

*The Fellows house on Molly Stark Lane in the 1940s*

## Jacqueline Fellows remembers New Boston in the 1940s and 1950s

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by Dan Rothman, New Boston Historical Society, and special guest Jacqueline Fellows Hull

Earlier this year the Historical Society received an email which began: “Hello, my name is Jacqueline Fellows Hull. Once upon a time I lived in the beautiful white house on Molly Stark Lane (Old Meeting House Road) from about 1945 until 1952, and again in 1955 to 1957 when I was in high school.”

I am always delighted to hear from people who lived in New Boston years ago, especially when their email contains the magic words “Once upon a time”. Jacqueline and I began an email conversation which has continued for months, and I promised I’d send her stories to the *Center of Gravity Gazette*.

We determined that the house in which the Fellows family lived is 18 Molly Stark Lane, now the home of Philip and Jane Trioli. Shirley Sullivan owned this house before the Triolis. I’ve never heard Molly Stark Lane described as “Old Meeting House Road” – have you? Indeed there was an old meeting house a few yards up the hill at the corner of Bedford Road – this was the 1823 Church on the Hill which burned in 1900. Jacqueline said the road wasn’t paved when she lived there.

Jacqueline wrote in her first email, “I remember my first grade teacher, but I can’t recall her name. Do you know who it was?” I went to our collection of Town Reports and discovered that Martha Colburn replaced Helen Gutterson as the Primary Room teacher in 1947. The 1888 Village School that stood across the street from Town Hall before the Fire Station was built in the 1970s had two classrooms on the ground floor, one for Grades 1, 2, and 3 and one for Grades 4, 5, and 6. High school classrooms were upstairs.

# *Eighth Grade*



Brenda Byam, John Grant, Jackson Strong, Donald Daniels, Harold Sallada, Thomas Bose, Jacqueline Fellows, John Colbert, Richard Boulter, Florence Briere, Paul Nadeau, Bartlett Hooper, Gloria Hoyt. SECOND ROW: Hughena Hooper, Gail Yates, Homer Dodge, Charles Houghton, Marilyn Livingston, Mrs. Johnson, David Whipple, Clayton Savoy, Florence Barss, Roger Follansbee, Francis Dane, Philip Smith, Ronald Daniels.

At the last meeting of our seventh grade year we elected the following officers:

President . . . . .	Jacqueline Fellows
Vice President . . . . .	Thomas Bose
Secretary. . . . .	Harold Sallada
Treasurer . . . . .	John Colbert

We have a collection of “Joe English Echo” yearbooks in the museum and I found class photos from 1956 and 1957 when “Jackie Fellows” was in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. She’d been elected class president one year and vice-president the other!

Jackie’s parents Leslie and Yvonne Fellows first moved to New Boston with their young family at the end of World War II. Here are some of Jacqueline’s memories.

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From my house back in the day you could see the playground, the town hall, Dodge’s store. Now the beautiful hayfield is all pine trees. We would sit on our lawn and watch the fireworks on the Fourth of July.

Of all the places we would live later, this beautiful house was home to me. It was the typical colonial structure with an added-on kitchen in the back and a red barn off to the left side. You could step out the kitchen door that faced the barn onto a porch and look into the backyard. A huge stone wall held back the hill. We could walk along the porch to another door which led up a flight of stairs into the barn and the hen house. Along the kitchen wall Mom had planted beautiful hollyhocks.



Back in the early- to mid-forties many people in the country still relied on subsistence farming which meant you had chickens, ducks, geese, pigs, cows, goats, and a huge garden to tend. My Dad had an oversized garden across the road from the house. I don't remember how the field became plowed so we could begin planting. I suppose a farmer came. Afterwards Dad always rototilled each spring preparing the earth for the gardening ritual. All the seeds – corn, green and yellow beans, carrots, beets, cabbage, potatoes – were always planted in precise rows. He passed that method on to me from what he learned as a young man on the farm where he lived in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

Of course, it was expected that the children in the family would help on the farm. So he set out one day to have me help with the weeding. I doubt I was much older than five or six and didn't know carrots from grass. He instructed me to weed this particular row which I did quite thoroughly. To his dismay, part way through he discovered that I had pulled carrots and weeds. So much for that lesson.

As the vegetables grew to useable size Mom who hadn't done a lick of canning also was learning. She acquired the necessary jars and lids along with pots and pans over time and somehow found out how to prepare and can the produce from not just the vegetable garden but the small apple orchard up back. You see, Mom was a city girl from Waltham, Massachusetts. She had met Dad at Frost and Higgins where he worked as a laborer and she was employed in the office. They married in 1939 at the Episcopal Church in Waltham near where my Grandmother and Grandfather Gibbs lived.

I have to give her a lot of credit because times were really tough and she figured out how to earn money to supplement their meager income by baking breads, pies, brownies and cakes to sell to the summer people who came up from Boston, including Mr. Kettle who lived next door in this spooky house that we often would walk through when he wasn't up from his professorship in Boston. She also sold eggs that our prolific hens laid daily. Mom also made our clothes. With the sewing machine she would fashion doll clothes for some company far away that needed them to dress the dolls they sold. I never did know where it was. It was just another one of those things that folks did to keep solvent... especially those of us on the bottom rung of financial stability.

To me that house on Back Meeting House Road was the closest thing to heaven for me. I loved drudging across the field to walk down the very steep Meetinghouse Hill to the three story wooden structure known as "the school" for all twelve grades. The elementary students were on

the ground floor with older students occupying the second floor. Above that on the third floor was the home economics classroom.

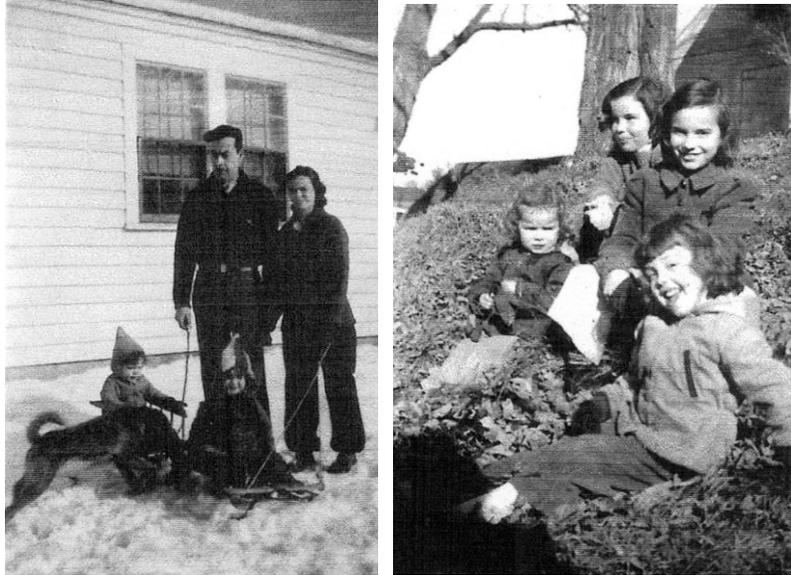
I still remember my first grade teacher, Mrs. Colburn. I really loved her for her kindness and caring. My second grade teacher was a real hardnose. I can't say as I liked the idea of a teacher using a wooden ruler to whack her students' knuckles though. I made up my mind if I ever became a teacher that I would fashion myself after my first grade teacher. She was a gem.

Well, back to the village and Meeting House Road. As Memorial Day approached we waited expectantly for the lilacs to blossom. We would get the scissors and cut the most gorgeous fragrant blooms from the lavender lilac bush by the back door. We would scurry down the sidewalk by the kitchen to the front of the house and wait to hear the military guard fire their rifles in salute to the souls lost in the wars. Someone would toss a wreath into the Piscataquog River in their memory. Then little by little we could hear the drumsticks thump against the swinging drums setting the beat for marching feet that began to make their way up the steep hill to the cemetery high above the town. Every thrump echoed against the mountain ridges that surrounded the village. With our treasure of lavender lilacs we rushed across the field to meet up with everyone and silently march the remaining half mile higher and higher until we reached the iron gate to the cemetery. Always there was a ceremony and once again rifles extended skyward to blast in honor of fallen soldiers. Then all the children were given permission to find a flag by a marker to gently place our gorgeous flowers. Some of us found Revolutionary graves, Civil War markers and World War I and World War II sites. It was a most stirring event for an eight year old. I can still hear the drums and musical instruments as the band marched back down the mountain to the town.

New Boston was a close knit community. People helped each other especially those who weren't managing to keep ends together. I remember my Mom telling me that one particular winter was especially difficult for our family. My father wasn't able to find steady work, which under the circumstances back in the late forties wasn't a big surprise. So my petite Mom went down to Dodge's store and talked with Mr. Dodge about our "pickle." Now mind you this is a real old fashioned country store with squeaking doors when you enter and creaking wooden floors as you walked between the rows of canned goods, cereal, coffee, meats and dairy. Until Dad found steady work again, we needed credit. I vaguely remember Mr. Dodge, a round short man with a kind face. Once he heard Mom's needs, he told her to pick up whatever she needed. He would tally everything up each time she came to the store and once spring came with the offer of work, then we could begin to pay the bill. True to her word Mom paid every cent back. Quite honestly I've never forgotten this event in our family's life in New Boston.

My Mom was a frugal person. Growing up in the Depression and living through World War II created the need to do with what she had on hand including making her own wallpaper paste out of flour and water. We helped by applying this homemade paste to the back of the paper. Then every piece of wall paper was meticulously matched so that the floral print became a beautiful picture on the wall.

Everything was repurposed, like paper bags, plastic containers, cans and even the wrappings of lard and butter. Each lard wrapper was used to grease cake pans, muffin tins and cookie sheets.



*Leslie and Yvonne Fellows and their daughters*

By then there were four children...all girls. When we weren't in school, my Mom shuttled us off to our rooms while she went to her room for a quick nap. We could read our books or play with paper dolls, but quietly. Bet you wonder what paper dolls are. We bought a book of them at the five and dime store in Goffstown. Of course, we needed scissors to cut them out. They had tabs so you could hang dresses, coats and sweaters on them. We would pretend that they were real people and made them walk and talk. And, yes, we had to be quiet.

My father was a man of multiple tinkering abilities...mechanic, farmer, carpenter, hunter, truck driver, gardener, and maple sap collector. Each late winter he drilled holes in the huge maple tree out front and some in the back woods and then hammered the metal taps into the holes from which hung a metal bucket. We waited eagerly for the first plink plunks into the pail. Once the pail was quite full, Dad would carry it to the cast iron stove that he had placed out back. The sap was added to a huge kettle that was already steaming. It took quite a while for the sap to boil off the liquid and become the most delicious maple syrup...some golden and some dark. If there had been a new fallen snow, Dad would take a flat pan, fill it with snow pressing it down, then added some of the syrup. We ate the best candy ever!

The winters could get colder than cold back then in the 1940's and early 50's. The snow piled up to the window sills and the frost crystalized on the windows creating pictures of forest and field. Next door was Mr. Kettelle's summer home with a back shed roof than snuggled into the slope of the land. It was a quick step up and we could climb onto his roof while he was away in Boston as a professor. As the Christmas season arrived my father was concerned that we children had begun questioning Santa Claus...like how did he slide down the fireplace chimney, how come we never saw reindeer tracks? Dad would offhandedly remark that we were so small that we couldn't see on the rooftop of our house. Still we wondered. So one winter Dad decided to put all to rest.

When we awakened on Christmas morning, we were ecstatic. Not only had Santa filled our stockings, eaten the cookies, slopped the cocoa, snatched up the hay for his reindeer, but wonder of wonders his reindeer had landed on Mr. Kettelle's sloping roof leaving of all things, hoof marks in the new fallen snow... and wow! Sleigh tracks! For a number of years we

speculated about the evidence amongst ourselves. When we broached the topic with Dad, he'd only smile and say nary a word.

Each winter once it snowed Pinball Mountain down by the Piscataquog River was open for skiing. We walked down Back Meeting House Road crossed over the river to the ski tow. We would strap on our second hand skis and zig-zag up the kids slope to slither down to the bottom. Then do it again. The "big kids" whizzed down the mountain. I never did get the hang of skiing, but being with everyone in the winter snow was fun.

Once summer arrived, it was time to enjoy the waters of Scobie Pond where we all took swimming lessons. We rode a yellow school bus over the mountain from center town singing songs like "Irene Good Night, Irene," "On a Bicycle Built for Two" and the favorite "100 Bottles of Beer on the Shelf." That one took us over the dirt pot-holed road until we could see the short beach and raft on the water. The older kids could swim to the raft and practice diving while the younger ones were taught the rudiments of swimming. What I really didn't like about that pond was all the doggone bloodsuckers. Ick!

We lived in New Boston two different times, the first time from 1944 to 1952. At that time Aunt Pat and Uncle Bill Fowler were trying to encourage my parents to move to Florida so Dad could work at the new Minute Maid plant in Leesburg. So we packed up and drove on Route 1 down the East Coast to Florida. It took us a week to get from New Hampshire to Leesburg. Back at my favorite home we rented our house to some folks. I can't recall their name.

This wasn't a good choice for my folks, but they didn't know that at the time. We returned to New England where we lived in East Auburn, Maine, until the renters in our New Boston home moved out. By this time my brother, John, was born. Now there were five of us me, Susan, Lucy, Marion and John along with Mom and Dad. So back we came as I was entering my eighth grade.

I have a special memory during that time about playing baseball. Just so you know I am not a sports person but you had to take gym during this education time. So I joined the girls' baseball team. Being not quite five feet tall was an interesting challenge. We were playing another team that particular day and not making much progress. I also was striking out often. Someone called, "Batter up." Yikes, that was for me. I decided in my mind that I was going to nail that sucker. I walked to the home plate, clanked the bat on the mat and gave a few swings. The pitcher wound up with the underhanded throw that you do in softball. That blazing orb of fury came hurtling at me. Following a valiant swing, I heard the best crack ever and the ball was flying over everyone's head roaring into outfield. And, wow, out of the park!

Everyone on the bases was momentarily shocked but quickly got their feet in motion and dashed faster than the wind to home plate. Following behind them was me, still in disbelief. The opposing team stood in total amazement that this peanut had connected with that fire ball and the home team won the game. Once that bat was dropped, I swore I would never play competitive sports again

These are the names of some of the students that I remember from eighth grade: Gloria Hoyt, Brenda Byam, Marilyn Livingston, Florrie Barss, Bart Hooper, Jackson Strong and Harold Salada. I don't remember the teacher's name at that time and I don't recall how many students were in the class. – *Jacqueline Fellows Hull 2025*