

CHAPTER XVII JAFFREY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It took nearly forty years for Jaffrey to develop a real interest in the formation of a historical society. The need for such an organization in Jaffrey was suggested by the writer about 1930 to the leaders in the community at that time and the former Jaffrey History Committee, but no interest was aroused. Had such an interest been aroused, no doubt, Jaffrey would today have the old Prescott Tavern on the Turnpike, with its painted room, as a historical reminder of the splendor of an older day. Now gone, at that time it was still occupied as a home by the owner, Fred Kendall Davis, and his housekeeper, Mandana Grimes. Following Davis' death in 1948, the old landmark was sold and torn down. The painted room went to the Goyette Museum in Peterborough, New Hampshire. The bandstand on the Village Green might still be there, a symbol of when life was less hurried and harried and people had time for local orchestras and bands and band concerts to while away many an evening hour. With no depository for their collection and safe keeping, many artifacts and items of historical interest have been permanently lost.

From then on, the matter of a historical society in Jaffrey lay dormant until 1958, when Homer J. Belletete, a leading citizen of Jaffrey and a former selectman, took the initiative to interest others in the formation of a historical society. His awareness of what had been happening on the wayside of the years prompted him to suggest an exploratory meeting at Library Hall on August 4, 1958, for a discussion of the proposed project. Others who manifested an interest at that time in the formation of a historical society included Judge Jason C. Sawyer, Selectman Ralph E. Boynton, Carl C. Spofford, Professor Robert H. George, Georgia L. Eaves, and Fletcher Taft. Nearly twenty people attended the meeting, which was presided over by Homer J. Belletete until the election of its president, Ralph E. Boynton, during the meeting. A five-member nominating committee, consisting of President Boynton, Evelyn H. Ruffle, Homer J. Belletete, Katherine W. Blaine, and Professor Robert H. George, was named and authorized to consider the needed offices and choose candidates for them. Roger Smith of Jaffrey Center was assigned to gather copies of historical society by-laws. Professor George was named secretary pro tem. And thus the present Jaffrey Historical Society was born and in the twelve years of its existence has gained a membership approximating two hundred and fifty persons.

The first officers of the Jaffrey Historical Society were as follows:

President, Ralph E. Boynton
First Vice President, Homer J. Belletete
Second Vice President, Prescott Duncan
Secretary, Anne B. Gordon
Treasurer, Warren C. Ruffle

The first Board of Directors of the Society consisted of the following:

Elizabeth Torrey	L. Evelyn Bean
Lenna Perry	Alice E. E. Lehtinen
Robert H. George	Theodore Taft
Carl C. Spofford	Elizabeth D. Sawyer

Oren Letourneau
Georgia L. Eaves

Marion G. Symonds

The first meetings of the Society were held at the Clay Library Building but after the construction of the Jaffrey-Gilmore Foundation Civic Center, the meetings have been held there. The annual meetings are held during the month of August. Since its formation, the Society has been carrying on a program of historical exhibits at the Civic Center, which are attracting an ever increasing number of visitors. These exhibits are held in the basement rooms of the Civic Center and individually continue for quite some time to afford more people an opportunity to view them.

Among the major or larger exhibits have been the following:

Old time farm implements and tools; old time country store; old costumes lent by the Humiston family; Hannah Davis band boxes; Helen E. Shattuck's 24-tray collection of old buttons; Sandwich glass including glass hats, shoes, and salts; pictures of the old inns in Jaffrey; and old doll collection. Several smaller exhibits have been held at various times, all of them of historical value.

The Jaffrey Historical Society sponsors at least four public meetings a year and during some years as many as six have been held. These are free to the public and the programs include lectures, movies, and slides on history related subjects, based upon local history whenever possible. Most of these are well attended, especially when there are no conflicts with other local activities. At the close of each such meeting, refreshments are served free to all. Also on the Society agenda are annual band concerts on the Fourth of July on the Civic Center grounds. These, too, are well received by the public and enhance the usefulness of the Society in the community.

The following slate of officers was elected at the annual meeting in August, 1970:

President, Eunice Greene	Treasurer, Lucy Leach
First Vice President, Ann Sawyer	Corresponding Secretary, Anne B. Gordon
Second Vice President, Jean Eaves	Historian, Louise Belletete
Secretary, Esther Engvall	

Professor Robert H. George has been named an Honorary Director

The regular directors are as follows:

1968-1971

Marjorie Shattuck	James Balentine
Daniel Johnson	Betty Shea

1969-1972

Evelyn H. Ruffle	Mary Stillman
Paul J. Kidder	Anne B. Gordon

1970-1973

Levida Boutwell	Hope West
Elizabeth Torrey	Homer J. Belletete

JUNIOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Junior Membership Group of the Jaffrey Historical Society was formed in March, 1962, with Daniel C. Shattuck, Jr., and his wife, Travis (Allen) Shattuck,

as leaders. They continued in this advisory capacity until they left for the Peace Corps in Chile in 1963. At that time, Betty J. Balentine succeeded them as advisor to the group. The meetings of the junior group were held at Library Hall.

The group organized with Keith Tribble as its first president, 1962-1963. He was succeeded by Dean Drew for the year 1963-1964. The group was authorized to send a representative to the meeting of the directors of the parent organization.

One of the first projects of the junior group was the clearing of the Small Pox Cemetery on the brow of the hill in the cow pasture on the Deschenes farm in Cheshire. After completing this phase of the work, they made wooden crosses to mark the graves of the six people buried there. They also rebuilt the stone wall enclosing the plot, restoring once again this small cemetery to its former unmolested reposeful setting, overlooking the Contocook River. This work was done in the spring of 1962.

During the 1962 Amos Fortune Forum, the members of the junior group acted as hosts at the little Red School House. They devoted time also for the identification of places of historical interest in Jaffrey by using "Gibbs' maps" donated to them by Norman Torrey. Also during the initial year, tours of old cellar holes and old roads were suggested, under the direction of the following committee: Homer J. Belletete, Frederick H. Smith, Daniel C. Shattuck, Jr., Daniel Johnson, and Karl J. Boutwell. These tours have been conducted at various times through 1969. On September 25, 1967, a panel discussion on old roads was conducted at the Jaffrey-Gilmore Civic Center with Daniel C. Shattuck, Jr., Daniel Johnson, Frederick H. Smith, and Alice E. E. Lehtinen as the panelists and Jason C. Sawyer as moderator. On October 6, 1968, an old roads tour started at the Sharon Arts Center, with Frederick H. Smith as chairman, and took the group through three towns. The October 25, 1970, feature of the group was an "archeological dig" under the guidance of Professor Howard Sargent, archeologist at Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, New Hampshire.

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