

Under the Hump

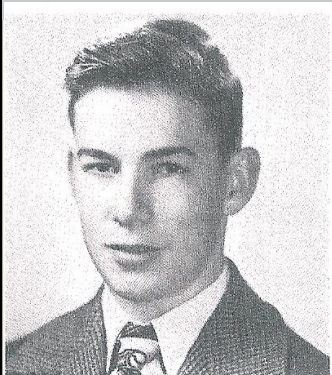
SOCIETY BUSINESS

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 14
meeting at CBMS,
7 pm

- Join us at the meeting and enjoy the video about sugaring in VT.
- Town Meeting is right around the corner. Please see information on this page.

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS SOCIETY MEMBER?



Last Issue's Photo:
Gordon Wood



Next Meeting

Following the business meeting, we will show a video about sugaring in Vermont featuring Burr Morse. Refreshments will be served and a time to chat with friends and neighbors as always.

Memberships expired December 31, 2011. If you haven't paid your dues by the end of the one-month grace period, you will be removed from the membership and distribution list as of Feb. 1, 2012.

Town Meeting 2012

The Historical Society will sell coffee and snacks in the morning and lunch at Town Meeting again this year. Please bring a hot dish, salad or dessert (please, no nuts of any kind or foods made with peanut oil, per school kitchen rules). This has been a popular and financially successful event for us for the past couple of years. We look forward to the possibilities this year. Thank you from the Food Committee! If you have any questions, please call Mary Ethel Welch @ 244-7558.

Historical Society Calendar Sales

Many thanks go to the six locations that sold the Historical Society Calendar for us which were: Duxbury Country Store, Depot Beverage, Waterbury Public Library, Waterbury Pharmacy, Billings Mobil, and Stowe Street Emporium. Without them this fundraiser would not be possible. We had record sales and still have calendars available at the Stowe Street Emporium and Waterbury Pharmacy until February 4th.

250th Celebration Committee Report

The 250th Celebration Committee held a meeting on December 7, 2011, with seven persons in attendance.

The Duxbury Historical Society will be the sponsor of the celebration so it was decided that Mark Morse will assume the treasurer position for this committee in addition to his treasurer's duties for the Society.

Sub-committee budgets for each activity were discussed. The T-shirt design and quantity was decided and ordered. Post office stamp (pictorial) was discussed. A design is to be decided on with the Moretown post office to make a stamp that could be used for 30 days. The relocation of war monuments and flag pole were discussed and a sub-committee was elected. George Welch has agreed to design a float for the 2012 July 4th parade. Vince Frankie was contacted regarding videoing our celebration.

This committee is filled with enthusiasm and ideas to make our 250th celebration a success!!

Stephanie Koonz, chairperson ~ Kelly Welch, secretary

SOCIETY BUSINESS

Archival/Preservation Committee Report

Members: Eulie Costello, Debbie Sweetser, Lori Morse, Bonnie Morse, Mark Morse

The committee met on 11/05/11, 12/10/11, and 01/14/12 from 9-11 am. During those meetings we catalogued recently donated items. We also have purchased a laptop computer and have begun the long process of getting much of our information stored in digital format. This includes our genealogical files and scanning our photo collections. Those efforts will be continuing throughout 2012. All the family files beginning with the letter "B" have been transcribed and digitized. This is a very lengthy process and will be ongoing for months until we have all the family files completed.

Research Requests and Assistance

Don Welch presented three separate programs to 5th graders at Crossett Brook Middle School during the last quarter. The first was on the early history of the site now occupied by CBMS. The second was regarding the Alice Meaker murder. The third was regarding the State Hospital Dairy Farm. Genealogical requests were also provided for the Lavanway, Blair, Sinnot, Griffith, Corliss, Boyden, Hogg, Cady, and Armington families.

Monetary Donations

Theresa & Gordon Wood—Newsletter Support * Richard Lindsley—Research Assistance/Material
Ames & Todd Hill * Dick Charland * James Hanley * Jerry Paige * Kelley Taft

Donation Artifacts/Documents

- Old School Files—Town of Duxbury
- Three Notebooks of Duxbury Historical Homes—Town of Duxbury
- Photocopy of 1889 Washington County Gazetteer—Town of Duxbury
- Blueprints of Crossett Hill Bridge Constructed 2011—S.D. Ireland Co.
- 1903 Morse Genealogy book—Marianna Towne

Duxbury Historical Society's Flood Relief Effort

On August 28, 2011, tropical storm Irene left Vermont in absolute ruins. Our community, because the Winooski River drains into the Lake Champlain watershed, was no exception. During the height of this storm, the overflowing banks of the Winooski River devastated the low lying areas adjacent to this narrow valley.

The sad news spread so fast that the next morning our family was able take the generator, sump pumps and hoses and pump out a cellar on a home in Randall Street. Two days after pumping and carrying furniture upstairs, along with hauling pails of mud out of the cellar, we moved on to the Wesley Methodist Church where we cleared the dining room, kitchen, furnace, and storage rooms, ahead of the carpenters who stripped the walls to the foundation.

Arriving home that fourth evening, we received a message from The Duxbury Town Select Board, requesting that we organize a Duxbury flood relief effort, located at the town garage and office. Without hesitation, the members of The Duxbury Historical Society sprang into action and opened the town garage and office doors that very next morning. With a barrage of volunteers to accept supplies, food, and clothing, we started serving the victims immediately.

The third day of the relief, we teamed up with The Red Cross to prepare and deliver lunches and dinners to homes. We served 600 meals in 16 days from the town office. We continued this effort as The Salvation Army accepted this responsibility from The Red Cross. The food deliveries eventually ceased but a dinner each day continued at St. Leo's Hall.

Our relief effort continued at our town center for a total of 16 days. This included door to door visits and obtaining lists of individual needs, collecting the items at the relief station and delivering the items back to the homes. When we ceased the flood relief we relocated our clothing and cleaning supplies to Sunshine Hall (next to the South Duxbury Church). We operated from this site until late November, where the hall was opened on weekends for people to collect the items they needed.

Our Historical Society members and outside volunteers and donations were a huge reason for our success. In total, our monetary contributions alone to our relief effort exceeded \$1600. One important source of donations came from our sister town of Duxbury, Massachusetts. We also received support from the Meriden and Wallingford, Connecticut area. These two sources donated clothing, toys, cleaning supplies, monetary donations, and gift cards.

With an unlimited staff of committed volunteers, many hours and days of operations, a huge amount of nicely-presented donations, a genuinely thoughtful and sympathetic Select Board, the effort was truly a great success.

~The Don Welch Family

D U X B U R Y I N T H E C I V I L W A R

Chapter V

New Hope for '62 — The Peninsula Campaign

By Mark H. Morse

As 1862 dawns the Union, leaders are hoping to rebuild their army for the upcoming year. Vermont has answered the call to duty and Duxbury has supplied its share of volunteer recruits. Last year's battles have been hard on the Union forces having suffered several losses of men killed, wounded, missing, or captured. It is hoped that while camped in winter quarters, a revitalizing of the regiments will result in a better prepared force for the upcoming campaigns.

Duxbury had already supplied 29 men for the effort in 1861. It was apparent that the new year of fighting would bring more heartache for family members back home but little did anyone know just how devastating the carnage would be in the upcoming 12 months. Although enlistments had slowed in the early months of 1862, by summer as the heavy fighting began and the need for more troops was required, the Duxbury boys once again came through for their country. By the end of 1862, twenty-eight more men had enlisted from this tiny town.

Gustavus Young was the first recruit in 1862. Living on Crossett Hill with his wife Nancy, a son Alfred, and two daughters Ann and Helen, he enlisted on January 13. Twenty-six years old and a farmer and carpenter by trade, he was assigned to Company 'E' of the 8th Vermont Infantry. On September 9th he was captured during battle at Vicksburg, VA, however, he was fortunate enough to be paroled just two months later on November 13th. He served out the remainder of his enlistment, mustering out on June 22, 1864. The 1890 Veterans Schedule indicates he had been shot in the right knee, arm, and breast but it doesn't indicate in which battle(s) these injuries occurred. After returning from the war, he and his wife Nancy had three more children and lived in Waterbury for some time. Records from 1890 indicate Gustavus moving west and settling in or near Genoa, Nebraska. He died sometime after 1892 and is buried in the Valley View cemetery in Genoa, NE.

Not until mid-July did more men enlist from Duxbury. Prior to July, the Union forces had been involved in several altercations with the Confederate army. In March of 1862, Union General McClellan had amassed a large force which included the recently formed Vermont Brigade to take on the campaign trail. The Vermont Brigade had been organized in late 1861 consisting of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th regiments. The 1st VT regiment had previously completed its enlistment requirement of 3 months however some of those men reenlisted in other regiments. It was not standard procedure to assemble brigades consisting of regiments from one state because

it was felt by the government that the competition between different State regiments would improve the qualities of the entire brigade and battle casualties should be shared by regiments from several states to avoid one state suffering all the losses. However, General William F. Smith was allowed to create the Vermont Brigade and it was the only brigade in the Union army to bear the name of a State. The Brigade was under the command of Brigadier General W.T.H. Brooks of the 3rd Infantry, United States Army. A West Point graduate and Mexican war veteran, at age 42 he was well suited for the position which he held for one and a half years. Though not a Vermonter himself, having been born in Ohio, he had ties to Vermont as his father had been born in Montpelier. One distinction the brigade had early on was its high number of men unfit for duty due to illness. The brigade consisting of nearly 5,000 men had close to 1,100 unable to perform their duties while camped in winter quarters in the early months of 1862. Poor sanitary conditions and crowded camp facilities were the main contributors to the sickness. By spring conditions had improved and the majority of the men were ready for regular duty.

The Vermont Brigade received orders on March 9 to pack 2 days rations and be ready to move out. The men were glad to finally be headed out after months in camp. McClellan had at his disposal 175,000 troops to face off against Confederate Joe Johnston with a suspected force of at least 100,000. Johnston actually had less than 50,000 troops at his disposal (McClellan usually overestimated his enemy's strength).

The troops met with little conflict before entering Lee's Mill around April 4th. The weather was very warm and as the brigade approached, they came in contact with Confederate pickets which, unlike previous encounters, stood their ground and began firing. There were large earthworks visible in front on the Union forces which numbered approximately 58,000 (having divided up earlier to reconnoiter other areas). It immediately became apparent they were facing a major force of the confederate army. McClellan, ever cautious, chose not to attack and by April 6 President Lincoln urged him to advance. McClellan continued to wait even though his troops were in continual engagement with skirmishers. Not until the 16th of April did the full battle take shape.

Lee's Mill was the first time the Army of the Potomac had assaulted an entrenched army. The confederate forces had excavated several trenches and were willing to allow the opposing Union Army to take the offensive while they were well protected by the cover below ground level. Several well-armed rifle pits as well as a 24-pound howitzer and two smaller cannons surrounded the perimeter of a large open field known as the Garrow farm. In the center of this field there stood three chimneys, all that remained of a burned out farmhouse which had been

DUXBURY IN THE CIVIL WAR

destroyed weeks earlier by Confederate General Magruder's troops. The field sloped down to a small river which had been dammed (Dam #1) creating a causeway to the wooded area beyond where the confederates were encamped and continuing to improve on the dam structure and their breastworks. On the morning of April 16 an order had been received to move the Union forces against the enemy forces in an effort to disrupt the progress on the dam and defenses. By 7:30 a.m. the forces had become engaged. Most of the action had taken place by the opposing sides firing across the river at each other. The Confederate howitzer had been struck and disabled by Union artillery. The other two cannons had been held at bay by Union sharpshooters. By late morning it appeared that the order to disrupt the confederate building efforts had been successful and most of the firing had ceased. It appeared to the Union officers that the confederates were about to retreat as they could see few if any soldiers in the rifle pits, also what appeared to be a wooden cannon decoy stood atop a redoubt, and wagons in the rear of the enemy lines appeared to be readying to leave the area.

By noon General McClellan had spoken with his staff officers and concluded that his army should move to occupy the confederate works. Orders were given stating such as long as it didn't result in a general engagement with the enemy and to withdraw if such was the case. Artillery pieces were placed at the top of the slope leading to the rivers edge with Vermont regiments guarding each flank. Under artillery cover fire a small detachment of infantry from the 3rd Vermont would cross the river below the dam and if it found the rifle pits empty or lightly defended, a larger detachment of troops would cross and occupy the Confederate rifle pits. The 3rd Vermont's skirmishers met resistance immediately upon approaching the rivers edge and withdrew to woods as it was evident that the rifle pits were still well-manned. Additional members of the 3rd Vermont were assigned to assist the first group and a line of infantry was instructed to form and cross the river holding their rifles and ammo over their heads. If they were successful in ousting the enemy from the rifle pits they were instructed to cheer and wave handkerchiefs indicating such. At about 3:00 p.m. Union artillery opened up on the confederate positions with return fire from the confederates which lasted only a few minutes. With the confederate artillery silent the order to advance was issued and the troops began crossing the river. Although some men fell during the crossing due to tripping over debris on the river bottom and despite heavy enemy musket fire, the wave of troops made it to the other side. They were successful in driving the enemy from the rifle pits and were jubilantly pursuing the rebels as they retreated to their next line of defense but were commanded to stop and occupy the rifle pits and wait for reinforcements before continuing. The men cheered and

yelled back across the river, waving their handkerchiefs signifying their success as they waited for other units to join them.

It soon became apparent that the confederates were not running away. In fact, it became clear that they were amassing a force to counter-attack. Members of the 15th North Carolina regiment charged down the hill toward the rifle pits but were repelled due to several casualties from the Union rifle fire. Two Georgia regiments were advancing on the Union left and were able to maintain its position due to the fact that no reinforcements had yet been sent to support the Union soldiers defending the rifle pits. Soon, units from Virginia entered the fray and the men in the rifle pits were taking musket and artillery fire which was having a devastating effect. Captain Pingree sent multiple messengers back asking his superiors for reinforcements or permission to retreat but no reply was received. As the battle raged on Captain Pingree was twice wounded but refused to retreat despite fearing his men would be overrun. Until he received orders to the contrary he was committed to holding his position at all costs. Finally his last messenger returned with permission from Colonel Hyde to withdraw his men. Capt. Pingree, unable to walk on his own, was carried by his men back across the river under heavy enemy musket and artillery fire. Of the 192 men who crossed the river, only 100 returned unhurt from the 40-minute engagement, many of the wounded being carried on the backs of their comrades. Had reinforcements been moved up it is possible that they might have been successful in holding the rifle pits on the confederate side of the river.

The confederates had two or three lines of breastworks behind the rifle pits. They also had additional dams along the river and they could affect a raising or lowering of water levels in the river by opening or closing the sluiceways on top of the dams. With several brigades of soldiers contained within these breastworks, they were well equipped to hold the position for quite some time. At 5:00 p.m. the battle is renewed. More troops are sent across the river below the dam again however, this time the water is much deeper as the sluice has been closed on the dam further downstream. This time several companies are entered onto the field of battle from frontal and flank positions. The result turns into tremendous loss. Many men are blown to bits by enemy artillery as the musket fire was incessant. Regiment and company officers were being lost to wounds or death, enlisted men dropping all around. By nightfall the Union forces were all in retreat and the Confederates were satisfied they had successfully repulsed the attack. Union artillery continued to fire for a while longer but it had little consequence. Though some artillery fire continued back and forth over the river for two more days the battle was essentially over.

Colonel Levy of the 2nd Louisiana approached the

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Union line two days after the battle under a flag of truce regarding the disposition of the Union dead on the battlefield. He asked a Union officer which unit had initially attacked the rifle pits. He was informed it was a detachment from the 3rd Vermont. Upon which he replied, "It is lucky for us that you did not send over many such detachments."

For many of these Vermont men, it was their first time in battle. For their families back home that would have to mourn their deaths or deal with their loved one's injuries it was a devastating realization of what this war could take from them. Fortunately for those back home in Duxbury no casualties were received by their loved ones in this battle. Thomas and Polly, the parents of Private William Scott of Groton, were not as fortunate as those Duxbury families. Their son, being wounded during the assault on the rifle pits, died the next day. He had been saved from death by execution months earlier when he was pardoned by President Lincoln for sleeping while on guard duty.

The casualties to Vermont regiments at the battle of Lee's Mill also known as Dam #1 or Burnt Chimneys were 44 killed in action, 148 wounded, 21 mortally wounded, for a total of 213. Seven of those listed as wounded were taken prisoner by the enemy. Confederate losses reportedly numbered a total of 75 killed or wounded. The total number of Confederate forces engaged was approximately 16,000 (much less than McClellan had estimated) of which total losses killed or wounded was reported as 75.

Much controversy continues over General McClellan's tactics in disbursement of his forces at this battle as well as several others. Any time there is a lost battle there is an amount of finger-pointing as to who is to blame. McClellan is noted to be reluctant to initiate attack and to follow-up once he has the enemy on the run. Whether this is the case at this battle is still being argued by historians.

By all accounts the Vermont Brigade performed their duties admirably on April 16. They fought fearlessly and met with some initial success before being outmaneuvered by the enemy. Three Medal of Honor medals were awarded to the following men for the gallantry during this battle: Drummer Julian Scott, 3rd Vermont; 1st Sergeant Edward Holton, 6th Vermont; and Captain Samuel Pingree, 3rd Vermont.

Hopes for some major battlefield victories still elude the Union forces. President Lincoln, ever mindful of the morale of the troops and the support of the public, is dependent upon success on the battlefield. To date, he has been disappointed with the results.

Perhaps the upcoming months will be different.

Sources: Duxbury Historical Society – Family Archives; US Census; Vermontcivilwar.org; [Vermont in the Civil War](http://VermontintheCivilWar.com), Benedict, Chapter 11.

T O U R I N M U S I C A

In 1977 a feasibility study of a small hydroelectric system was done at Tourin Musica in conjunction with the Vermont Energy Office. The information below is a reprint of the historical background section of the document that was produced.

The site where Tourin Musica is presently located has an interesting history. Between 1773-1797, the family of Ebenezer W. Corse settled in the Town of Duxbury, Vermont. Corse was born in 1771 in Greenfield, Massachusetts, and migrated north with his family during the Indian raids in Massachusetts. Sometime during the 1820's, it is told that Corse built the first log milldam in Duxbury, utilizing hydropower from what is now known as Crossett Brook. The sawmill was purportedly powered initially by an undershot waterwheel which was soon thereafter changed to an overshot wheel, as the original design failed to work due to an insufficient water head.

Between the 1820's and the 1850's, the original mill site was used for a variety of purposes. From the bits and pieces of information we have gathered, it appears that the old mill site once was used as a gristmill, then later as a cider mill. Sometime in the early years of its operations, the location of the mill area was referred to as Mut-

ton Hollow because of the wool processing that supposedly had once been a function of this same mill site.

Sometime in the 1850's, the mill again turned to the production of lumber. It would appear that about this time, new management took over the mill and output soared. One major reason for the improved production was the installation of new waterwheels to replace the huge 24-foot overshot waterwheels. Another important factor accounting for the mill's prosperity was the arrival of the railroad to this area in December 1849. By this time other mills had been built, and the demand for all types of lumber was growing rapidly.

The railroad was the medium by which it could be delivered. Typical products of the lumbering industry were bridge beams, clapboards, pickets, shingle timber, and barn timbers. Chunk wood was also important, as wood fuel stops were required approximately every 30 miles by the steam trains of that day for fueling the boilers. It is

TOURIN MUSICA

interesting to note that to produce this lumber, mill workers received about \$11-\$14 per month in 1850. The burgeoning demands for lumber during the Civil War increased their wages to \$30 per month.

In 1887, the mill was sold by the heirs of Ebenezer Corse. It changed hands 11 times before the present owners, the Tourins, became the twelfth owners. Each time a new owner purchased the operation, improvements were made to increase its production. In November 1886, the mill burned to the ground and was later sold and rebuilt in 1887. The records indicate that the mill output around 1888-1889 was 500,000 board feet of lumber per year. Such items as hardwood flooring, chair stock, and dressed lumber were the prime products during this period. Records mention that the mill was producing wood for "cars", which probably refers to railroad cars.

Sometime in the period between 1890 and 1918, steam was introduced to power machinery, especially during the winter season, when the water level was low. In 1918, the old log milldam was replaced by a concrete design by Cooley Construction Co. of Waterbury, Vermont. This dam still exists, having survived both the 1927 and 1973 floods. The steam boilers, unfortunately, were lost in the 1927 flood and were not replaced.

In 1932, the mill burned for a second time, and was rebuilt by the owner, who added a semi-diesel generator to provide a more reliable power source for use during peak operation. In its prime, the mill employed 30 men, 10 per shift on three eight-hour shifts per day. Between 1930 and the mid-1950's, the mill's output fluctuated depending on the length of the spring high water season. In 1955 the mill converted to electricity as its source of power and has relied on it from then until the present. The current primary use of the facility is the making of historical instruments (harpsichords and violas da gamba).

In 1971 the Tourins purchased the mill site and changes once again began to take place. In early 1975, Jack Tourin of the Tourin Musica approached Forrest E. Orr, the Director of the Vermont State Energy Office, with a proposal to examine the dam site at the Tourin Musica to determine what were the problems and opportunities for renovating and operating a small hydroelectric dam site project. Initially, a number of legal problems had to be solved before construction could even start at the dam site. Finally, the legal obstacles were overcome and the award for the contract was made on June 30, 1975. On the basis of the initial proposal, the State Energy Office and the New England Regional Commission worked



The Collins and Meeker sawmill and lumber yard in operation in the early 1950s.

TOURIN MUSICA

with the Tourin Musica to secure a small grant of \$8,500 to assist the Tourins financially in renovating the dam site and putting the electric generation system in working order.

The Tourins themselves aided substantially in the writing of this report and contributed a major portion of it which deals with the supply and technical challenges faced by them in bringing the Tourin Musica dam site to a point where it could produce a significant amount of Tourin Musica's needed electricity. Various press releases and articles by the Tourins themselves show an early level of optimism about the project. Their portion of this report shows that at times their optimism was hard to sustain during the period in which the renovation took place. As this report goes to press, the Tourins are quite elated and optimistic with the results achieved and particularly with the long range outlook for viable hydropower systems in Vermont and New England. The system was completed and put in working order in September 1976, and on October 8, 1976 the project was officially dedicated.

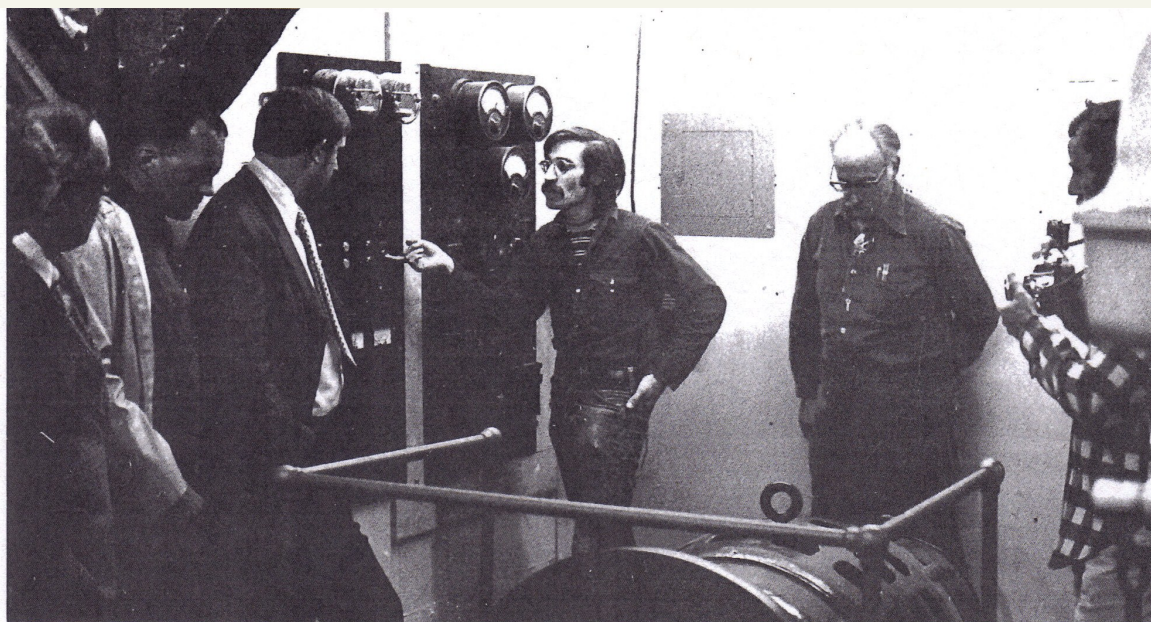


The diesel engine building and garage with collapsed drying shed in the foreground.



The old Demeritt chair mill around 1970, later to become the Tourin Musica studio and residence.

TOURIN MUSICA



Peter Tourin (center) explains control panel operations while Jack Tourin (next right) contemplates the generator.



New bridge over Crossett brook replaces the old one washed out in the June 1973 flood.

THE ICE POND ON WELCH FARM

The Coming of the Ice Pond on the James Lewis and Mabel Welch Farm
as told to me by my father, Ferd C. Welch

By Don Welch

About 1925 my dad and two of his next younger brothers, Howard and Jim (George's dad) had a slew of friends on Crossett Hill, all about their age. They were: J. Crossett Shonio, Bert Clark, Harvey and Ralph Morse (Wade's dad), two of the Keene boys, and brothers Claude and Roy Phillips. All of these young men were very normal, and appreciated a good time, especially Roy and uncle Howard. They were adept at finding devilry.

Now my grandfather, (J.L.) as most neighbors referred to him, was all for his children having a great childhood and plenty of fun while growing up, however, his first preference was for the work to be done FIRST!!

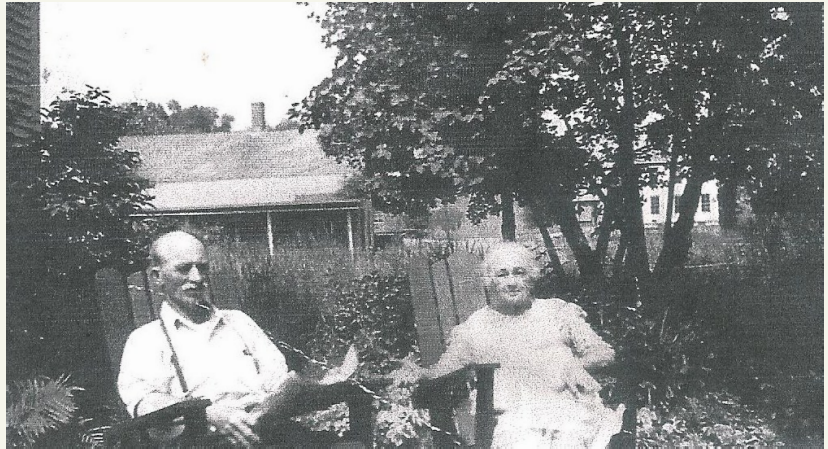
The idea of building a deer camp came to these young men's minds, and where else but up in J.L.'s pasture, just out of sight from the farmhouse, where they could do as they saw fit—and of COURSE, they never even thought of asking permission! So up it went, with a board from here and there, and in business they were, except my grandfather was some excited, especially when my grandmother thought it would be fine—just a passing thing J.L., "let the boys be boys."

Well, J.L. sputtered for some time about that camp and what goes on there with no satisfaction from the household until one afternoon my grandparents returned home from trading in the village to find several young men down in the brook behind the home. In about three steps, he made the some two hundred yards jaunt to confront the situation, only to hear they were constructing a swimming hole for EVERYONE! Adding insult to injury, Howard explained the cattle will also have plenty of water, even in the dry summers. So back to the house J.L. went—disgruntled and discouraged, wondering what next will these boys think of??

As the next fall slowly settled into winter and his sons were away for the day, the camp mysteriously burned to the ground. Speculation and the memories remained in the young men's minds for many years of their old camp. Over time with the young men's changing lives, the swimming hole became idle. My grandfather thought of making this swimming hole an ice pond for the family's use.

He built an ice house to store the ice that was cut in February, which lasted through the summers for the family. He continued to cut and store ice each winter until electricity came to Crossett Hill.

For years now, this little farm has been home to the J.R. and Carol Senning family. They have improved and enlarged J.L.'s ice pond into their own version of a family swimming pond. As the end of the Welch era on this farm evolved, my family was fortunate to receive, from my aunt Bernice McDonald, J.L.'s ice cutting saw and block ice tongs. Now, we've heard J.L.'s side of the story.



James Lewis and Mabel (Collins) Welch



Undated photo of three men cutting ice in Vermont. As you can see, the saws are quite large and the job made easier with more hands.

POTPOURRI

"Old Town Characters"

My neighbor says, amidst a yawn,
 "The old town characters are gone!"
 Time was, I well remember when,
 We had some real distinguished men,
 Who by their great sagacity,
 Or individuality,
 Or sense of humor, Yankee wit,
 Were great—you could depend on it.

One of this ilk earned his name
 And no small measure of local fame
 For things we knew he'd always say,
 Or do, when came Town Meeting Day.
 He'd rise up, really dignified
 When taxes must be ratified,
 And always move, this oracle,
 To just "pass by" the Article.

And one, reputedly, could talk
 Continuously, and never balk
 So long and fast, and glib and free
 Folks said, "he'll preach, you wait and see!"
 And preach he did, and every day,
 About the most unrighteous way
 We broke the Sabbath, and how once
 Such things folks wouldn't countenance.

Each morning when you got the mail
 They'd be there, almost without fail.
 The postal lobby was the place
 They first of all would show their face
 On pretense that some mail had come.
 In half an hour they'd meet with some
 Who'd start an argument, and swear,
 And miss 'em if they wasn't there.

Whenever came a real hub-bub
 This Sidewalk Superintendents' Club
 Was holdin' court, decidin' what
 The Town should do as like as not.
 They'd pay no heed should you deride
 The idea they could things decide,
 But counsel everybody near
 Who'd give 'em even half-an-ear.

The greatest fun of all, for me,
 Was when they got to repartee.
 Some pretty pointed things got said,
 But no one felt offense—instead
 The ones who jeered the loudest jeers
 Were friends, who'd been that way for years.
 For them no day was stared right
 Without they had this morning fight.

The "Old Town Characters" we knew
 Are gone all right—but where's the new?
 My neighbor says it just might be
 The breed is irretrievably
 Defunct and gone; we'll never know
 Such characters as one would go,
 Not to get, but to make the news—
 For none grew up to fill their shoes.

But this conclusion can't be right—
 Folks keep on aging, day and night—
 The thought, somehow, occurs to me,
 We're not as young as we used to be—
 For sure we see things differently
 Than back when we were twenty-three—
 It's possible the young folks see
 "Old Characters" in him—and me!

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The January Thaw

A January Thaw makes sense,
 It helps us say, without pretense,
 That Winter's not bad after all.
 If we had cold from end-o-Fall
 Way through to Spring we'd have excuse
 To talk of hardship and abuse;
 But rain is such a different touch
 We really can't complain so much.

The date is never twice the same;
 It just warms up and starts to rain
 About mid-Winter, and we know
 It's going to settle lots of snow—
 The rivers free themselves of ice
 And if the roads are not too nice
 Right now, we know the Thaw's the thing
 That saves us trouble in the Spring.

We're apt to say, "It's not so bad,
 This winter's easier'n some we've had,
 What's still ahead is apt to last
 No longer'n what we've now just passed."
 We count the days and realize
 The sun is higher in the skies—
 We're half way through, for that's the law,
 When comes the January Thaw.

'Fore long the old North wind will blow
 And bury us again in snow,
 But meantime here's a short recess
 Which does us good, we all confess,
 Just by the change that comes along,
 Tomorrow's tune's a Winter Song,
 But what of that, we've had a rest,
 It's likely this arrangement's best.

The Month of March, we've known for years,
 Won't end like first the month appears—
 March Lions always switch their tails
 And when they do we're in for gales;
 But this is also Nature's law,
 Which now provides a Winter Thaw
 To even things and let us know
 We won't have floods from melting snow.

And all of this we take in stride—
 Quite sure and confident inside
 That things will work out on a plan
 That's never too unkind to Man.
 We know there's balance in all things.
 The Season's change that Nature brings
 Is sometimes early, sometimes late,
 So we're prepared to sometimes wait.

We're just as sure to get relief
 From other things we term as grief,
 But mostly fail to catch the sign,
 (That's somewhere in each man's design),
 Which bids him rest, against the day
 He'll face a harder, rougher way—
 And so forgets that Nature's Law
 Grants him, likewise, a "Winter Thaw."

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P O T P O U R R I

On Town Meeting

In Granther's day folks had a way
 Of "turning out" Town Meeting Day,
 'Through not by car, with instant heat—
 Freestones, in papers, warmed their feet,
 But tucked in 'neath a "buffalo"
 That bright red sleigh against the snow
 Seemed just as grand, on looking back,
 As this year's brand new Cadillac.

The horse shed back of our Town Hall
 Had 20 stalls. 'Twas far too small.
 It wouldn't half accommodate
 The folks who always got there late.
 But Granther set this day apart,
 And always planned an early start,
 Prepared to argue long and loud
 For savings, with that spendthrift crowd.

Remember how we'd once deplore
 A thing that taxed us three cents more?
 In those days taxes caused alarm,
 "If taxes rose we'd leave the farm!"
 All new "hair-brained schemes" we'd desist,
 And "hold the line" on that Grand List.
 The thing most practical to know
 Was—"Pay Entirely As You Go."

But somewhere there evolved a change.
 Expenses took a wider range,
 And this goes on—there's no release—
 Each year our taxes just increase,
 'Though with the increase, as a rule,
 We build our kids a bigger school,
 Or add more miles of better road
 To carry our new traffic load.

Then came this thing we called a "crime,"
 This tinkerin' with the Good Lord's time!
 We just accept "Daylight" today,
 We know they'll pass it, anyway,
 And hasten on to other things;
 For "Meetin' Day" 'most always brings
 New plans to further raise the tax
 For things our present system lacks.

There'll be some ideas from the floor
 'Bout how the School Board needs some more,
 If we're to pay out, every term,
 What our State Board says teachers earn.
 There's money from the State to match,
 For roads we build, or have to patch—
 This snow—that's up above the fence
 Has raised our Winter Road expense . . .

A truck and plow has broken down,
 We'll need a Grader for the Town,
 The Fire Truck's getting' pretty old,
 We need another, so I'm told—
 Seems like we'll need a Heavenly grant
 To build us that Disposal Plant—
 We gotta have it soon, it seems,
 The State insists we clean the streams. . .

We'll have to bring more water down
 For all these new homes in the Town—
 Their owners have to be "all set"
 For sewer lines we ain't built yet—
 And, always, must we be real sure
 Th' Overseer of the Poor
 Has cash to spend, without disgrace,
 For folks who now live "off the place."

We'll have to raise a new amount
 Of money earmarked "street Account"—
 Police protection will be high,
 There's just no doubt that we shall buy
 A brand new two-way radio
 To keep the tourists going slow—
 They'll build a bridge before they're through—
 And "Lord knows" what they'll want to do!

It's quite important folks turn out
 To learn just what it's all about,
 And have a say in what we spend
 Before the next twelve months shall end.
 Perhaps I'll give my phone a ring
 And see how many I can bring
 To criticize, at this event,
 The way our last year's taxes went.

Complainers have a Holiday,
 For every man can have his say,
 And nowhere can you talk so free
 With guaranteed immunity.
 It's called the Democratic way—
 This right to say what you shall pay;
 You come out with your conscience free,
 But 'bide—by the Majority.

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If you have any comments or contributions for the newsletter we would love to hear from you.

www.DuxburyVT.com

DON'T FORGET THE NEXT MEETING - FEB. 14
CROSSETT BROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL - 7 PM

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