

Sutton Historical Society Bulletin



December 9, 2007, 2007 – Volume 45, No. 3
Kate Hutchinson, Editor-in-Chief
Malcolm Pearson, Editor Emeritus

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from SHS Bulletin, 1983

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Sutton Historical Society Officers:

President: Wally Baker
Vice President: Cheryl Bonin
*Recording Secretary: Darlene
Belisle*
Corresponding Secretary:
Chris Sinacola
Treasurer: Ellie Hutchinson
Historian: Johanne Walker
Curator: Paul Brosnihan

Upcoming Sutton Historical Society Programs:

December 31, 2007 – Annual
"Last Night" celebration by the
Sutton Independent Artillery.
Sherman Blacksmith Shop,
11:00 PM

March 4 – Antique Appraisal
Night, Sutton Senior Center
with professional appraisers
from Skinner's Antiques. \$5
per item.

A Message from the President

As we end the year, I want to invite our members to attend the "Last Night", a cannon firing at the Blacksmith Shop. This will commence about 11:00 PM and will be conducted by members of the Sutton Artillery.

A special thanks should be given to all the volunteers who give their time, talents and energy to the activities of the society during the year. An event that some members may not be aware of is that the Sutton Fifth Graders tour the Blacksmith shop, the cannon shed and the museum each year. Carl Hutchinson, Steve Colonies and Fran Donnelly take time off from their work to make the presentations.

Thanks to the Millbury Credit Union, the Society was able to participate in the Chain of Lights December first. There were approximately 175 visitors to the Blacksmith shop.

A very successful Antique show was held on the commin in September and will be repeated September 20, 2008. We will need volunteers to handle the crowds, take tickets, help the patrons etc. There is a complete schedule of next year's events listed in this bulletin. We hope that you will attend them. If there is anything of a historical nature that you think should be included, please let me know at 508-865-4135 or patwal@charter.net. I hope everyone has a happy and healthy New Year.

Wally

A Message from the Editorial Staff

We will be recycling articles from the older bulletins in the next coming bulletins. If you have a particular article that you would like to see please contact Wally Baker and we will try to locate it.

As always, we welcome any submissions from all the members. It is not always easy to put together a bulletin and help from any quarter is appreciated.

The Sutton Town Farm – Charles M. Plummer – reprinted from the Sutton Historical Society
Bulletin, February 1983

In the late 1800's and early 1900's before the advent of nursing homes, towns throughout New England provided facilities for the care of the destitute. These facilities were known under various names such as "Town Asylum", "Poor Farm", "Alms House", and "Town Farm." The Sutton Town Farm was purchased in 1837 according to the Town History and remained active until early 1940.

My grandparents, Erastus and Louisa Plummer, were in charge of the farm from 1898 to 1907 and from 1912 to 1923. I do not know the exact acreage of the farm, but would estimate that it had about 150 acres with about two-thirds in cultivated land and the balance in pasture. The land was approximately one mile north of West Sutton on Town Farm Road.

The buildings on the farm consisted of a long two-story frame building, one end of which was for the Warden and his family and the other end for the poor and crippled of the town. In the earlier days, mental patients were also confined at the "Town Farm" as there were three or four rooms with barred windows and doors. During the time I can remember these were never used.

The building had no modern conveniences other than running water which was piped from a wooden tank high up in the barn across the Town Farm Road. This tank was filled by a small steam driven pump that was located about three hundred feet below and south of the barn. I used to watch my grandfather "fire up" this little steam engine and when steam pressure was right, turn it on. I expect this little red and polished brass engine is now reposing in some "dump" in Sutton.

The barn was large with room for 25 to 30 cows, a bull (usually mean) and four horses plus room to store enough hay to feed the animals. There was also a large silo and a room that had a cement water tank to cool the milk. Several pigs were raised each year, some of

which eventually provided ham, bacon, etc. There was also a large flock of chickens which provided eggs and numerous Sunday dinners.

Other buildings were an ice house, which was filled with ice each winter and a large shop, part of which was open on one side to store farm equipment.

While my grandparents were there, the farm was self-supporting to a great extent. Salmonsens Dairy from Worcester would pick up several cans of milk each morning. In the late summer, Grandfather would leave the farmer's market in Worcester with a load of sweet corn, cauliflower, cabbage, etc. and he would return to the farm in time to do the morning milking. All the work on the farm was done with the help of one hired man. One I remember was Ralph Gurney, Sr. Help was also obtained from some of the able-bodied inmates.

I remember two of the inmates very well. One was Mr. Lebo, a blind man who was very kind to us kids. His chores were to keep the wood boxes full in both ends of the house and store wood in the woodshed for winter. This he did very neatly and willingly. Another was Mr. Bassett who was crippled by polio. He worked in the barn.

The cellar of the house had a dirt floor and was usually quite cold. One side was lined with shelves. Here canned goods were stored. The other side had several large bins where apples from a small orchard on the farm were stored for winter use. The other bins contained potatoes, squash, cabbage and other vegetables that could be stored for winter use, all of which was grown on the farm.

In the spring, maple sugar trees were tapped and several gallons of maple syrup would be made. In the early years of the 1900's there were many wild berries which were picked

and made into pies and also canned for later use.

During haying, cutting silage and storing ice, the farmers in the vicinity exchanged labor with each other. After the crops were harvested, and as both ends of the house were heated with wood, my grandfather and his helper would leave for the wood lot after the barn chores were done and cut wood for the following year's wood supply. The wood would be stacked in cord piles and left to dry until the following summer when, as time permitted, it would be hauled to the farm. When all of the wood was at the farm, Ed Leonard, Sr. would be engaged to bring his saw rig to cut it into stove lengths. The saw rig was mounted on a wagon and powered by a one cylinder water-cooled gas engine. At one time

the wagon was pulled by oxen.

Three meals a day were prepared by my grandfather and a hired girl. Everyone in the house ate the same. About the only items that were used in cooking and that were not grown on the farm were flour, sugar salt, coffee, tea and spices. There was one luxury my grandfather indulged in and that was a wheel of New York cheddar cheese, which had to be real "nippy" to please my grand father. Each morning before doing the chores, he had to have a slice of cheese and a couple of doughnuts from a crock that was always kept full by my grandmother. The farmers back in those days were hard working, but seemed to always find time to help out a neighbor.

The Demise of Mr. Isaac Stiles, March 25, 1808

Excerpt from a sermon delivered at Sutton, second parish, at the interment of Mr. Isaac Stiles, March 27, 1808, by Joseph Goffe, A.M.

Reprinted from the Sutton Historical Society Bulletin, June 1979

Mr. Isaac Stiles was a young man of reputable character and agreeable manners and was descended from respectable parents now living in the town of Sutton. He had been for several years, employed at the Blacksmith-works belonging to Elijah and Asa Waters, where his principal business was to grind scythes, which he performed with neatness and dispatch. He had lately hung a new and large grindstone, which was found, but not the strongest kind used for grinding. Upon this stone which was of sharp and good quality, he had ground for several days, without the least appearance of any danger which is not common in such business.

On the morning of the 25th of March he had ground about a dozen of scythes before breakfast; and then returned to his work about 9 o'clock in good health and spirits and intent upon performing a profitable day's work. It is thought he drew the gate a little higher than usual, and the pond being somewhat raised by a rain which had lately fallen, the rotary motion of the stone must have been increased to a degree which it had never reached before. He then, it appears, took a scythe in his hand, and either as he was placing, or had placed himself in a position to grind, but before he began the stone burst and he was instantly killed.

There were several men in the works at the time, but as no human eye was upon him at the fatal moment, the progress of the sad catastrophe is not certainly known; and as there might have been several strokes sufficient to extinguish life, it is not certainly known by which effect it was produced; probably they all concurred in the event. Mr. Stiles was quickly seen lying on the floor a few feet distant from where he sat to grind with about one fourth part of the stone which weighted four hundred and thirty-nine pounds, leaning on his head. This part of the stone seem to have been thrown, in a quite elevated direction about ten feet high against the timbers of the shop where it broke a large oaken brace, indented the beam and thence returned in an oblique direction to the place where the body lay.

All the bones on one side of his head were broken in, either from the stone as it burst or the timbers behind him, against which he must have been thrown with great violence as the blood was to be seen sprinkled on the side of the shop.

His body was much bruised in several places but the stroke which he received on the head was what proved immediately fatal. He was seen to gasp but once or twice after the stone was removed from his head.

This accident (if it may be called) appears to have been purely providential. Not the least shadow of blame, or even carelessness can be justly attached to any individual living. From what can be learned, the immediate cause of the stone's breaking must have been its being too tightly wedged with seasonal timber on the spindle in the center. The increasing strain here, arising from the swelling of the wedges, and the swifter motion of the stone which has been mentioned, apparently was sufficient to account for its bursting at that time. It is hoped that those who may hang large stones in the future for the purpose of grinding by water will be cautious on these two points.

Thus died, in an instant, in the 25th year of his age, a young man of industrious habits, promising abilities, and agreeable prospects, leaving a wife and one child, parents, brethren and friends, to lament his sudden and untimely exit. May they be comforted and otherwise warned. His funeral was attended the next Lord's Day at the house of Deacon Elijah Waters where the afternoon service was performed to an auditory unusually numerous, collected on the solemn occasion.

First Annual Sutton Historical Society Antique Show Success!

Thanks to all of our volunteers who helped to make this first year fundraiser as success for the Historical Society. Thanks to the expertise and yeoman efforts of Cheryl Bonin, the Sutton Historical Society raised nearly four thousand dollars, gross and netted three thousand dollars. As this event was so financially beneficial to the Society, we have decided to make it an ongoing event, possibly replacing the Flea Market at the Blacksmith Shop. As times progress, so must the people who are stewards of the legacy started by those who founded the Sutton Historical Society. This takes the commitment and effort of all our members, both in spirit and in time.

We appreciate all the hard work that is done by those who step up to the plate.

SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2008 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

December 31, 2007 – Annual “Last Night” Celebration, hosted by the Sutton Independent Artillery, featuring “Old Ben” firing at midnight. Sherman Blacksmith Shop, 11:00 PM Carl Hutchinson 508-865-3010

February 5, 2008 – BOD meeting only, all members welcome. Hutchinson Home, 208 Burbank Road, Sutton, 7:30 PM 508-865-3010

March 4, 2008 - Antique Appraisal Night, Sutton Senior Center. Expert Appraisals at \$5.00 per item. Sutton Senior Center, 7:30 PM – Cheryl Bonin 508-865-1329

April Meeting 2008 – Date to be determined. Field trip to Museum of Work and Culture, Woonsocket, RI - Wally Baker 508-865-4135

May 18, 2008, Concert on the Sutton Common featuring live music by folk band Plainfolk with original ballads about local places 7:00 PM 508-865-3010

June 3, 2008 – Show and tell/ Pot luck supper Eight Lots School House, 6:00 PM Wally Baker 508-865-4135

July 1, 2008 - BOD meeting only, all members welcome. Wally Bakers house, 4C Herbert Drive, Sutton, MA - 508-865-4135

August 5, 2008 - Pot Luck Supper, John Sinacola, beekeeper, Eight Lots schoolhouse, 6:00 PM

September 20, 2008 – Sutton Historical Society Antique Show, Sutton Common. 10 to 4. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!! Cheryl Bonin 508-865-1329

October 4, 2008 – Gravestone Girls, rubbing and history in Sutton Center Burial Ground, 508-865-3010 (Date subject to change.)

November 11, 2008 – BOD meeting only, all members welcome, Polly’s Antiques, Sutton Center, 7:30 PM

December 2, 2008 – Annual Christmas Party and Pot Luck Dinner/Yankee Swap. Cheryl Bonin, 650 Central Turnpike, Sutton, 508-865-3129

ANNUAL "LAST NIGHT" NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION

**THE MEMBERS OF THE SUTTON INDEPENDENT ARTILLEY AND "OLD BEN"
CORDIALLY INVITE ALL THE MEMBERS AND GUESTS TO ATTEND
THE ANNUAL WELCOMING IN OF THE YEAR 2008**

**M. M. SHERMAN BLACKSMITH SHOP
SINGLETON AVENUE, SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS
MONDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2007 AT 11:00 P.M.**

FIRE, HOT CIDER, GOOD COMPANY AND CONVERSATION PROVIDED.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
CARL R. HUTCHINSON, GUN CAPTAIN, 2007
(FIRING PERMIT APPLIED FOR AND RECEIVED)**

Wally Baker (508-865-4135)

Carl Hutchinson at (508-865-3010).

Sutton Historical Society
4 Uxbridge Road,
Sutton, MA 01590

RETURN TO: