

# Yesterday's News

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Fall 2020

## Researching our Home's Past

By Heather Sawin



The home of Farwell & Heather Sawin, 186 Main Street in Lovell Village

Fourteen years ago we moved into our house on Main Street in Lovell Village. We were already Lovell residents, just moving from the Center to the Village. As we unpacked boxes we were enthusiastically greeted by neighbors who were quick to congratulate us on purchasing the Philip Johnson house, birthplace of Eastman Johnson. Or was it? Some local lore says he was born here, other says he was born in his grandparents' house on Old Stage Road.

To be honest, I didn't know who Eastman Johnson was until I moved into this house. I started reading about him and discovered he was an artist known for his paintings of rural scenes often reflecting his

Maine roots in his paintings of maple sugaring and corn husking. Since then, I have had the pleasure of seeing two of his original paintings in person—one in a Smithsonian museum in Washington, DC, and another right here in Maine at the Portland Museum of Art.

I read and heard several conflicting stories about his early days here in Lovell. An article in the *Lewiston Evening Journal Magazine Section* dated August 6, 1942, summarizes some of those stories. One suggests he was born in the home of Jeremiah and Judith Chandler. Another suggests he was born in an inn that Philip Johnson ran. Yet another suggests

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## From the President

This summer was very busy, even without our two largest fund-raisers. We conducted a specialized raffle to benefit local businesses during these difficult times. Also, we were fortunate to have the assistance of two great summer interns, Dory Brosnan and Cecilia Cormier. A lot was accomplished!

To accommodate two interns, we finally purchased a third computer for the Research Center—a laptop, which will help us work off-site when necessary. But, similar to Newton’s third rule of motion, with every action there is a reaction. With all the computer activity, we quickly determined that our internet services were inadequate for our purposes. We changed our services to 5G, which then revealed that we needed to replace our main computer, which was nine years old. All of this was done with great difficulty, considering we did not receive any grant monies and were already operating in the red. But we did it, knowing these upgrades would pay off in the long run.

Some of these benefits are readily available to see on our website—[www.lovellhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.lovellhistoricalsociety.org). Over four hundred photos were added to our image database, primarily from the collection of Earl McAllister. Lovell’s Town Reports from 1880 until the present were scanned and added to our Online Documents collection. Also, all of the Charlotte Hobbs Collection, which included over 1400 documents, have been scanned, indexed, and archivally preserved, thanks in part to a generous donation by the Henney Historical Fund.

Speaking of grants, stop by and see the new lighting inside the barn museum. We were fortunate to receive assistance from the Robert and Dorothy Goldberg Foundation for this important project.

Our Thank You Raffle was very well received by our members, the community, and the twelve business recipients. Four of the winners donated their winnings to those in need, and three of the businesses added to the gift certificates. Thank you all!

The following people won \$250 gift certificates: Jim & Nancy Van Metre (Center Lovell Market); Barry & Heidi Dikeman (Ebenezer’s Pub); Glenn Grant & Jackie Andrews (Harvest Gold Gallery); Winchell & Ruth Moore (Kezar Lake Marina); Andrew Johnson (Lodge at Pleasant Point); Sarah Jones (Lovell Box Company); Rick & Shelley Pilsbury (Lovell Hardware); Anne Wolf (Molloy Energy); Beth Ellen McNamara (Old Saco Inn); Alejandro Tassara (Oxford House Inn); Janice Sage (Rod Iron Design); and Ray Littlefield (Rosie’s).

As to future events, on December 20th we will host a variation of our annual Christmas Open House. We are in the process of organizing a safe festivity, with the hope of spreading joy during these unusual times. Meanwhile, we remain open and welcome your visit. We merely request that everyone wear a mask and practice safe social distancing.

To all our donors and volunteers—many thanks for all you’ve done and continue to do. The Society has been very fortunate to receive many contributions in the form of volunteer work, additions to our collection, gifts in kind, and financial gifts. Please remember we welcome and depend on all of these contributions, no matter what form.

Best wishes and stay safe, *Catherine Stone*

### Tentative 2020 Events

Business Meeting	Monday, October 19th
Christmas Open House	Sunday, December 20th
Business Meeting	Monday, December 21st

### THE LOVELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### OFFICERS 2020-2021

Catherine Stone, President	Bryan Molloy, Director
Michelle Molloy, Vice President	Lou Olmsted, Director
Dee Barker, Treasurer	Dean Stearns, Director
Liz Kerr, Secretary	Jean Stearns, Director
	Carol Taylor, Director

#### LOCATION AND HOURS

The Society, located at 551 Main Street in the 1839 Kimball-Stanford House, is open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am to 4pm, Saturdays from 9am to 12pm, and by appointment. All are welcome to visit our museum and research collections.

Business meetings are open to all members and are held at 6pm every other month on specified dates.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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the family was living over the mill that Philip owned, and many more suggest he was born in our house. I decided then that I should research our home's lineage and try to "prove" that he was born here.

Little did I know what a task I was taking on! First of all, deed research fourteen years ago needed to be done at the Registry of Deeds building in Fryeburg, searching through book after book. Secondly, I had no knowledge of the early land proprietors of Lovell. Lots and divisions caused much confusion. I didn't get very far in my research. Like a needle in a haystack, it turned out I was looking for a one-acre lot in a 100-acre parcel; part of Lot #1 in the Second Division of land grants.

Fast forward to 2020. I find myself with some extra stay-at-home time. We've been gardening more and digging up sod around our yard. Using a metal detector provided many hours of entertainment, finding iron treasures left behind by the barn that burned on our property in 1942. I found hinges, nails, files, chisels, door handles, one commemorative presidential token, and a 1936 penny. We often wonder what that barn looked like.

We pulled out our deed, walked our property lines, searched for old stone posts, common corners of land, stump fences, and discussed what this land might have been like as farm land. An interest in tracing the house's ancestry was reborn. Was Eastman Johnson born here? Time to find out.

My goal was to trace the deeds back and have a clear paper trail proving that Philip Johnson lived here in our house at the time of Eastman's birth. Simple, I thought.

Well, it really wasn't simple. Fortunately, all the historical deeds are now on the Oxford County Registry of Deeds website. I started there and quickly realized I needed help. A visit to the Lovell Historical Society was the place to get the help I needed. I learned about the first land proprietors and the lots and divisions. I found copies of wills, tax records, census lists, and pictures of our house. The more I searched, the more I learned about how to search the old documents. I learned about measuring land in poles and rods and how trees, stones, and other people's land (even if the people are deceased) can be boundary lines. I learned that, in a time before banks, many deeds were used only as a way to borrow money.

Weeks, and many hours of reading old deeds later, I was stuck again. Another visit to the Historical Society led to verifying our lot on a map displayed in the museum. That finally gave me the information I was missing.

I needed to remain focused. There are so many fascinating stories about the early founders of our town, the jobs they had, the real estate transactions they made, the farmers, the store owners, the soldiers and families that lived here. But I was after the facts for now, just simple, paper trail proof.

Did I figure it out? Was Eastman Johnson born while his parents owned our home? The answer is YES! I took the deeds I found; some that pertained to Philip Johnson and some that just referenced meetings held in his home or that used his home as a landmark to describe another parcel. I traced the deeds to our property all the way back to the original land proprietors of Lot #1, Division #2. Then I read the description of each portion of it as it was sold and re-sold until I located a three-acre piece covering both sides of the road in front of the cemetery. This was referenced in deeds actually selling other property, but with the addition of "one other piece" being the one I was looking for. Next, I followed the deeds for that piece, and I also factored in a few known facts about Philip Johnson and put it all together as follows:

- Philip Johnson came to Lovell and married a local girl, Mary Chandler, in 1816 per the town marriage records.

- Per 1819 and 1820 town tax records, he was a resident of Lovell along with another adult in his home.

- Per the 1820 census, he lived in Lovell. From 1822 to 1827, he was the first postmaster in Lovell, and the post office is reported to have been in the ell of our house.

- Hannah Swain owned the property from 1818 to 1821. She either sold or mortgaged the property to John Wood. Either Swain or Wood sold it to Philip Johnson.



Earliest photo of the Philip Johnson House



Heather & Farwell Sawin at their front door

- Although I did not find a registered deed selling the property to Philip Johnson, I did find deeds of him selling pieces of it. On December 20, 1824, he sold the acre and house he lived in to his father-in-law, Jeremiah Chandler, but continued to live here. Jeremiah Chandler then sold it to John Wood, but Philip Johnson remained living here. That is evidenced in the deed dated October 12, 1826, where Philip Johnson sold the piece across the street from “the acre of land now occupied by Philip Johnson and recently deeded to John Wood by Jeremiah Chandler.”

- On July 29, 1824, Philip and Mary’s third child, Jonathan Eastman Johnson, who became known as the artist Eastman Johnson, was born here.

- Another deed in 1826 showed Philip Johnson buying the cemetery in our backyard. The boundary description in this deed includes, “...being all the tract

now enclosed and which has been heretofore occupied as a burying ground and situated directly in front of and opposite the dwelling house that the said Philip Johnson now lives.” It does make me wonder why would he want to purchase an existing cemetery?

- For another date reference, I also found a deed that mentioned a public meeting held at his home on October 18, 1824.

- In 1827, Johnson had remodeled the Lovell Meeting House and was selling pews to fund the project. By 1828, deeds signed by him refer to “Philip Johnson of Fryeburg.” At this point in time, Eastman Johnson would be about 4 years old.

My conclusion? YES, our home is the birthplace and early childhood home of Eastman Johnson. I have a paper trail to verify it. Mission accomplished!

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# Eastman Johnson's Barn Doors

By Catherine Stone



Eastman Johnson's *Corn Husking*, 1860, Emerson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY

On July 28, 2008, Sam and Sheila Robbins visited the Lovell Historical Society. Sam was an investment counselor from West Newton, MA, his wife was a pianist, and both were serious collectors of White Mountain paintings.

The purpose of their visit was to donate to the Lovell Historical Society a set of barn doors, originally from the Day house on Fish Street in Fryeburg. The doors were the backdrop for Eastman Johnson's *Corn Husking* painting.

Eastman Johnson (1824-1906) was born in Lovell and lived here until his family moved to Fryeburg when he was three years old. He became one of America's greatest portraiture and genre painters.

*Corn Husking* is one of Johnson's most widely-known paintings. It pictures four adults, a child, and a dog amidst lots of husks and corn. Johnson painted himself in the composition – he is the young man seated in the right talking to a woman. According to Sam Robbins, the barn doors featured as a backdrop in

the painting had been stored in the Historical Society's barn loft since 1981, where then-owner Robert Goldberg placed them.

Robert Goldberg died in 1997, whereupon his home in Lovell was advertised for sale. The Historical Society was immediately interested in purchasing the property. The house was directly across the street from the Society's "temporary" headquarters, a portable classroom. The house was built in 1838 for Moses Hutchins, and for more than a century was owned by the Kimball family. Sumner Kimball, Lovell's first comprehensive town historian and genealogist, had lived there and many of his "artistic flourishes" were visible throughout the house.

Thanks to tremendous community support, the Historical Society was able to purchase the property. Years of restoration and renovation followed, and in 2005 the home, now known as the Kimball-Stanford House, became the Society's headquarters. Meanwhile, the set of doors remained in the barn loft.

No one knew where they had come from, but they looked interesting, so they remained where they were.

When Sam and his wife stopped by to visit the Goldberg's old house, they asked me if there was a set of barn doors in the loft. I replied in the affirmative and showed them what we considered to be the "mystery" doors. At that point, Sam recounted a fascinating story of how he and his close friend Bob Goldberg had obtained them:

*While in Bridgton in July 1979, I stumbled upon a Bittersweet magazine in a country store. It was described as "The Magazine of Maine's Hills & Lake Region." I opened it up, and starting on page 8 was an article about Eastman Johnson by Harry Walker. A photograph of Johnson's "Corn Husking" painting was displayed. I knew the painting, but here was a picture of the actual barn portrayed in the painting and I said "What a historic barn. Let's go find it". I spoke to Bob Goldberg, art dealer and "Canoe King", who was a good friend of ours, and we decided to go on a joint pilgrimage to find the barn.*

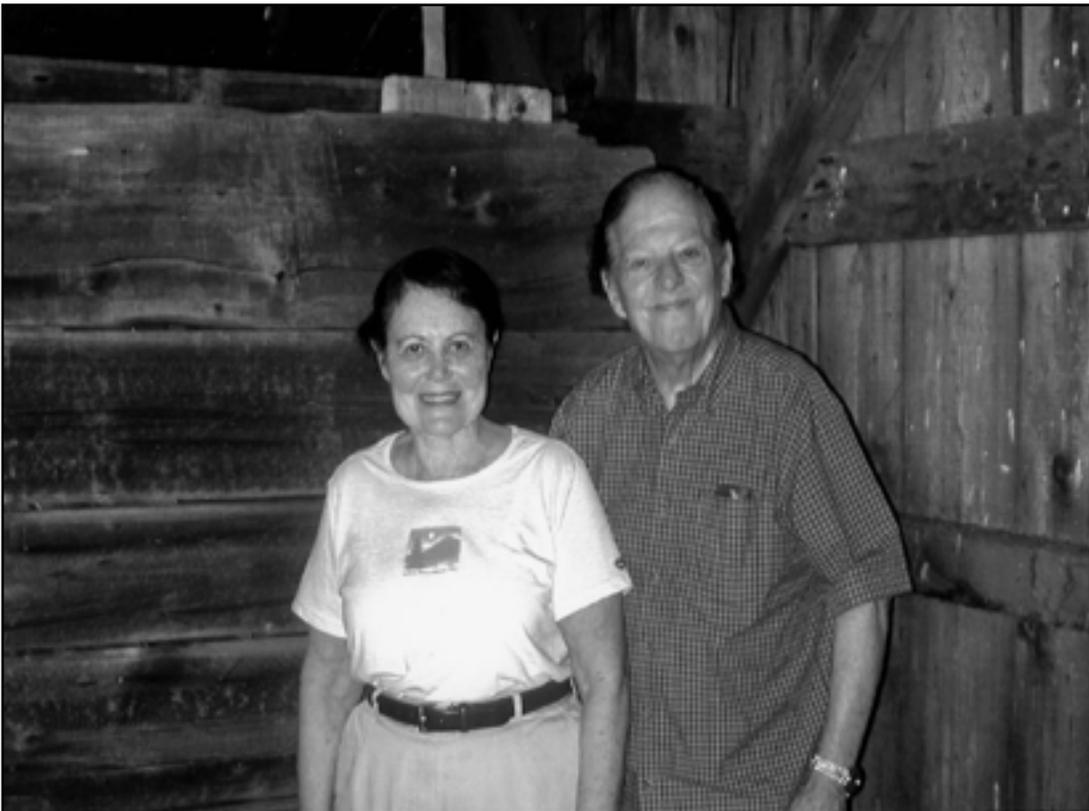
*About a month later, he invited us for lunch with his family. After lunch, we all traipsed to the Day house of Fish Street. There was the barn with the*

*doors in poor repair. I immediately said, "Bob, we have a project. These are historic doors. We can't just let them fall down." He agreed and we approached the house to speak to the owner of the barn. A man by the name of Seth Buchanan answered the door. We asked if he would like new barn doors in exchange for the old ones and he said, "Sure." We hired a carpenter, and for \$469.41 new doors were built, and the old ones were carted to Bob's barn in Lovell.*

Later, Sam and Bob offered to donate the doors to several organizations, including the Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, MA (which owns the Currier & Ives print of *Corn Husking*), and the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, NY (which owned the original painting). They hoped these doors would serve as a backdrop for displaying the artwork. Both organizations declined the gift because they did not have room to store or display the large pieces. The doors are 5 feet, 9 inches wide and 11 feet, 9-1/2 inches high and are complete with original iron hinges and nails. They are also extremely heavy.

The Historical Society gladly accepted the donation of the doors. They remain stored in the barn loft, ready for future displays.

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Sheila and Sam Robbins standing in front of the barn doors.

## Gifts & Donations

*We are very grateful for the following gifts received since the last newsletter:* **Ken & Chris Barthelette** (in memory of Donald & Lucille Newell)—grain scale; **Jon & Dawn Crowe**—a 2002 oil painting by Sarina Dotson in titled *Preservation*; **Evelyn Davis**—Rodolph McAllister's WWII ditty kit, permission to scan photos; **Chris Kuhn**—DVD of the Camp Mudjekeewis Reunion in 1994; **Eric Perkins**—ticket stubs for a Wiley's Hall performance of *Along the Missouri* in 1914, Boy Scouts Troop Record Book for 1977-1978; **Heather Sawin**—article on researching the history of 186 Main Street; **Ellie Waterman**—collection of photographs.

*Donations for the purchase of oil have been gratefully received from:* **John & Nancy Conti** (in memory of Mary Nelson); **Dick & Linda Matte**; **Irene McDeed**; **Barry Weiss**.

*Cash donations have been gratefully received from:* **Morris Bailey & Anita Miller**; **Jim & Suerae Ballard**; **Donald & Gertrude Blanchard**; **Boulder Brook Club** (in memory of Arthur Brecker); **Jon Briccetti & Corey Jamison**; **David & Alice Carberry**; **Jeff & Amy Crowe**; **Dan Eaton & Linda Whiting**; **Louise Ferris-Burt**; **Mary Flanagan**; **John & Deborah Fossum**; **Elmer Fox**; **Wayne Gehman**; **Cricket Gentry**; **Tom & Debra Gilmore**; **Jane Gleason**; **Collier Hands**; **Arnold & Susan Harmon**; **Henney Historical Fund**; **Allen & Patty Jenkins**; **Kezar Lake Marina**; **Steve Lewis & Mary Atkinson**; **Julie Lindquist** (in memory of Camp Mudjekeewis); **Ray Littlefield**; **Chris & Jen Lively at Ebenezer's Pub**; **Scott & Beth Cooper at the Lodge at Pleasant Point**; **Barbara Lukens** (in memory of Phil Harmon); **Arthur & Hinda Marcus**; **Gary & Anna Mason**; **Dick & Linda Matte**; **Robert & Eileen McAllister** (in memory of Stillman McAllister); **William & Nancy Mende**; **Howard & Veronica Mitchell**; **Dale & Kitty Nelson**; **Dan & Jeanne Ouellette**; **Angela Rostami**; **Gene & Vicki Royer**; **Armand & Judy Sabourin** (in memory of Arthur Duggan); **Bob & Mary Tagliamonte**; **Deborah Tait**; **Hal & Carol Taylor**; **Tom & Kay Todd**; **George & Zoe Trautman**; **Frederick & Mary Tucker**; **John & Nancy Walcott**; **Steve & Judy Wales**; **Betsy Warren-White**; **Barry Weiss**; **David & Nell Wing**; **Anne Wolf**.

*If you have made a donation or given an artifact or other form of historical material, and it has not been listed here or previously noted, please contact us immediately. We appreciate the thoughtful generosity of our members and friends and most certainly want to acknowledge and list gifts properly.*

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## In Memoriam

*We note with sadness the death of the following friends and neighbors:*

**Brent Curtis Angevine**, 50, of Bethel, ME, and formerly of Lovell, died on June 23, 2020. He was born in Norway, ME, on November 8, 1969, to Donald and Bonnie Angevine. He graduated from Fryeburg Academy and Eastern Maine Technical College, where he received an associates degree in Heavy Equipment Repair. He had a career in the equipment repair business and was a past master of the Bethel Masonic Lodge, member of the Shrine Temple, and Chairman of the Bethel Water District Trustees. He is survived by his wife, Lori, and two children—Luke and Leah.

**Nicholas Bull**, 75, of Lovell, died on August 9, 2020. He was born June 14, 1945, in Morrison, IL to Mason and Kathryn Bull. He graduated from Harvard University and Northwestern University School of Law. Nick practiced law in Maine for over 50 years, with most of his career as a partner in the Portland law firm Thompson, Bull, Furey, Bass, and MacColl. He is survived by his three children—Elizabeth, Samuel, and Whitney—and ten grandchildren.

**Michael R. Davey**, 65, of Scarborough, ME, and formerly of Yarmouth, ME, died on August 24, 2020. He was born on April 11, 1955, in Lovell, the son of Peter and Sally Davey. After graduating from Fryeburg Academy and Bowdoin College, he received an Architectural Engineering degree at the University of Colorado in Boulder. His career in construction culminated with the formation of his own company, Ironwood Construction.

**Peggy Sue (Davis) Franklin**, 61, of Casco, ME, died on September 1, 2020. She was born on March 30, 1959, in Lovell, the daughter of Lawrence and Merlene Davis. She graduated from Fryeburg Academy and attended college in Pittsburgh, PA. As a career, she worked as a stitcher in North Conway, NH, and at local shoe shops. She is survived by her husband, Joseph, two children—Joseph and Shelby—and two grandchildren.

**Richard Bardwell Lyman, Jr.**, 84, of Sweden, ME, died on August 23, 2020. He was born on February 5, 1936, in New York City, NY, the son of Richard and Dorothy Lyman. He grew up in West Nyack, NY, graduated from Bowdoin College, and received a PhD in History from Harvard University. He had a career teaching at Bowdoin College, Simmons College, and Brandeis University. He founded the Sweden Historical Society and was a life member of this Society. He is survived by his wife, Kathleen, son Richard, stepson Jonathan Graves, and six grandchildren.

**William Hart Nichols, Jr.**, 89, of Falmouth, ME, died on July 25, 2020. He was born on August 4, 1931, in Hartford, CT, the son of W. Hart and Ruth Nichols. Bill grew up in Weston, MA, graduated from Harvard University, and served in the U.S. Navy. He had a career with the W. H. Nichols Co., a precision manufacturing business created by his grandfather. He summered at his cabin at Ladies Delight on Kezar Lake and was a life member of this Society. He is survived by his wife, Jan, three children—William III, Judy Paul, and Susan—four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

**Meghan L. (Mulhern) Nyberg**, 56, of Lovell, ME, died on September 17, 2020. She was born on September 26, 1963, in Syracuse, NY, the daughter of Daniel and Marialice Mulhern. She grew up in Lowell, MA, and graduated from the University of Cincinnati. Meghan managed her husband's company, Lovell Logging and Tree Service, and ran the Daisy Mountain Inn. She was a past Treasurer of this Society and was awarded an Honorable Life Membership in 2016. She is survived by her husband, Harry.

**Catherine (Dowling) Sanderson**, 81, of Waterford, ME, died on August 18, 2020. She was born on August 11, 1939, in Ridgewood, NJ, the daughter of Donald and Marion Dowling. She graduated from Cornell University and received a PhD in English at Indiana University. She had a career teaching at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, MA. She was a life member of this Society and is survived by her husband, David, and her son, Stephen.

**Marcia (Goll) Storkerson**, 76, of Sweden, ME, died on August 6, 2020. She was born in Boston, MA, the daughter of Harry and Ellen Goll, and graduated from William Smith College. She had a career with WGBH Public Television in Boston, culminating in her position as Associate Manager for National Programming. After retiring, she moved to Sweden and became a tireless volunteer at this Society, transcribing some of the most important early works in our collection. In recognition of her contribution, she was awarded an Honorable Life Membership in 2008.

**Elizabeth Virginia (Gans) Woods**, 83, of Longmeadow, MA, died on June 25, 2020. She was born on October 24, 1936, in Baltimore, MD, the daughter of Hilary and Rosalie Gans. She received a degree from Holyoke Community College and worked for many years as a teacher's aide at Willie Ross School for the Deaf. In 1973, Evie and her husband, David, became the first owners in the newly developed Westways. From then on, she spent her summers on Kezar Lake and was a life member of this Society. She is survived by her husband, four children—David, Sarah Bates, Margaret Heffernan, and Jennifer Henderson—and eight grandchildren

The Lovell Historical Society  
P.O. Box 166  
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If your mailing label doesn't say "6-21" or "Life,"  
it is time to join or renew your membership. Thanks!