

CHRONICLES – September, 2012

One of the benefits of our Remember When Gatherings is the information we receive from participants that often give way to a Chronicle Article...so be it this month – special guest “by proxy” is Elizabeth Whitney, born and raised in Kingston, who at the age of 81 penned these notes about her life in Kingston. She entitled it “Remembrances of the Old Days” and it was shared with us at the May event by her daughter Phyllis Crowell. Although her ideas were written as random thoughts (which appear in italics), I have taken some literary freedom in rearranging her words into this small narrative.

Elizabeth fondly remembers her father, Freeman Nason, who married in 1903 and raised ELEVEN children. Her mother died when Elizabeth was only 9, so the child rearing became his burden. He was a farmer, hauled boards by horse and team for Walt Bartlett’s saw mill. He was a boundary finder, a selectman, a road agent, a cemetery sexton, a deacon and a square dance caller. He helped to build and finance the Union Chapel, where the family came to worship. *My father and some other men built an old snow plow out of planks to plow the roads with horses. Prior to his hand made planks, they did the shoveling by hand. My father used to take people to vote in the center of town by horse drawn wagon with side seats and hay in the middle – it took the entire day. The men of the Nason family used to take charcoal, wood and vegetables by horse drawn wagons to the Ellis Company in Haverhill, Mass.* The pride in her heritage was evident in every sentence.

She writes of fond memories: skating on the Mill Pond Bartlett’s Mill (which sat on the falls at the Pond View Restaurant’s current location). *We built fires to warm our feet. There was also a grist Mill at this site and many times, it was converted to a square dance hall where my father “did the calling”. Doctor Lambman would come to our house to treat us for our ailments. We looked forward to his visits in the winter when the snow was so high, he would arrive in an old car with skis on it. I first had electricity in my home in 1921 and route 125 was tarred for the first time in 1929. There were ice houses on Bayberry Pond, Silver Lake and Great Pond. Kingston had a hand pumper and ladder trucks for fires and volunteers would help. These were stored at Clark’s garage and when the fire call came, all the help from the garage would leave the station and go fight the fires. The firefighters relied on wells in different parts of town to fight those flames.*

Elizabeth Whitney never lacked for fun either. *We used to go to Silver Lake (now Country Pond) and the Mill Pond for swimming. Visitors would come from the city and stay at our farm for most of the summer and have fun with us. We made homemade ice cream, set off fire crackers and ate lots of fresh fruit from the trees. I remember jumping off our corn barn with an umbrella thinking I could fly. One time, while wearing a red bathing suit, I was chased by a bull and jumped in the old dump cart. The bull kept hitting the dump cart with his head while I was*

stuck inside until someone came to help me. We all attended one room school houses, mine was where the Bayberry Store stood. It held all 8 grades with one teacher. It had a wood stove, an out house and an outdoor hand pump for water. She claims that neighbors made the "recipe" in their cellars. A favorite town character, Charles Hutch, often indulged in a bit much of the recipe and would sing and dance and do whatever the townspeople wanted. How they loved to tease him.

Life wasn't all fun and games. Her work load?? I picked 45 quarts of blueberries, by myself, while pregnant, and sold them for 10 cents a quart. My Aunt Lene and I would take in washing, do it by hand on an old scrub board, dried it and ironed it for \$1.25 a wash. Every day, we had to drive 14 cows to the pasture down route 125. After the cows were milked daily, the milk had to be cooled and cream taken off the top, then it was bottled. These were then delivered to the neighbors and families on Country Pond. At Christmas, all the decorations and most of the gifts were hand made. They included practical things like clothing, bedding, hand made dolls or paper dolls. On Halloween, this lady, Mrs. Bennett would burn a cork stopper and blacken her face. She told us such scary stories and made them so real, we were often afraid to walk home alone.

Sadly, she remembers the very bad hurricane in 1938 which caused lots of destruction and flooding. She told of the head-on train collision at Newton Junction which claimed the lives of five people and injured many more. There was a stable at the station to house the passenger's horses for one day. It was used as the morgue during this tragedy.

Special Thanks to Phyllis Crowell for making her mother's writing available to us. Praises to Elizabeth Nason Whitney for taking the time at age 81 to "tell her tales". It is stories like these that need to be heard, documented and somehow preserved for future generations. That is the theme behind these Chronicles and the Remember When Gatherings hosted by the Historic District Commission. After two very successful meetings, the next one is planned for Sunday, October 21st at our new Kingston Community Library from 2 to 4. Topics for this upcoming event include social and town activities and recreational events, Municipal Activity, Public Service, Road Building and maintenance of the town offices and buildings. Refreshments are served so save this date, October 21 ---- come and share your history with us.