

BITS AND PIECES AND A LITTLE GOSSIP

In 1799 the town records indicate that the following town officers were elected in addition to the usual ones.

Surveyors of Highways

Hogreeves

Tythingmen

Fence Viewers

Pound keeper

Surveyors of Lumber

Fish Wardens

Sealer of Weights

Surveyors of Wood

Weigher of Hay

Town records were used to record many cattle marks which were used to identify straying animals. The following are examples:

Bartholemew Gale Jr.'s mark for cattle and sheep is a hole the left ear with a punch.

Recorded Nov. 10, 1825

Stephen Weeks' mark for cattle and sheep is a crop off the right ear and a half-penny notch in the under side of the ear.

Recorded Jan. 2, 1826

It also appears that the town clerk's records were sometimes used to place statements on record to settle controversies and squelch gossip. The following is an example:

"Whereas I understand that there are vile reports in circulation respecting the character of Mr. Peter L. Folsom, and it has been said that I talked disrespectfully about him, if so, it was all in jest. Now, this may certify to whom it may concern that I know nothing against the character of said Peter L. Folsom and if I said naught against him at the frame of Doctor Prescott's, I am sorry for it, or if I have said anything disrespectful of Judith Gilman, I did not mean any harm - as I do not believe those slanderous stories of them."

Gilmanton, September 21, 1819

Nathaniel Elsworth

In 1831 when Dearborn Street was constructed Jeremiah Sawyer was paid not only for the land which the road crossed, but also for moving his cider mill which sat in the right of way (Brizer house).

Among the numerous small industries which have come and gone in Belmont, the most unusual was probably the peg mill which was put in operation in 1844. It employed four or five persons and produced small wooded pegs which were used by cobblers to attach the sole of shoes to the uppers.

When the first settlers arrived they met the problem of removing the virgin forest by the best methods they could devise. At least one old timer reported many years ago that he had seen trees notched at one end of the plot to be cleared and then the first tree was caused to fall, in turn pushing the others over, much as we might do with dominoes. The fallen timber was allowed to dry and then set fire. After as much was burned as possible, the remainder was dragged aside for use as a stump fence, or if the stumps could not be moved, they were ploughed around and left to rot. Potatoes were always a good crop to plant the first year as they were vigorous enough to compete with any vegetation that might grow.



The old wooden penstock after it had sprung a few springtime leaks in 1901. In the foreground can be seen the remains of the dam which had first held back the water for the mill.

Farrarville was once a bustling community containing a saw-mill, batting mill and grist mill. (A batting mill is one used for thrashing grain.)

In order to have the town reports available for town meeting in 1888, it was necessary for the individual sent to Laconia after them to walk back to Belmont on snowshoes, carrying the reports on his back. The town meeting that year followed the famous blizzard of '88.

The 1790 census shows that Gilmanton had 2,610 residents, of which twenty-two were free non whites, and one a slave. Gilmanton was exceeded only by Rochester in size in Strafford County, and was the third most populous town in New Hampshire after Rochester and Portsmouth.

Porcupine Ledge, southeast of Belmont Village, was at one time a considerable attraction, although it is nearly forgotten today. The ledge consists of an outcropping of rocks, one upon the other, forming numerous caves and arches. Years ago these rock formations were named "table rock, pulpit rock, the devil's den, the arch, the kitchen and the bottomless pit." One author reports that the ledge was a favorite gathering spot for lovesick youths from Gilmanton Academy, and that many trees bore the initials of young lovers.

Before the installation of electric street lights around 1900 the village was lit by kerosene street lamps. Each evening the lamplighter walked the village streets with a ladder, lighting the lamps. This duty was performed for many years by Bill Chaplin.

In the early 1900's the largest expenditure of the Belmont water department was for wood. This was used to fire the boiler of the pumping station at the lower end of the village. (Opposite the Orrin Page house) Charles O. Judkins was superintendent of the water works and he kept a rocking chair at the pumping sta-



William Barrett's 1907 Maxwell was one of the earliest automobiles in Belmont. In order to have gasoline it was necessary to purchase it by the barrel and Mr. Barrett soon found himself measuring out gasoline by the gallon to those who needed the vital product for their own autos.

tion so that he could relax from time to time while the reservoir was being filled.

One of the earliest auto accidents in Belmont occurred when Doctor H. S. Bickford and Sumner Gardner were thrown out of Mr. Gardner's auto on the Tilton Road, when they came into collision with another vehicle. Dr. Bickford was reported as saying that he now understood the truth in the saying "It is nothing to fall out of a balloon, but the stopping so quick is what hurts."

Another auto accident occurred according to the newspaper clipping when Fred La-Flamme and Horace Hancock bumped into each other in front of Hall's store. Both cars were damaged, but no one was hurt.

A 1902 newspaper clipping said the following about one of the school districts in nearby Gilmanton. "School has begun in the Allen's Mills district and Annie E. Weeks is the same old teacher."

In 1936 after the re-election of F. D. R. a victory parade was held in Belmont. One of the prime entries was a wheelbarrow ride given Arlington Hartford by Charles Torrey and Albert Lucier. After the parade an oyster stew supper was provided free of charge for two hundred and fifty people. It was reported that ten gallons of oysters and ten quarts of pickles were consumed.

In 1909 Fred Gardner had a hen who layed an egg 7 1/2 inches by 5 1/2 inches weighing one half pound. Another undated clipping states that Isaiah Piper slaughtered a porker last week which weighed 588 pounds.

Among the several murders which have occurred in Belmont, one to this day remains officially unsolved. On the night of September 26, 1900 one terrific thunder storm after another continued throughout the night. Late in the afternoon George Hurlburt who lived on Hurricane Road hitched a horse to an express wagon, in which he placed two grain bags, and told his wife that he was

AUTOMOBILE
NOTICE!
RULES AND REGULATIONS.
No Automobile or Motor Vehicle shall be run on any public street or highway within the limits of the village of Belmont at a rate of speed exceeding
SIX MILES AN HOUR.
or on the highways in the town of Belmont outside the limits of Belmont at a rate of speed exceeding
TEN MILES AN HOUR.
Every driver of Automobile or Motor Vehicle shall be provided with a **FULL STOP** sign.
No stopping, standing or parking shall be permitted on any street or highway within the limits of Belmont at any time.
Any person violating the above regulations shall be liable to a fine of \$5.00.

going to the village, some two miles away, to get grain. He failed to return that evening and his wife and young children remained alone in the house during the fierce storm. Early in the morning Daniel Donovan a milk man driving along Hurricane Road, which was almost impassible due to the wash outs, came upon Hurlburt's body lying in the road about a half mile from his home, but in the opposite direction from the village. There was a bullet hole behind his right ear and a revolver lay near his foot. His false teeth were sitting on a rock. After an inquest lasting several days and an investigation involving Pinkerton detectives in Boston, no evidence could be found and the murderer was officially listed as unknown. Local gossip, however, stated that the murderer was a neighbor who caught Hurlburt taking grain from his barn and who, when he realized the seriousness of his offense, took his own life a short time afterward.

The earliest fire fighting equipment in Belmont Village consisted of a set of wheels and a hose rolled up between. It was kept in Charles Gilman's woodshed on Fuller Street and was pulled by hand to a fire. This apparently worked fine where hydrants were available, but was of little value where there was no water.

The first electric lights in Belmont Village were installed in the houses of John Lyford and Moses Sargent. The power was supplied by a generator at Judkins Pond on Cutler's Brook.

The first telephones in Belmont were located in the Moses Sargent house and in Hoyt's store. The telephone lines came to town from Laconia and were strung on short poles so that the snow sometimes drifted almost to the wires. These poles were along the old Laconia Road leading from Church Hill. From Belmont the lines ran to Gilmanton Corner. At a later date the telephone office was located in the post office.

In the town's earliest days there were no bridges across the Winnepesaukee River, so that the river had to be crossed by boat. Ferries were run at Mohawk Point, known as Copp's Ferry and at Union Bridge, known as Gibson's Ferry. Many of the earliest roads constructed in the town led to Copp's Ferry.

Hazen Gale was reportedly a man of marked eccentricities. It is told that he, for some unknown reason, acquired a strong aversion to Laconia, and vowed he would never visit the town again. He kept his pledge for more than thirty years, with one exception when he was required by the sheriff to appear in court as a witness. His aversion seems especially severe when it is considered that he lived on Mile Hill only a few feet from the Laconia line.

At least two brickyards are known to have operated in Belmont. One was located on Perkins Road (C. H. Smith), and undoubtedly many of the bricks in the older houses in the town were made there, and quite possibly, those in the hosiery mill. Another brickyard was located on the Rundlet or Randlett Farm on Horn Road, later known as the Horn Farm.

The oldest recorded longevity of a resident of Belmont was Mrs. Eunice Swain Sweatt, who died in 1881 at the age of 105, the oldest resident of the state.

Two Jamestown residents, Harvey Gardner and Dexter Webster, while neighbors, nevertheless could not bear each other. Dexter Webster owned land at the point at the far end of Gardner's Grove, which he could get to only by crossing Gardner's land. Since he could not get permission to do this, his only recourse was to take a boat along the shore. Both of these men ended their lives violently; Dexter Webster being reportedly pushed down the cellar stairs by his housekeeper, and Harvey Gardner hanging himself on a door casing. In addition, Gardner's wife hung herself on a bed post, and their son Fred hung himself in Webster's barn. Perhaps this story contains a moral for feuding neighbors.

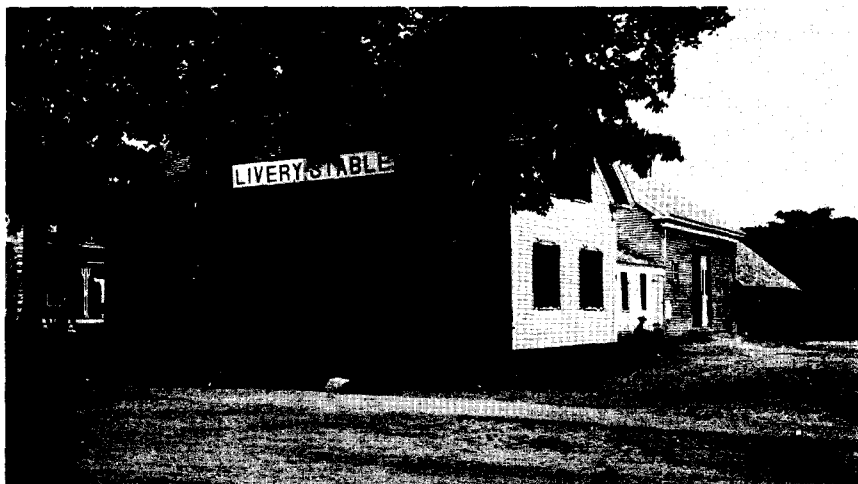
In 1880 the annual school committee report said the following about the school in district #8:

"Miss Folsom is a fine scholar, one who is conversant with all the branches which are taught in your schools. She labored to gain success. Beyond any question, she tried to perform her duty faithfully. Some of the scholars were prompt and made good progress, while others were lacking in promptness and proficiency. A few of the boys were mischievous, or worse, and manifested a lack of politeness, and an inclination to have their own way. We saw many things of a reprehensible character. A little of the article called "muscular christianity", if used in this school, might show good results. It would do no harm, and we would advise the teacher to give it a fair trial, in doses to suit the various cases."

Of the many ways of parting from this life, one of the most unusual occurred in Belmont. One elderly lady died from injuries suffered when she, being hard of hearing, was buried by a load of pumpkins being dumped by the men of the farm.

In the days of the horse and buggy numerous watering troughs were located throughout the town and the owners were paid \$3.00 yearly by the town for the public usage.

For a number of years Belmont boasted its own printing shop which occupied the basement of the dwelling now owned by Robert Bordeau on Spring Street. It was operated by Clarence



The Clarence Dearborn house on Main Street, which for several years bore the sign "Livery Stable". Presently owned by Patrick Young.

Gilman and went by the name of Kendall and Gilman.

Virginia's Hosiery Shop, operated by Virginia Barrett Shaw was for years visited by travelers from far and wide, who came here to purchase locally manufactured "Grace Mae" and "Robert Lawrence" hosiery. Among steady customers were Mayor Curley and Congressman John McCormick and their wives.

Belmont was for years served by two telephone exchanges — Winnepesaukee Bell Telephone Company and Citizens Telephone Company. Since it was impossible to connect from one exchange to another a few individuals found it necessary to have two telephones so as to be able to call all their neighbors. This system continued until 1919 when the two companies were combined. In 1924 a new telephone office was fitted out in the old Forrest house on Main Street (Rhodes). In 1941 Belmont's telephone exchange was converted to dial, being one of the earliest automatic exchanges.

Prudential Committee records of Union School district record that when the schoolhouse was first built in 1833 an appropriation was made to buy fire dogs, indicating that the school was heated by a fireplace. Three years later an appropriation was made to buy a stove and funnel and it was voted to sell the fire dogs.

One old expression which seems to bear repeating is this: "Don't spite things that are small — a quart bottle can hold more than most men."

In closing this chapter it seems appropriate to use the words

of Francis A. Badger in his address at the Belmont Old Home Day celebration in 1903: "New Hampshire claims freedom from contagious diseases, but we still have a few chronic cases of foot and mouth disease among the residents of New Hampshire; that is, every time they open their mouth they put their foot in it, as you have no doubt discovered before this time."