

Two Boys Find Fun Near Hunter's Mill, a Century Apart

Submitted by Karin Landry

Hunter's Mill was once a thriving three-season operation located about a third of a mile downstream from Gilford Village. It is believed that it was built soon after the Revolutionary War, by a "negro" named Mingo. This is the story of two Gilford boys who lived near the Mill more than a century apart.

In 1959, Joe and Marian Landry moved their family from Laconia to a modest home on Cherry Valley Road in Gilford. Old photographs showed that their new home was at one time called "Jurney's End." Jurney's End was really nothing to boast about. It was a modest cottage that was expanded throughout the years with the addition of various parts of buildings from around Town (including the Village Store). Adjoining rooms had different ceiling heights, and there wasn't a level floor to be found. But the grounds, they were extraordinary. "Down back" there was a confluence of two streams, both of which ran year 'round, and the remains of a dam constructed of enormous granite boulders. When Marian shooed the kids out the door in the morning with instructions not to return until the

cowbell rang, she meant it. And as a young boy with a vivid imagination, that was no problem for her son, Bob. He spent many hours down back leading settlers through the wilderness or fighting fearless battles with unseen enemies. In fact, the unique property was a year-round source of entertainment for the entire Landry family and their friends. When the snows melted in the spring, the boys anxiously awaited the first signs of suckers migrating upstream to their spawning grounds. Although the bottom feeders were not considered a delicacy, many hours were spent in the frigid water pursuing them with makeshift spears. When Village resident Doc Hoyt proposed using the suckers to fertilize his garden, the boys were pleased to actually have a purpose for the massacre. The raccoons feasted heartily in Doc's garden a few nights later. Summers were the time for cookouts with family and friends. Joe built a home-made grill supported by the granite boulders of the dam, and it was said that Marian would take a few strokes in the naturally formed pool nearby. When fall rolled around, it was not unusual

to find Bob and his best friend Warren, equipped with their pint-sized bows and arrows, on a mission to eradicate chipmunks and red squirrels from the Town of Gilford (apparently, they didn't spend much time agonizing over animal rights!). Winter was the time for clearing a skating rink and warming fingers and toes at a campfire nestled against the boulders of the dam.

In 1989, having spent 12 years in California, Bob returned to Jurney's End, and watched his daughters participate in many of the same activities he did as a boy (unfortunately, there were a few more suckers that never made it upstream!). Considering the countless hours he spent near the mill during his life, you can imagine his surprise when one late fall day, while repairing the tree house

supported by the dam, he found a boulder with an inscription that read "1870 October 5, H. Hunter, A.H."

A few years later, as a result of my involvement with the Thompson-Ames Historical Society, I was made aware of an unpublished manuscript written by Alvah Hunter that is the story of his New Hampshire boyhood in the 1800's. Chapter 7 is entitled "Working in the Mill."



The following information was taken from that manuscript, and gave an insight to the inscription.

In 1851, when Alvah ("Alvie") Hunter was about four years old, his father traded a farm in Moltonboro for a mill and land in Gilford. There was no dwelling house on the mill property, so the Hunter's lived in a house at the top of Tannery Hill Road before moving to their permanent residence on Belknap Mountain Road. In spite of the many responsibilities the Hunter children shared as family members, the manuscript tells of adventures afforded by the freedom to wonder far and wide without adult supervision. Alvey and his brother Charles spent many hours fishing in the brook and the spillway pool with poles they made from hemlock saplings that grew near the brook. On one occasion, they caught nearly 100 trout in three days of fishing on a nearby tributary. (*I'm certain those fish did not go uneaten!*) As Alvey grew, he was proud to become strong enough to take on increased responsibilities at the mill. He especially enjoyed cleaning the sheep brought in for shearing in the spillway pool. Alvey was in charge of the "carding" room by the time he was ten years old. There seemed to be time for boyhood antics even while working long hours at the mill. The

boys paddled about on makeshift rafts constructed from remnants of the Tannery Hill Bridge. On a number of occasions, they proudly exterminated muskrats that were causing problems for their father by burrowing tunnels under the dam. At the conclusion of a long day at the mill, the boys looked forward to a swim in the spillway pool before heading back to the Village.

Hunter's Mill was a common thread for two boys who otherwise lived in vastly different times. The boulder was inscribed in 1870 by Alvah and his father, Heman Hunter. At the time, Alvah was 23 and his father was 54. The inscription was discovered 135 years later by Bob Landry at the age of 50. Four generations of the Landry family have lived in the house at Hunter's Mill at this writing. The house is currently occupied by Bob & Karin Landry, and their daughters Jamie and Rachel.