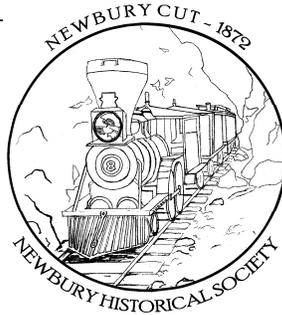

NEWBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Newsletter Volume 10, No. 2 Summer, 2013

"Seasons of a Century"

An Historical Address Commemorating the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Sunapee Lake Grange, Patrons of Husbandry, No. 112, Delivered by Tracy Messer, June 21, 1986.

Since its beginnings as an agricultural Society, the Patrons of Husbandry has become an organization which, today, is dedicated to the entire family; both rural and urban. Nowhere is this change more apparent than in the story of Sunapee Lake Grange, whose past one hundred years have been cycles of changing times; like seasons of a century.

Though Newbury had its own system of government, churches, schools, as well as regular G.A.R. and lyceum meetings, none of these offered the opportunity for townspeople to gather in a spirit of cooperation, devoid of partisanship and religious bias. The success of the Patrons of Husbandry in the neighboring towns of Bradford, Sutton, New London, Washington, Warner, Wilmot and Newport provided the inspiration for Newbury residents to form a grange they could call their own. It was on the eighth of January, 1886 that a group of mostly farmers and their wives met here in the town hall to found Sunapee Lake Grange, Patrons of Husbandry, Number 112. These seventeen charter members had the distinction of being organized by Nahum Batchelder, who later became governor of the State of New Hampshire. Likewise, Sunapee Lake Grange was also destined for notoriety as the following years would prove.

The first quarter of a century was indeed a season of spring. it was a time for cultivating interest and sowing the seeds of good will and fellowship. Having elected a lifelong farmer, Frederick Sargent Muzzey, as their first Master, Sunapee Lake grangers met every Friday night in the upstairs hall of Cilley's store, which was once attached to the Syvertsen home located directly across the street. By the early 1900s the membership had outgrown their rented facility so they sought a building of their own. Through the generosity of Mr. Mark Shultis Sr., a widely respected man of many interests, the Jason Perkins blacksmith shop was bought and razed. Built by John Hoyt of Bradford at a total cost of \$1,551.06, the present grange hall held its first meeting on October 24, 1902.

Now having the room to grow, more ambitious activities could be undertaken. Suppers were put on regularly featuring baked beans, oysters, and chicken pies, along with an occasional dance or skit. Annual attractions such as the discussion of town and school warrants, "Children's Day," the Christmas

celebration, and the Grange Fair were to become Newbury traditions. The layout of the new building also allowed the perfection of the fraternal degree work which exemplifies virtues of the order through agrarian symbolism.

Beyond the agricultural imagery used in tableaux and ceremony, regular discussions were held which served to promote practical farming interests within the community.

Topics ranged from the evaluation of methods used for forecasting the weather to the types of crops and animals which were the most profitable to raise. Other useful presentations dealt with maple sugaring, the manufacturing of woolen goods, and bookkeeping for the farmer. Housewives exchanged household suggestions including the way to properly black a stove, and "how to make everyday cooking attractive to the eye, desirable to the taste and nourishing to the body." Not limiting themselves to concerns of the farm, members disputed such social, moral and philosophical issues of the day as temperance, capital punishment, human integrity, education, and the impact of modern technological wonders like electricity, the telephone, and the automobile. Early Sunapee Lake grangers evidently took great pleasure in debating "whether or not more pleasure was derived from anticipation or realization," and speculating "What would I do with a million dollars."

Music and literary programs were other popular forms of old-time



Sunapee Lake Grange, # 112, South Newbury, c. 1902

entertainment. Drawing upon the talents of its self-taught members, the grange hall resounded with tunes from the cornet and trombone; the melodeon, organ and piano; the flute, piccolo, and harmonica; the violin and autoharp as well as a variety of whistling solos, duets and group sings. Poetical recitations and biographical essays were also characteristic of Sunapee Lake Grange around the turn of the century. Familiar readings from Whittier and Longfellow were offered along with original compositions which honored the lives of great Americans and extolled the agricultural heritage of Newbury.

During these early spring years, Sunapee Lake Grange prospered through the dedication of its members and through the contributions from prominent area residents including Secretary of State John Hay, Mrs. Armenia White, and the Shultis family. This generosity of time and money was returned to the community by the grange in the form of numerous service projects.

Some, like the yearly scholarship to the Agricultural College in Durham and the distribution of government seeds, generated considerable attention. Other acts of charity were carried out more quietly through aid to victims of disaster, comfort for the sick and bereaved, care of cemeteries and beautification of the town.

Having rooted itself in Newbury with a growing membership of 140 Patrons of Husbandry, Sunapee Lake Grange began its second quarter of a century. The advent of its summer season coincided with the heat of the impending first World War. It was during this period that patriotism flourished, both in spirit and in deed. New traditions were established such as the opening salute of the flag and the regular observation of Memorial Day, led by Jonathan Merrill, a veteran of the Battle of Gettysburg. Grangers aided in the national effort through individual enlistments, the support of the Red Cross, sponsorship of first-aid instruction, letters to servicemen overseas, assistance to disabled soldiers upon their return, and through endorsement of the League of Nations.

The war came to a close, but the fight for causes did not. Locally, Sunapee Lake Grange took an active part in the efforts to preserve an ancient Indian mortar on Ledge Hill from destruction and in securing a full-time minister for the village of South Newbury. It was also instrumental in establishing a town library and fire department. Voicing itself through legislative channels, the grange spoke out on such issues of the day as suffrage, rural-free mail delivery, farm insurance, regulation of child labor, and the daylight savings bill. Traffic safety also became a concern judging by their 1935 discussion as to "which causes more accidents; the back-seat driver or the front seat sweetheart?"

It was during the "Roaring Twenties" that novelty entertainments became fashionable. To encourage participation from everyone, the evening's program would be the responsibility of a different group each week such as "bobbed-haired sisters" or "brothers who used tobacco." Among the frequently repeated activities were: mystery rides, mock weddings, bird calls, songs sung backwards, along with motion pictures and music from the radio and phonograph. Competitive events were quite the rage: spelling bees, cookbook recipes, membership drives, guessing

games; once they even had a string-eating contest! Grange dances and melodramas were popular ways for young couples to meet back then. One of the ideas that did not catch on was a 1925 box social whereby the price of boxes was one half cent per pound of the weight of the lady furnishing the box!

In 1933, the effort was initiated to collect pictures of past masters. Among the most outstanding members of that generation were James Clifton and Mary (Rowe) Farmer. Born in Newbury on April 15, 1887, Jim Farmer joined this grange at the age of fourteen and became Master by the age of twenty-three. Known to his friends as "Smiling Jim," he brought us wide-spread recognition through his outstanding accomplishments as an officer in the Local, State and National Grange. After serving as State Grange Deputy, Steward and Overseer, he filled the office of State Master from 1925-1929. It was then he introduced the tradition of the traveling gavel and advocated the establishment of a state police system in New Hampshire. In 1927, James Farmer was elected Lecturer of the National Grange, a position which he held consecutively for twenty years. Throughout his travels he brought the spirit of the grange to towns all across the country by means of his enthusiasm and dedication. Equally spirited is his wife Mary, the daughter and granddaughter of fellow Patrons of Husbandry. In 1926, she had the distinction of becoming the first sister to serve as Master of Sunapee Lake Grange. To her credit the hall was completely refurbished; new paint on the inside and out; the wall paper was replaced; a new ceiling was installed and the building was wired for electricity. It was also Mary's somewhat unexpected honor to have organized the first Juvenile Grange in the State of New Hampshire. Together with a long list of other dedicated members to numerous to mention, Mary and Jim Farmer led our little grange to acclaim, earning Sunapee Lake Grange many awards including the title of "Honor Grange."

Clearly, Newbury was undergoing a transition from a farming to a vacationing community. As the town changed, so too did Sunapee Lake Grange. Members increasingly became aware of the principles of forestry management and took up the question as to which was more profitable; the hay field or the woodlot. As the regional economy changed, the native population shifted from small towns such as ours, to the cities. And so, the summer season of Sunapee Lake Grange drew to a close.



The annual Sunapee Lake Grange Fair in South Newbury attracted large crowds from 1915 to the 1950's.

The autumn cycle began during the height of the Great Depression. Hard times became that much more difficult as the Hurricane of '38 stormed across town. Like leaves falling from a state-ly old tree, grange membership dwindled to seventy-four patrons. Not only were young people drawn away by educational and employment opportunities, Sunapee Lake Grange also had to compete with newer organizations which had sprung up such as: the 4-H and Boy Scouts; the King's Daughters and Rebecca Lodge, the Rainbow Girls and Sunbeam Circle; as well as the Masons and Odd Fellows.

Of the grangers that remained, many were grandchildren of the earliest members and were faced with the question "What can we do to keep our grange from becoming an old story?" Before a strategy could be formulated, Sunapee Lake Grange was confronted by the Second World War. Despite the fact that gasoline and tire rationing effected attendance, Newbury's Patrons of Husbandry worked diligently toward the national effort. Grangers sponsored a war chest drive, gathering tin cans, stamps, and, of course, planting victory gardens. In addition to supporting the Red Cross and U.S.O., brothers and sisters of the order again wrote letters to servicemen overseas, purchased defense bonds, and engaged army officers and nurses to speak at meetings.

Yes, these autumn years were a busy season for the grim reaper. During that period more than two dozen members were called to the roll up yonder. One of the saddest losses was the life of Herbert E. Brook, Jr. Born and raised in Newbury, this young soldier worked in the Lake Sunapee Trading Post before joining to serve his country. His heroism is commemorated by a street which bears his name near his place of death in Guam and by a memorial tribute displayed within the upstairs room of the grange hall. As the charter members passed away one by one, so did some of the Sunapee Lake traditions. Among those forgotten was a grange cane which, since the time of the charter members, was handed down over the years to the oldest brother. It passed through a succession of ten male grangers until one day the cane became lost in the past.

The post-war years of this third quarter of a century concentrated on rebuilding both the membership and finances of Sunapee Lake Grange. Because honorary members as well as servicemen were exempt from dues, it became necessary to increase the annual fee. Other attempts to harvest income included a "Monopoly" fund-raiser, card parties for the area skiers, and a silver dollar contest. A portion of the proceeds went toward building maintenance. The foundation and chimney were badly in need of repair; running water and gas heat were introduced; and a kitchenette was added to the upstairs hall. The remaining fruits yielded were fed to worthwhile causes including the March of Dimes, the Kern-Hatten Boys' Home, the P.T.A., a grange home for the aged, and the construction of the present New London Hospital building.

A time for reflection upon the past and for anticipation of the future, the winter cycle of Sunapee Lake Grange was a season of nostalgia. It was during this most recent quarter of a century that the grange observed its own Diamond Jubilee highlighting its first seventy-five years, and also participated in the bicentennial celebrations for both our nation and our town. Perhaps it is

the strong bond of sentimentalism within Sunapee Lake Grange that has enabled it to withstand the trials of the modern day world.

Much of the activity of the winter years centered around the home economics and youth committees. Baking and sewing contests were held regularly as were various exchange programs. Card parties and suppers enjoyed continued popularity. While Sunapee Lake Grange continued the traditions of the annual fair and memorial day observance, topical debates and discussion of the town and school warrants had become glazed over. During the past twenty-five years, officers became increasingly involved in the leadership of the Pomona Grange. Undoubtedly, the most significant accomplishment of the winter season was the formation of the Sunapee Lake Junior Grange. Though the idea was discussed as early as 1929, it was not actually organized until the 28th of May, 1971.

By the fourth quarter of a century, the composition of Sunapee Lake Grange's membership had changed considerably. Few if any of the members were full-time farmers. As many of the old Newbury families moved on, the leadership within Sunapee Lake Grange was drawn from members who had belonged to the Bradford, Warner, Sutton, and New London granges which had previously disbanded. As a result of the joined forces, our present membership now stands at 143 patrons all together.

Sad but true, nowadays few but the officers themselves regularly attend the subordinate meetings. If we are to satisfy our present members and attract new ones, we must overcome the biggest obstacle now facing us: complacency. We mustn't be content to merely manage our routine business matters and go through the motions of the degree work. Sunapee Lake grangers need to encourage widespread participation by revitalizing old traditions and devising new ones. We can not be satisfied with only our past accomplishments, we must take pride in our present if there is to be a future.

As so eloquently stated in the verse from Ecclesiastes "For every thing there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." In the midst of contemporary times, our community now more than ever needs an enduring organization which unites the entire family. Let each one of us now take the opportunity to renew the traditional grange values of faith, hope, charity and fidelity and apply them to the generations of today and tomorrow. Together, we can insure that today's centennial celebration will not just bring to a close the winter cycle of Sunapee Lake Grange, but will begin the spring season of a new century.

SUNAPEE MOUNTAIN HOUSE REVISITED

We are farmer Nathan Johnson and Henniker blacksmith David Cogswell joined forces in 1859 to purchase a 200 acre tract of land on a northerly slope of Sunapee Mountain. Their plans were to harvest timber and convert the land to pasture. The magnificent panorama of lake and surrounding mountains which emerged so enchanted Johnson that he made plans to move his family from Weare and establish his farm on a plateau 500 ft. above the lake.

Over the years, the view from the Johnson farmhouse and land became locally renowned and Johnson would accept a few summer boarders. When Lake Sunapee became accessible by rail in 1872, Johnson and Cogswell announced that they would build a resort on the property.

Despite the changing location, the four story hotel containing 50 guest rooms
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Newbury Historical Society

P. O. Box 176

Newbury, NH 03255

Newbury Historical Society Dates and Events:

Annual Meeting and Program: August 11, 2013

**Steve Taylor presents
New Hampshire's Grange Movement:
Its Rise, Triumphs and Decline
Veterans' Hall, 2:00 PM
Refreshments will be served.**

**Newbury Historical Society Board Meetings:
Newbury Town Office, 7:00 PM
September 12, November 14, 2013**

Newbury Historical Society Board of Directors:

Term expires June, 2013

Paula Falkowski, Gay Sheary, Mary Thayer

Term expires June, 2014

Ashley Geddes, Barbara Steward, Claire Vannatta

Term expires June, 2015

Deane Geddes, Bill Weiler, Margie Weiler

E-mail: info@newburyhistorical.org

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Sunapee Mountain House Continued

was completed and ready for business for the 1873 summer season. The canny partners invited six newspaper editors from Massachusetts and New Hampshire to be the first guests in their new hotel. The strategy was a resounding success and the hotel opened to enthusiastic endorsements from the editors.

The Mountain House was a success. Hiking was a popular activity. Guests would trek up to Lake Solitude, visit Indian Rock and even search for a mysterious cave said to be located high on one of the mountain ridges.

Then, on a June morning in 1875, shortly before the first guests of the season were to arrive, Nathan Johnson built a fire in his hotel's kitchen, as usual, to take off the early morning chill. Later, the insurance adjusters concluded that a faulty chimney was the cause of the disastrous fire which ensued. They would pay only 60% of the costs to rebuild. Johnson and Coggs well returned to their original plans to farm the land and harvest timber. Johnson reportedly accepted a few favored guests into his farmhouse each summer.

On a crisp, clear Saturday morning in late April of 2013, one-hundred and thirty-eight years after fire consumed the stately Sunapee Mountain House, nine members of the Newbury Historical Society set out to locate what remained of the grand hotel and farmhouse on the northerly slope of Sunapee Mountain. Chuck Crickman, Paula and Don Falkowski, Ashley Geddes, Deane Geddes, Craig MacKenzie, Bill Weiler and Gay and Marty Sheary gathered in the parking lot of the Town Hall to carpool to the mountain. Once there, we accessed the wrong gate at the park and hiked up and down the steep slope searching for clues. Two or three of our more intrepid members put on quite a bit more mileage than others and eventually located the granite foundation on a plateau, now overgrown, which clearly once commanded a magnificent view of the lake. Nearby, we viewed what must have been the foundation of the old barn with its graveyard of bits of farm equipment and old harness parts.

We imagined guests arriving by rail and making their way up to the hotel by horse and carriage. We could see them gathering on the 110 ft. veranda after dinner to enjoy the view. In the morning after breakfast, they'd be ready to hike to Lake Solitude or Indian Rock. Simple pleasures. We wished we could have joined them.

Ashley Geddes