

# CAMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## PRESERVING OUR ROOTS: HOW SMALL MEANS ACCOMPLISHED GREAT ENDS

By Sue Ellen Snape

The Campton Town House (1855) stands proud on its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. For 120 years the center of town government, the building had fallen into a slow decline after town services moved to a vacant schoolhouse in Campton Village in 1975, nearly dropped into obscurity after the last Town Meeting held there in 1991. Chartered that same year, the Campton Historical Society had dreams of refurbishing the building. Over the next decade the group had the building rewired and underground utilities installed, began a collection of artifacts and made a valiant start on the monumental task of putting the building back in shape for public use. This worthy effort laid the groundwork for the turning point in 2001, where this article begins.

First, some quick background. From Campton's founding in 1767, geographical barriers kept the town divided. In the 1790s, fueled by the ideals of a new democ-

racy, dissension surfaced over the separation of church and state as well. At the time, the predominant Congregational Meeting House did double duty as a Town House, a situation some saw as allowing the church undue influence in town government. However, their proposal to erect a separate Town House was defeated at Town Meeting. The church issue, along with whether to locate the Town House on the east or west side of Pemi, prolonged the controversy until 1854, when Town Meeting finally gave approval to Campton's first and only Town House. The locating committee wisely placed the building in the geographical center of town, a little north of the Blair Covered Bridge, on property the town already owned – a good selling point for tight-fisted voters.

When the building opened its doors in 1855, the town numbered around 1400 inhabitants. Around 50% of town land had been cleared for agriculture, primary crops

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## Grange Dedication

On November 15, 2004 at our Annual Meeting, Campton Historical Society had a rededication of the Campton Grange Hall, P of H #93. This capped a summer's work where we raised the Grange Hall, put a foundation under it, installed heat, insulation and did some rewiring. ABC Construction did the raising, excavating, laying of blocks etc, Mastro Plumbing and Heating extended the heat, Zwicker Electric installed a new subpanel in the Grange Hall and Quality Insulation

By Scott Pulsifer

did their work and our "Odd Job Specialist," Jonathan McCue, pulled many loose ends together. CHS staff installed foundation insulation, put up some shelving on the walls in the new basement, insulated the Grange



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*We haven't forgotten what counts.*

If your business would like to sponsor CHS, contact any of the officers or directors on page 3.

## Historic Site Markers

By Walt Stockwell



Campton Historical Society's Site Marker 11 showing the Town Pound.

**“This initiates a program to identify and mark many such important parts of Campton’s heritage.”**

As you know, we recently installed our first Historic Site Marker at the Town Pound. This initiates a program to identify and mark many such important parts of Campton’s heritage. Did you know that there were 14 district schools in Campton, and that 8 are still standing and used? The PTA has made a commitment to sponsor site markers at several of these. We have identified over a dozen additional sites for markers in our initial phase. AND we already have donations to mark 5 of them. This is part of a growing interest in cultural heritage, of identifying, studying and appreciating our past.

We invite the participation of individuals and businesses in this program. A donation of \$100 will enable us to install a site marker. The name of the sponsor, or a memorial dedication, will be placed at each site. We plan to create a master brochure with this information included. In addition, individ-

ual descriptive brochures are planned for several of these sites. These also may be sponsored for a donation of \$100, and will include appropriate recognition as well.

Call Walt at 726-3813 or e-mail to [flagman@lr.net](mailto:flagman@lr.net) to discuss being a sponsor, to determine available sites, and to suggest additional sites for our next phase. Be a part of preserving our heritage.



## Grange Dedication Continued from p. 1

outhouse (of course we kept the outhouse—we’re the Historical Society) and painted the new bulkhead doors. We also primed the clapboards on the new connector between the two buildings, insulated it, got old, period pressed tin, refinished it and installed it in the connector ceiling. And staff reseeded the “lawn” but the jury is still out as to how successful that was.

In the early spring we got an excellent bid from Briggs Floors to refinish the three front rooms’ floors. Staff removed the furniture (Oooooof) and toilet and the old entry way rug. Mr. Briggs also got material and replaced the holes in the floors where the old gas furnaces had been. Now you can hardly see where they were. Then we got a bid from Mike Benoit Painting and the main entry way ceiling and walls were repainted. Pretty spiffy. Walt Stockwell repainted the walls in the bathroom and that’s pretty spiffy too.

Our thanks go to our Town, our Members, LCHIP and the USDA (who gave us a grant) to save and improve the Campton Grange Hall



## Antique Vehicle Day

By Paul Yelle

The Campton Historical Society hosted its first annual Antique Vehicle Day on Saturday, August 27 from 11 to 2. Visitors had the opportunity to get up close and personal with 12 antique vehicles from the area. These included a 1936 Hupmobile (bottom right), a Model T and Model A (bottom left), three military vehicles (top right), and many more. Campton resident David Dearborn also set up several of his steam-powered engines for visitors to check out.

All of this looking can make a person hungry, and a fleet of volunteers were ready to provide hot dogs, chips, salads, fruit, and desserts. As with any outdoor event, the New Hampshire weather is always a gamble, but we lucked out with a warm, sunny day. When the sun got to be too much, visitors grabbed sodas or headed inside to check out the artifacts on display at the open house.

Thanks to everyone who brought vehicles, prepared food, manned the displays—or simply enjoyed the day with us. Maybe we should do something like this again next summer!



**Campton Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 160, Campton, NH 03223**



Michelle Betts, President  
 Paul Yelle, Vice President  
 Nancy Mardin, Secretary  
 Mary Durgin, Treasurer  
 Jim Parziale, Program Director  
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## IT'S MEMBERSHIP TIME!!!

It is time, once again, to become a member of the Campton Historical Society.

We have had another great year with good programs and fellowship. With your help, we will have another outstanding year. Membership dues help with the cost of programs, newsletters and maintaining the building, which has increased with the expansion of use.

We are looking forward to your support; send your check today. For your convenience, attached to this newsletter is a combined membership form and return envelop. Single memberships \$12, Family \$20. Mary E. Durgin, Treasurer

## Preserve Campton's Heritage

By Walt Stockwell

This is our part of our mission statement. And we are to do that through the acquisition and care of artifacts, documents, and other information of historic value. But we cannot do that without the help of the entire community.

As you know, we now have a safe, environmentally controlled facility to store and display these items. We now need to build our files and displays. Several persons have recently made donations to help us meet our obligation. These include the following:

- An original United States Patent issued to Roger Blake for a design of a filling bobbin as part of his long career at Draper Corporation.
- A Saw Set used to put the set in the teeth of a saw, from Jane Stohn.
- A 7-foot up and down saw blade from Charles and May Brosseau
- Notes and papers from the files of George Durgin, donated by Mary Durgin.

These are invaluable in documenting our heritage. AND there are lots more where these came from. Many residents have these types of things stored away in their homes. We ask you to consider adding them, or copies of them, to our growing centralized story of our community. We would be pleased to discuss a donation, or of loaning artifacts to the Historical Society. Consider packaging or creating a file on your ancestors. We are receiving an increasing number of requests for genealogical information, but have very few records to allow us to respond.

In short, **WE NEED YOUR HELP IN FULLFILLING OUR MISSION.**

Call me at 726-3813, or e-mail to [flagman@lr.net](mailto:flagman@lr.net) to discuss a contribution.

Your participation is appreciated.

Walt Stockwell, Librarian/Curator



## **PRESERVING OUR ROOTS: HOW SMALL MEANS ACCOMPLISHED GREAT ENDS**

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being wheat, corn, oats, potatoes and hay; the balance used for grazing livestock – mostly oxen, milk cows, and especially sheep. Wool, butter, cheese and maple sugar brought in cash. On the political front, New Hampshire's own Franklin Pierce was midway through his single term as President of the United States, years rife with divisions over slavery and states rights, the nation teetering on the brink of civil war.

Fast-forward to 2001. At town meeting that spring, Campton Historical Society secured a long-term lease on the Town House and Grange (added on in 1912). The nation had undergone massive changes, but the divisive bitterness stalking the political scene harkened back to the Civil War era. The soul-wrenching events of September 11, 2001 would foster a renewed determination to preserve the historic roots of our democracy.

Thus began a new chapter in the Town House story. Although judged structurally sound, the building lacked a water supply and consistent heat, among other problems. The attached Grange appeared in terrible shape, the floor sagging on a wood-post foundation, the exterior rotted and windows boarded up. At the time, our financial resources centered on membership fees and donations. Per the terms of the property lease, the Town budgeted an annual sum for major repairs while CHS covered operations and routine maintenance. That alone stretched our treasury to the max.

We reviewed fund-raising options. Around that time we heard about a new state-funded program for land and building preservation, known as LCHIP (Land and Community Heritage Initiatives Program). While our two old buildings certainly fit the requirements, we weren't optimistic that our plain, no-frills Town House could compete with the more elegant historic edifices built in wealthier communities to the south. Not until we went through the process of having the buildings declared eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places (a requirement of the LCHIP grant) did we gain a full appreciation for the Town House as a classic example of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century civic architecture.

The "we" of this project consisted of the CHS Executive Board plus assorted volunteers. The 2001 Board included Mary Durgin, Scott Pulsifer, and Lester Mitchell, all born and raised in the area; Carol Lenahan, who came here as a teenager; and the Rev. Bayard Hancock, a retired minister and long-time resident. Also, some relatively new arrivals in Walt Stockwell, Carol Newcomb, Jim Parziale and myself, although Carol had longtime roots from summers spent here with her family. Our backgrounds and skills were all over the map. Once we got to debating building issues, so were our opinions.

Faced with the huge task of refurbishment, perhaps we could have done with more long-range planning, but we were in a hurry for a bathroom, the lack of which tended to discourage volunteers and keep down attendance at our evening events. Imagine having a visiting speaker ask which way to the bathroom. Yes, we had a museum quality two-holer facility at the rear of the Grange, but it didn't have a prayer of meeting minimum sanitary standards. Bottom line, we needed a flush toilet. That would require a well for water, the necessary plumbing and fixtures, plus an oil-fired furnace so the pipes didn't freeze, and oh yes, don't forget the building insulation. That's sort of how we sounded at the start.

We made a list, secured some estimates and went to work on the LCHIP application. Our list didn't begin to cover the ton of information needed. Back to the drawing board. Assigned as grant-writer, I labored through it. First hitch, the grant covered a maximum of 50% project costs, which by our initial calculations left a good \$20,000 to be raised. Second hitch, any grant award would be contingent on our adhering to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and signing off on a preservation easement. I won't bore you with details, but the stack of paperwork and multiple signatures required were exceedingly scary. Third hitch, we needed detailed plans, specifications and a timeline. We were in over our heads. But did that stop us? Heck, no.

We fired off an LCHIP application for a bare-bones project. Soon after, Mary Durgin announced that her late brother, George V. Durgin, charter member and first treasurer of the Campton Historical Society, had left the society a bequest of \$10,000. This generous gift enabled to flesh out our proposal to cover the complete water/heat/plumbing installation, including design and installation of a septic system. It also got us off the ground in a fund raising effort that eventually brought in enough to cover our share of this project and two subsequent phases as well. Looking back, George Durgin's bequest marked a turning point. It also prevented our fainting dead away when LCHIP approved our upgraded grant request for \$22,000. That the grant came subject to meeting "terms and conditions" tended to get lost in the celebration.

The news that LCHIP required the project to be finished, inspected and the work approved by their representative before funds would be released, brought us down to earth in a hurry. We organized a formal Building Committee, established rules and procedures and advertised for contractors. The rules created dissent and the procedures didn't work. The contractors didn't flock to our door. When summer dragged into fall and no material progress had been made, we swallowed hard and started over, replacing the formal committee structure with a teamwork approach. Still the meetings but less formal, with responsibilities assigned by mutual agreement and availability of people. Formal decisions took place at regular meetings of the Executive Board, special sessions held

as needed.

It wasn't all smooth sailing from there, but by spring of 2002 we were set to go. After an anguished debate over whether to stay with a dug well as initially planned or switch to a drilled well, thereby reducing the odds of contamination while upping the price by a large factor, we crossed our fingers and went for drilling. Scott Pulsifer, who along with Walt Stockwell served as on-site supervisors, recalls looking on as the drill went deeper and deeper, churning up dollar signs with every foot. With the drill down to 605 feet and virtually no water yet, Scott says he couldn't stand the excitement and left for lunch. The driller struck water just as he returned, a good 25 gallons a minute. We'd just blown our original budget by a painful amount, but we had water. Scott was also on hand when the insulation contractor discovered the building had 8-inch thick walls instead of the 3½ inches initially quoted. Up went the cost of Fiberglas insulation, another scream from the budget.

Meanwhile, I provided LCHIP with ongoing reports and waded through easement stipulations, going back and forth between LCHIP and the Town Attorney. What had seemed a minor sticking point – the Town had no actual deed to that parcel of land – turned out to be a huge headache. After researching the Registry and contacting John March for assistance, I pulled together supporting evidence. This included an affidavit from the Board of Selectman, another from Lester Mitchell describing his close association with the Town House as Town Meeting Moderator, as was his father before him; also, that Lester's uncle had carried out interior renovations to the building in 1909 and his father had installed the Moncrief furnace in 1934; the sum total of which was sufficient to prompt an opinion from the Town Attorney that the Town had legal claim to the property.

LCHIP director Rachel Rouillard joined us in July, 2002 to declare the initial project officially complete. Thus inspired, we forged ahead to Phase 2. Back to the grant table. I hounded the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development office for an answer on a weighty grant proposal I'd put together earlier that year for \$25,000 to put towards replacing the foundation on the Grange. Rural Development came back with a regretful "no" but we were welcome to try again. The next January I did. In the meantime, in the fall of 2002 we submitted another application to LCHIP in what was Round 4 of their grant program. Since LCHIP now required a professional evaluation of the structure by a architectural engineer or equivalent, we searched around and came up with Stanley Graton, an area contractor familiar with historic structures. After a detailed inspection of the building, Stan echoed our earlier assessment that the building was structurally sound, with one big exception – the roof. Looked in decent shape but wasn't, the decade-old shingles concealing rotted beams and in some places, gaping holes. While the Grange foundation wasn't pretty, Stan said the wood posts had been shored up before and could be shored up again. On the other hand, a severe storm could take out the roof.

The roof went to the top of the list. With a devout prayer, we sent off our LCHIP application requesting \$30,000 to go towards replacing the roof, along with refurbishing the leaky windows, chinking up the foundation, upgrading the fire safety system, providing handicap access, and as much work on the Grange as we could afford. Once again, LCHIP came through for us. Saved again. Started to seem as if our ragtag efforts might just pull this off.

With Phase 1 under our belt, we blew through Phase 2 without so many heart stopping moments, but still a few. Cash went out faster than it came in. LCHIP had modified its rules to allow for partial payments, but still the occasional panicked phone call that the Building Fund was down to nothing. Somehow we got by without borrowing. Walt Stockwell spear-headed the pledge drive, utilizing as incentive gifts a pen-and-ink sketch of the Town House by Cheryl Johnson, and prints of F. Schuyler Mathews's chickadee illustration provided by Mathews's granddaughter, Carol Newcomb. To start off our collection of fundraising products, Cheryl Johnson helped out with printed materials from her Campton print shop at minimal cost, and steered us into a good deal on T-shirts featuring the Blair Bridge. Shirley Stockwell initiated the Yankee Magazine Partners program, which eventually brought in over \$1,600. Early on in the project, Meredith Village Savings Bank contributed \$4,000 towards insulating the building in conjunction with the bank's community grant fund. Campton Printing, Pemigewasset National Bank, Community Guaranty Savings Bank, and Wal-Mart provided substantial support, with generous donations from other businesses and individuals as well. Throughout the project, the Board of Selectmen supported us to the hilt, allocating funds for major repairs as approved by Town Meeting vote.

With Phase 2 well underway, I received a call from the Rural Development Office of Community Affairs saying that the federal office had scraped up sufficient funds to fill our request for \$25,000 to put towards a new foundation for the Grange. Phase 3 came off the table to run neck-and-neck with Phase 2. After scrounging together the last of our resources, then brainstorming bids to arrive at the best alternative at the least cost, we went with a combination poured-concrete and block foundation that provided a full basement. Then we took a hard look at the ramshackle connector between the Town House and Grange. Although not much to look at, the connector had historic significance in bridging the gap between town government and the farming culture, as exemplified by the Grange. The connector stayed, rebuilt and enlarged to accommodate handicap access. With heat, water, and working doors, the windows unboarded and refurbished, the Grange joined the Town House in standing as a lasting testament to the ideals and farming roots that engendered a great democracy, the United States of America.

Lots more work to be done, many more stories to be told, but this chapter ends with a quote from the preface of a small book garnered from the old Campton Free Library, published in 1850. The title: "Small Means and Great Ends."

"Be assured, dear friends, we are more grateful than can properly be expressed in a brief preface. Our warmest thanks are due our old friends, who, in the midst of other arduous duties, have willingly given us assistance."