



Epsom Historical Association

# NEWSLETTER

*Catch up to the Past*

Nov. 2009 No. 5

## BICKFORD AND HUCKINS MILL

Sunday Afternoon 2 pm  
Nov. 15, Epsom Public Library



On Sunday November 15 at 2:00 pm, the final program of the Epsom Historical for the year will be presented at the Epsom Public Library. The program will be the history of the Bickford and Huckins mill with personal anecdotes, photos and stories concerning the mill presented by Al Bickford. Residents will best remember the building as the Old Mill Restaurant. The meeting, open free to the public, will also include election of officers and refreshments.



## Annual Christmas Social December 6th

Each year members of the Epsom Historical Association gather for a strictly social affair during the holidays as a thank you to its members. Always a festive affair with great food and fellowship, it is always one of our most anticipated events. During the social, time will be set aside for a review of the Association's events of the past year and recognition given to those who helped make them possible. The members only event will be held at the Epsom Public Library on Sunday December 6th beginning at 5 pm.

# **A Sketch of the Mills and Water Power in the Town of Epsom, New Hampshire**

by Hiram A. Holmes

Down the river with a fall of 55 feet we come to Cass Dam where there is seven feet head (referring to the little Suncook River). November 3, 1803 Francis Locke entered into a contract with John Chesley, Daniel Philbrick, John Downes and Philip Stevens to build a saw and grist mill to be leased to them for 20 years. Soon after the contract closed, the mills were allowed to go down.

July 13, 1830, Ephraim Locke sold the right to run a carding and fulling mill to Dearborn Lord, who sold the same right to Joseph B. Cass on September 19, 1846, together with a right which he had bought of Bennett Lawrence, who was running a hat factory with water across the road from the dam. J.B. Cass took out the machinery and put in a lathe for making bobbins for the Lowell cotton factories. He continued running the carding mill for many years. (Near Mary Frambach's home)

In 1846 the saw mill privilege was bought by George Batchelder and sold by him to Hiram A. Holmes, March 4, 1865.

Down river a half mile, with a fall of 50 feet was Isaac Libbee's fulling mill, with ten feet head. He sold out to a man named Kyer or Currier, who soon sold the machinery and let the mill go down.

About a quarter of a mile further down river with 8 feet fall was Capt. Samuel Locke's saw mill and grist mills, with 8 feet head. He sold out to a company of which Deacon Frederick Sanborn and his brother were members. They rebuilt the mills,

Benson Ham was the millwright. (Across from Knowles' Store).

About 1858 Alonzo Wallace bought the mills and sold them in 1859 to a man named Smith. He reconstructed the saw mill putting in circular saw machinery. About 1867 he sold out to Albion Locke. James D. Paige was the millwright and miller. About this time Mr. Paige moved the grist mill to the dam on the south side of the stream and added a shingle mill. Mr. Locke sold to Ephraim Heald in 1871. He had the mills rebuilt in 1873, millwright on the grist mill was William Shackford; on the saw mill was Hiram Holmes. (Ed: This is probably where Slab City got its name.) At 12 o'clock on a September night in 1877, the mills were burned with all their contents. Mr. Heald sold the dam and privileges to Henry Knox, who sold it again in 1878 to Henry Knowles who built the grist mill now standing in 1880, as a merchant mill fitted with elevators and storage bins. Albert Ladd was millwright.

A half mile down the river with 25 feet fall is Horace Bickford's dam with 11 feet head. At this place on March 12, 1778, Capt. James Gray bought the mill privileges and grist mill of Isaac Libbee (Libbey). Capt. Gray soon added a saw mill just below the grist mill which was afterward burned. Present saw and shingle mill build by Horace Bickford in 1870, with H. A. Holmes as millwright. In 1873 H.A. Holmes built a planing mill for himself and in 1875 added a grist mill, in 1894 moved them both away.

Down river a quarter of a mile with a fall of 12 feet is the shoe factory dam with a head of 12 feet. Dam and factory were built in 1880 by the Epsom Shoe Factory Company. The factory was built by J.C. Philbrick, the dam by H.A. Holmes, who also put in the machinery. Eight companies have carried on the shoe business there. From the shoe factory to the next mill there is an 8 foot fall. (Across from the Baptist Church on the river.)

## **Mills on the big Suncook River**

At the first dam there is a 6 foot head. This mill and dam were built in 1872 by Morrill D. Bickford and William Tripp for the manufacture of lumber and boxes. H.A. Holmes was the millwright. William Tripp sold the box shop to Guy Marden who sold to George H. Burnham in 1889. About the same time Mr. Burnham bought out M. D. Bickford, added a water wheel and grist mill and is doing a thriving business.

The water from this mill flows nearly level to the next mill pond where the dam has 8 feet of head. The first saw and grist mill at this place was built by Jeremiah Gordon. Mr. Gordon granted to Nathan Bickford right to run a carding and fulling mill at the dam. Afterward he changed it to a shingle mill which was burned, rebuilt, and burned again. It was again rebuilt by M. D. Bickford and moved away.

In 1817 Jeremiah Gordon and Ezekiel Burnham built a dam of timber cut on the river banks, some of the timber is still in the bottom of the dam. They also built a saw and grist mill which were washed away. Mr. Gordon built a saw mill after the company's mill washed out and sold it to Jeremiah G. Marden. September 2, 1847 he sold to William Goss and John Clark, who soon sold to Stickney and Joseph Robinson. They sold to Arel Boynton on March 16, 1850. Boynton paid \$2,500 for this mill. By September 5, 1857 the mill had again been washed away and the mill privilege was sold to Isaiah Lane.

Samuel Bickford bought the mill privilege in 1860 and built a saw mill on the old site. In 1862 he sold one half of all to Capt. B.A. Noyes and the following year the machinery was changed from upright to a circular mill and a shingle mill was added. H.A. Holmes was again the millwright. Capt. Noyes bought out Mr. Bickford, the machinery was moved away, and the mill taken down. The mill privilege was sold to Freeman Marden on

September 12, 1896, who also bought the right which M.D. Bickford owned to use the power from the dam, and built a shop for making doors, sash and general job work. After passing down the rapids of Long Falls, with a fall of 14 feet, the water stands nearly level to the dam at Short Falls where there is a 6 foot head. About 1786 John Tripp built a dam and sawmill. A paper mill was built here and burned April 30, 1839. The present dam and grist mill were built in 1839 by a company consisting of Jeremiah Tripp, Winthrop Fowler, Squire Martin, James William Knox and Norris Cofran. Theodore Elliott was the millwright. The mill was reconstructed in 1873, with new flume, water wheels and machinery. H.A. Holmes was the millwright. This mill has been the most successful of any in the vicinity. Farmers have brought wheat thirty miles to be ground. There have been but five millers during the 63 years that the mill has been run. Millers; John Harvey assisted by James Marden and later Andrew Ladd for 8 years, Worcester Preston for 30 years, William Burnham for 7 years, to James W. Marden, who has filled the place for 25 years. Long may he last!

To all to whom I am indebted for information is regard to the mills, I extend my hearty thanks.

signed: Hiram A. Holmes. Hiram A. Holmes was born in 1838 and died 1916.

## **ELECTION OF 2010**

### **OFFICERS**

### **Nov. 15, 2009**

## **Epsom Public Library**

### **2:00 PM**

## Early Settlers of Epsom

By J.M. Moses

Samuel Blake was "of Epsom" February 8, 1742, when he bought Home Lot No. 14, on the south side of the road, also part of a sawmill.

In 1742, John and Samuel Libby of Rye bought home lot No. 8, on the north side of East Street, and probably No. 9, next on the west, with a share in a sawmill and 150 acres of out-lying land. Both were in town at an early date, perhaps before the French War, and remained till after 1760; evidently men of prominence, as they held the most important town offices.

Isaac, Jr., lived a little to the east of the Center village, where he had a grist-mill on the Little Suncook; also a lathe, on which he turned out the old-fashioned wooden dishes that were in use. He lived to be eighty-five years old, and died in Epsom, August 28, 1810.

Francis Locke died in Epsom in 1835 and his wife, Mary, in October, 1818, "in her fifty-eighth year." Their home in 1803 was where the crossroad joins the main road west of the cemetery. In that year he made an agreement with John Chesley, Daniel Philbrick, Jr., John Drowne and Philip Stevens, to utilize the mill privilege on this cross road. A sawmill and gristmill were built, and in 1811 Bennett Lawrence of Epping bought a right there for a carding and fulling mill.

Among the children of Francis and Mary were: Deacon Ephraim, born July 1787, died April 14, 1855, who lived north of the mills, on the turnpike; Francis, born about 1791, died December 31, 1869, who lived in old age near the town house; and Margaret, who married Jonathan Knowles, son of Josiah, and died in 1817.

In 1781 Richard Tripp removed to Short Falls, where he built a sawmill a little above the present gristmill. His wife was a daughter of Andrew McClary.

From Byfield came also members of a Pearsons family; among them, Jonathan, clothier, who was of Epsom in 1782, had a large family in 1790, died in 1821. He bought the east side of Isaac Libby's lot and had a fulling mill near Libby's gristmill. Caleb Pearsons was in town in 1786 and then married Mary Locke. She died in 1820, aged 55.

In 1772 Black Hall Road was referred to as "the road that leads from John Cass's to Shepard's mill." Ten years later it was extended to Allenstown, the extension beginning "8 or 10 rods south of Nathaniel Wallace's house."

As early as April 23, 1761, Ebenezer Barton was chosen surveyor of "the road leading to "new orchet, so called." In 1774 this road was laid out "as it goes." from near Shurking mill to Chichester (now Pittsfield) near Ebenezer Barton's.

Shurking mill stood where the Knowles gristmill now stands, it may have been the first sawmill, standing as it did, on public land, on the main road. In 1773 Ephraim Locke sold his brother, Francis, seven eighths of it, together with all the eastern half of the village on the north side of the road. Samuel Bickford owned westward from him.

In 1785 the mill was called Locke's mill. Samuel Locke then bought eight acres west of it, between the road and the river.

The earliest mention I have found of a mill was February 8, 1742. William Haines of Greenland then deeded Samuel Blake "the eleventh part of a sawmill now being in Epsom." There was then a sawmill on the Little Suncook (Deeds 27-326). In 1760 Andrew McClary, "milright," deeded his son, John and Andrew, his sawmill and gristmill near the outlet of Suncook Pond, on land he had bought in 1756. In 1768 Benjamin Shepard deeded Joseph Cilley of Nottingham 80 acres in Epsom, land "I did formerly live on," also "one half of all the privilege I bought of George Youring in the stream on which Jona. Hill and others formerly built a sawmill, with the privilege of one half the mill now built." In 1778 John Cass sold Ephraim Locke "one twelfth of a sawmill commonly known by the name of Civility's mill."

Besides these and other mills previously mentioned, Ephraim Locke had a mill on Bear Meadow Brook in 1777, near the North road, and the Cates had a sawmill of early date in New Orchard. The great water power of the Suncook was not improved till later.

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF EPSOM, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**by REV. JONATHAN CURTIS, A.M.**

Originally published in 1823.

### **WATER MACHINERY**

The hilly surface of the town, and numerous streams, rendered it very favorable for that kind of machinery which requires the power of water. Within the limits of the town are eight grist mills with twelve runs of stones; ten saw-mills; three carding machines; three clothiers' shops; and four bark mills.

## ***FURNACE "BLOW BACK" UPDATE***

The furnace has been repaired at the old library, and on Sunday Nov. 8 all the Historical Association's holdings were moved into a trailer. A dumpster was donated to dispose of items ruined by the dust and oil that covered the entire interior of the building. Thanks to Armand and Nancy Claris, Ken and Carole Brown, Norman and Miriam Yeaton, Ed Nutter, Joyce Heck and Carleton Rand for moving all the items, cleaning, boxing and storing our belongings. Among the items that will need replacing are the inkjet all in one printer and the computer monitor. The computer itself and the laser printer have been cleaned and are operating normally. Other expenses will include the cleaning of the chairs which included fabric. Beginning Monday Nov. 9, the insurance kicks in and the professional clean-up service begins to clean the interior.

## **HISTORY OF EPSOM**

By John H. Dolbeer

At the present time there are two saw-mills, three grist-mills, one sash and door manufactory, one box factory and the shoe-factory, all situated upon the Great and Little Suncook Rivers.

In the spring of 1881 the matter of building up some kind of a business that would be of a benefit to the inhabitants of the town was discussed, and on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of May of that year a company was organized, called the Epsom Shoe-Factory Company, with a capital stock of three thousand dollars, divided into shares of twenty-five dollars each. The stock was soon taken and operations at once begun.

A dam was made across the little Suncook River, near the Free Baptist Church, and a two-story building erected.

The fall of that year the factory was rented to Hill & Puffer, of Lynn, Mass., who at once commenced the making of shoes. Their practice was to take stock from Lynn or other manufacturing towns that was partially fitted and make the shoes.

In 1883, Mr. Hill left the firm, and Mr. Nathan Goss was associated with Mr. Puffer in the business.

In the spring of 1885 they sold out to parties from Haverhill, Mass., and a new firm went into the business, known as Mitchell, Finney & Co.

They are now manufacturing shoes, cutting and making entire.

At present they employ about seventy-five hands and make six cases per day. Their pay-roll for labor is about one hundred dollars per day.

# Connect to Epsom's Past at Epsomhistory.com

The screenshot shows the Epsom History website interface with the following annotated features:

- Research Link to 10 areas of interest.** (Points to the RESEARCH AREAS menu item)
- Link to 2500 Historical Photos** (Points to the PHOTO ARCHIVES menu item)
- Historical Association link to past and future events** (Points to the HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION menu item)
- Library & Museum with pictures of exhibits & documents** (Points to the LIBRARY & MUSEUM menu item)
- Links to external sources & maps** (Points to the LINKS PAGE menu item)
- Logo Links to Home page** (Points to the circular logo in the top left)
- Link to Town of Epsom Home Page** (Points to the Epsom Town Site link in the navigation bar)
- Various Ways to Search Site** (Points to the Search this site link in the navigation bar)
- Contact Info** (Points to the Contact Us link in the navigation bar)
- Link to Epsom Public Library** (Points to the Epsom Public Library link in the navigation bar)
- Biographies** (Points to the BIOGRAPHIES link in the grid)
- US Census 1790-1880** (Points to the CENSUS INFO link in the grid)
- History Articles, Diaries & more** (Points to the HISTORY link in the grid)
- Obits** (Points to the OBITS link in the grid)
- 2500 Photos** (Points to the PHOTOS link in the grid)
- Cemetery Inscriptions & 2000+ gravestone photos** (Points to the CEMETERIES link in the grid)
- Two 39,000 Person Databases** (Points to the GENEALOGY link in the grid)
- Soldiers, service, pensions etc.** (Points to the MILITARY link in the grid)
- Town, Church & Vital Records** (Points to the RECORDS link in the grid)
- 2500 Scanned Original Documents** (Points to the DOCUMENTS link in the grid)
- Click Scrolling item for News and Site Additions** (Points to the NEWS section)
- Email Us** (Points to the Email link in the footer)
- Sign Guestbook** (Points to the Sign Guest Book link in the footer)
- View Guestbook** (Points to the View Guest Book link in the footer)
- Start & View Discussion Forums** (Points to the Forum link in the footer)
- Local Weather Link** (Points to the Weather link in the footer)

The new Epsom History.com website was activated October 4th 2009, with a new look and graphical home page with more links to more information. Over 10,000 images are available to view which include easy to browse thumbnails that when clicked on bring up a larger, captioned image. 2500 pages of diaries, reports and more, are also shown with thumbnails, with previous/next buttons to allow reading page after page with ease. Cemetery inscriptions include names linked to over 2000 gravestone images. Latest news and activities of the Epsom Historical Association, a new forum, search capabilities, local links, buttons for research areas, genealogy and a special section for the Historical Center Library and Museum, make the website an incredible resource for the researcher or casual observer. Visit it today - updated regularly.

## Tentative 2009 Program Schedule

**Sunday November 15** - History of the Bickford and Huckins mill with personal anecdotes, photos and stories concerning the mill presented by Al Bickford. Epsom Public Library, 7:00 pm

**Sunday December 6** – A members only event – the annual Christmas Social, details to be announced. Epsom Public Library, 5:00 pm.

### IN OUR ELECTRONIC EDITION -

Members of the Epsom Historical Association who provide email addresses, receive an expanded version of the newsletter by email. In this edition:

**Mills and Water Power in Epsom** by Hiram Holmes

**Early Mills in Epsom** - Excerpts from Epsom Early Settlers by John Mark Moses.

**Water Machinery 1823** - Brief excerpt from article by Rev. Jonathan Curtis.

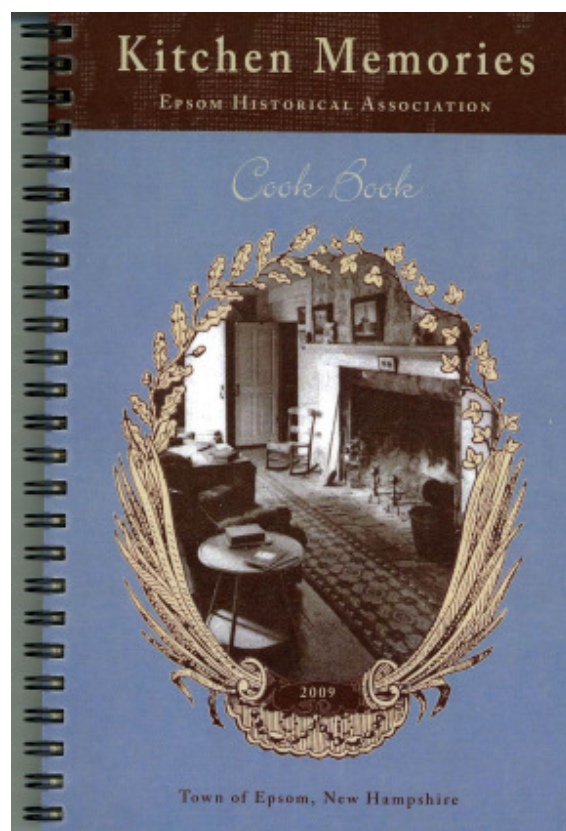
**Epsom Factories** - Excerpt from the History of Epsom by John Dolbeer

**New Website format debuts,** - A look at the new navigation links on the redesigned website Epsomhistory.com homepage.

## RENEWAL NOTICES IN THE MAIL

Membership renewal notices will be sent out to over half of our members in November and December. The majority of these members joined through the free membership offered during the Calendar Raffle held by the Association last year. Of the one hundred current members, 55 will expire in the next two months.

## *KITCHEN MEMORIES \$14.95*



The Epsom Historical Association debuted its new cookbook "Kitchen Memories" on Sunday July 12th, complete with samples of selected recipes, at the Epsom Public Library. One hundred of the cookbooks were sold during the day, and the remainder were sold within days of the event. The 170 page cookbook features submitted and other recipes along with related historical photos from the Association's digital archives, with some old remedies from various sources. Complete with a helpful index, the book is divided into seven categories: Appetizers & Dips; Breakfast, Brunch and Breads; Cookies and Bars; Desserts; Main Dishes and Caseroles; Salads, Sides, Soups and Stews; and finally, This & That. The book has had a second printing and is available for purchase at Historical Association meetings and through the Epsom Public Library.