

“In the Country” by Robert Todd – published in the *New Boston Bulletin* in 2002

Reproduced by the New Boston (NH) Historical Society with permission of the author and the newspaper.

Table of Contents

<u>Published</u>	<u>Title</u>
<u>01/2002</u>	<u>Wetland Protection</u>
<u>02/2002</u>	<u>Humble Farm Crafts</u>
<u>03/2002</u>	<u>Headlines of the Future</u>
<u>04/2002</u>	<u>Looking and Seeing</u>
<u>05/2002</u>	<u>Timelessness of Our Town Clock</u>
<u>06/2002</u>	<u>Trees as Witness to the Human Experience</u>
<u>07/2002</u>	<u>Selectmen Take a Hike (town boundaries)</u>
<u>08/2002</u>	<u>Valley Hall (Dodge's store)</u>
<u>09/2002</u>	<u>A Legacy of Shoemaking</u>
<u>10/2002</u>	<u>Trees and People</u>
<u>11/2002</u>	<u>Tamias's Diary (chipmunk story)</u>
<u>12/2002</u>	<u>Cider Press</u>

**Wetland Protection:
Our next era in conservation (01/2002)**

Peter Moloney, Kathy Conroy, and I have been working on a special committee appointed by the Planning Board. We took on the assignment to amend the Zoning Ordinance relating to the Wetlands Conservation District. Over the past 18 months we have studied issues, researched similar ordinances in adjoining towns, heard testimony from others, studied wetland science, and revised the proposal several times. Recently, we gave our latest revision to the Planning Board for administering the public hearings required by statute and for placing an article on the Town Meeting Warrant for ballot vote.

I believe that without the Town's tradition of strong support of land stewardship for public benefit over the past 65 years our committee would have become discouraged. Further encouragement came to us in the words, actions, and strength of resolve of individuals named below and by many others. A big boost came from our devoted Conservation Commission whose members gave their support to the objectives of the proposed zoning amendment. On behalf of the committee authoring this amendment, I ask you to review the text of the proposal, available at the town office, then if you believe in what we are attempting to do please mark your ballot accordingly in March.

Two personal contacts in the past several months peaked my determination to continue working on the committee. Ben Dane walked into my office one morning and woefully stated, "Well, I guess I lost one of my favorite deer stands, they aren't going to cross there anymore". I said, "What are you talking about Ben"? He went on grumbling, "They built a house so close to the swamp that deer aren't going to go by my stand". I reflected on this statement and realized maybe a buffer around that wetland would have sustained the deer's travel corridor.

Earlier in the summer, Graham Pendlebury stopped by my office to pick up a survey plan and Hannah was with him. She had on high rubber boots and bib overalls and was noticeably eager to have Graham hurry about his business. It was obvious to me that she was on a mission and I quizzed her teasingly, "What are you up to today"? She smiled and said, "I am going to pull purple loosestrife". She talked about the wetland that she would target and explained how she hoped to at least keep this exotic weed under control. I remembered that she and Lyn Lombard are local members of a Piscataquog Watershed Association committee dedicated to controlling the impact of this weed on wetlands. Hannah's energy was inspiring and I asked myself, "Would
2002 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

the protection offered by a buffer have avoided the Purple loosestrife invasion”? The fact is, this plant becomes established in wetland borders disturbed by man.

We feel strongly about perpetuating the New Boston tradition of caring for the land in the manner demonstrated by public and private entities since the 1930’s. At that time private landowners made gifts to the Town of the several “groves” that now protect long reaches of the river and the scenic drive along Route 13 toward Goffstown.

Since 1970 the Piscataquog Watershed Association, a private non-profit organization with its new headquarters at Nan’s House in New Boston Village has initiated many wetland protection projects. One of the most significant was facilitating the purchase of several miles of the historic New Boston Branch of the Boston and Maine Railroad bed lying along the north side of the Piscataquog River.

Our Town, as a public entity, has shown a great willingness to support wetland protection projects. Most recently the Town Meeting appropriated a large sum of money to purchase the development rights on the Marvells’ Sunset Tree Farm. The last Town Meeting appropriated an even larger sum to purchase the Sherburne Estate tract upon which lies a significant wetland habitat.

In comparison with the existing Wetland Conservation District regulations that have been in effect since 1990, the committee’s amendment proposes some sweeping changes. However, we have studied published recommendations and guidelines on the subject and are led to the conclusion that these are the minimum basic changes needed to sustain the public benefits derived from wetlands in light of current rapid development. Following is a synopsis of changes proposed.

The wetland definition suggested by the amendment changes the existing definition, based only upon drainage class, to one incorporating three parameters that must be present: hydrology, hydric soils, and a prevalence of wetland plants. The proposed definition is the same as that currently appearing in State and Federal regulations. This will eliminate much of the confusion in the land use permitting process that comes from having different jurisdictional wetland boundary lines on the same property. This means that, in most instances, the wetland boundary line under the amendment will move to a “wetter” location from a line delineated per the current definition.

The second major change proposed is to regulate land uses within buffer strips around the delineated wetland boundary. Two buffer strip widths are proposed; 100 feet along the banks of the Middle and South Branches of the Piscataquog River to the confluence of these two branches near Howe Bridge; and 50 feet along all other wetlands over 2000 square feet in area. The buffers along the remaining reach of the Piscataquog River and around the great ponds in town are under more strict regulation by the Shoreland Protection Act enforced by the state. The present Wetland Conservation District Regulation does not include a buffer provision and any permitted use can occur right to the wetland boundary.

Scientific studies on the subject of buffers clearly recommend that widths should vary with physical attributes that include slope, soil type, wetland class, wetland size, adjacent land uses, and the wildlife species to be encouraged. The committee members realize that a standard width must be included in the ordinance for practical administration; therefore, we chose 100 feet and 50 feet for the respective buffer widths. We feel however, that the issue of varying widths for particular situations can be addressed in requests for special exceptions brought before the Zoning Board of Adjustment. In this venue the site specific facts can be presented and evaluated.

We are convinced that the amendment will go a long way toward maintaining several wetland functions that are now threatened by certain land uses related to development. This amendment will help minimize

2002 *“In the Country”* by Robert Todd

flooding by encouraging people to keep a woodland buffer along wetlands on their property. Trees take up a lot of water in respiration and also intercept precipitation on leaves and stems. A thick humus layer, such as normally found under trees and shrubs, acts like a sponge to hold runoff-allowing it to slowly percolate into the soil. Runoff from rooftops, driveways, and other impermeable surfaces placed next to wetlands, as now allowed, increases flooding and diminishes other wetland values.

Vegetated buffers will also ensure that nutrient retention will be provided. Nitrogen and phosphorous in runoff from developed areas flowing directly into wetlands damages the integrity of the wetland. A vegetated buffer provides space for organic matter to accumulate, to absorb the nutrients, and hold them for conversion by soil organisms into less harmful compounds.

Sediment trapping is another important function provided by wetland buffer areas. Erosion and sedimentation is becoming one of the most visible and severe forces of damage to wetlands in town and there will be more frequent damage in the future. Despite all the good intentions by developers to prevent it from happening, there will be failures and there is a need to minimize damage. A wetland buffer requirement will provide an opportunity for plant parts and the thick organic layer to trap sediment before it reaches a wetland.

Other wetland functions that will be enhanced by wetland buffers are ground water recharge and wildlife habitat. It is obvious that water running off from impermeable surfaces of developed land is not available to infiltrate the soil and supplement the ground water supply. I believe that wildlife habitat benefits accrue from the buffer. I have always been baffled by the rationale of protecting wildlife by bag limits, but not protecting the preferred habitat for 40% of our wildlife species. The destruction of wetland habitat by detrimental land uses adjacent to it is just as much a taking of wildlife as is killing.

I have heard the argument that our wetlands and surface waters are in better condition than they have been since early settlement, so why pass more regulations. I would agree that water quality has been improved in my lifetime and I believe it is because point source pollution is nearly eliminated. Land uses that caused point source pollution have cleaned up or gone away. However, now we are faced with non-point sources of pollution contributed to by every new facet of development placed on the landscape. These are nearly all irreversible in contrast to land uses of the past. Development will not go away and its cumulative effect will, without planning, eventually bring us to a point of no reversal with respect to decreasing the functions and values attributed to wetlands.

In my consulting business over the past twenty-nine years I have dealt with land use permitting in 5 out of 8 surrounding towns with wetland regulations similar to those in our proposed amendment. These regulations have not been project stoppers and I think, overall, did not materially affect the outcome of the project in terms of profit. Development by landowners in these towns continues to be feasible- is there any reason to believe that it would be any different in New Boston with the proposed amendment in place?

On behalf of the committee, I ask your support of the Wetland Conservation District amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. We believe it is a continuation of the conservation ethic begun by two prior generations of New Boston citizens. The buffer requirement in the proposed amendment will provide protection, not now offered, from the sneaky affects of non-point source pollution on our wetlands. As feared by some, the amendment will not take away significant property rights- it will instead require more ecologically conscious land use planning as is currently required in more than half of the surrounding towns.

Humble Farm Crafts (2/2002)

Often I have looked at my lineage and my surroundings and have asked myself, “Of what generation am I really a part”? Only five generations separate me from an ancestor that in 1814 bought the home where I now live. I have been close to furnishings, letters, records, and things, left by my ancestors, throughout the old farmhouse I have lived in and loved for most of my life. The links to the past that I most cherish, formed when the mind is most malleable at age 6-10, were hand forged by my gentle grandfather and grandmother. From all these influences on my life I have grabbed many treasures of life, love, and knowledge that I can recall for moments of pleasure and for understanding of what is really important in life. In these there may also be a lesson in how coming generations should live on the earth.

At my impressionable age I sensed a great strength in my Grandfather and was awed by what he could do with his hands and with materials we would consider waste. Although I cannot remember the words he spoke, the images of him and of the things that surrounded him replay on the DVD player of my mind as sharply focused as those occurring minutes ago. How well I learned that the old man I idolized was skilled in the many crafts necessary for one living his productive years before the advent of power tools and even electricity.

An important icon on the tool bar of my memory menu is a chair that was my grandfather’s during the time that I was in his presence. This chair was originally leather covered and Grandpa had worn the leather completely through. He contained the coarse horsehair stuffing by sewing on random patches. I watched him as he took Aunt Lydia’s thread, a multi-purpose, heavy black thread, and ran it through crevices worn into a ball of beeswax he held in his strong hands. This, I was told, made it easier to pull the thread through the heavy leather and also prevented it from knotting. Even at age 80 he mended shoes, harnesses, and the blue denim bib overalls he always wore.

With a Case knife kept in a pocket of his overalls (the pocket showed the impression of that knife by the wear marks in the denim) he could carve wooden toys that delighted me and swelled my chest with pride. I spent many hours seated on the floor at the old man’s feet always sunk in tall rubber boots. There amid the chips that he removed with a quick flick of the sharp blade I watched the amazing transformation of wood to a whistle, truck, or chain. None of my friends had toys of equal realism. I cherished these long after Grandpa had passed on-until the “boy” metamorphosed to a young man more concerned with “toys” of the future than those of the past. He was always good about sweeping up the litter using an old chicken wing (offered by the one that ended up in the stewpot) and a dustpan, which he then dumped into the Round Oak woodstove in the dining room.

My favorite toy in the whole world was the impeccably detailed replica of the 1850 Colt Navy Revolver that he kept in the top drawer of the old chest of drawers that was also in the dining room. The wooden replica was my trusty sidearm during many life and death encounters with enemies of all descriptions upon the “Great Plains” and “deep canyons” of my youth. In real life my “Great Plains” was the pasture behind the barn where a large boulder was my fort. The scene seems miniscule today as I walk in the old pasture, but in a flash my heartbeat quickens and the childhood images play out in my mind, awesome!

Grandpa once selected a shingle from a pile of many kept in the barn for ready use in needy roof repairs. He sighted along the edge and upon the face of several before choosing the one most suitable for a more lofty use. My observant eyes were stunned by the way he converted this shingle into a handsaw. Well, I stood six feet tall as I followed along behind Grandpa with my saw, ready to assist him as he went about his real life fix-up projects on the farm.

On occasions when Grandpa was more seriously engaged in applying his skills to repairing or crafting tools needed for work on the farm, I just stood out of his way and watched with wide open eyes and a very perceptive right brain. Infrequently, he would need something forged from iron, perhaps a clevis pin, or a special bolt assembly for a horse-drawn implement then being used by my Dad. I followed Grandpa out to the old blacksmith shop that stood on Todd's Corner next to the farmhouse. Although the building was bowing and leaning, held up mostly by the equipment and the iron and wood scraps left inside at the end of his last regular day there, the old brick forge and bellows still functioned. I stood as he hoed the clinkers out of the fire-pit and added fresh coal to a fire he started with pine shavings. By working the bellows he soon brought the coals to a brightness that was beyond red. I continued to watch as he placed the iron in the center of the greatest brightness and attentively watched the iron and on a certain cue he lifted the piece from the fire with his tongs and placed it on the anvil. The ring of the anvil as he struck hammer to iron still reverberates in my head. Several times he alternately placed the piece in the fire and on the anvil until he saw, and confirmed by measurement, the exact form he intended to make.

Often I watched him in his shop as he fashioned axe handles, hoe handles, whiffle trees, and chair rungs from selected sticks of white ash, oak, and hornbeam. Each species of wood he knew from past experience was particularly suited for the purpose at hand. The drawshave that hangs on the wall in the shed was his favorite tool and I was amazed at how fast he could use it to remove the unwanted wood in great long shavings that he later bagged up for kindling. He was not satisfied with his work until he had brought the wood to a shining smoothness by scraping it with a broken piece of window glass. Grandpa may have been the one who answered the question, "How do you know how to carve an axe handle?" by saying, "It's easy, all you have to do is remove all the wood that does not look like an axe handle".

In Grandpa's day the plumbing at the farm consisted of a lead pipe that brought water by gravity from its source, a spring on a hill several hundred feet away. One day I visited the farmhouse and observed that water was not running into the old wooden sink in the kitchen as usual. Grandma and Grandpa were busy tearing an old bed sheet into strips about two-inches wide and about two-feet long. I noticed that Grandma was watching a pot on the stove that contained mutton tallow. Being curious about what was unfolding before my eyes I inquired. I was told that the water pipe had frozen in the cellar and was leaking. They were going to repair it in their usual frugal way. Grandpa dipped the cloth strips into the hot mutton tallow and then wrapped them around the ruptured section of pipe. He applied several wraps of the recycled bed sheet, one on top of the other, waiting for the hot tallow to congeal before wrapping each layer. To finish his handiwork, he slathered hot tallow over the entire patch. Grandpa's patch held up until I remodeled the farmhouse in 1967 and then installed modern plumbing.

However, not all of Grandpa's skills engendered pleasant memories. One memory that still makes me gag is the process of making hog's head cheese. Hogs were raised on the farm and were butchered by Grandpa (butchering was another of his many skills). The meat was cut and processed on the kitchen table, a fascinating project in itself. The part of this process that shocked me was removing the fat and meat scraps from the hog's head, which had been cut exactly in half, one eye on each side. Maybe it was the removal of the eye that bothered me. Grandpa took his knife and just cut it from the socket. Later, I was thankful that he did not put the eyes in with the fat and meat scraps that he cranked through the grinder attached to the table edge. After the ground-up scraps were mixed with pepper and other spices he boiled the mixture on the kitchen wood stove. I remember that he put the cooked "cheese" in loaf pans for cooling and storage in the pantry. I am sure that my observations of this whole process set me up to despise the taste of this food, much enjoyed by my grandparents...ugh!

Upon writing this I realize how fortunate I am to have lived close to my ancestors so that I have a better understanding of the past than I would otherwise. On reflecting on the way my grandparents lived, I know that they lived poorly, but they did not live in poverty. They had the skills and knowledge to: distinguish basic

2002 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

needs from wants; live without dependence on others for these basic needs; use locally available resources; and contribute to a strong local economy. I believe that there is wisdom in this for how we should be living “in the country”.

Headlines Of The Future (3/2002)

I went away from the deliberative session of town meeting with my head full of ideas-many that I would not have expected to carry out. It was Tim Cady’s line graph of New Boston’s population dynamics from the date of town incorporation up to the present that raised a wave of implications rebounding through my head. Despite the great presentation Tim made in support of the library article, I was lost in distraction by the graph. This showed intelligence of which most people in town are casually aware, but when I saw the representation of the population growth since 1960 to the last census compared with the relatively steady growth during the previous 200 years I was shocked and uneasy. The population growth has spiked to a level more than quadruple what it was when I began my adult life in the decade beginning in 1960. Daily, since the session, I have had weird visions of foreboding newspaper headlines-perhaps on the front page of future issues of this paper.

In many ways this community will benefit from growth. Unfortunately, when I speculate about how we (me, my family, you, your family, and families yet to come) can sustain our quality of life, I do not conjure up good feelings. I suppose this mindset is the cause of the several unsettling headlines that I read in my mind. It is these that I want to share with you for contemplation as well as for my personal therapy.

Dateline New Boston: February, 2030; Deliberative Session Lacks Quorum Town Moderator, Peter Nyquist, grandson of former town moderator, Lee Nyquist, and the Board of Selectmen voted to reschedule the Deliberative Session in March in hopes that enough people would show up to conduct the town’s business. Moderator Nyquist stated, “This is a sad demonstration of the current feeling citizens have about their community. The trend began in the days of my grandfather’s tenure as Moderator when there was still a few residents that still cared about the town.” Selectperson Emma T. Strong, granddaughter of Bo Strong former selectman known for his steadfast commitment to town government, offered this take on the problem, “There is a difference between a resident and an inhabitant. New Boston is dominated by people who are residents, whereas in the past, it was inhabitants who nurtured it. Residents sleep here, but spend most of their lives somewhere else, places remote from here. To them our community has no significance of place, they have no connection with it. An inhabitant makes a good neighbor, is an honest citizen, and has a great knowledge of his community and is devoted to serving it.”

Dateline New Boston: May, 2040; Leaping Turtles Found Along Tributary of Piscataquog River Members of the Piscataquog River Watershed Association (PWA) discover Wood Turtles with extraordinary ability to leap long distances and over tall obstructions. Darrell Pendlebury, grandson of Graham Pendlebury, former Vice President of the PWA and long time member, observed the strange turtle behavior while conducting routine water monitoring along the river. Darrell reported his sighting to Oliver Tinglebright of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department who said, “The population of these special Wood Turtles has been increasing throughout the urbanized area of New Hampshire and they appear to be the result of natural evolutionary processes. The Wood Turtle, in contrast to the many other amphibian associates that have become extinct in recent years, has inherent intelligence and environmental awareness that when combined with a physical ability to climb has resulted in natural selection of turtles with much longer and stronger legs than those of former generations of its species. Oliver says that the turtle may be considered a new species.” He went on to say that the ability to climb chain link fences and to leap over retaining walls constructed along the borders of his natural habitat will facilitate the turtle’s escape from wetland habitats that have become polluted from chemicals found in urban runoff. These abilities will ensure survival of the species while the future of other herps is threatened by loss of habitat.”

Dateline New Boston: September 2050; Planning Board Approves New Boston's Last Subdivision The Planning Board Chairperson, Ms. Webe Futureless, announced "The Board has invoked its authority under a recently passed state statute that permits towns to decide when its carrying capacity for human development has been reached. The statute results from a decade long study by the Department of Environmental Services and from emotionally charged philosophical debates on the floor of the legislature. Mr. Addmore Dwellings' proposal for a 92-lot subdivision on Hooper Hill was denied accordingly and no more subdivision applications will be considered." Ms. Futureless went on, "This action is probably too late to restore the environmental functions enjoyed by our forefathers. It is unfortunate that in the past people have not paid more attention to the long-term effects of their behavior but rather focused on the satisfaction of their immediate needs-I suppose they could not afford the luxury of long-term planning."

Now that I have put on paper these fictitious headlines, I can look at them objectively. Do I think there is reality in these visions? Yes, I am convinced that the stories could become truths. If the rate of population increase shown on Tim Cady's line graph is projected to the dateline of my last headline, then our population may approach 20,000, a small city! While I believe in cities, I also believe that cities should not sprawl into a coalescent mass of highways, concrete, pavement, rooftops, and compacted lifeless, soil surface over the entire landscape of New Hampshire.

Did my ancestors think about my well being in their land use decisions? If they did they never made it known to me directly. I do hear them speak to me in the voice of the land and this voice makes me feel good and to have faith that my grandchildren and your grandchildren can inhabit this environment and enjoy healthful and spiritually fulfilled lives.

New Boston, my favorite community, must, in my opinion, commit to sustaining the essential functions of the natural landscape. This commitment is founded upon a responsibility to forthcoming generations for their quality of life. If this commitment were made, then logic would lead our community into a meaningful long range-planning program that identifies the point when that last subdivision application can be approved. I predict that this will happen and that we will read the following headline.

Dateline New Boston: February, 2030; Deliberative Session Attendance Overflows School Auditorium Town Moderator, Peter Nyquist, grandson of former town moderator, Lee Nyquist, credited the high degree of citizen interest in town government to initiatives on several fronts. The school curriculum has in recent years focused on man's relationship to nature and students have come to a competent understanding of natural systems. Town planning officials have taken advantage of recent technology, particularly computers with Geographic Information System software that facilitated decision making relative to defining the limits of our resources to sustain a high quality of life. With that information the planners have been able to direct development away from critical resources with well-written land use ordinances. Further, in the past 25 years nearly 30% of the land in Town has been set-aside as natural resource areas never to be developed. This forward thinking coupled with local employment opportunities enhanced by increased need for services and by decentralization of corporate structure has strengthened family and community ties." He summed up with a smile, "Our inhabitants have learned how to live well in New Boston and have committed to ensuring that their descendants will also live well."

LOOKING AND SEEING (April 2002)

As I reconnoitered the rolling hills, bedrock knobs, and wetland borders during the past two years an awareness fell over me like a pall. The features that I have trained myself to look for are no longer detected and recognized in a rapid scan of my immediate surroundings. Images of old barbed wire fence remnants, long rusted from the short stubs protruding from boundary line trees, are looked for but not as easily seen. Rings of lichen and litter covered cobblestones conspicuously placed around a proudly hewn stake, now reduced to soil by the agents of decay, set to mark property corners are found by my assistant after I pass by them. I was sure that I needed to have my eyes checked and new glasses prescribed.

There should have been no surprise when my eye doctor said, “Bob, you have glaucoma and I have to prescribe drops for you to use mornings and evenings to get the pressure reduced in your eyes. It is the high pressure that damages your optic nerve”. In a recollection of my grandmother putting drops in her eyes, I saw a reflection of my own life from that day on. Glaucoma is hereditary, she had glaucoma, and my destiny became suddenly apparent.

During the early stages of my loss of visual acuity, I learned how to make adjustments in my looking procedures to compensate for the limitation imposed upon me by the damaged optic nerve. I now understood that my inability to see clearly through the instrument telescope, regardless of how I changed the focusing knob, was not due to poor optics in the instrument, but due to poor optics in my looking apparatus. Since the left eye was damaged more than the right, I now use my right eye to view objects through the telescope and get along fine.

I have learned other ways to minimize my visual limitation. Ambient light is more important to me than it was and I search for boundary evidence when the sun is shining over my shoulders and not in my eyes. My searching is best accomplished during optimum light conditions. Mid day observations are easier than during periods of low sun angle, early morning and late afternoon. I find that searches for markers during partly cloudy days are the most productive. Objects of interest present themselves to my vision in one light condition and not in others.

Overriding the change in how I search for things was learning how to use the progressive lenses in my new glasses. It has been difficult to coordinate head and eye movement to direct my focus through the portion of the lens giving me the clearest vision to objects of interest. This routine is relatively slow and cumbersome because of the constantly changing focal length from eye to object. Therefore, I search my surroundings by scanning the foreground around me equidistant from my eye. Then I move my head slightly to focus through the part of the lens giving me clear vision to objects a few feet farther away and I scan that foreground for features important to my duty.

Systematic searching is another practice I have adopted to replace the more random method I used B.G. (before glaucoma). Now, I center my search at the most likely location for finding that iron pipe called for in the deed, then I search through an outward spiral from the center until the search area radius becomes too long to be realistic. If I have not found the objective, I will return to the center of the search area by walking the spiral in the opposite direction toward the center.

I suppose that the deliberate, systematic movement of my head from left to right with eyes focused on the immediate foreground, then lifted a few degrees and sweeping left to right over more distant foreground seems peculiar to others in my presence. This behavior and the uniform searching patterns I employ, perhaps appear robotic, that is the way I feel at times. However, this personal retraining in the way I look for all the physical features on the ground important to my work has connected me with the apparatus I use to see the

world, in the past I took it for granted. I am satisfied that during the past two year period I have overcome most of the limitation.

Still, social settings confound me and are generally uncomfortable. I must admit this is because I have not learned the same “looking” adjustments in these settings that I have made in my work environment. Images seen easily by others are not recognized by my seeing apparatus. My wife teases me for not seeing things right in front of my nose. “Honey, would you get the mustard out of the refrigerator”? “Sure”, I said. Following what seemed like a long time to her, she said, “have you found it yet”? Sheepishly, I replied, “uh-no”. In a flash she makes me feel stupid by grabbing it from before my eyes. Lots of retraining needed by me before I can see what others see easily in their daily lives!

This life experience has caused me to pay more attention to seeing. Realizing that my eyes are only one part of my anatomy used for seeing, I looked inward to consider the full scope of how humans perceive the images that pass through their “seeing” apparatus. How we see the world is not entirely dependent upon our eyes. Our brain is the organ that really “sees” and this is where perception is born. My wife’s perception of things we both see around our home is not the same as my perception. Years ago I planted a juniper that was marketed as a “dwarf” variety suitable for the location chosen at the entry of our home. Soon this plant exhibited a fast growing, spreading characteristic not suitable for its place and I removed it to an open spot at the edge of the lawn and allowed it to extend its arching branches over an area that is now about 20 feet in radius. Laura sees this plant as an ugly “thing” and I see it as a beautiful asset. Conversely, in planting the garden each spring, Laura visualizes a “bloom” in every seed she plants and, although I cherish the flowers when they mature, I perceive only the aching back and tired muscles associated with the planting work.

In his book Human Natures, Paul Ehrlich devotes an entire chapter to perception. He lists and explains the many factors that determine how we see. Cultural background, social standing, training, age, gender, education, and evolutionary trends top the list. I will not go into detail on his points, however I want to say that he strongly reinforced my understanding of how important it is to realize that seeing is a very personal thing. I now understand that my perception is developed by a nervous system that contains “filters” and “feature detectors” that make sure that stimuli important to me are the only ones passed along to my consciousness. Another person’s nervous system contains different “filters” and “feature detectors”.

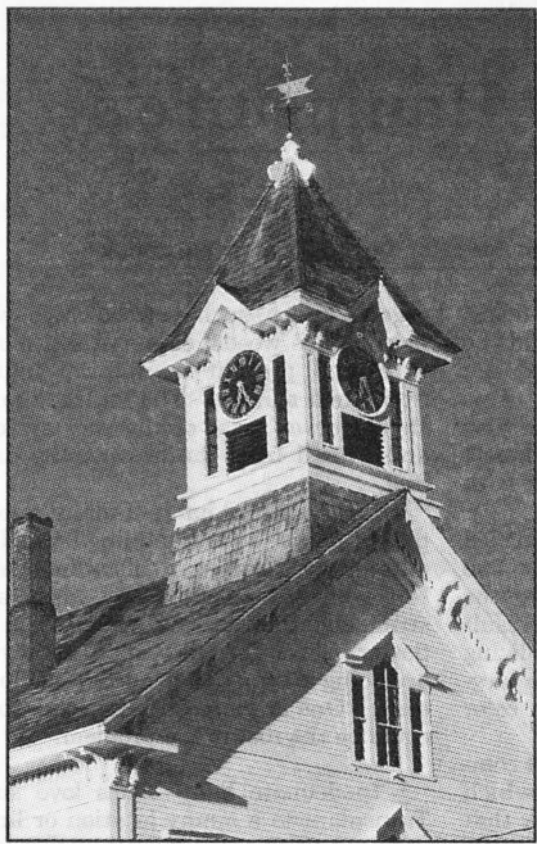
I believe land surveyors, in general, understand that looking is a precursor to seeing; they do a lot of looking at physical marks and written documents and they see where property lines should be. Surveyors look for the marks and the words, then pass the images through filters to their minds where they make choices, evaluations, and reconciliations. Surveyors prepare plats (maps) showing their own perception of a property boundary location. The plats are also intended to communicate relevant information about the physical world, and limited aspects of human history and society (laws). One surveyor’s abstraction of what he perceives and communicates may not be the same as that of another surveyor.

I observe that surveyors, in comparison to most other professions, have perceptual systems trained to “see” environmental changes that others have learned to “filter” out and ignore. I talk particularly about changes that take place over decades, even centuries, such as population dynamics, land use changes, forest vegetation dynamics (biodiversity) and changes in the hydrologic cycle.

In bringing this piece to a conclusion, I want to say that it is important to be tolerant and considerate of other people’s perceptions, for we are in communities where more diverse perceptions are introduced to us than ever before. As professionals, surveyors should be more articulate and share their unique perceptions with others, especially in circles where land use decisions are made. Finally, everyone should be more aware of the way they look, see, and perceive and make adjustments needed to be better citizens and more compassionate human beings.

The Timelessness of Our Town Clock (4/2002)

As planned, John met me at the Town Hall parking lot less than a minute after I had parked. The moment we left our vehicles to greet each other, the old clock bell in the tower spoke before either of us could say a word. The distraction lasted for the nine rings of the bell; during these few seconds I listened intently, perhaps more intently, than I have listened to it in years, even though my life has been guided by this same baritone song that echoes between the valley walls hugging our village center. We counted off the tolls - nine pleasing chimes. We should have counted ten tolls of the bell; this Monday morning being the second day of daylight savings time.



“Come on, Bob, lets go up there and I’ll show you the clockworks while I set it ahead and wind it”, said John. A few days before I had been at John Gingrich’s house on business and at some forgotten cue the discussion segued from the subject of his land use plans to the volunteer work that he does for the Town, now going on three years. “Once a week I climb into the clock room in the Town Hall and wind the works”, he said smiling proudly and with obvious enthusiasm. “This is the best volunteer job in Town. I can do it when I am available and I like the connection it gives me to the history of the Town”. His great attitude about this unpretentious and un-noticed task immediately captured my interest and for a couple of days I found myself wondering, somewhat shamefully, how I could have taken the Town Hall clock for granted all my life, particularly since it was so significant in governing my activities, more so when I was teenaged than now. Recollections in the form of images projected through my mind. Hundreds of these were of myself with friends on the ball field behind the Town Hall, on one of the two bridges in town fishing with village buddies, or swimming in the Mill Pond, always conscious of the number of tolls resonating from the tower. The ringing of the bell was equivalent to my mother’s voice telling me when to be heading home on my bicycle.

I could not contain my curiosity any longer and that evening I called John and asked him if I could go with him the next time he winds the clock. “Sure”, he said, “Come along with me on Monday, I’ll be there at ten”. I asked, “Do you mind if I write about your duty as keeper of the clock and a little about the clock’s history in my column?” With a positive inflection to his words he replied, “I think that would be great!”

John started up the stairs to the second floor of the Town Hall with me close behind and at the landing near the Recreation Department Office he turned sharp right through the door into the old ticket office, a small dark room with a window behind which stood ticket sellers for the many thousands that have been entertained by the variety of events held in the upper Town Hall since it was built in 1888 following the great fire of 1887 that destroyed most of the buildings in the lower village. I paused in the ticket office a moment to reflect on the number of times that I bought a ticker to the Saturday night movies that Bill Hooper (Rhoda Hooper’s late husband) ran single handedly; yes he made pop-corn and sold it by the box during intermission. There were also minstrel shows, plays, and high school basketball games. I chuckled to myself at the recollections. By this

time John had opened a small door at the rear of the ticket office and was headed to the next level of the Town Hall.

Leaving my reminiscences behind, I turned and followed John up the steep, dark, narrow staircase that groaned under my weight. We stopped for a moment on the landing behind the projection booth where Bill Hooper had spent countless Saturday evenings operating the old 35mm projector. My most poignant observation in scanning my surroundings as I stood at this level was several sets of initials carved, or lettered in pencil, upon the woodwork. Some of the initials I recognized. John and I speculated about what occasioned the placement of graffiti on these walls. This area is not one that teenagers would have any business being in and certainly would not have been allowed to enter. I will not reveal the initials, the persons who possibly left them, nor the several reasons why boys – and girls - may have been in this secretive, seldom visited part of our Town Hall.

This musing made us laugh, but seriousness quickly overcame my humorous thoughts as we ascended the stairs through a creaky trap door to the final level of our destination. I was thinking about the Hunchback of Notre Dame as I passed through the trap door to a dimly lighted room. While my eyes adjusted to the lower light, I heard the ticking of the clock works, a sound much quieter than I expected; it was not much louder than our old mantle clock at home. Then the image became clear and I saw the same kind of machinery that we see in a mechanical pocket or wristwatch, just at a larger scale. The mechanism is held in a cast iron frame about 3 feet by 4 feet and about 4 feet in height. On the side of the frame is written, E. Howard, Boston. An eight-foot long wooden pendulum rod is suspended down through the floor where the cast iron weight swings in a short arc. I was surprised to learn that the clock tower with its bell was not visible and was accessible only by passing through another trap door. All of John's duties are performed at the level we were on and neither of us wanted to climb into the tower.

Here, while John picked up a hefty hand crank and attached it to the winding mechanism, I was given a lesson about the clock. "This thing has to be wound every Monday, although the clock will run for 13 days on one winding and the bell will toll every hour for 8 days with one winding", said John in a more serious tone. He positioned himself in a power stance and started turning the crank to wind the cable holding the weight that runs the bell ringing mechanism. He spoke not a word as he turned the crank 25 revolutions without stopping. This effort caused him to puff considerably and he commented, "This gives me aerobic exercise, first in climbing the stairs to get to this level, then in turning the crank 25 times to wind the bell and 200 times to wind the clock".

John willingly handed the crank to me and I soon experienced the same loss of breath and tired arm, shoulder, and back muscles. We switched off in 50 turn cycles until the job was done. Between gasps I asked, "With the force we apply to all this mechanical advantage we have in the crank and gear mechanism there must be a lot of weight attached to these cables". John replied, "I was told the counterweights totaled about 800 pounds, each one weighs 400 pounds". He explained that weights have to be pulled up through a vertical lift running from the cellar through the Tax Collector's office and then through the Recreation Department office. I had never known what the boxed in corners in these offices represented. Before we left the clock room John set the hands forward one hour by turning a device on top of the mechanism which moved ahead the hands on all four dials at the same time. Then we stood up to listen and count the tolling of the bell ten times. "We're done", said John and we descended the several stairs to the main floor where I thanked him for sharing with me his volunteer duties and for the very pleasant experience in learning about our Town Clock.

During the next few days I reviewed the Town Reports in the period of 1888 to 1916 looking for information about the old clock. I was surprised to learn that in 1894 the Town considered a warrant article "to see what action the town would take in regard to purchasing a town clock to be placed on the Town House". Prior to this date the Town House tower had a bell and the annual meeting always included an article to

2002 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

appropriate money to ring the bell. After the date of 1894 there were no more articles regarding bell ringing so I assume the vote of 1894 passed and the clock was purchased.

I also talked with Phil D'Avanza, a clock repairman from Goffstown, about his work on the clock. He told me that he repaired the clock in 1994. In response to my questions about how long the clock would serve our Town he said, "It will last at least another 100 years; any part that fails can be remanufactured by a machinist".

As I conclude this I realize that the old clock has measured the moments of my life and governed my conduct as it has those of everyone else that has grown up, or is growing up, in this community. Those moments are now precious memories that are timeless. This experience has helped me embrace the past, to look forward with longing, and to understand what time really is: a construct of man to govern his conduct, but in the realm of the universe it means nothing.

7/2002 Post Script to *Timelessness of our Town Clock*, New Boston Bulletin, May, 2002:

I recently received a call from Sheri Burdick of Weare and she reminded me that the New Boston Bicentennial Committee's publication, *Those Wonderful Years* (1963), has a lot to say about the Town Clock. Thank you, Sheri. In review of the article I learned that the New Century Club purchased the clock and had it installed in the tower in 1913. The Club donated \$125 from its treasury and members raised another \$625 from private donations for the clock project. What a gift those ladies made to our town!

Trees Bear Witness to the Human Experience (6/2002)

On Arbor Day, Peter Jennings featured a 15 second story about businessmen that have found success in propagating special tree seedlings in their nurseries. These seedlings are claimed to be the progeny of trees that witnessed a significant event in the history of America. One nursery sells "Liberty Elm" seedlings that are descendants of an elm tree from which was hung an English Stamp Officer by a group that became known as the "Sons of Liberty".

A second nursery grows seedlings that are descendants of an Osage orange tree that was carried by the Lewis and Clark expedition from the northwest back to President Thomas Jefferson. I thought about the phenomenon that drives the success of these nurserymen. I rationalized that it is basic to the human psyche to find solace and security by being in the presence of something living that witnessed an event or that is connected with people important to us.

I have written in this column about plants that have touched my own soul. There is a distinctively beautiful red cedar tree in my back yard that connects me with my great-grandfather. He stood beside this tree as he was photographed approximately 1890. In the photograph the cedar tree was not as tall as he was. James P. Todd crossed over in 1916 – the red cedar tree lives on as my spiritual token. Without speaking a word this tree transcends three generations of my family.

The Yew tree has a life span greater than most other species anywhere in the world. Understandably, the Yew tree is the grist of many legends involving historic events and people. In his book, *The Yew Tree: A Thousand Whispers*, Hal Hartzell, Jr. writes of the mythical aura associated with the Fortingall Yew situated in a church-yard in Perthshire, England. According to Hartzell, the Fortingall Yew is well over 3000 years old and has a girth of 58 feet. Most impressive is the author's statement that the tree is the oldest plant specimen in all of Europe. It was about 1000 years old when Pontius Pilate was born in a Roman camp sited close by and who as the legend goes "suckled at his mother's breast under the sacred boughs of the Fortingall Yew".

The ubiquitous White Pine became a witness to and token of the onset of colonial resistance to intolerable English laws. As I understand the story, English soldiers marched into Weare to enforce the law that reserved all White Pines over 24 inches in diameter for the Crown. Cutting of the King's Pine by the settlers of Weare was widespread, encouraged by sporadic enforcement until 1771. At that time Surveyors of the Kings Woods were appointed to mark the King's Pine with the dreaded Broad Arrow. Some of these surveyors found over 250 logs at a sawmill in Weare and the County sheriff and deputy proceeded to arrest Ebenezer Mudgett who had brought the logs to the mill. The next morning an angry group of settlers surprised the authorities at the tavern where they spent the night, there the crowd disarmed them, beat them up and ran them out of town. Soon two regiments of British soldiers marched on the town, a short skirmish resulted and several were apprehended and tried, fined, then set free. A plaque at the site of Aaron Quimby's tavern commemorates the "Pine Tree Riot", one of the first acts against the laws of England. (Pine Tree Riot, Weare Junior Historical Society, 1972)

Another well-known legend that comes into discussions about the birth of the United States centers around another famous tree, the Washington Elm. The legend is that General Washington took command of the Continental Army on July 3, 1775 under a great elm standing on the edge of Cambridge Common. (New England Natives: A Celebration of People and Trees Sheila Connor) In 1864 the Massachusetts Legislator passed an act commemorating the Washington Elm as a historic tree, despite arguments by many that the change in command took place in Dunster Hall about a block away and the only connection between Washington and the great elm may have been that he stood in its shade for a moment that day on July 3, 1775. I have to agree with the Massachusetts Legislature that the Elm serves as a much better witness to that auspicious event than does the much duller version of the story.

Trees and groups of trees are reflections of the soil, topography, and aspect of the site on which they grow, but of equal importance is the reflection they cast of land use by people that settled upon the land. These subtle reflections may be seen only by people professionally trained to see them, or by people that are self-taught. For those interested in understanding the connection between land use events and the trees on our landscape, I recommend the book, Reading the Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England, by Tom Wessells. Mr. Wessells describes in logical, easy to understand language, how to "read" the history of land use from the gestalt of the forest.

Although, New Boston does not have any individual "witness" trees, I do believe that our landscape does have a group of unique trees that are witness to an event significant to the development of the Town. Jay Marden presented a talk at the New Boston Historical Society a few months ago about the first settlement in town during the 1730's decade. Jay reported finding evidence of the homes of those settlers in an area of Town called "The Plains". Although the settlement was abandoned due to deprivations during the French and Indian War, I believe there may be other witnesses to that settlement.

I first became aware of the possibility that in our forested landscape there still stands witnesses to the first settlement. Tim Trimbur, David Allan, and myself (all members of the New Boston Forestry Committee) spent a morning several weeks ago reconnoitering the boundary lines of the Johnson Lot, one of the parcels comprising the Town Forest. This land has not been used intensively since the mid 1800's when the cleared pasture was allowed to grow into forest. In our hike over the area around Oak Pond and along the Town line common with Weare we noticed an uncommon tree that made up a large portion of the forest. Tim and Dave asked me what species the tree was and I had to think about it for a while because I do not see it often in my work. Finally, the identification came to me – it was pignut hickory. We all talked about why it should be relatively abundant in this area of town and not elsewhere.

As we continued around the perimeter of the Johnson lot sniffing, looking, and kicking the duff looking for evidence of the long-lost boundary line, several old fence posts leaning against boulders grabbed my attention. With my Swiss Army knife I sliced across the end grain and recognized the pattern of porous vessels typical of hickory. Instantly I realized that the hickory trees had been growing in this small portion of our town for over two hundred years. I estimated that the fence posts were split out of logs from trees about 80 years old and the fence is at least 80 years, perhaps as much as one hundred years old.

For days I tried to reconcile how the hickory forest could arrive in New Boston since the northern limit of its growth range was a line running westerly from Boston to the Connecticut River. Further, the seed is so heavy that it does not travel far from where the seed drops. Then it came to me: Boston, the home of the first settlers that came to town. I am betting that these first settlers brought with them hickory nuts. The tree would certainly have been valuable to them because of its durability and strength. Oil extracted from the nuts was a likely source of fuel for the “Betty lamps” used to illuminate the dark cabins.

So, it is possible, here stands a mute witness to the fact that a community of hardy people came, lived, and left with little trace of their existence. For me these hickory trees are validation of land use by the first white inhabitants of our town.

Often I see other witnesses, inadvertently stationed, to the presence of generations gone from local memory. My favorite witness is the ancient lilac shrub, persistent and beautiful, at the site of homesteads long forgotten and now deep in the forest. This time of year, the alluring aroma of its blossom unexpectedly beckons me to old homesteads as I walk through the forest. I would have otherwise passed by the stone foundations now obscured by large trees growing from the cellar. I always pause to visualize the diorama of a splendid farm and a happy family. I regret that I came too late to accept their greeting.

Such witnesses transcend time and touch our souls in a way that the written word cannot. For thousands of years trees have been one of the most important witnesses and tokens of times long past and have thereby become important to our spiritual lives.

SELECTMEN TAKE A HIKE (7/2002)

The duties that we usually attribute to the Office of Selectmen are several: assessing and collecting taxes; providing safe and convenient highways; maintaining police and fire protection; and ensuring the health and welfare of the citizens of New Boston. Obviously, these are very important services that affect our daily lives. There is one time-honored and unchanging duty that is completely overshadowed by these things Selectmen do to serve the daily needs of our community. Perambulation of Town Lines is the duty to which I allude.

The little known law written in RSA Chapter 51:2-4 requires the Selectmen to perambulate the lines between towns every 7 years. The purpose of the perambulation is to renew the marks and the bounds so as to preserve the remembrance of where the town lines are located. I know that the law has required this practice since the origin of the towns. Our early community leaders possessed keen foresight in adopting this law. They knew, I believe, that if the law did not require town leaders to renew the bounds of the respective public jurisdictions, then it would certainly never be done and the markers would soon be lost. As a surveyor, I know that people pay little attention to renewing boundary markers on their personally owned real estate, so I suspect even less emphasis would be placed on renewing markers of public jurisdiction.

The law goes on to require that a perambulation report, signed by the Selectmen of the adjoining towns, be filed with the Town Clerk and the Secretary of State. Frequently, in my work I research the perambulation 2002 *“In the Country”* by Robert Todd

records for evidence relative to locating private boundaries abutting town lines and I get frustrated by reading reports that have been simply copied and recopied for a hundred years. How much more helpful the records would be if the reports described the markers currently in place along with a description on how to find those markers located in remote places! In most instances, I believe, succeeding Selectmen have not implemented the intent of the law.

I suppose that it was my local surveying experience that prompted our Board of Selectmen to “invite” me to go with them and the Francestown Board of Selectmen during their perambulation of the line common to the two towns. In accordance with my invitation, I met Selectmen from each town at nine o’clock on the morning of June 8, a sunny and cool Saturday. David Woodbury and Gordon Carlstrom of the New Boston Board and Alan Thulander of Francestown gathered with me and a plan of action was quickly agreed upon. I immediately sensed a need to hurry with the assignment and keep it to a two-hour commitment – everyone had to be at other places. All approached this duty with a light-hearted attitude contrasting dramatically with the serious tenor of most Selectmen meeting agendas.

This group of public servants, plus Selectman Carlstrom’s daughter and I, set off from the parking lot in two cars to Old Coach Road and the first search point. Our objective was to find a stone monument that marks the northeast corner of Lyndeborough, the southeast corner of Francestown, and a point on the west line of New Boston. I offered to strike off into the woods on the south side of Old Coach Road because I remembered seeing the monument during a land survey I did there twenty years ago. It soon became clear that my recollection was not clear and my attempt was abandoned several hundred feet into the forest. The group straggled back to the road and Alan Thulander took the lead in another direction, he quickly came upon the monument and shouted, “here she be”. We soon joined him and we stood around it while I took some descriptive notes for future reference.

The subject of the discussion I heard at the old stone monument was predictable. Gordon smiled as he described the ancient custom of “beating the bounds”. He said, “In England the old timers would take children on a perambulation of the boundaries and at each marker the child was switched to impress in his mind the location of the bound”. I suppose he was lecturing us for the benefit of his daughter, but Alan said, “I was wondering who would be switching whom in this situation”. Laughter echoed through the forest and the discussion ended with Alan’s remark.

Continuing on from this point, Alan and David with me and Gordon and daughter in the second vehicle, we stopped at the location known to be where the town line crosses Clark Hill Road. No marker was found here, except a corner of stonewalls on the southerly side of the road that I assured all was on the town line. The others concurred that this was also their understanding of the town line location and we jumped into the vehicles to continue on.

As I drove talk centered around old timers that were common acquaintances and have special noteworthiness assigned to their names. I suppose it was the historic nature of our engagement that brought the old timers to mind. I am not to mention names of many, but it was fun to talk about what characterization made these people live on in the collective memory of many that perpetuate these tales. A lively tale was spontaneously generated between David and Alan while I listened intently. This story was about Levi Woodbury an appropriate subject because my companions are both experts on this early character.

The awesome discussion was interrupted briefly as we stopped at the point on Route 136, near Bunker Hill Road, where the town line crossed. Here we saw the stonewalls that we all agreed were marking the town line. Gordon bid his adieu and left the perambulation at this point and the remaining entourage continued on in my vehicle, a 4 X 4 Frontier. Alan and David promptly continued the discussion of Levi Woodbury. I know from reading U. S. History that Levi Woodbury was a prominent leader of the country during the mid-portion of 2002 *“In the Country”* by Robert Todd

the nineteenth century. What unfolded in the comments of the two experts in my presence established a foundation of my respect for this “local boy made good”.

David Woodbury is a great, great, grandnephew of Levi Woodbury and Alan Thulander lives in the historic and beautiful Woodbury Homestead in the center of Francestown village. Alan is a student of Levi Woodbury’s life and a collector of Woodbury memorabilia. Much was said, but the remarks between these two Selectmen that replay in my mind was the first observation by Alan, “it is very likely that if Levi’s health had not failed him at the height of his career, we would be riding in the presence of a relative of a President of the United States”. David replied, “Well, he was Governor of New Hampshire, a U. S. Senator, then Secretary of the Navy and of the Treasury, it follows that he could easily have been elected President and Franklin Pierce would have been a nobody.”

Our last stop was on Dennison Pond Road in Francestown. As this road is not maintained I was glad to be driving my 4 X 4. Made confident by a recent visit to the marker being sought at the northwest corner of New Boston, the southwest corner of Weare and on the east line of Francestown, I took the lead hoping that I would not be embarrassed at the end of the trek about 800 feet into the forest. Guided by my hand compass, I bee-lined to the marker, a non-descript pile of angular rock at the westerly end of a stonewall. Old black painted initials were still visible on the sides of the stones “NB, “W”, and “F”. The previous perambulation report stated that there was a white pine tree at this point, no evidence of the tree is there today! Alan exclaimed, “I am very glad to find this, I have searched for it several times and never found it”!

Having returned to the Town Hall, the Selectmen deemed this short endeavor a success and as the members discussed the final task in this duty I knew Dave Woodbury would ask the question “Bob, would you write the descriptions of the markers we found today so that Mr. Reynolds can write the report to file at the Secretary of State’s office”? I was pleased to say, “of course”. Actually, I was proud to take part in what I believe to be important work. Most rewarding, however, was the feeling I experienced. First, I was humbled knowing that I participated in a lawful duty performed by Selectmen of adjoining towns every seven years for 239 years, that is about 34 perambulations. Second, I was awed by the thought that I stood in the same spot as did the first surveyor, William Clark, when he set the original town corner markers in the mid 18th century.

Valley Hall – The Largest Antique in New Boston (8/2002)

Antiques usually are well-used items of furniture and other personal effects that are of value as a reminder of life and times long gone. Some folks keep them for their investment value; others clutch them for sentimental reasons and would not let them go for any price. Either way these cultural symbols are passed to the hands of the highest bidder, or to the next of kin by devise or the operation of law. Usually, antiques are held in private collections to be enjoyed by the privileged few but some are procured by institutions where they are preserved and enjoyed by the public. Sequestered in the center of downtown New Boston is an antique that falls outside the norm, this story is about my near transcendental experience visiting this antique, Valley Hall, through the generosity of its owner, Mike Danzinger.

Perhaps several thousand times I have entered the corner store without lifting my eyes to the second story. For many of my younger years, without appreciation for its symbolism and antiquity, I opened the heavy door with “Valley Hall” painted on the glass, climbed the wide spiral staircase to the second story, passed down the hallway followed by the echo of my footsteps from the solid wainscoting and high ceiling, to the barber shop. In that room which I would later learn was once J. R. Whipple’s business office, I sat waiting with local men for Don Bazinet, or Henry Hunter, to cut my hair. I never realized that a great room languished on the other side of the wall I stared at while the barber “lowered my ears”.

On that morning last week, as I approached Dodge's Store, my eyes focused on the tall single lights of glass in the Valley Hall windows above the main entrance. I strained to get a glimpse of what I might expect to see in the room that few in town have entered, but they revealed only a black background. Inside the store my presence was announced to Mike and he greeted me with a smile and a handshake, then I was hastened up a steep stair to his nicely appointed office in the rear of the building on the second level.

Eagerly, I followed his path through stored merchandise, then through a door to a room also used for storage. Mike explained this was set up as a kitchen area to serve meals during functions held in Valley Hall. Although the room was very dark I could see, as he pointed, the old sinks and shelving, plus a door that he said opened directly to the front of the Hall. Hurriedly, we passed through a second door to the coatroom; huge black iron hooks lined the walls still waiting to serve the purpose for which they were made. A toilet room with a stool and an overhead flush closet also waited patiently to serve anyone in need. Mike said this was no longer supplied with water.

By now I had passed through enough doors to similarly pass my imagination to another time, I was not cognizant of the present as I passed through the next door and entered the great Valley Hall. I stood in amazement, the room was bright from the sunlight coming from the three large windows facing the store front and three in the River Road side of the room, a sharp contrast from my dark perception of the Hall from the outside. I just stood there in awe, forcing my mind to concentrate and to observe, and to not conjure up visions of the past.

I failed to keep from visualizing my grandmother, her sister, and two others standing on the stage that ran the full length of the front of the Hall. The occasion was the first New Boston High School graduation in 1895. I had to deal with another vision of the New Century Club, a social, philanthropic group, organized by Sadie Saltmarsh, putting on a lecture, maybe a play, on this very stage. I touched the old curtain still drawn back to the end of the stage, it felt fragile and I dared not pull it along the wire from which it hung. How many people sat in this Hall to applaud the numerous plays performed here, perhaps 100 to 150, I thought.

Green paint and solid oak trim still decorate the high walls that vault to the even higher ceiling, perhaps 18 to 20 feet high. From the ceiling, still in abeyance, hang two of the most glamorous chandeliers ever to be seen in this town for sure. Mike and I concurred that they were first gas burners, then retrofitted for electricity. We also speculated about today's value of these ornate fixtures, wow!

The floors are narrow oak boards still in great shape despite the wear and tear of dancing feet and the scraping chairs of people in assembly. I thought about the old OUAM organization, whose purpose is, or was, unknown to me, that met here regularly. In the attic of the Todd Homestead hangs a blue cap with a gold braid and black visor. It is shaped like the old train conductor's cap and a shield over the visor contains the four initials representing the name "Order of United American Mechanics". Perhaps my grandfather was a member of this group and attended meetings here.

While in a nostalgic state of mind, I tried to frame the time period in which Valley Hall contributed so much to New Boston's community life. I knew that there had been a corner store at this site since very early in the 1820's decade, operated first by Amos Tewksbury, then by James Gregg. S. D. Atwood remodeled the original building and operated a store there until it was destroyed by fire in May of 1887. However, Valley Hall did not exist at this site until the present building was constructed by J. R. Whipple about 1888. S. D. Atwood operated the store in the ground level until Whipple died and then Atwood continued in the store when it was owned by Mr. Gilman. I reasoned that the use of Valley Hall by the public most likely ceased when Clarence Dodge purchased the edifice in 1920. A quick calculation in my head resulted in an estimate that the Hall had been actively used for about 32 years.

I drifted across the floor and looked out over the town just for a reality check, was I really back in 1910, or is it actually 2002? First, I absorbed the beautiful view I saw from those tall windows. Then I glanced down to the busy street below. Traffic was not horse and buggy, it was cars and trucks! My mind was reluctantly returned to the present. Instead I wished that it was 1910 and I could have turned around and danced under the gas lights with a pretty girl in an evening gown to music played by a live band on the stage.

I could tell Mike was anxious to get back to work and I thanked him for allowing me to experience Valley Hall, he smiled, turned, and headed back through the several doors and down the stairs to the busy store. Thanking him again, I jokingly said, "Have you considered conducting guided tours". He laughed and we parted.

As I passed store patrons and porch sitters on my way out to the car, I knew they were all oblivious to the wonderful treasure that is just over their heads. I was saddened that Valley Hall is a place not making any more memories and that the folks who had memories of the good times there are now dead. I worry about the future of the Hall and of Dodge's Store and I sensed that Mike Danzinger is perplexed by those thoughts as well. Mike, I wish you well.

A LEGACY OF SHOEMAKING (9/2002)

There was an ash splint basket in the attic close to the eaves half buried by collections of stuff. This basket had been passed over during the many "treasure" hunts I charted during my lifetime in this old family homestead. I knew eventually I would get to it and the motivation at this time came from Dick Moody in a discussion we had at a Historical Society meeting. Dick, the chairman of the society, was intrigued by my tale of the old basket and of what I believed to be its contents. He suggested that I pull out the basket and bring it to a society meeting for a show and tell. I said "I will do the show if you will do the tell". He agreed.

One Saturday morning, early enough to avoid the effect of the hot sun radiating on the unshaded roof, I ventured to the attic and focused my attention on the last of my hereditaments to be inspected. I pulled away boxes of old books, bags of old clothes, and an old mattress to reach the handles of the basket. An "Uh" was all that happened as I tugged on the handles. Too heavy...had to unload the pieces inside one at a time.

I set the pieces on the only bare part of the attic floor that I could find. There, laid out side by side, I enumerated the contents. Four pairs of very stiff old shoes, 47 wooden shoe lasts and a device I believed to be a shoemaker's vice. Then I moved the basket, a marvel of handicraft in its own right, to a spot adjacent to all the pieces it contained. In the tranquility of my surroundings, I pondered the meaning of what I observed.

I remembered my grandfather replacing the soles of the black leather shoes my grandmother wore. They were pretty ankle high lace up shoes with a heel about one inch high-she wore them everywhere, even in the garden. With a tap, tap of his small hammer he set the small, extremely sharp pointed nails at strategic points to attach the new "taps" to the soles of the shoe. Her shoes were not handmade, nor were the rubber soles that he fitted to them. The shoes were held on an iron last set on an iron standard that grandpa placed on the floor between his knees. After securing the soles, he used a sharp knife with a "bill hook" on the tip to trim the new sole to exactly the same size as the leather sole. I quickly reasoned that I was not looking at the same shoe making methods and technology that I remembered my grandfather using. Perhaps grandfather had learned the basic skills of shoe making and repair from his father, but had purchased more modern tools. What I observed was the technology of a generation previous to grandpas.

My father told me much about the lives of my ancestors who resided at Todd's Corner, I am fortunate in that regard, and I recall what he told me about his great-grandfather, Samuel Todd, being a shoemaker in 2002 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

addition to being a farmer. I suspect that shoemaking did not change much from Samuel's time (1814) to about 1870. The biggest changes would have been the advent of steel shoe nails to replace wooden shoe pegs and making shoes uniquely left or right. Possibly, the tools in the basket had been made and used by Samuel and he passed them on to James, my great-grandfather. There certainly was a need for each of my two ancestors, before my grandfather, to acquire the skill. Samuel had eight children and James had nine. I reasoned that both would have spent considerable time and energy in making and repairing shoes for their families.

In fifteen minutes of musing I came to accept that these objects were pages in an unwritten history book that has been given to me by my ancestors. So, some of these items may be close to 175 years old! I kneeled and began to examine more closely the history lesson I had laid out on the attic floor.

First, I hefted the shoemaker's vice...solid oak and massive! It apparently stood on the floor between the knees of the shoemaker and held a shoe securely at a comfortable height. I believe it was used similarly to the way my grandfather used his newer model made of cast iron. The vice has two standards, each about 3 inches by 4 inches mortised into a 3 inch by 6 inch by 16-inch base. The tops of the standards had rounded notches carved in them, one lower than the other. To one standard there is a lever held in a slot by a bolt. The other end of the lever runs through a long slot in the opposite standard. A leather belt runs through a hole in the lever. Even my lack of mechanical ability did not deter my understanding of how the device worked. A shoe was placed upside down in the notches, the heel end in the lower notch, the belt was placed over the sole and the lever was lowered until the belt was taut. A peg was inserted in one of several holes drilled in the standard to hold the lever down and the shoe tightly in place.

Next, I held the larger of the two pairs of "pull-on" boy's boots. These were so dry and stiff from aging in the hot attic that I could not flex them. The shin side of the boot is taller than the backside and there are pull straps on the top of each side. The soles are thick leather and the heels are also pieces of thick leather built up to form a heel about one half inch tall. These boots are about size 8 and they were probably placed in the basket for heel replacement and they wait still.

The second pair of pull on boots is about size 6 or a little smaller. These boots have leather soles and heels held on with some wooden pegs and some steel nails. They were placed in the basket for repair to the toes that are worn through one patch and need another sewed on. Both pair of boots had obviously been worn by young farm hands-boys that worked in the barn and around the farm. This is evident from the barnyard stuff I saw still stuck to the bottom of the soles against the front of the heels.

A third pair of shoes is a low cut, work style, made from three pieces of leather. The toe, instep, and tongue are cut as one piece. The other two pieces covering the foot are sewed together at the back of the heel and sewed to the toe piece. The sidepieces join over the instep and tongue by laces through two holes on each side. A leather inner sole and inner piece placed against the back of the heel would have provided comfort to the wearer. The pegged on soles and heels are cut from heavy leather. I estimate the pair to be about size 11.

Lastly, I picked up a last...there is no pun intended here. "Last" is the term used to identify a wooden form that has been carved to accurately model the foot of the person being "shod". The leather is cut to fit over the last and then sewed together. While on the last the sole is attached by nailing. The last is pulled out and the shoe put on the foot for final adjustment. Often the leather would have to be stretched here and there to fit comfortably over bunions and enlarged arthritic joints. Early in the nineteenth century shoes were made without regard for fitting the left or right foot. I could not distinguish left and right lasts in the many before me.

I recalled reading an inventory of New Boston business establishments in the year 1856. Could it be that the shoes I held in my hand were cut from leather made in the one tannery listed in that inventory? Then my thoughts became even more abstract. When I was a young boy, my father always bought shoes for me at 2002 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

Nazif's shoe store in Goffstown – it was next to Bazinet's barbershop. Both of these places were on the left next to the bridge as you enter the village. Nazif Kiazam was a kind man and was passionate about his trade as a shoe repairman and retailer. His demeanor and love of kids may be responsible for how I felt about shoes. Shoes – more than any item of apparel made me the happiest.

I remember the proud feeling of wearing new shoes. But, I do not remember such euphoria with new pants, shirts, or jackets. It is luck that kept me from bumping into doors as I pranced around looking at my shoes and not looking at where I was going. I wondered, did the boys that wore these homemade shoes share my new shoe feelings?

The attic had become uncomfortably hot and I got back to the business of preparing my show and tell for the Historical Society meeting on September 12. So far, I have twice brushed heavy applications of neats foot oil over the old shoes and it will take more before the leather becomes flexible. I have also brushed the wooden lasts, and the shoe vice. To all I applied linseed oil so they will be smooth and clean to handle.

Perhaps more effectively than I could from any written history, I have learned from the hereditary lesson found in the old basket. My great-grandfather and my great-great-grandfather have spoken to me about shoe making and repair. This lesson is one of many they have taught me about how they lived in the old homestead. The way they lived is customary of the way all New Boston residents of that period lived, so this could be a history lesson for all.

Trees and People: Love and Hate (10/2002)

Many of the calls to my office result in work that is routine and is completed without dealing with people under stress or in situations involving conflicts. However, there are calls that come from people that have been trespassed upon or have been accused of trespassing. These situations center me in emotionally charged arenas. By far, the most dreaded calls come from folks that have a boundary line dispute and a disagreement about a tree flaming at the same time. I have found that people get ugly about trespass, but those cases are pale in light of the emotion and lack of reason shown by those with disputes also involving trees. Such cases are much more likely to end up in court.

My experience tells me that disputes between people over trees and boundaries stem from two flaws in our society; first, is a basic lack of understanding about legal aspects of land ownership, and second is the divergent cultural background of people that share neighborhoods. Most of the people that have called me for help are hopelessly naïve about the boundaries of their property and the role of trees in the overall property ownership concept. Further, I believe that the mobility of our society has a much more likely prospect of putting people with very different values in close proximity to one another than was the situation in the past. One neighbor looks at a tree and sees a great asset and the other sees the same tree as a liability ... a precursor to conflict!

My purpose in this column is to provide some general guiding principles that have been established by court decisions in land and tree dispute litigation. I intend not to give legal advice here, but to impart some wisdom to landowners that will, hopefully, make them better neighbors. It is my belief that in the ordinary run of neighbors, the majority have a natural desire to live in peace and harmony. Knowing the law can help them maintain positive relations. But, to the few having "the other" neighbors that are antagonistic, spiteful, irresponsible and otherwise impossible to live near, I will continue to offer my services.

A tree that stands wholly on a property is part of the property and is considered real estate. This fact is well established in New Hampshire case law and it is true throughout most states in the U.S. While attached to
2002 "In the Country" by Robert Todd

the soil on the property, trees contribute considerable value to the entire ownership. The tree or trees standing on a property dramatically affect appraised values of real estate. This is supported by a number of studies showing that trees contribute 15% to 25% of the entire property value.

Another well established basic principle is this: Someone who cuts down, removes or hurts a tree without permission owes the tree's owner money to compensate for the harm done. The value of the harm done is usually determined by agreement between the parties, a professional appraisal, or by the court in litigation. I observe that most unauthorized tree cutting has been through mistakes and misunderstandings. In these situations the owner is compensated only for his actual loss, but where the cutting is done intentionally and maliciously, penalties will be triggered.

Last year I was called to appraise the value of trees that had been cut without permission on the rear of a small city lot; these trees provided the only tree cover on the property and were part of a mass of trees that straddled the property line. The defendant did not bother to have the line surveyed before the cutting despite the plaintiff's concerns expressed to him that the line should be surveyed first so that only the trees on his side of the line would be cut. It seems, from his actions, that the defendant decided to ignore the plaintiff's warning and request for further discussion of the matter by scheduling the cutting while the defendant was away on vacation. The case went to arbitration and the legatees failed to come to an agreement. The arbitrator's ruling was that the defendant cut the trees willfully and maliciously and he awarded the plaintiff damages more than double the appraised damage value in my report. The award was for \$27,000 ... these were very expensive trees.

Trees grow randomly and have no deference for property boundaries. There seems to be a misunderstanding amongst landowners about who owns trees that are not wholly on one side or the other of a property line. When a tree trunk straddles a boundary line the common rule is that it belongs to each owner. A boundary tree is co-owned. One owner of a healthy boundary tree may not remove the tree or harm it without the permission of the other owner. However, if a boundary tree is dead or diseased beyond repair, a co-owner may remove it without the other's permission.

Co-ownership does not mean that, in rural areas, one co-owner can cut every other tree for timber or firewood. On a case a few years ago, a landowner complained that a logger had cut some of his trees. On investigation that included a survey of the actual location of each stump along the property line, it appeared to me that the logger had cut every other tree. My observation was confirmed by testimony of the logger; he reasoned that since each boundary tree is co-owned, as a practical matter, he would own every other line tree. My client did not see it that way and threatened to sue the logger. In light of the threat the logger agreed to pay the other owner one half the appraised value of the line trees he had cut. This was an expensive lesson learned.

What of limbs and roots? A recent project I worked on illustrates the application of case law to ownership of tree roots and tree limbs. A lady owns a city property that is mostly covered by the house, garage, and swimming pool. The only available spot for a garden, and this lady has a passion for gardening, was directly under the neighbor's exquisite and stately sugar maple tree. My client hated that tree and wanted it removed. On the other hand, the tree owner expressed his love for the tree and exclaimed about its beauty and value to his property; under no circumstances would he cut it to please the lady next door. My client instructed me to stake her property line so that she could hire a backhoe to dig a trench along the line. This plan would cut off the roots that were on her side of the property line and she could remove the severed roots from the soil so that it could be tilled.

In that trench she planned to place a concrete footing for a low wall that she said would prevent new roots from crossing on to her property. Above the staked line she intended to cut all the limbs that shaded her

only available garden site. I marked the line and immediately I could hear in my mind the ticking of a time bomb.

I advised my client of the consequences of what she intended to do. She understood that she has the right to cut off the branches and roots that strayed into her property and she was determined to exercise her common law right. I made sure that she understood that she could expect the tree owner to take legal action against her, particularly if the cutting of the roots and limbs leads to a decline, or death of the magnificent maple. She acknowledged that she may be liable for damage to the tree, but she was steadfast in her intent to create her garden and was willing to take the risk. I have not been back to observe the tree since the work was done.

These real life experiences should illustrate the strong feelings that can well up in neighbors' hearts over boundary lines particularly when trees are involved. I could go on for pages, but these paragraphs provide some general principles that you should be aware of. Talk with your neighbors about these tenets when problems arise.

Tamias's Diary (11/2002)

September 1, 2002

Tamias Munk, his diary. My parents named me after the Latin name for the chipmunk genus, as in Tamias striatus, attached to the likes of me by the human race. Translated to English this fancy name means "striped storer". The human race, Homo sapien, is not comfortable unless every living thing is classified and named; for them, all must fit into a neat, orderly system. Huh! You should see Mr. Todd's barn-nothing neat and orderly about that. But, what a wonderful home it makes for all of my near relatives, red squirrels, gray squirrels, mice, and for my not so near relatives-bats.

My family has shared this land with the Todd family for nearly two hundred years. The fact that Mr. Todd's family has been here that long has become for him a bragging incantation. I would love to burst his bubble by reminding him that my family has been here for 9000 years, just about a thousand years after the glacier melt and nearly 5000 years before the human race was considered civilized.

Of late I am spending less time in my chambers reading the latest adventures of my favorite Disney characters, Chip and Dale, and more time in planning my busy season that is about to begin. My chambers have been enjoyably cool this summer and now I need to make them warm and cozy for the winter. My chambers are in the voids of the earth covered, rock filled, ramp that forms the incline to the west door of the Todd's barn. The ramp was originally intended to give mechanical advantage to the draft horses in pulling the heavily loaded hay-wagons into the barn. In recent times the ramp has not been used much and it provides me with a charming home site.

Today I am curious about the activity in the barn. Mr. Todd entered the barn early this morning and began moving objects around with no apparent purpose, some he threw out the east door on to the ground and other things he sorted and arranged in the middle of the barn floor. He kept at this chore all day long; sweeping, moving, and throwing. I must say this is totally out of character for Mr. Todd, he usually does not do any task all day long. I wonder what's up.

This evening I was sitting on the ramp viewing the changes that had occurred when I saw 6 members of the mouse family come by with all their belongings strapped to a wagon they were pulling. Molly Mouse was sobbing when I asked where they were going. She choked holding back her emotion and said, "Mr. Todd destroyed our home that we had been comfortably nestled in for several years. He also took away other nooks and crannies that we could have used for another home. We no longer feel secure here and must move on".

Hm ... I thought about the upheaval that struck our neighborhood today. This is not like the Todd's, we have enjoyed peaceful coexistence here for quite a while, not much disturbance in the barn ... and they keep their cats in the house. I hope this is over.

September 14, 2002

This week I have been doing stretching exercises to make my cheek pouches more flexible so I can carry more. Today, I began to enhance my chambers by bringing in pouches full of dry grass, leaves, and that lovely soft milkweed down to keep me warm this winter. I was shocked to see Mr. Todd back in the barn again, doing more of what he was doing last week. We exchanged greetings, mine more cautious and reserved than usual. He worked hauling objects to the transfer station while I made many trips to the field for home improvement materials.

During the day, several people came to the barn. They stood next to my door and talked for a long time but I continued with my work. They appeared to be planning something, gesturing with their hands and offering ideas about something I did not understand. Boldly, I dodged around their trespassing feet and dashed down my tunnel entrance. Some noticed me and remarked how cute I was.

Mr. Todd worked all day, again, and went into his house with a smile on his face. Wow, I have never seen him so motivated! He must be up to something big.

September 15, 2002

I was awakened early this morning by a vibration that rolled me out of my night covers. After overcoming my fear that it was an earthquake, I ran up my tunnel and gaped at a huge darkness overhead. It was the underside of a vehicle and feet were moving around, I recognized the largest to be those of Mr. Todd. They lifted furniture, a painting, and another object I did not recognize from the vehicle and put it in the middle of the barn floor. I overheard the gentleman that parked his car over my door say that he hopes the antiques bring a good price ... more laughing and talking ... then he left. Mr. Todd went on with his sweeping and arranging while I sat at my tunnel scratching my chin.

I was now anxious about what was happening, would I be harmed by it ... could I work on my plans for the day? Finally, I cast off my paranoia and went down to my chambers to prepare for the day.

The rest of the day was a nightmare, scores of people brought loads of stuff, they parked on the ramp over my door and unloaded it all into the barn and piled it with Mr. Todd's stuff. I felt it was too dangerous to venture out so I spent the day huddled against my chamber wall reading *The Doom of Babylon*, [Isaiah](#), Chapter 14.

September 21, 2002

This has been a tumultuous week. Crazy activity overhead and in the barn throughout the week, but I became less fearful for my life and my abode. Lots of vehicles had shaken the ground, but my chamber walls held firm. Most of the time I worked on preparing a list of foods I needed to store for the winter: 5 quarts of butternuts; 2 quarts of acorns; 1 quart of sunflower seeds, 1 quart of rose hips, and a pinch of Mrs. Todd's herbs. Today, I started food gathering in earnest!

I gathered the butternuts first-the old tree is only about 70 feet from my tunnel. I had made several trips, one nut in each pouch, before I found myself passing through a labyrinth of moving legs and feet. I was hardly noticed by the busy people; only a few commented, "look at the busy chipmunk", "don't step on his hole". Despite my busyness I overheard enough to figure out what was going on. The New Boston Community Church would be having an auction here tomorrow and every item was being tagged and arranged to show it off from the best perspective. I was impressed by the hard work and dedication exhibited by these people.

September 22, 2002

I got up early this morning to put more food in storage. I finished with the butternuts and started on the acorns before the auction goers started to arrive. I continued through the morning until the ramp became too crowded for me to work efficiently, so I decided to quit. I sat in my upper chamber and listened to the happy talk and laughter as well as the business part of the auction. I chuckled a lot over what I heard from the Minister and the Auctioneer. Each could earn a living as a standup comedian. All afternoon the auction helpers brought items from the barn and the money flowed from the pocket of buyers to the busy bookkeepers.

At the end of the day quietness returned to my surroundings and I ventured out of my tunnel and repaired the minor damage that had occurred to it. I slipped unnoticed to the table where people were intently looking over the books. All at once a loud cheer rang out, nearly scared me out of my fur, I understood from the exclamations that the Church had received a gross income of \$7000 and this put the fund raising effort for the church addition way over the goal. I scampered back to my tunnel entrance experiencing mixed emotions; on the one hand I was happy for the Church and that Mr. Todd has a clean barn, but I was sorry about Molly's family losing a happy home.

Selfishly, I thought to myself, now this is over, I can finish my food gathering without interruption and certainly enjoy a comfortable winter in my secure home.

THE CIDER PRESS: Inspiration for Art and Culture (12/2002)

On a recent Friday evening, Bob Belanger, of "Cider Press" (the band) fame, enthusiastically showed off his unique home. The focus of his pride and enthusiasm was the rare antiquity in the cellar of the home on Francestown Road he and his wife Eileen have lived and worked in since 1974 – the Cider Mill. I was soon caught up in Bob's eloquent story. But, I did not anticipate my response to it and the great excitement that welled up in my heart. Many memory files, sealed since my adolescent and young adult years, were read into my consciousness, to the point of distraction from Bob's demonstration.

That evening I walked through the heavy wooden doors, pushed to the side with considerable exertion. These doors are at the street entrance to the Cider Mill ramped down from the pavement on Francestown Road to which it is very close. Upon entering the wide aisle that extends the full length of the upper level of the old mill, presumably built by J.R. Whipple in the decade of 1880, I was greeted by Bob and Eileen. I exclaimed, "Your front door is the largest I have ever seen". "Yup, probably is", Bob replied. I spilled the first memory that came to my mind, "I remember riding in my Dad's 1936 Ford dump truck as he backed it through this same doorway, down the aisle, to the opposite end where I helped unload boxes of apples that Dad had hauled from a local orchard for Paul Saltmarsh." Dad hauled a lot of apples for Paul while I was growing up and it was in this period that I was first intrigued by the old mill.

Bob showed me the hole in the upper level floor where apples were dumped down a chute to the grinder attached to the superstructure of the cider press on the level below us. As I followed Bob down the stairway I could detect a faint smell of apple lingering in the cool humidity. I had to tell Bob the first thing I noticed on the stairway, "My feet aren't sticking to the stairs the way they used to when Paul Saltmarsh owned the place. Most anywhere in the press room I tried not to stand in one place too long - being uncertain that I would be able to lift my feet." "Yeah, Eileen and I had to really scrub and scrape this place to clean up the sticky floor," replied Bob.

Before my eyes, as I stood at the bottom of the stairs, was the old cider press that I remembered as a teenager. It was clean and beautifully painted red with gold scrolls decorating the linear wood parts, Eileen's 2002 *"In the Country"* by Robert Todd

artful skill obviously applied here. The metal parts of the apparatus are painted black. Bob exuberantly began a description of his equipment and a demonstration of the apparatus while I struggled to pay attention by suppressing old memories. He pointed out the seal on the face of the structure on which was stamped, *Boomer and Boschert Press Co., Syracuse, N.Y. #1*. According to Bob, the number signifies the model size and this is the smallest of 4 models. The platen (the wooden surface at the bottom of the press) is 48 inches square.

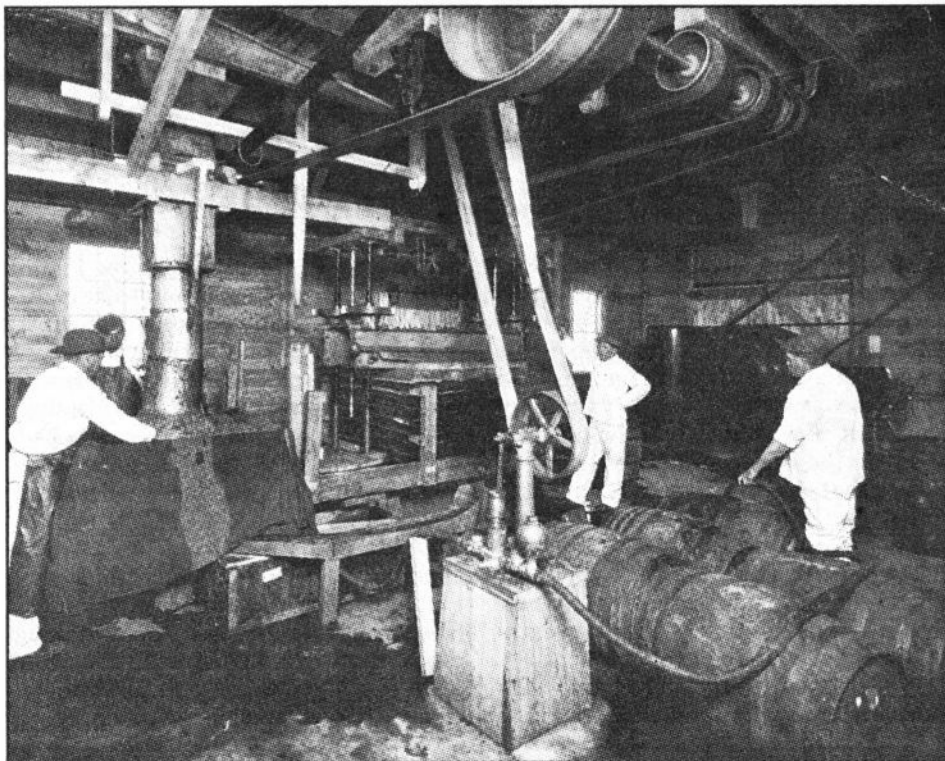


Photo from the book "About the Farm" of the cider press in the early 1900s.

rack added. This process is continued until the stack of racks and pumice layers are five high. Although Paul may have pressed a stack of eight pomace layers, I get more cider yield from the pomace by stacking only five", said Bob.

We looked at the picture of the press displayed on the wall, enlarged from the book, "*About the Farm*", published by J. R. Whipple to promote his farm, and we counted eight layers. This picture prompted a discussion about the history of the cider press.

Bob recalled that the Whipple Company used it until about 1919 and Paul Saltmarsh operated it from 1936 until his sudden death in the middle of the pressing season in 1973. I later found that Mr. Saltmarsh purchased the mill in 1944 so it is speculation that he rented the facility from Constance Fitzgerald, the former owner, from 1936 until 1944. I wonder if the equipment languished from 1919 until 1936. I also wonder what destiny held the cider press off the list of items on the auction bill that were sold in 1920. This auction liquidated all the farm equipment owned by the J.R. Whipple Company. The land was sold to real estate investors and is now in the title chains of many homes in the village.

Bob drew me back into his explanation about the operation of the press. "Once the stack is ready the apparatus is turned on the round track to a position under the press mechanism comprised of gears and screws driven by an electric motor, a three horsepower induction start motor dating back to 1916, installed by the Whipple Company to replace the original gas engine." Then he turned on the motor and lowered the press to show how slow it went down. I was thrilled to again hear the slapping sound of the long belts and the rumble of 2002 "*In the Country*" by Robert Todd

I hung on to Bob's description of how the press worked, reinforced by images in my mind of Paul Saltmarsh and his assistant, Charles "Mudworm" Murdough working right where we stood. "Look here Bob, the platen turns on this large round track to the loading position under the pomace grinder. Pomace is diced up apples. As he placed on the platen a square device comprised of wooden slats joined in a grid, he continued, "These press racks are put on the platen and a filter fabric is placed on it, Paul used burlap, I use polyethylene fabric. Then the grinder chute is opened and pomace from four or five bushels of apples is spread in a layer of uniform thickness on the filter which is then folded over the top of the pomace and another press

long steel rods transmitting power from the motor to the press. He went on, “The cider runs onto the wooden base of the platen to the inlet of a pipe that carries the sweet liquid to a large wooden vat under the platen. From there the cider is pumped into barrels for storage, or into retail sized containers. I get about seventy gallons per pressing which is a yield of about three gallons per bushel of apples run through the press.”

I asked Bob, “What do you do with the pomace that has been pressed”, I asked? This question was cued by my memory of forking this firmly matted “stuff” into Dad’s dump truck so many times. We took it home and dumped it beside the dairy barn entrance and Dad fed it to the cows. “Fred Byam comes and picks it up for hog feed, spent pomace is an excellent animal feed”, replied Bob.

I commented, “I have not noticed much activity at the mill for several years.” He replied, “We make a point of pressing cider at least one weekend per year, we call it our *Annual Never Making Cider Anymore Party*. Roger Swain, formerly with WGBH’s show, Victory Garden comes and we have a great time.” I recalled the many enjoyable times that I had been to Bob and Eileen’s to buy cider and gifts and the times I bought cider, apple syrup, apple jelly, and vinegar from amiable Paul Saltmarsh.

We did not go into the barrel room, a large window-less cellar behind the press room where the 55 gallon oak barrels were stored while the cider was allowed to ferment and turn to vinegar. I was content to recall the feeling of being in the room long ago and to remember the tickle in my nose brought on by the acidic-sour smell of vinegar. John Young, local orchardist and producer of apple products, told me that Paul would have over 200 barrels of vinegar in the cellar each year and that he could make vinegar in one year, although some say that the process takes up to three years. He went on to say that Paul was a pioneer in marketing organic foods and for many years he sold most of his product to “organic” outlets, this was from about 1960 until his death.

I am thankful to Bob and Eileen Belanger for offering an opportunity to experience the cider mill again and for the encouragement to feature this grand antique in my column. The attitude they share about their role in sustaining this significant part of the Whipple Farm legacy is a model for stewardship and promotion of cultural heritage. To my knowledge, the Belanger’s cider press is the only remaining Whipple Farm equipment still functioning as it did 120 years ago.