

Under the Hump

SOCIETY BUSINESS

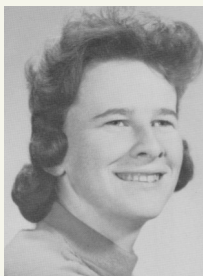
NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- Our annual picnic is August 16th, noon, at the South Duxbury Meeting House. Rain or shine!

DO YOU HAVE A
PHOTO OF A
PERSON OR PLACE
WE CAN USE FOR A
MYSTERY
PHOTO? IF SO,
PLEASE SUBMIT TO
A NEWSLETTER
COMMITTEE
MEMBER TODAY!
THANK YOU!

Last issue's mystery photo:

Patricia (Atwood) Sherman



Our annual picnic will be held on Sunday, August 16th, at noon, at the South Duxbury Meeting House. Rain or shine! Since it will be potluck, please bring a hot dish, salad, or dessert to share. Please remember to bring your own lawn chair, if possible. Beverages and paper products will be provided. There is a port-o-let on site for your convenience. We hope to see you there!

A Priceless Gift: The Welch Archive

Late last fall, the Duxbury Historical Society received an extraordinary gift. Our society president and lifelong Duxbury resident, Don Welch, donated an extensive collection of local artifacts and ephemera detailing the expansive history of our town. In addition to these historical treasures, President Welch has entrusted us with his priceless collection of original notes and research materials used to write Cause of the Will, his comprehensive history of Crossett Hill.

Donnie and his wife, Mary Ethel, recently moved to Berlin, VT. While they may have relocated, Donnie's heart remains firmly in Duxbury, and we are incredibly grateful for his enduring dedication. Our deepest thanks go out to the Welch family for their steadfast leadership and continued support of the Society.

From the Welch Archive: Seth Thomas Parlor Clock

This clock pictured with myself is an eight day Seth Thomas parlor clock. The patent date is 1881. It was originally purchased by Janus Crossett when he lived on his Crossett Hill Farm.



Kelly Welch photo.

For the next three generations this clock chimed on the hour, and also once on the half hour, and stayed in their sitting room.

My grandfather James Lewis Welch was brought up by this family. I believe this clock was handed down to him.

It was then passed to my aunt Mary K. Welch and years later she passed it to myself and my wife, Mary Ethel.

We are pleased that now the Duxbury Historical Society has this clock that has stayed in Duxbury for so many years.

Donnie Welch with the parlor clock.

~Donnie Welch

SOCIETY BUSINESS

Archival/Preservation Committee Report

Members: Lori Morse, Bonnie Morse, Mark Morse

- Updated family files with new information regarding births, deaths, marriages, etc.
- Research assistance on Simeon Wells' family for researcher inquiry from Oregon.
- Research assistance regarding former gas station in South Duxbury for local resident.
- Research assistance regarding the 1790 birth of Moses McPherson for Zimmerman family genealogy project.

Monetary Donations (01/01/2026 thru 06/30/2026)

Bisbee Family * Dan & Lynne Cardozo * Linda Devlin Irrevocable Trust * Marge Gormel

Stephanie Koonz & James Dryden * Mame McKee * Palmisano Giving Account

Josh Welch * Kelly Welch * Donations collected at Society Meetings and Meeting House Canisters

RECIPES TO SHARE

Maple Bran Muffins

3/4 cup maple syrup
2 eggs
1 cup sour cream
2 1/2 cup crushed bran flakes
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

In a medium bowl beat eggs and maple syrup with wire whisk, then beat in bran flakes. Let stand 5 minutes. Beat in sour cream. Stir in flour, baking soda, and walnuts; do not overbeat, batter will be lumpy. Spoon into greased muffin pans. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes.

~Mary Ethel Welch
From the Waterbury Center Community Church cookbook

Lumberjack Chili

1 lb ground beef
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 clove minced garlic
1 (#2) can tomatoes
1 (#2) can kidney beans
1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce
1 Tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon sugar
Salt and pepper to taste

Brown beef, onion, and garlic in 2 Tablespoons of fat, stirring lightly. Mix in all ingredients except beans and simmer gently about 1 hour. Finally stir in beans and simmer 15 minutes longer. Good served with cold buttermilk.

~Louise Welch
From the Waterbury Center Community Church cookbook

Doughnuts

2 eggs, well beaten
5 Tbsp. oleo, melted
1 1/2 cups sugar
2 cups milk
2 tsp. vanilla
1 quart flour (5-6 cups)
1 Tbsp. salt
2 Tbsp. baking powder
2 shakes of cinnamon

Mix and roll out on lightly floured board. Cut and fry at 375 degrees. Drain on paper towels.

This was William Harrison Turner's wife's recipe. William was Samuel Cooke Turner's brother.

THE BREEN FARM

The following is from Cause of the Will, by DHS President Donald R. Welch.

THE BREEN FARM

Referred to as the J. J. Breen Place as this family was the last to engage in dairy agriculture as we know it.

This farm originally was at least a segment in each of lots 25 and 28 in the second division of land grants awarded by then the Governor of New Hampshire.¹³⁴

After nearly 40 years, many transactions and sub-divisions, this property came under the ownership of the Crossett Family. On September 22, 1849 Edgar R. Crossett purchased at least a parcel of this from Wm. Wells.¹³⁵ On April 8th, 1862 he sold this same property to his brother Burton.¹³⁶ After the early death of Burton Crossett, a local, prominent business man by the name of Jacob Foss purchased this from Burton's estate on June 25, 1867.¹³⁷

On February 4th, 1868 Mr. Foss sold this to Roderick W. Phillips.¹³⁸ A huge increase in the price of this place may suggest the buildings or at least the barn was constructed then. Some features of this barn seem to dictate it may have been much earlier built than 1868.

R. W. Phillips married Mary Griffith and became the parents of 6 children; the last 2 of which were born while the family resided on this farm. One of their daughters; Etta V. married George W. Gilman, a neighbor. She died at 20+ years and is buried in Phillips Cemetery along with her infant son.

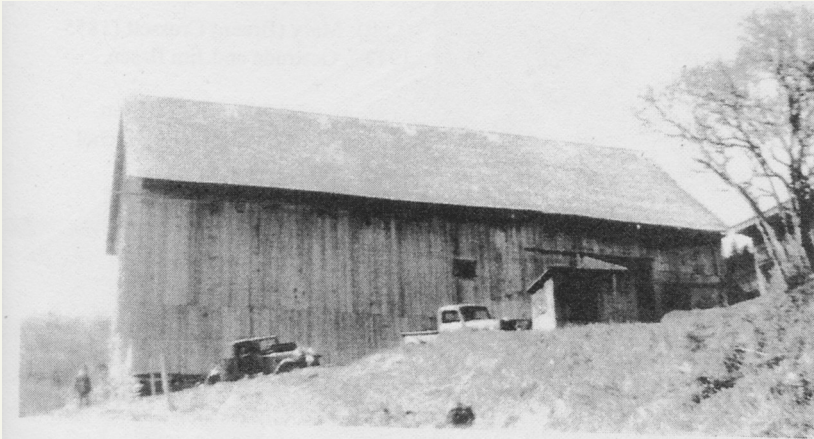
After 18 years on this place, suddenly R. W. Phillips passed away, ending the Phillips era on this farm. His estate sold this parcel to Dan Bulkeley in 1887.¹³⁹ The next 7 years saw many faces here until 1894, when George C. and Laura Thompson bought from E. O. and Abbie Trask.¹⁴⁰

The Thompson Family must have been thrilled with this farm, majestic as the buildings overlooked the valley, inviting to the morning sun, practical and yet well constructed to withstand the weather. They eagerly farmed for 8 years, then suddenly hardship and despair overtook them as their 4 ½ year old daughter, Lilla Belle died from diphtheria. She was immediately buried in the cemetery just below the farm, to rid this exposure to the family. Lilla Belle is believed to be the last buried in the Crossett Hill Cemetery, that occurred in January 15, 1895. It has been said, Lilla was buried near the west side after you enter the cemetery; without a headstone. Later, her parents had another daughter, and they named her Lilla Belle also.¹⁴¹

L. J. Roberts became the next owner, but for only 24 hours, as he sold to James J. and Gertrude (Wallace) Breen in 1903 for the sum of \$2500. In 1913, they increased the farm size by purchasing land from A. T. Canardy and again in 1916 from his daughter, Agnes and son-in-law, James Collins.¹⁴²

This family was probably the most productive while on this site than anyone else, especially in terms of dairy size. They had a large maple sugar operation along with a shallow ice pond on the small brook that allowed them to cut their block ice from.

THE BREEN FARM



(Left): The massive barn gave a majestic appearance against its surroundings.

This barn was gravity fed (produce in the top and products out in the bottom.)

Windows along the south side allowed the winter sun to radiate the herd.

(Photo, courtesy of the Grace Family)

(Right): Jim Breen, son Willis, and Gertrude

Jim's obituary states he was a town selectman and a representative to legislature.

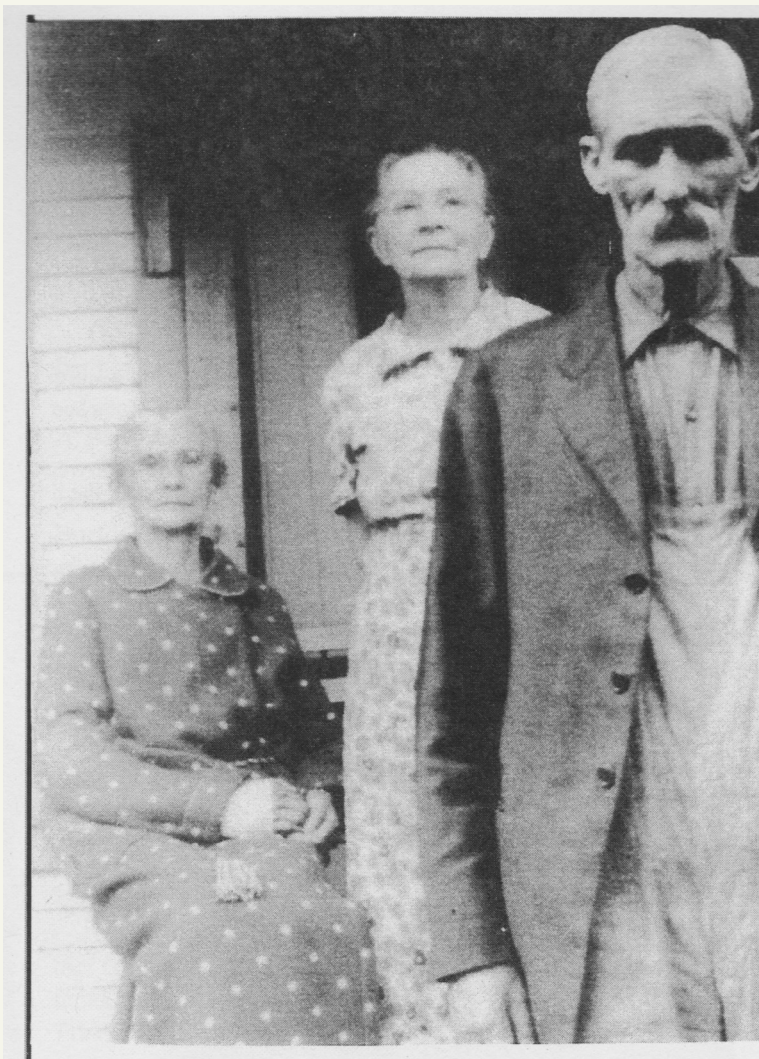
(Photo is the courtesy of Mary Breen, their grand-daughter)



Gertrude grew up on Blush Hill where some of her family still resides. She graduated from Green Mountain Seminary in Waterbury Center, and later taught school on Crossett Hill. Her attire was accented with her hair done up in a pug, which was quite normal for her. Her husband was tall, slim, usually wore suspenders and kept a casually trimmed mustache.

Most of the farm work was done earlier with his team of large Holstein oxen, while in later years they also had a pair of horses. His oxen would work in tandem, with a sliding yoke that allowed freedom in their independent stride. Most large ox stride nearly sideways, which inadvertently effects the other ox in his stride. This sliding yoke eliminated the problem, allowing his oxen to work free from cohesion.

THE BREEN FARM



(Left): Mary (Breen) Crossett (1855-1943.), Gertrude and Jim Breen.

Mary married Willis H. Crossett. His parents were: Gary and Rachel (Wright) Crossett. Source: (Crossett Genealogy)

Mary and Jim were siblings.

The Breen Family farmed on this homestead for more than 40 years.

They deeded a parcel from their farm to the Crossett Hill Association for their pavilion and annual picnics.

The family cut their block ice from a shallow pond in the small brook below the buildings.

The high drive (on the west end) allowed access to the upper part of the barn.

A dinner bell (mounted near the roof of the home) was rung by the women when calling the men in from the fields for the next meal.

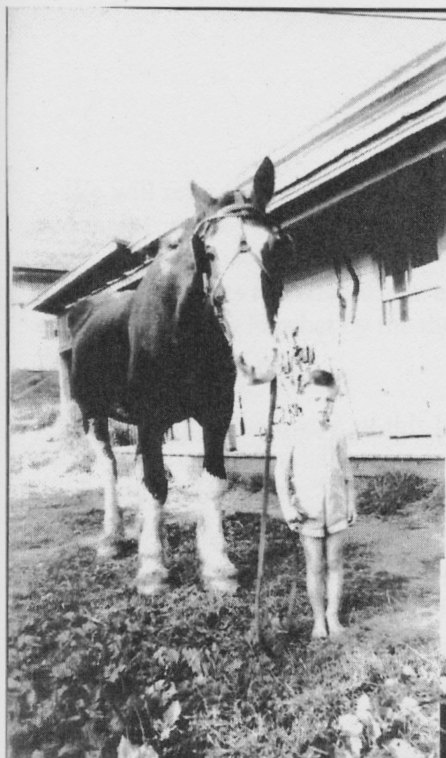
(Photo is the courtesy of Mary Breen)

Jim and Gertrude were active in community, school and town affairs. They were very well thought of and well respected by neighbors, friends and all those associated with them.

Jim was born in Richmond, and relocated to the Little River Area with his parents when he was quite young. Gertrude lived on Blush Hill when she was young, so this may have been when they met.¹⁴³

Marking the end of an era, this family sold the farm on July 6th, 1943 to the Demeritt Lumber Company.¹⁴⁴ Adjacent farms were also included in this transaction. They were the Carver and Collins Farms which enhanced a vast lumber source for the new owners.¹⁴⁵

THE BREEN FARM



(Left): The Graceful days began about 1945 when Healy and Helene Grace purchased this farm. Eventually they had 6 children: Robert, Richard, John, **Stephen** (pictured with one of his dad's horses), Marjorie and Mary.

Helene worked as a stenographer at the Vermont State Hospital while Healy logged mostly on his property.

The earlier mentioned name of Healy, Healey or Haley on the hill are believed to be related to Healy, so this may explain his first name.

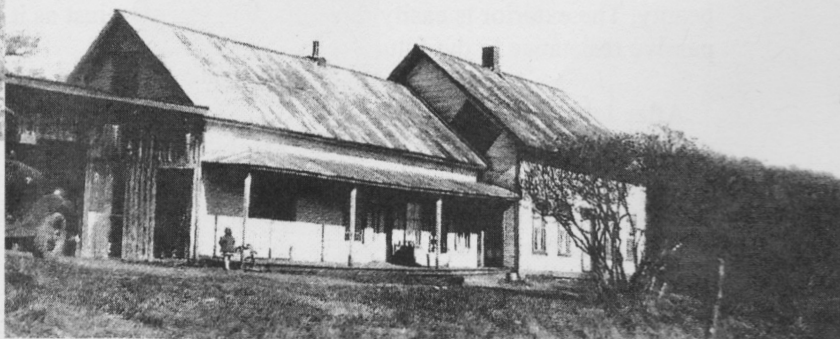
The Grace Family were also early settlers in town, initially in the upper elevation at the foot of Camel's Hump.

During the 1940's and 1950's, when the Grace Family resided on the hill, the farm looked much the same as when the Breen's were there, except with no dairying. The meadows were open and harvested, and the buildings appeared much the same. Rural life was not ready for a change quite yet, as travel was too confined to allow the world to expand.

(Photo courtesy of the Grace Family)

(Right): The Breen and Grace home as it appeared in the late 1940's.

The exterior of this home has not changed dramatically, except for the shed which was damaged and removed in the late 1950's.



The interior has been renovated to a charming and eloquent home of late.

(Photo is the courtesy of the Grace Family)

During the mid 1950's, the Grace Family relocated to the village, and slowly this place began to turn to the future. First the Harold Chamberlain Family attempted to reside here, work in local mills and log on the side. Shortly, they sold to Orville Duprey and his wife, who lived here for several years. Orville was a local plumber. They loved this rural atmosphere, and what came with it. He had the barn dismantled and rebuilt on the east end of the foundation.

THE BREEN FARM



Orville Duprey in his late years. They owned the buildings and several acres including the meadow below the home.

Unable to carry on, Orville sold this property and relocated to the village in his late years. Linda and John Devlin bought this same property and did a remarkable task of refurbishing this home. Erasing the past, they transformed the interior of this home into one of comfort, style and beauty. The exterior is easily recognizable, standing just as it has for many, many years, in passive resistance to the future.

After John's death, Linda sold this property and constructed a new home just up this same road. John is buried in Phillips Cemetery along Route 100.

Kenneth and Mary Spencer relocated here from the west, purchasing this property. Mary equipped the barn to accommodate her craft business.

The barn now a mere elf of the original, does allow some resemblance of the elegance this barn once had, as it stood solid and solitaire, overlooking the meadows below. The past is behind us all, so now we must preserve, protect and ---remember.

Endnotes:

- ¹³⁴ Duxbury Land Grant Map, copied in 1914 by F. H. Dewart
- ¹³⁵ D. L. R. Bk. 9, Page 248
- ¹³⁶ - D. L. R. Bk. 11, Page 58
- ¹³⁷ D. L. R. Bk. 12, Page 383
- ¹³⁸ D. L. R. Bk. 12, Page 444
- ¹³⁹ D. L. R. Bk. 15, Page 445
- ¹⁴⁰ D. L. R. Bk. 16, Page 100
- ¹⁴¹ Transcribed Excerpts from the Diary of Janus Crossett (1846-1905)
- ¹⁴² D.L. R. Bk.17, Page 552, Bk. 18, Page 161 and Bk. 19, Page 61
- ¹⁴³ Jim Breen's Obituary
- ¹⁴⁴ D. L. R. Bk. 24, Page 101
- ¹⁴⁵ D. L. R. Bk. 24, Page 200

June 2026 DHS President's Note:

Linda and John Devlin lived on Crossett Hill for several years, many of those years on the property that is described here in Cause of the Will as the Breen Farm. This property is presently owned by Ken and Mary Spencer.

After John's death, Linda built a new home just above where they first settled on the hill.

For many years, Linda was an active member and generous supporter of our Duxbury Historical Society who is truly missed by the community and the society.

**D U X B U R Y H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y , I N C .
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**DON'T FORGET THE ANNUAL PICNIC - AUG. 16
SOUTH DUXBURY MEETING HOUSE - NOON**

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