



Hebron *Then & Now*

The Newsletter of The Hebron Historical Society

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How Hebron, Connecticut Gave Birth To a Vermont Town

Many of Hebron's earliest settlers had some seed money for investment purposes. They certainly didn't buy stocks in Enron, banks or utilities! They knew that land speculation was the way to go, that more and more people would be looking northward and westward, and that they should buy land while it was readily available!

Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire had an idea similar to our Hebron folks, but he wanted it all! As a conniver, Wentworth first got himself appointed in 1741 as King George III's governor of the Province of New Hampshire. Wentworth's plan was to divide the province into townships, and then sell the property to "proprietors". He got so greedy that he crossed the Connecticut River and even granted charters to some coastal towns in Vermont! The Province of New York had already laid claim to that area. Imagine the ensuing arguments between the provinces of New York, New Hampshire, and the proprietors from Hebron!

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Upcoming Event:
August 22, 7:00 p.m.
At Old Town Hall

A Tribute to Donna McCalla

Please join us at this celebration for former HHS President Donna McCalla as we recount her achievements and thank her for her many years of leadership. Public is invited. Refreshments will be served.

HHS To Hold Annual Meeting, Election of Officers, Bylaw Revision Approval on September 19th

The Hebron Historical Society (HHS) will host its annual meeting on Thursday, September 19th at 7:00 at the Old Town Hall at 26 Main Street. All HHS members are encouraged to attend.

During the business meeting, which will run from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m., HHS members in attendance will be asked to vote on a proposed slate of new officers for calendar year 2014. The proposed Board of Directors and Officers for 2014 is shown on the chart on page 2:

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. . . Vermont Town
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Governor Benning Wentworth,
Province of New Hampshire

By 1761, when the Governor had hooked up with Hebron’s group of investors, he had already given Thetford its town charter. He then “granted” Thetford to 61 proprietors, the vast majority of whom lived in Hebron. Each of these “stockholders” paid the Governor 20 pounds for their “shares”. For that 20 pounds, each proprietor received one 68th of the approximately 23,000 acres which comprised the new town of Thetford, not a bad investment for a land speculator with a few extra pounds to spend. To curry favor among the clergy, Wentworth set aside property for the minister and glebe (church-owned) land, reserved land for a school, and kept 2 rights for himself in each town. This guy didn’t miss a trick!

Once the proprietors had their land, they needed to divide and organize the town. With the majority of the shareholders being Hebron residents, the first meeting on September 16th of 1761 was held here in town. Folks by the name of Phelps (14 of them), Smith, Post, Hosford, Buell, Jones, Root, and Beach were among those who gathered to plan. By October 8th a committee of eight had arrived in Thetford to survey and lay out the 50-acre lots for the proprietors. The requirement was that each lot be “butted and bounded” on an 8 rod wide highway, have 50 rods of frontage and be 160 rods deep.

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HHS Annual Meeting . . . continued from p.1

Proposed Board of Directors Slate for 2014

<p>Officers: President – Mary Ellen Gonci Vice President – (Currently Vacant) Treasurer – Robert Gonci Secretary – Susan Heise</p>	<p>Past President – Helen Reardon Historian – Mary Ann Foote Directors: Carolyn Aubin, Louise Casarella, Jean Cyr, Robert Huntington, Ann Marie Piggott</p>
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Each officer will serve a 1-year term, except for the Treasurer, who will serve for 2 years. The election will be decided by a simple majority in a show of hands vote. Members who wish to be considered for the vacant Vice President position or to nominate another member (with that member’s advance knowledge and consent) should contact Mary Ellen Gonci at 860-228-3388 no later than August 19th.

A second key business item to be voted on during the business meeting will be the approval of the proposed HHS bylaw revisions. Each HHS member will receive a copy of the proposed bylaw revisions along with the current bylaws in the month preceding the business meeting. Copies of the current bylaws and the proposed revisions will also be posted on the HHS web site. The HHS membership will be asked to approve the proposed bylaws in a show of hands vote. Approval will require a two-thirds majority of the members present.

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HHS Annual Meeting . . . *(continued from p. 2)*

Immediately following the Annual Meeting, HHS will host a presentation by award-winning photographer and author Bob LaMay. Mr. LaMay will share stories and images taken from a lifetime of active involvement with railroading in Southern New England.

The public is invited to attend Mr. LaMay's presentation, following which refreshments will be served. More information about the annual meeting and Mr. LaMay's presentation will be posted on the Society's web site, www.hebronhistoricalsociety.org, over the next couple of months.

. . . Vermont Town *(Continued from p.2)*

At the next proprietors' meeting in Hebron, held on December 9th of the same year, the committee was back in town presenting its survey with the numbered lots. Through a method of chance, they conveyed the lots to the proprietors. The numbers of the lots were placed in a box, one blindfolded proprietor drew the numbers, and Alexander Phelps, Esq. matched the landowner's name with the appropriate drawn lot number.

By 1768, the Town Meetings were actually held in Thetford. Not until 1784 was there a vote to lay out the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th divisions of the proprietors' lots. The 2nd division lots followed along the Connecticut River. For an initial outlay of 20 pounds, the investors must have each received at least 200 acres. Interestingly, the proprietors chose to remain in Hebron; they were absentee landowners or simply land speculators, and gradually sold title to their Thetford property. Many of their Hebron relatives and/or friends did settle in Thetford, and became the leaders of the new community just as the investors were back in Hebron.

John Chamberlin, in May, 1764, left Hebron and became Thetford's first settler. After a year alone, he was joined by Hebronians Abner Howard, Benjamin Baldwin, Joseph Hosford and Joseph Downer. Reading Thetford's history will show that Hebron's rearing guaranteed Thetford's later strength and success. Hebron supplied both the smart and lucky investors, and equipped smart and hard working Thetfordites.

At least two more towns in the "Province of New Hampshire" were "purchased" by Hebron people in a similar fashion. Both Orford, NH and Gilsum, NH were proprietor-owned townships, but their stories will be told some other time. To see the layout of townships chartered by Governor Wentworth, go to: http://www.old-maps.com/nh/nhs_1784_SawyerMap.htm Enlarge the map to spot all of the little towns on both sides of the Connecticut River. Thetford, VT is located northwest of "White River Falls"; Orford, NH is across the CT River and to the north of Thetford, VT. Gilsum, NH can be found near the southwest corner of the state, just north of Keene.

-- Mary Ann Foote

Author's Note:

Some of the Thetford information was gleaned from the "Gazetteer of Orange County, VT 1762-1888 History of the Town of Thetford". More information, and the impetus for this article, came from the book Once Upon a Town: A Romantic and Factual Chronicle of the Early Families and Houses of Thetford, Vermont. The book was loaned by Henry Jones, a member of one of Hebron's oldest families. A count of 86 individuals with the surname "Jones" can be found in Hebron's cemeteries, 59 of them in the Jones Street Cemetery alone! Henry, a nonagenarian, still drives and loves to reminisce about Hebron. He can be seen at Ted's, Gina Marie's, the American Legion, and is in evidence at all elections.