Issue Eighty Two | Duxbury Historical Society, Inc. | November 2026

Under the Hump

Society Business

NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- Holiday sing-along is Dec. 20, 2 pm, at the Old Meeting House in South Duxbury.
- Next meeting is May 18, 2027. More info to come.

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!

Mystery Photo

Guess Who?



Halloween 1969

Reminder: Dues expire December 31, 2026. Dues for 2027 are being accepted. Please mail your dues to Mark Morse, Treasurer (see back of newsletter), which will help defray postage costs of reminders. If you have already submitted your dues please disregard this notice. A reminder will be sent nearer the December 31st deadline.

Fundraiser Update

The DHS held its annual Let's Make A Deal Lawn Sale and Food Sale in September. The total profits netted a little over $2,000! A huge thank you to everyone who organized the sale, volunteered their time in various capacities, donated items, baked delicious treats, and bought items to support our society. We are grateful for your generosity!

Holiday Sing-Along

The DHS is happily hosting its third annual holiday sing-along at The Old Meeting House in South Duxbury on December 20, 2026 at 2 pm.

Join Nina Towne, Karen Winchester, and Patty Delaney as we welcome in the most wonderful time of the year!

Light refreshments will be served. Donations at the door benefit the Duxbury Historical Society. Dress warmly as our building is only lightly heated. There are 5 stairs to enter the building. We hope to see you there!

Mystery Photo
or
Trivia Question?

Do you have a photo or trivia question we can feature in an upcoming newsletter? Please submit to the newsletter committee and we will place it in the next available issue.

Society Business

Archival/Preservation Committee Report

Members: Lori Morse, Bonnie Morse, Mark Morse

- Updated family files with new information regarding births, deaths, marriages, etc.

Monetary Donations (07/01/2026-10/31/2026)

Mame McKee * Al & Bev Young * Sally Chartrand *
Kim Greenwood * Hugo Martinez Cazon * Anonymous Donors

Our annual picnic was held on Sunday, August 16, 2026, at the South Duxbury Meeting House. It was a beautiful day to share food and catch up with neighbors!







Shawn Perry photos.



Call for Submissions!



This is your newsletter—what would you like to see in it?

The newsletter committee would love for you to submit a story, poem, historical piece, photos, etc. that we could place in the newsletter for everyone to enjoy.

Some ideas:
Do you have a story or poem about living in Duxbury or about a Duxbury resident who is special to you?
Did you write a poem or take photos when you made it to the top of Camel's Hump?
What was it like growing up in Duxbury?
What were some of the occupations in your family from years gone by?
Did your relatives have a story about the 1927 flood that was recounted to you that you would be willing to share?

Please share your materials with a newsletter member and we will place it in the next available issue.
Thank you in advance for your generosity!

Society Business

Building Committee Update, October 11, 2026

There have been some changes to the building committee in the past few months so it seemed like the right time to update membership on what has been happening. Membership in this committee has changed to the following: Ramona Godfrey and Mary Spencer (co-chairs), Laura Titus, Christian Magnani, Kelly Welch, Jim Welch and Willie Docto. All members are voting members due to recent bylaw changes approved by membership at large.

The building committee is charged with deciding what are the most pressing matters in maintaining both the Old Meeting House and the Sunshine Hall and with how to move forward with the larger goal of updating the Sunshine Hall so that those buildings can be used for community functions and still maintain their historic integrity. The last big project which was undertaken was the painting and removal of lead-based paint from Sunshine Hall last summer.

The dilemma that has been foremost for this committee, however, is how to provide handicapped access to the Old Meeting House. The members, both former and current, have wrestled with this for the past couple of years and consider it a top priority. A decision was reached this summer to cut a door into the back of the church on the left side and put a ramp there, so as not to change the view of the front of the church. We were not, however, able to find a contractor to do this work and it is currently on hold. In the meantime, we are continuing to explore other options, such as portable ramps and hiring an architect who would be able to help us with a plan and perhaps other ways of approaching this problem. We would all very much like to make our events accessible to all without compromising the integrity of that beautiful building.

Mary Spencer
Building Committee Co-chair

Sanctuary Chair

Herb and Nettie (Moulton) Pike were Mary Ethel's grandparents and they farmed on Ricker Mountain for many years. Herb was a trustee for the Little River Baptist Church while farming on Ricker Mountain and later during the years he farmed on Route 100.

This sanctuary chair was salvaged by Herb and Nettie as plans were scheduled to raze the church and all of the buildings to allow the construction of the flood control dam.

The chair remained in the family until 1978 when it was given to us, and has been with Mary Ethel and myself for nearly half a century. As a connection to Duxbury, Arthur Butler lived on Turner Hill in Duxbury, with his family and was a substitute pastor in this Little River Baptist Church. It is with these thoughts that our family proudly passes this chair on to our Duxbury Historical Society to embellish the meeting house and the future museum.

Donnie Welch
DHS President



Kelly Welch photo.

Writing Our Memories

Writing Our Memories; So Important

by Carol Johnson Collins

Recently a program sponsored by The Duxbury Historical Society was held at The Old Meeting House (across from Harwood Union High School) honoring the life, poetry, writings and work of my Great Grandfather, Erastus Johnson (April 20, 1826-June 16, 1909).

Two friends, Rosina Wallace from Blush Hill, and Skip Flanders, both of Waterbury, encouraged me to work with them to put on a program for the community about Erastus. Their interest developed when they learned that in the 1800's, Erastus wrote the hymn called "The Rock That Is Higher Than I" which is actually in The Methodist Hymnals that were for use in what was The Duxbury Church, now The Old Meeting House.

Together, they and I read Erastus's Autobiography, and his poem collection entitled "The Old Cobbler and Other Poems." Each of us took different aspects of his life, or poetry, or family-related memories to share with an audience of 35 who congregated at the meeting house on Sunday, October 18, 2026. Pastor, Sam Newton, shared a Homily he wrote, based on Erastus's hymn.

Throughout my life I read snippets of what Erastus wrote, but I didn't think about it very much. My friends' interest in these old writings, encouraged my own interest, and I am now reading word-by-word all of what Erastus wrote that was published. I am coming to understand so much about myself; my love of water bodies of all kinds, (being in the water, on calm water, looking at any kind of water) and my love of writing poetry, articles, stories, memoirs. It came from him! Never before had I seen such a clear connection.

My Uncle Fremont Johnson (grandson of Erastus), Aransas Pass, Texas, founded and owned a printing business called "The Biography Press." He printed people's biographies. During the years of his business, he re-printed Erastus's Autobiography, in 1974, using the one copy done by Students of Printing in The Frank Wiggins Trade School, Edited by Charles E. Johnson (also a grandson of Erastus), the school's principal. Fremont made enough copies so that they could be passed to many family members. It is thanks to Charles and Fremont that we still have copies today.

Erastus wrote beautifully about nature and his childhood in a logging camp on The Penobscot River at the base of Mount Katahdin. I thought of my home in South Duxbury, at the base of Camel's Hump! He was one of 13 children. They travelled to church services on Sundays, by boat, and details of dragging logs out of the woods in winter to move them down the river when the water is high again in the spring, were very interesting to me.

Why am I writing about this? I encourage you to write your thoughts, memories, ideas, poems, stories, so that they can be kept in your family, or by friends, and be passed down to the next generation. It is such a wonderful way to learn about history, and to learn much more about ourselves. Write whatever you can, now, as a gift to the next generation!

One-Room Schools in Duxbury

The End of the One-Room Schools in Duxbury

By Steve Grace

I was a grade school kid in the 1940's and 50's, living on Crossett Hill, on the farm now owned and occupied by Ken and Mary Spencer. My siblings, John and Marjorie, and I attended the Crossett Hill School which is now owned and occupied by Dave and Sue Rogers. The school was also attended in those years by my old friend, Ralph Ainsworth, who in that era was known as Ralph (Teddy) Murphy by my family. In fact, Ralph was the last graduate from our school in 1950 - Ralph being the only child in the eighth grade at Crossett Hill School that year.

The closing of Crossett Hill School was not a sudden or rash decision. By 1950, there were only three schools in Duxbury: the Duxbury Corner School which had two classrooms, the one-room Crossett Hill School, and "The Red School" as everyone called it in those days. The Red School was at the southern intersection of Route 100 and Crossett Hill Road, a building which has been occupied by Benoit family members since the school was disbanded in 1950. My wife, Breta Berno (her name before she made the tragic mistake of marrying me) attended that school for her first grade year. I'm quite sure that my friend, our Duxbury Historical Society president, Donnie Welch, was also a student at the Red School in that final year of its existence.

To get an idea of how rapidly and dramatically the one room school era was in decline in Duxbury, an article in the *Barre Times*, dated February 24, 1950, points out that less than 40 years before this date, there were eight schools in Duxbury. They were located at Duxbury Corner, North Duxbury (close to the River Road and Camels Hump Road intersection), Scrabble Hill, Graves School on River Road, Crossett Hill, South Duxbury, and Dowsville. Still earlier in Duxbury's history, there were schools on Ward Hill and Turner Hill. In those days, teachers' pay was abysmally low and buildings were inadequately equipped, but by the late 1940's the expense of maintaining these schools had been steadily increasing. For instance, my old school, the Crossett Hill School, had no indoor water facilities, an outhouse, the school was heated by a huge wood stove in the back of the room. The shortcomings of the school were not only hardships for both the teacher and her students, but dangerous as well. At our school in 1948, when I was in the first grade, a female student nearly burned to death on a bitter cold early morning, in front of my terrified eyes. All of us students were huddled around the huge wood stove, a roaring fire blazing in the monster, trying to stay warm in the freezing cold room, when her dress was sucked into the bottom draft opening, setting her dress afire. She was terrified, of course, and ran around the room screaming in fright and pain, her dress and her body in flames. No teacher was there that early in the morning. The oldest, most responsible student in school at the time would come to school well before the opening bell and start a roaring fire in the stove. Ralph (Murphy) Ainsworth was that trusted student that year - and Ralph was the person who saved the young girl's life. He wrestled the girl to the floor, then grabbed a big winter coat off the coat rack, and smothered the flames with the coat. Ralph (or Teddy as my family called him at the time) became a hero in my eyes that day. And he remains so as I write this narrative.

(Time and history seem to repeat themselves. In our community today, there is an ongoing debate on how to provide excellent educational opportunities for our children at a cost we can afford. One of the ideas floated… consolidation of schools. Just as it was in Duxbury in the late 1940's.)

By the end of the 1949-1950 school year, the town governing officials had come to the reluctant conclusion that the declining student population at the Crossett Hill School and the overcrowding situation at the Red School had to be addressed. Several meetings, nine in total, were held by town officials in late 1949 and through 1950 to try to arrive at a solution that could secure the public's approval. It was apparent that no solution would make everyone happy, but the problem could no longer be kicked down the road.

At the third such meeting, in February of 1950, definite plans were formulated to close the Crossett Hill School and reopen the South Duxbury School which had been closed for eight years. The Crossett Hill students who lived on the south side of Crossett Hill would be transported to the Red School, while those who lived on the north side would be transported to Duxbury Corner School. To accommodate the new students from Crossett Hill School, students living in the southerly section of South Duxbury would be relocated from the Red School to the reopened South Duxbury School.

One-Room Schools in Duxbury

However, when this plan was presented to the public, a fire storm broke out. The feeling was that instead of a long term fix, the officials were basically going the 'kick it down the road' route. (Does this sound familiar in today's attempts to solve our school location issues in our community?) More meetings ensued. The Red School parents met with Superintendent Freemont Fiske and the school directors and voiced their strong opposition to the plan. The Crossett Hill parents were less vociferous, but there were increasing complaints from that area.

Another meeting of town officials followed where it was apparent that the proposed consolidation plan was meeting more and more opposition. So the board met once again where several problems were presented which might change the picture...and it was decided to wait until mid-summer before making a permanent decision.

In June of 1950, another public meeting was held at the Town Hall to discuss a new proposal by the school and town officials and Superintendent Fiske. As the meeting commenced and debate started, Nellie Ravelin, the local reporter for the *Barre Time*s, stood up to speak in favor of the latest plan. *The Burlington Daily New*s, in an article on June 15, 1950 reporting on the meeting describes Mrs. Ravelin as uttering these approximate words in defense of consolidation: "I hope the parents of Duxbury will seriously consider the question and, furthermore, I hope the plan goes through." These were the last words ever spoken by Nellie Ravelin. A few moments later, she collapsed and died in the town hall. Mrs. Ravelin was a former school teacher in Duxbury - she taught at the Crossett Hill School in the first decade of the 20th century, first as a single woman named Nellie Woodruff and later as a married woman Nellie Ravelin, married to Fred Ravelin a highly respected up-and-comer in the town. At the time of Nellie's death, Fred was operating a successful saw mill business in Duxbury and, as Nellie, was a beloved figure in the community. In the weeks before this final - and to her, fatal - meeting, Mrs. Ravelin, despite suffering from a serious heart ailment, had been contacting residents of Duxbury by phone and in person, rallying people to the consolidation cause which was so dear to her. I like to think that her last words, her last effort, were instrumental in helping implement a historically significant event in our town's history.

In a decisive ninth meeting in July of 1950, Superintendent Fiske outlined the latest proposal. He stated that if consolidation was not implemented, the next year's enrollment at the Red School would be 35 pupils, whereas the school could only accommodate 25. In contrast, the enrollment at Crossett Hill School would drop to 10 pupils, although it could accommodate 25. He stated that the only logical, financially responsible solution was to consolidate all of Duxbury's school children at the Duxbury Corner School.

There was a huge turnout at this final meeting. 150 of the potential 223 voters in the town turned out for the meeting. There was more an air of sadness and resignation in the audience than one of anger that prevailed at the end of the meeting when it was decided to go forward with this last proposal, to make the necessary upgrades to the Duxbury Corner School to accommodate the incoming students from Crossett Hill School and the Red School. Howard Sherman, a school board member and patriarch of a large family, several of his children of school age, passionately defended the board's decision and his healing remarks were followed by applause from the attendees.

My school experience and that of my siblings and neighborhood fellow students at Crossett Hill School were changed forever, by the consolidation decision. But we were all up for the new education experience awaiting us. That fall, we excitedly climbed into the back of Hayden Waterhouse's Rube Goldberg model school bus, a utility van with benches attached to the sides of the van and a long bench anchored to the floor in the center of the van...and off we went, careening around in the belly of that van as we traversed the hills and sharp corners of Crossett Hill Road to our new, big, 'downtown' school. 'Twas a hell of deal, for sure!

The days of the one-room school in Duxbury were over.

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Note from author: I researched several articles from *The Burlington Free Press*, *The Burlington Daily News*, *The Waterbury Reporter*, and the *Barre Time*s in establishing facts and timelines for this narrative.

Remember When?

Duxbury in Bicentennial

Aug 28, 1975

August 28, 1975

Tuesday evening, the South Duxbury Hall was nearly filled to capacity when the Duxbury Historical Society met for its first regular meeting. It was a family pot-luck supper affair which began at 6:30 with the Duxbury Elementary School Band playing four selections under the leadership of Mrs. Ellen Harvey who is music teacher in that school.

There was about thirty who stayed to participate in the business segment of the meeting with all the officers present, namely Alice DeLong, president; Mrs. Ellen Harvey, vice president; Mrs. Anna Lamos, secretary and Mrs. Mabel Fraser, treasurer. It was reported that about 48 members had joined the newly established society.

The charter-signing ceremony was led off by Mrs. Carol Collins who read an original poem which set the mood for the occasion. The poem mentioned that history, or the past, is the mother of today and the future. Mrs. Mabel Fraser presented a candle lighting tableau with three candles, one representing the past, one the present and one the future with Mrs. Stella Merchant, Mrs. Iola Atwood and Ann Harvey lighting the respective candles. The reader was Mrs. Fraser who composed the impressive narration to accompany the candle lighting. The first to sign the charter was Mrs. Elsie Colton, then Mr. and Mrs. Ray Davis, Frank Griffin, and Mr. and Mrs. Fraser, all of whom are in their 90's, 80's or late 70's. After they signed all who were present and were members signed the charter. The treasurer will add the names of those who were not present but who had joined since the Society was first launched. The charter is to be framed and displayed once the Society has a place to keep such artifacts.

A special cake with crossed American Flags and inscription commenorating the Bicentennial was made by Mrs. Deanna Dufrosno who also made the initial cut as part of the ceremony.

Letters relative to the fact that Duxbury has been named a Bicentennial Community were read and mention made of the fact that a proper and fitting program should be planned and a date set for the formal acceptance of the flag.

Mrs. Wade Morse reported on the sunbonnets which were on display during the meeting. They had been made by members of the Duxbury Bicentennial Committee, the Duxbury Home Dem Club and others. It was stressed that the committee needed to know when special meetings or other gatherings were to take place so that the sunbonnets might be put on display and sold. These articles are a money-raising project of the Bicentennial Committee but proceeds will be used for special projects of the Historical Soc. or anything connected with the Bicentennial celebration in Duxbury.

Also, there is to be a quilt raffle on October 1st. The guilt is being pieced by the Duxbury Home Dem Club.

The next meeting of the Duxbury Historical Soc. is to be on November 11th, the time and place to be announced later.

Anyone may join the Society who has an interest in the town or is interested in such matters as such a society encompasses. The dues are $1 per person per year.

What Ten Dollars Bought at the Store in 1976

If you head into the store today with a ten-dollar bill, you're lucky to walk out with a jug of milk and a loaf of bread. But back in 1976—our Bicentennial year—that same crisp ten-spot actually covered a real armload of groceries.

Here is roughly what a register tape would have looked like for ten basic staples**:

Gallon of local whole milk: $1.42
Dozen Grade A eggs: $0.69
Loaf of white bread: $0.35
Pound of thick-cut bacon: $1.45
Pound of ground beef: $0.89
5-lb bag of King Arthur flour: $0.59
Pound of bananas: $0.13
Pound of sharp Vermont cheddar: $1.29
10-lb bag of potatoes: $0.94
Pint of real Vermont maple syrup: $1.95
Total at the register: $9.70

You'd head home with dairy, meat, baking supplies, and a pint of syrup, and still have thirty cents change tucked back in your pocket.

Times and prices have certainly changed over the last fifty years, but it's fun to look back at old register slips and see how everyday life used to stack up. (Though it's safe to say our appetite for good local cheddar and real syrup hasn't changed one bit!)

(** data taken from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Consumer Price Index (CPI) historical retail averages for 1976.) Research completed by Shawn Perry.

DUXBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
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If you have any comments or contributions for the newsletter we would love to hear from you.

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DONATE TODAY / SUPPORT THE RESTORATION PROJECT

www.DuxburyVT.com

DON'T FORGET THE NEXT MEETING - MAY 18, 2027
SOUTH DUXBURY MEETING HOUSE - 7 PM

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