two girls remained in Minn. working as teachers. The charming friendship note was sent by the first Peter Holland Putnam to Hannah Bigelow Putnam who later became his wife. She had kept it for over fifty years. The Civil War draft notice was delivered to the second Peter Holland Putnam. Family tradition tells that he never served in the War, but purchased his deferment.

The originals of these letters were entrusted to me by Bud Gurney (a descendent of the Waters family -- See letters from Ulva A. Waters) from Sutton Massachusetts, with my agreement to transcribe them into typewritten form and then give the originals and the transcriptions to the Sutton Historical Society.

I have provided copies of the transcriptions to Bud Gurney, to Janice and Andy Putnam of Thompson, Conn., and have kept a copy myself.

The letters were given to Bud Gurney by Doris VanTwyver, daughter of Nora Putnam Williams, writer of some of the letters. I am grateful to both Doris and Bud for appreciating the historical value of the letters and for keeping them safe for future generations.

May 17, 1886 from Ulva A. Waters, West Newton to sister Hannah, Anoka, Minn.

My Dear Sister Hannah

I recieved your kind letter in due season and I think I will not be so long answering it as I was before. I am still with Marion in West Newton. She and Henry make it a very pleasant home for me. They live so near the church that I can walk to it in less than five minutes so I do not miss going to church very often which I consider a great privilege. I am glad that you seem so happy in your new home. I wished that I could look on the Mississippi River from a child when I used to study Geography but I probably never shall see it. I was glad to hear you say your hope was placed on Jesus Christ for Salvation - "For there is no other under heaven whereby we must be saved." Our Savior says "Believe and be baptised and thou shalt be saved." And he that believeth not is already under condemnation. You mentioned a verse repeated by our Dear Mother. The last words she repeated to me was that very same verse and it has been a comfort to me. I think of it often when I think of her. Dear Father and Mother! I bless their memory - Sister Polley writes me that her health has been better the past winter than it has been for some time. I am so glad for her - Sister Lucy was well as usual the last I heard. Joseph wrote me that Cornelius and wife visited them fast winter and said Cornelius was well and jolly as ever. I have never been able to get a letter from Cornelius though I have written him every winter.

May 19th Our Dear Sister Jerusha has returned to her home to spend the Summer months and I am glad. I am sorry you have made up your mind not to come this summer but perhaps it is all for the best. I had hope that we should all meet in the grove at the Putnam Gathering. We missed our youngest Sister last year and it make us feel lonesome. My prayer is that the Dear Lord will spare us to meet again if it please him. I expect to go to West Sutton to spend the hot months. Samuel and his family expect to go sometime in June and Mr. Barbous and family think of going with them and if I feel able I may go with them. Marion and Henry are well as usual. Henry works in Boston at the Paine furniture Manufactory. Addle and Everett have been miserable in health this spring but are some better now. George lives in Missouri on a Sheep Ranche at the foot of the Ozark Mountains. He was well when I last heard from him. He has a baby boy 6 or 7 months old which pleases him very much. He has named him Nathan Richard Waters.

Anah's oldest daughter Louisa Aldrich goes to the High school in Oxford and I think by the letters she writes that she is going to make a very good scholar.

Give my love to Peter and all your grandchildren and Augusta. I hope you will write often. Tell us everything you can think of. It will interest us very much. Marion sends love to all the family. Addle would send love if she was here. But as she s not here now I will put it in for her - May the Lord bless

you all is the prayer of your Sister Ulva A. Waters

Feb. 19, 1893 from Cora Putnam, Anoka, Minn. to little sister Hattie, Sutton, Ma.

Dear Little Sister

Have been very busy and neglected writing to you except that little note I sent by another letter. Grandma wrote that your school has closed. Of course you are sorry. Help mother all you can during vacation. Orrin wrote that he carried you home from church Sunday, am glad to know you attend Sunday School. Today is a lovely day warm & bright. Tomorrow is my twentieth birthday. Just think no longer in my teens, what shall I do? We visited across from here last night. What a good time we did have Just jolly. Is father going to let me take the guitar, I do wish he could. I have such a fine chance to learn. Do you play much. So you have 5 cows and two horses. Are the horses good ones. Nora comes home in two weeks for her spring vacation & won't I be glad to see her? I know she will be pretty tired but it will rest her soon. What are you all up too? Has father started his milk route? You must write & tell me all about it. You know I want to hear. Is grandma visiting with Aunt Lucy now. I am so sorry Aunt Polly is dead but of course she was very old, We could not expect her to live long. It is sad nevertheless. I am going to have a pair of snow shoes. Bertie and I and four others and what times we will have walking over the deep snows. What a big boy Oscar has. It's a bouncer. Tell me how large Louise is. Tell Ford I wish I could see him. I just know I could tickle him. Did Wallace get his letter. I should like to hear if he did. Hav'nt been to town for a long time so hav'nt any news. School is only 10 weeks longer. It dos'nt seem possible but its so. How time flies. Has mother made her dress, Does she like it? What good times you must have scampering over the dear old place and climbing the hay mow and going into the cupila. Tell mother Mrs. E. L Reid was tipped over & thrown from her cutter and two days after a ten pound boy came. Both are doing well, but it was a narrow escape. Has father grown old Hattie or does he look just as he did? Grandma S. thinks Wallace and Carl are fine boys and says Ford is a smart little fellow. She says you look like Nora. Did Frank send you one of his pictures. I think they are pretty good. I hope we will have an early Spring. That is in about four weeks or less. I expect some of my big boys will soon be leaving school as soon as work begins. I shall be sorry for their work is most interesting. We are just finishing Robinson's Complete Arithmetic and have completed & reviewed U. S. History. I have Uncle Tom's Cabin. I'm going to read it to my school now, it's fine Hattie. I'll send it home as soon as I have read it to them. Ask mother if she won't please send me Garfield's Life. I want it very much and will be careful of it. It won't cost much. Will close now with love to Mother father brothers & sister and all Please write soon & long. Your loving Sister Cora. Remember when we danced McGinty? Ask Ma what would be pretty for a suit this Spring.

Sept. 8, 1894 from Nora Putnam, St. Francis, Minn. to Parents and all, Sutton.

Dear Parents and all, -

Nearly a week of school finished. I have a very pleasant school of 24 pupils. It is quite a good sized school house and shall have this winter about 35 schollars. We have a bell in the tower at the school which I have to ring at 8 o'clock, again at quarter of 9 and at 9. Then I have to ring them in at recess and at quarter of 1 and 11 have to ring. It is a bother. I can't see the use of it. At Columbus we had only a small bell and the children were there on time usually. Vangie Woodruff's brother came here to me and Jessis Moore's little sister Margaret and Little Flossie Bean. I think Hattie knows them. I board with Chas. Streetly. They are regular old English aristocracy. One day we had milk curd with cream to eat and I told her I had never eaten any and she said "If you had studied English literature more you would have been acquainted with "curds and cream." Her puddings I can't stomach so I told her I was not fond of puddings.

Will Dermott came electioneering this week at St. Francis so came to the school house asked how I was getting on? Frank says there is no show at all for him and also Mr. Streetly feels the same. He may possibly get it after all.

I think I shall like very well after awhile and get to work. They are putting a bridge across River here that will cost 4 or 5 thousand dollars.

How are Grandma's and Oscar's and Orrin's folks? O, I wish I had those pears in that trunk.

It is nearly time to ring again so I'll quit and write again soon.

Yours with Love from Nora

May 6, 1923 H V, Cyr, Franklin, Neb to Rev Charles Williams, Manchester, N. H.

Dear Charles:

Instead of the usual postal I am going to write you a letter to congratulate you that you are again preaching and gathering souls unto the fold. I never feel you are happy when you are doing anything else no matter how useful. Your girls seem to be doing finely I expect they will be a comfort to you & Mrs W. I did quite a little work for the church last fall & winter getting our church repaired & was chairman of the anniversary committee Our 50th anniversary was in Feb last

Fred James happened in a couple of weeks ago as he drove by in his runabout. He said he had a letter from you after his father's death I believe. He is located at Hasting: is a drummer in the lumber business. Expects to stay in H. till his boys are thru college but hopes to go back to Denver to live. Is supt of s s at Pres. church in Hastings

Of course you know Academy had closed up. We offered grounds to town at low price (Am secty of board) They voted to buy grounds last week for \$10,000. to use for school, park, etc. Its a fine thing for the community.

Lois writes from 17 miles up in the mountains from Chewlah Wash. that one of the mothers has taken her little boy out of school for the bears come out this time of year and are so hungry.

This is the time to plant corn. Am a little behind. Am using four horses on a three horse plow but In my heavy gumbo ground it makes them hump to pull it. Will have to get up before 5 o'clock now. When the boys come home will have a let up. We have been having terrible dust storms and winds but the drought of month's or perhaps more properly two years is broken. The wind can still blow but can't pick up the dirt so badly. Am not raising many pigs. Corn is very scarce and high and hogs very low in price. Perhaps will raise around 75 (have 40 now) last year raised 190 spring pigs. Well I earnestly hope you will be blessed in your work Remember me to Mrs. W. & the girls
H V Cyr

Note: list on envelope back shows: bread, salt foot (pork?), borax, soda, frosting sugar, raisins, 1 salmon, onions, yellow soap. Front of envelope also used for notes: Meat - \$1.80, watch .35, laundry, shirts, dark mahog stain for desk, pay bills, boot stitches, flash lt., cash checks, etc.

Hidden By Time

by D.A. Knowles

The washboard leans
By the attic door
Next to the flatiron
Needed No more
Their labors completed
Long in the past,
They rest in the shadow
The icebox has cast
Like so many soldiers
Lying at rest,
Who rose to their duty
And gave it their best.
There are no others
The likes of them
Their sight gives me
Solace, now and again.

Rusting Quietly

by Neoma Reed

A million furrows plowed,
A thousand acres tilled,
Grasped by a hundred men
Whose weary hands are stilled.

Pulled by a team of mules,
Labeled a horse-drawn plow,
Replaced by modern tools,
Timeworn steel's honored now.

Reclaimed the old relic
Sits in granddaughter's yard;
It gives focal point
Symbolically stands guard.

How quaint! By all admired,
Long ignored shamefully,
Primitive Implement
Rusts, stoic in dignity.

Charlie Gravelin was Mr. Purgatory Chasm for 44 years



Charlie Gravelin

I was born in 1910 in Connecticut and I remember going to kindergarten for one year and then my father died in the middle of the summer and my grandfather came over. He owned the farm up the road around the bend on the way to the Blue Jay restaurant. His name was Herman Kupfer, he was a well educated man, he came from Germany. He was a teacher at Worcester Technical Institute. He apprenticed as a machinist in Germany for fifteen years and learned the trade. My grandfather told us that we would have to come to Sutton and live with him on the farm. Well that was alright with me.

I came to the farm when I was seven years old and I had to go to school up in Sutton center. It was two miles from my grandfathers farm to Sutton center. I went to the old High School. Then I went to Putnam Hill School and that was nearer to the farm. They had to open up that school because they had so many kids. The Shaw kids had to walk to school and we'd meet where they came out from their lane and we'd walk to school together.

If you went to school in the morning you stayed at school all day. If it snowed two feet on the ground the school kept its doors closed and you stayed there all day and sometimes you went home with the snow pretty deep. They never plowed roads then. They didn't know what plowing was. You never saw a car or truck from the first of December till March, and then you'd see a car or truck from Millbury. All winter long you didn't see only just a horse and sled or a sleigh. It was wonderful. I'm glad I grew up at the time I did.

It was hard on the farm. You got up before breakfast and you went out in the barn and you did this and you did that. At 8 o'clock they told you that you had better get going to school and that took about twenty minutes to get to the school from the farm. I never had to milk the cows but I had to do everything else. I had to knock the hay down from the loft and get silage down from the silo and feed it to the cows.

My uncle Herman, he carried milk into Worcester for Salmonson. He had two horses and if the going was a little bad we'd put on four horses and then a

few times we had to put on two more horses and we had a six team. I had to drive them when it was so cold you didn't have the clothes you have today to keep warm. I had felt boots and they kept my feet warm. We collected three layers of eight quart milk cans on the sleigh. Some of those times there was a blizzard and you had six horses to drive and you'd have three reins in each hand and your hands would be so cold that you didn't know what you had in your hands. My uncle would get on and drive and I'd get off and run behind the sled to warm up and he took turns with me doing the same thing all the way to Worcester. Those were cold days.

Purgatory

The first time I went down to Purgatory when I was a kid I rode my bicycle down the cow path and that tells you the kind of road it was. In 1919 the state established the Purgatory Chasm State Reservation and I remember Herbert Ray, Dr. Johnson, and Willard Burnap were Commissioners. Their terms were three years.

I came to Purgatory on January 2, 1939. I helped to build the pavilion down there. I got there just after the 1938 hurricane and trees were down everywhere. Harry Dodge and Turner had a portable sawmill set up in the road. Paul Eaton and Ralph Hunts' oxen were skidding logs to the saw mills. There were three or four million feet of lumber cut here. They sold firewood at \$7.00 a cord delivered. There were fifteen of us cutting up trees. The largest tree that came down was about four feet at the butt. We had to cut all that wood with two man crosscut saws. There weren't chain saws back then. Then we replanted the area with white pine, red pine and scotch pine.

One morning we were working over by the fireplaces and we heard this terrible, terrible howl and I wondered what in the world that was and I looked up and on a ledge above us there was a great big animal. He was a dirty grey and he had a big round belly and a big head. He was over three feet long and the howls he made would make your hair stand on end. I didn't know what it was and I sure wouldn't want to tangle with it. I went home that night and I looked through some of my animal books and it turns out that it was a Timber Wolf. It seems

that they don't stay in one place and they travel from place to place and we never saw him again.

One time we had a fellow who lived in a cave. It was a man who came from Holliston and I came down one Saturday and I started a fire and I was feeding the birds and there was a bang at the door and there was a young fellow about thirty years old. I invited him in to warm up by the fire and he said he was camping down in the chasm and I said we didn't allow camping without a permit and he said well could I give him a permit.

I figured that winter was coming on and that he wouldn't stay very long. He said I should come over and he would show me where he was camping. So a little while later I went over and we climbed down and under and he had a bed roll and a lantern, a couple of pecks of potatoes and enough groceries to fill a pickup truck. He was going to stay all winter. I told him he couldn't stay there and I went back to work. A little while later some Scouts went down thru the chasm and he threatened them with a gun and they came back and told me about it.

Well I got on the phone and called Ed Lacroft and I told him that there was a guy camping down here who says he's going to live in a cave down here but he's not because we're going to take him out of there. The police came down and some more came from Whitinsville and they said you go down in the hole and get him to come out. So I figured that since he knew me nothing would happen and I went down and while I was talking to him the cops came up behind him and got a hold of him. This was at the time of the Red Alert and the guy was scared that the Russians were coming so he was camping there.

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You will find a brief history, the 1850 census, cemeteries, photos of our buildings, pictures of Museum artifacts and the Memories of Civil War Soldier Herbert A. Kimball

Our email address is holzwarthp@aol.com and we can be reached at **508-865-1609**