

Ruth (Grant) Bynum's Memories of New Boston 1937-1950

Ruth (Grant) Bynum was born in Nashua, New Hampshire and soon thereafter moved to New Boston to a home that is now the Biron residence at 329 Lyndeborough Road. Mrs. Bynum now lives in Oregon. She visited the Historical Society in May of 2016 with her daughter and granddaughters.

My father, Robert Earl Grant, bought the farm, known as the Douglass place, on Lyndeborough Road sometime around 1935. My father and mother Gladys (she was always called Lamie) moved from Nashua to work on the house, which I was told had been empty for some years and needed extensive repairs. He planned to start a chicken farm there. My father said he had been told the house was originally the ell of a pest house and had been moved to that location. It was a timber frame house. In the attic the beams were put together with wooden pegs and the ceilings were very low. There was no electricity or running water. There was a pump in the kitchen for water and a wood stove in the kitchen but no other heat.

The house had what my mother called Indian shutters. We used those shutters during the blackouts in World War II. My father was very inventive. The well was right beside the house and he built an addition on one end of the house which went up another half story past the attic and installed a windmill on the roof. The windmill pumped water up to a huge redwood tank in the attic and we had gravity flow water. This addition was always referred to as "the well tower". Later, after we got electricity, we had an electric pump and the windmill was taken down. My father bought an old steam boiler from a church and installed it in the cellar, then we had radiators and steam heat but we were always cold in the winter. He also added a bathroom but I can remember the chamber pots.

My mother, only eighteen when she moved to New Boston, had grown up in the city of Nashua and wasn't used to roughing it. She never liked that house. The house has been changed so much that it is hardly recognizable as the house I knew.

My sister Roberta (1938) and my brother Willie (1940) were born in the house with Dr. Fraser in attendance. Later my brother Alex (1946) was born in Goffstown.



Farm 1935

There was an old barn on the property and my father converted it to use for raising chickens by adding three more floors. He also added a garage and several other outbuildings. In 1947-48 he built another large barn on the other side of the house.



Farm 1950

I remember well the brick chimney where the paper mill had been because it was just across the meadow from our house and we often played and picked wild strawberries there. There were a couple of cellar holes by the chimney. Across the road was a round flat stone with a large rock in the center covering what we thought was an old well. I realize now that it was a millstone, probably from the paper mill. I don't know what ever happened to it.



Mill race where the paper mill was. 1950

Sometime in the forties (I don't know the exact date), my father bought a steam sawmill from a company in Milford that was converting to electricity. He set it up on our farm. My father loved trains and steam engines and he kept the steam boiler fired up to run the saw while a French crew sawed the lumber.



My father's sawmill about 1947

In 1938 my father's sister, Adaline Burke, and his mother, Mary (Doherty) Grant, lived in the house now known as Mary Louise Gould's house. My grandmother, Mary Grant, died in that house in November, 1938. That house changed hands and, about the time we left New Boston at the end of 1950, two women named Dottie and Rhodie lived there.

Sometime in the early 1940's my father built a small house for his sister Adaline a little way down the road toward town on the same side of the road as our house. She lived there for a time and later sold it.

Some people named Pepin lived there for a while. There is a larger house there now. I don't know whether it was added to the original small house or whether the smaller one was torn down.



Adaline's house looking shabby 1980's

When I was very young, Dick and Mabel Heath lived on the farm where the Gomes now live. I remember Dick Heath with his team of draft horses pulling a hay wagon. When the hay wagon tipped over one time we could hear him yelling and cursing across the road. After the Heaths left, the Wymans came (I believe from East Putney, Vermont). They were not there very long and then the Magarians (spelling?) moved in. Their daughter Nancy was about my age. Then the Gomes came. One of the Gomes' boys was friends with my youngest brother Alex who was born in 1946 as they were about the same age.



Alex (right) and the Gomes boy about 1948

There was an old unpainted two-story house across the road from our house where Mrs. Ellsworth lived. I believe she was a relative of the Baileys. When I was about six or seven my mother told me she had died when someone accidentally ran over her. I wanted to go to the funeral with my mother but she said I couldn't go. After Mrs. Ellsworth died, my maternal grandparents bought the house for \$500 but never lived there. It changed hands again and the Sykes were living there when we left New Boston. Later the house burned.

The Baileys (Ralph, Grace and kids, Raymond, Richard and Eunice) lived down the road. (I believe it's Cochran Hill Road.) Grace Bailey was a friend of my mother's and called her almost every day. We of course were on a party line. We were told Ralph Bailey was epileptic and Grace called my mother one day to say he had died in the night.

Further on that road was the home of Frank and Lillian Wilson. Frank Wilson was our mailman and Lillian was a friend of my mother's. My mother often made coffee or cocoa for Frank Wilson on cold days. Read Wilson was in my class at school. Other class members were Sylvia Barss, Lucille Sarette, Geraldine Klardie, Raymond Houghton, Raymond Bailey, Jean Strong (I know I have left out some).

The old schoolhouse in Gougeville was the summer home of the Pierces. Their girls, Elizabeth and Eleanor, were about the same age as me and my sister Roberta. Mrs. Pierce taught all of us kids how to swim in the river in back of our house. Because there was an old wooden dam just down river from our house toward town where a mill had once been (it's gone now), the water was deeper there. We had an old wooden rowboat and would row down the river, pass under Moley Bridge, go up to the edge of the dam and swim. In the summertime the river was lower and the edge of the dam was exposed. I can also remember driving over Moley Bridge. There is nothing left of the bridge now except the stone abutments.



Remains of Moley Bridge 1960



Swimming above the mill race.

Willie (in front), left to right: Alex, Roberta, my father (Bob Grant), Ruth 1947

Henry Friedrich built some kitchen cabinets and a closet in our house and I can remember being in his blacksmith shop with my father.

My parents were friends with Guy and Alice Hunter. Elizabeth Hunter was about the same age as my brother Willie and I remember when Mona was born.

The Bromans moved in up on the hill past our house (I don't know the exact date). Their daughters, about our age, were Susan and Sally.

Some people named Pestana (?) lived in the house just over the bridge on the left by Frog Rock Road. They bought an oil painting that my artistic mother painted of their house.

Mr. Lord opened a restaurant in the forties in what is now Frog Rock Farm. My mother worked as a waitress there one summer. Lord was well known in Nashua. People came from all over to eat there and my mother received a big tip one day from the Secretary of the Navy who had eaten there.

Charlie Hoyt lived down the road toward town in a poor house. He brought Mattie Sue Banks and her kids, Ollie Jo and Jack Dempsey, from Tennessee to live there. They had a little boy who later died when he became lost in the woods.

My father was raising chickens for hatching eggs. George Sheldon owned a hatchery on River Road and once we visited him. He seemed to me to be a very old man with a middle aged wife. I was very surprised that there was a crib in the room and they had two very small babies.

I started school in the village school in New Boston in 1942. Mrs. Hopkins was the teacher and the first, second and third grades were all in one room. When I was in the fifth grade, we went to school in the old train depot. Mrs. Rainey was the teacher. The round table where the train had turned around was in back of the depot. We played softball in the dirt yard next to the building.

Our eighth grade graduation was held on the small stage on the first floor of the town hall. I guess that would have been 1948. I remember that we sang “Red Sails in the Sunset” and “Now is the Hour”.

I continued at the village school until I was in my freshman year in high school. At some point I was on the basketball team as we were all required to be. I was not good at sports and hated it.

Home Economics class was held in the attic of the village school. We made grape jelly from wild grapes and learned to knit. It was in this class that I first saw canned frozen orange juice as it was a relatively new product then.

My mother bought groceries at Marshall's Market (owned by Cecil Marshall) or Dodge's General Store and my father bought supplies for the farm at the building at the end of Mill Street that is now a private home. Sometimes my mother bought from a bakery truck driven by Izzy Green that stopped at our farm.

My parents occasionally went to grange meetings in the town hall. Kids were brought along and I can remember square dancing in the town hall. Christmas celebrations were held in the town hall with kids taking part in the Christmas play. There was a big decorated tree and someone playing Santa Claus handed out small gifts to the children. On one such memorable Christmas, Brainard Newton was part of the program. On stage he held a twig and recited Joyce Kilmer's “I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree”. The town acquired a movie projector sometime in the forties and started showing movies in the town hall. If I remember correctly, we paid a dime to watch the movie. In the summer the movie screen was set up on the playing field and we sat in the bleachers. The first movie I remember seeing was the silent film “Phantom of the Opera”.

In the winter of 1948-49 I was in the hospital in Goffstown with pneumonia. While I was there, the second new barn my father had built burned to the ground, along with outbuildings and the sawmill.

A few weeks after I came home, the barn at the old Heath farm (Magarians were living there) burned. An investigation was made because arson was suspected but my parents didn't believe it was arson. My father hadn't been feeling well that night so he hadn't checked the brooder stoves as he usually did. It was thought that the fire started when the brooder stoves overheated and sparked the sawdust on the floor. Some people from town helped my father build a new barn which is still there today. It isn't as big as the barn that burned.

Our farm was for sale in the summer of 1950. By that time Roger Babson was in town with his Center of Gravity Research Center. He came out to look our farm over but didn't buy it. The farm was sold to the Southworths and by the first of December, 1950 we were on our way to California.

For anyone who may remember my father, I would like to add what happened after that. In 1964 my parents were living in Cucamonga, California where on May 12, 1964 my father was shot by a deranged man (he did not know the man). He died on May 16, 1964.

-- Ruth (Grant) Bynum, May 2016

Historical Society notes:

An undated newspaper article by Rena Davis describes a house which may be the one in which Ruth grew up. Ruth described her house as "the Douglass place", and it stands near King's Mill, which was a flour mill when it was owned by Jonathan King. Rena Davis wrote: "This house at Gougeville in which Jesse and Mary [Christy] lived was built by Jesse and has been moved a short distance, but in 1893 it was occupied by James Douglas, which was once Jonathan King's residence."

Ruth remembered her father Robert describing his house as an old "pest house". A "pest house" was where people who were suffering from communicable diseases like tuberculosis, cholera, smallpox or typhus might be quarantined. King's Mill became a paper mill in the 1860s, and paper was manufactured from old rags. There are stories of millworkers contracting smallpox when they sorted infected rags. One victim was the daughter of Thomas Seavey, who died in 1874, while her family was working in the Paper Mill mentioned by Ruth (the former King's Mill).

The "Moley bridge" Ruth refers to may have been the "Mullett bridge" which we think was the bridge which once connected McCollum Road with Lyndeborough Road.