



SUTTON NOW & THEN

The Newsletter of the Sutton Historical Society

Founded 1985

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Sutton Historical Society

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chuffed.org/project/shs-meetinghouse-restoration

ALMOST THERE!

Please help us cross the finish line as we work together to preserve and maintain Sutton's rich history.

[Donate today.](#)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Notes	2
Stewardship Fund Soars	2
In Memoriam	3
SHS Pays Tribute to Long-time Contributor	4
Recollections of Carlton's Boyhood Home	5
Excerpts from Ben Nelson's Courageous Death	6
Epidemics in NH History	7

Stewardship Fund Goal in Sight

If you have driven through the village of South Sutton recently, you've probably noticed that the fundraising thermometer in front of the South Sutton Meetinghouse has nearly reached the top. Thanks to the kindness and generosity of so many, SHS has raised \$94,995 to date. That puts us just \$5,000 shy of our \$100,000 goal.

If you've helped us get to this point, THANK YOU! Now is the time for the last push to put us over the top. Over 150 individuals or families have generously donated to the Stewardship Fund during these unusual times. If you'd like to help us reach our goal, please donate today. Any amount helps!

Work on our first stewardship project is already

underway. We have received the first 50% of the grant awarded by LCHIP to restore the meetinghouse tower. Materials have been ordered and are being milled to replicate the existing clapboards and decorative urn finials and retain historical accuracy. SHS has also contracted to update and improve the building's lighting protection – a smart move given that the meetinghouse was damaged by lightning in the past. The onsite work will begin in late spring. The plan is to remove the existing three-stage tower topped by

the four-sided dome and perform the restoration and repair on the ground. SHS will be sure to share progress on the effort; it's going to be fascinating to watch this project as it unfolds.

Continued on Page 2



The temperature is rising in Sutton this spring thanks to many generous donors.

Scholarship Deadline Approaches

Each year the Sutton Historical Society offers the Barrows and Jane B. Pratt Scholarship in the amount of \$1000 to graduating high school seniors who meet the eligibility requirements. The deadline to apply for 2021 awards is May 1.

The scholarship fund was generously established by Jane and Fritz Pratt, first known as the Martha W. and Fred H. Barrows, Jr. Scholarship in memory of Jane's parents. Upon Jane's death in 2008, the award was renamed the Barrows and Jane B. Pratt Scholarship to hon-

or Jane. Fritz, who passed in late 2019, insisted that all eligible students receive the scholarship. Some years there are multiple recipients, other years there are none.

Continued on Page 3

President's Notes

"What a long, strange trip it's been." "Truckin'" may be the Grateful Dead's signature song; it has also been our year, and yet it has been an outstanding year. Thanks to our Board of Directors and all you members, here's what the Sutton Historical Society has accomplished during the pandemic.

1. We have raised close to \$95,000 for the repair and renovation of the South Sutton Meetinghouse, a National Historical Sutton landmark, built in 1839 and unchanged through the years.
2. Due to the efforts of Don Davis, LCHIP has granted \$52,500 to be used for this project and one half of that amount has been received.
3. Through Andy Jeffrey, Burrington Builders has contracted with the Society to repair and renovate the meetinghouse steeple. We've also contracted to have the lightning protection system restored. All this work will be accomplished into the fall.
4. Over 150 individuals have contributed to the Meetinghouse restoration effort. That is remarkable at any time, but this



level of support during a pandemic is inspiring. Bless you all.

5. March 28 was Carlton Bradford's 95th birthday. After approval of the board, Judy Lowe and Jack Noon arranged to have an etched wooden sign placed over the meeting room of the Cressey House, naming the room in Carlton's honor. The dedication of this room will be later when we can gather face to face.
6. While the Town of Sutton owns the GG Wells Old Store Museum, the Society handles the day-to-day monitoring and up keep. Some time ago an inspection was made of the store and the town was notified and select board members made a further inspection. A list of chores has been put together and many repairs will be made this summer and fall.

7. Bruno and Marilou Steblai continue to maintain and make improvements to the Cressey House.
8. Even while doing more writing, Jack Noon continues to upgrade and refine the archives.

The South Sutton village area is idyllic. In the center of the square is a Civil War statue, behind the statue on the knoll is the meetinghouse,

"Over 150 individuals have contributed to the Meetinghouse restoration effort. Bless you all."

just behind and to the right is the one room schoolhouse. To the left of the statue was an inn (now a private home) and to the right of the statue is the Old Store Museum.

As 2021 unfolds, we may get to a point where we can interact without masks, or as some say, "back to normal" but not yet. Without physically meeting, the Society has accomplished much. When we are able to be together to work on our meetinghouse or to share other special times, we then can say, "we are back."

Robert W. Wright, Jr.

Stewardship Fund Donations Soar *from Page 1*

While donations have come from many sources, SHS has come close to reaching our fundraising goal in part from a generous donation from the Maxwell Land Trust, a nonprofit organization founded in 1998 by Wayne and Cynde Robbins. The original purpose of MLT was to facilitate the preservation of 325 acres of open space in the Robbins'

densely developed hometown on the South Shore of Massachusetts, a goal which has recently been achieved. "When we decided it was time to close MLT after 23 years of conservation work, we started making lists of possible nonprofits to donate to," shared MLT co-founder Cynde Robbins. "We decided that for the most part we wanted to help

smaller nonprofits who really had a definite need." Cynde's family has summered on Blaisdell Lake since 1938 when her grandfather, Earl Little, build their camp. The MLT donation honors Cynde's fondness for Sutton and support of the Society's plan to restore our historic meetinghouse.

Scholarship Deadline *from Page 1*

We invite all eligible students to take advantage of this opportunity.

Eligibility criteria include:

- The student is a resident of Sutton.
- The student's parents/guardians are current members in good standing of the Historical Society.
- The student is a high school senior and has been accepted to a higher-level educational institution and provides the name



Mills School (District No. 4) c. 1869

and location of the institution with the application.

- The student submits an essay of at least 800 words about how

living in Sutton has shaped his/her life and contributed to future plans and goals. The essay is to be typed in Word document format.

- The student must provide GPA and any extra-curricular and/or community service activities he/she is or has been involved in, along with the essay. Applicants must also supply a current photo in JPG format.

Winning essays will be published in the SHS newsletter, *Sutton Now & Then*, along with the scholarship recipients' picture. Applications may be emailed as an attachment by the May 1 deadline to suttonnh-history@gmail.com or to Karla Salathe, Scholarship Committee Chair at ksalathe@kearsarge.org. Any questions about the process should be directed to Karla.

In Memoriam Veda May Whipple Hosmer (1936 – 2021)

SHS is sad to share the news of the passing of Veda Hosmer on February 1, 2021. She was born in Newport, NH on February 1, 1936 to Ralph J. and Emma (Eastman) Whipple. When Veda was just five years old, her parents purchased the house known as the Marietta Ferry homestead, the second house south of the Old Store Museum on the South Sutton Common. Veda had a short walk out her front door to the one room South Village

(District 9) schoolhouse, which she attended through eighth grade. Veda graduated from New London High School in 1954 and married Charley Hosmer on Nov. 11, 1956. While Veda and Charley spent their lives together in Newbury, they were highly involved in the Sutton community, where Charley's dad, George, owned a home across from Wright's Beach at Blaisdell Lake. Together with Charley, Veda was an honorary member of the Sutton

Historical Society and a life member of the Blaisdell Lake Protective Association.

Veda was predeceased by Charley, her husband of 58 years, in 2015. She is survived by two daughters, Debbie Hosmer of Sutton, NH and Elizabeth "Betsy" Seufert and her husband, Chris of Fort Myers, FL. A graveside service will be held on Saturday, May 15, 2021 at 11:00 A.M. in the Millwoods Cemetery, in South Sutton.

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SHS Pays Tribute to a Longtime Contributor



Carleton Bradford in his Old Home Day regalia, c. 2010.

SHS recently had the pleasure of dedicating the Carlton R. Bradford, Jr. Room at the Society's headquarters in Cressey House in South Sutton Village. The tribute, revealed on the occasion of Carlton's 95th birthday, is the Society's way of showing our deep respect and admiration for Carlton's many contributions throughout the years. A man of many talents from entrepreneur to author to artist to tenor vocalist, SHS is pleased to express our gratitude for the major impact that Carlton has had helping to preserve Sutton's history.

Carlton was born at home in North Sutton on March 28, 1926 in the midst of a blizzard. According to his dear friend and Sutton Town Historian, Jack Noon, Carlton had what he considers an idyllic childhood growing up in the village of North Sutton and remembers well when none of the Sutton roads were paved. He went to school in the North Sutton schoolhouse, originally located across from the Follansbee Inn. Carlton lists author among his many talents and accomplishments and recounts many details of his youth in his 2019 publication, *A Boy, His Village and His Lake – North Sutton in the 1930s*.

Carlton attended high school in New London and when World War II intervened, he joined the Navy. After mustering out in 1946, Carlton graduated from UNH and moved to Massachusetts for work. In 1966 Carlton returned to New London where he married wife Maggi and purchased the Kearsarge Bookshelf, a business he operated for 27 years. Another of Carlton's books is *The Retailer Who Needed A Roof Over His Head*, the story of how Carlton built the Gallery shopping and professional space in New London to house his bookshop.

Sutton Historian Jack Noon shares that Carlton has always loved Sutton and has been a prominent and contributing board member of the Historical Society and Muster Field Farm. Carlton served as SHS Vice President from 1992 to 1995 and

retired from the board in 2014. To honor his Sutton roots, Carlton pursued research on Sutton history with Jack and with historian and genealogy extraordinaire Larry Bennett. Carlton instituted the cataloging of SHS assets and served as chairman of the SHS Archives committee. Soon after Bob Bristol's will established Muster Field Farm as a working farm and public museum in 1994, Carlton joined that board and worked tirelessly to bring the Harvey family documents to life. Carlton invited Jack to join him in transcribing the Harvey family papers and got Jack interested in new aspects of Sutton history that he had previously been unaware of. Carlton documented the men of the Harvey Homestead in his 2001 publication, *Out of Tin Boxes*, an historic account of Matthew Harvey and his two sons, Jonathan and Mathew II, from the Revolutionary to Civil War eras.

On the occasion of Carlton's 80th birthday in 2006, Jack wrote, "(Carlton's) consistency to explore all kinds of documents, photographs, and other acquisitions for SHS has been the gently driving force in what progress we've made in updating the town history since 1890. I doubt very much that I would have involved myself with the challenge of writing about Sutton history if it hadn't been for Carlton."

SHS plans to formally honor Carlton and celebrate the Carlton R. Bradford, Jr. room when it is safe to do so. The Society looks forward to upcoming meetings and gatherings in the newly dedicated space that will also house several of Carlton's oil paintings, including renderings of the nearby historic South Sutton Meetinghouse and District No. 9 Schoolhouse.



Dedication plaque over meeting room at SHS headquarters with painting of the historic South Sutton Meetinghouse and Schoolhouse by honoree Carlton Bradford in the background. (Sue Esposito Photo)

Recollections of Carlton's Boyhood Home

By Jack Noon

Ninety five years ago on March 28, 1926, Carlton was born in North Sutton in the Abel Wheeler house, which was then nearly a century old. The house is beside route 114 on the way up towards New London. A picture taken of it in 1994 shows a sign in front announcing it as the Bayberry Barn Christmas Shop.

Abel Wheeler's sons Leonard and Ransom Wheeler grew up there. Leonard's daughter Emma married James Harvey Watson, a Harvey family descendant who for more than forty years beginning in childhood had lived at Muster Field Farm. Her uncle, Civil War veteran Ransom Wheeler, lived and worked at Muster Field for years in his old age while Emma Watson lived there as well and had two sons. After Em-



The Abel Wheeler Homestead in 1939 when owned by Carlton Bradford, Sr. (Sutton Homes & Buildings Volume II)

ma became a young widow in 1899, she lived at the Abel Wheeler house for a few years.

Carlton's father, Carlton Bradford, Sr., bought the house in 1923. No roads in Sutton were paved at the time. Carlton walked to school, stopped frequently at the

Vernondale store, rode his bicycle everywhere, and had an idyllic childhood in the small village where everyone knew one another. The hotels and summer camps around Kezar Lake were filled every summer. Carlton set pins at the Whippoorwill bowling alley and was quite familiar with the Maple Leaf golf course. His boyhood reminiscences led him to write his fourth and most recent book, *A Boy, His Village and His Lake - North Sutton in the 1930s*.

"(Carlton) had an idyllic childhood in the small village where everyone knew one another."

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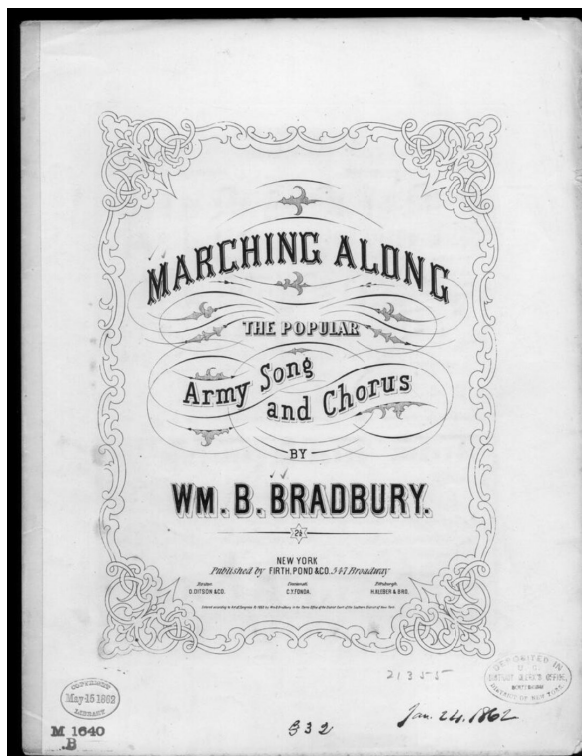
Carlton R. Bradford, Jr. Room



Excerpts from Ben Nelson's Courageous Death

By June Stearns Butka

Light eyes, light hair, dark complexion, standing five feet nine inches tall, Benjamin P. Nelson born on 4 May 1824, Sutton, New Hampshire age thirty-eight years, occupation farmer, took a stand in the Civil War. He is one of 19 men to voluntarily enlist, on the 15th day of August 1862, as a private in the Militia of New Hampshire and to be mustered out for a period of three years. He mustered out with Company F, New Hampshire 11th Infantry Regiment on 29 August 1862. He served until his death in action on 13 December 1862 at Fredericksburg, Virginia.



"The regiment leaves for the front at 9 AM September 11, 1862, the regiment took up its line to march, crossed the river, and, amidst the assembled thousands accompanying its departure with sorrowful hearts, marched down Main Street of Concord, New Hampshire, to the station to the cheering strains of "Marching Along" from the regimental band. Boarded the cars, and were soon rolling on to the seat of war, - via Nashua, Worcester, Stonington, Jersey City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore to Washington."

Benjamin P Nelson would be one of these soldiers going off to war. Leaving his wife, Elinor M (Babb) Nelson, and four children; Monira age 11, Martha age 9, William age 7, and Loren age 4. William was my great grandfather. My father, Nelson, barely remembers his mother, Lillian, or his grandfather, William. William died when Dad was 2 years

of age and Lillian died when Dad was 4 years of age.

On a cold and overcast morning, the City of Fredericksburg was blanketed in a deep fog making it almost impossible for the armies to see each other. Around 10:30, the fog started lifting, allowing the troops to move forward. Ben was killed on this gruesome battlefield that day.

Ben's wife, Elinor, carried on the farm with the aid of family and friends, a Civil War widow's pension until her death in 1907. Her son William continued farming on the homestead at the base of Nelson's Hill in Sutton, New Hampshire. It is the place that always brings the sense of home to my heart when I visit.

June, daughter of Sutton natives Nelson and Shirley Stearns, spent summers in her youth visiting her great aunt Carrie Stearns Perkins and Uncle Wilson (John Wilson Perkins) in Sutton. June is a hobbyist who enjoys researching family history, reading about their lives and times, and taking photographs of whatever catches her eye. While researching her Sutton roots several years back, she visited the SHS archives and took away much information from Larry's Bennett's Sutton Genealogy Collection. Her full article about Ben Nelson will be published this summer in the Southern California Genealogy Society Jamboree. June lives with her husband in Merrimack, NH.

Source: A history of the Eleventh New Hampshire Regiment, Volunteer Infantry in the rebellion war, 1861-1865: covering its entire service, with interesting scenes of army life, and graphic details of battles, skirmishes, sieges, marches, and hardships, in which its officers and men participated by Cogswell, Leander W. (Leander Winslow), b. 1825.

We want to hear your story!

Send us your stories to share with our readers about all things **Sutton Now & Then**.

- Family stories passed on from Sutton ancestors or experienced yourself
- Pictures, scrapbooks, journal entries and other memorabilia
- Information from your family genealogy or family history research
- And much more!

Thank you!

Epidemics in NH History

One of the responsibilities of our distinguished Town Historian is to provide a statement for the Annual Town Report commenting on history and historical milestones. Here is a timely and memorable excerpt from Jack's commentary about Town History in Sutton's recent 2020 Annual Report.

About 15 months ago 2020 lay ahead as a special year for celebrating Sutton's history. The first settlers had arrived 250 years earlier in 1770. Historical hikes over the town's first roads were planned along with several programs about the early decades. Then, however, Covid-19 shut down everything, and we all settled into different degrees of isolation and personal challenges coping with the threat.

Covid-19 was a new disease, but disease epidemics have been all-too-frequent horrors in New Hampshire's history. In the mid-1730s, down by the seacoast, more than a thousand people died of "throat distemper" (diphtheria), most of them children. Deadly smallpox outbreaks joined those of diphtheria, dysentery, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, typhoid, and other unidentified epidemics. Many of the victims were children or young adults. Old gravestone inscriptions, early town records, and published town histories recorded the fatalities.



Satirical painting by James Gillray mocking quack medicine. (New England Historical Society)

The equivalent of our mysterious modern outbreak raged through New Hampshire from about 1812 through 1816. It struck settlements randomly throughout the state and killed many people. Known generally as "the spotted fever," its victims went from apparent health to death often within a day and sometimes within a few hours. Some towns escaped

completely, but others were struck hard. As a few examples included in an 1817 Gazetteer, it killed 10 people in Gilsum, 17 in Lempster, 52 in Londonderry, 30 in

Moultonborough, and 75 in Pittsfield. The town of Warren buried its spotted fever victims in a separate section of a cemetery and erected a monument in 1994: "In memory of those who lie in these unmarked graves. Victims of the 1815 plague."

"The equivalent of our mysterious modern outbreak raged through New Hampshire from about 1812 to 1816."

Several dozen other towns, including Sutton, had their own spotted fever victims. Hannah Harvey Dinsmore, a daughter of Matthew and Hannah Harvey born at Muster Field Farm, died of spotted fever in



STAY TUNED!

The Meetinghouse tower is scheduled to be removed to the ground later this spring. You won't want to miss it!!

The historic structure also needs paint and new windows; we're at the beginning of this wonderful restoration. Please help make it all happen and [DONATE TODAY](#).

Henniker along with one of her children. Spotted fever victims in Sutton, mentioned in the 1890 town history, included John Felch, Abraham Peaslee, and brothers David and Thomas Mastin. (The brothers' Mastin grandparents and one of their daughters had died of dysentery in 1776 shortly after arriving in town.) The only positive aspect of the year 1816, when there were killing frosts every month, was that the cold killed off the spotted fever.

Modern medicine and sanitation have eliminated many diseases of long ago. There is great optimism that vaccinations in 2021 will end the current threat and let us get back to normal lives.

Jack Noon, Sutton Historian

SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 457

South Sutton, NH 03273



Please support the SHS Stewardship
Fund and restore our Meetinghouse

Join us!

We invite you to join the Sutton Historical Society or renew your membership. Please mail the form below with your dues and/or additional contribution to the Stewardship Fund. Be sure to include your email address. We welcome volunteers to help SHS preserve our Sutton heritage and contribute to ongoing projects. Volunteers are needed for the Meetinghouse restoration effort and much more.

Name _____

Email _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Please select: ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Volunteers are needed to help paint the Meetinghouse, bake for fundraising events, catalog historical records and much more.

SHS 2021 MEMBERSHIP FORM

ANNUAL DUES

- | | |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Member | \$15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Individual | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Couple | \$400 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution | \$ _____ |

Mail this form with your check to:

SHS PO Box 457 South Sutton, NH 03273

Sutton Historical Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible. Membership includes a subscription to *Now and Then*, the newsletter of the Sutton Historical Society. Members are eligible for the Barrows and Jane B. Pratt Memorial Scholarship.

Thank you for your support!