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A New Look at Gilford in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

by Pete Allen, Thompson-Ames Historical Society

One of the obvious pleasures of being involved with a historical organization is the opportunity to learn something new about something old. When the late Arthur A. Tilton donated the contents of his family's homestead to the Thompson-Ames Historical Society he left us with the accumulated materiel of well over a hundred years of everyday life in Gilford and central New Hampshire. In other words, we acquired a bewildering amount of stuff. Eventually, the furniture and many household items and articles of clothing were moved to the Benjamin Rowe House where they remain on display. Unfortunately, by this time Arthur was no longer able to assist us in knowing the origin or understanding the context of many items, especially paintings, portraits, photograph albums, books, etc. Most of these items have been packed up or tucked away in the closets and attics of the Rowe House. Among this collection is a small cardboard box containing more than a dozen pocket-sized calendar books spanning the years 1865-1885, with daily entries by a man named Henry Whitman. These books will be the topic of the Thompson-Ames Historical Society program on Monday, June 2nd at 7:00 pm at the Union Meetinghouse located at 24 Belknap Mountain Road in Gilford.

For more than fifteen years, Gilford High School's Advanced Placement US History class has assisted and/or reported to the T-AHS on projects such as doing research for the 1995 publication of *The Gunstock Parish*, recording oral histories of area residents, serving as docents for elementary school student tours of the Grange and Meetinghouse, and also the 2003 archaeological dig in the basement of the Grange. Their own projects include surveys to compare the opinions of the students' generation with those of their parents'. Topics have ranged from teen dating to the current war in Iraq.

The 2007-2008 class, with teacher Michael Zulauf, and students Sarah Ayer, Greg Bernash, Andrew Boardman, Matthew Cappelo, Sam Chapin, Cora Crafts, Christina Gangi, Spencer Klubben, Taylor Morrison, Tyler Murphy, Lindsey Nelson, Gordon Scott, Trevor Shackett and Sarah Snow, are researching the earliest of these books. References provided by Henry Whitman in the 1865 book serve as the basis for putting together a profile of Gilford and New Hampshire for the time period 1860-1870, as well as his Civil War experience and arrival in Gilford. Working individually or as a two-person team, each student/team will use sources such as the New Hampshire State Library, records of Civil War regiments, US Census records, Gilford town records, T-AHS, and other local historical societies. Topics being researched include Lake Village (Lakeport), lake transportation, railroads and Gilford, the 1st New Hampshire Battery (light artillery), Gilford industry in the 1860s, the Temperance movement, Millerites in Gilford, and the Grand Army of the Republic. Next years' class will continue on into the 1870s, using the numerous and more detailed later volumes.



Please join us on June 2nd for this introduction to the life and times of Henry Whitman and a unique perspective on daily life in central New Hampshire in the mid-nineteenth century.

You can contact Gilford's Thompson-Ames Historical Society at (603)527-9009 or e-mail us at Thomames@worldpath.net. For more information, visit our website www.gilfordhistoricalsociety.org.