

## NINE GENERATIONS OF THE COLBY FAMILY WRITTEN INTO GILFORD'S HISTORY

2009

Written By: Carol Lee Anderson



*Photo Caption: Jim Colby of Gilford, wearing his Air Force uniform, pays his respects to his fallen comrades during the Memorial Day services at Pine Grove Cemetery. Colby, the ninth generation of his family to live in Gilford, marches each year in the Old Home Day and Memorial Day parades.*

If the family history of well-known Gilford resident, Jim Colby, was written into the pages of a novel, the book would offer a long and fascinating read. Generations upon generations of the Colby family have resided in Gilford dating back to 1740 when the family's first farmhouse was built. As fate would have it, the house was demolished in a blaze and another was built on Old Lake Shore Road in 1815. Colby is the ninth generation living there, a property that is home to the state's biggest California Poplar tree.

"My grandfather, who had his own milk route, ran the family farm on 300 acres here," said Colby as he told the history of his home. "My mother, who was 91 when she passed away, was born and died in the same room in this house. I find that to be an amazing thing."

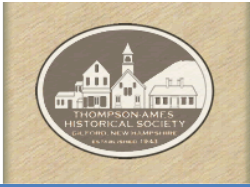
There are many amazing stories that Colby can tell of his family's involvement in local history. There is almost no aspect of the town's history that family members haven't been involved with in some way. Old Home Day holds some of his earliest memories growing up as a young boy in town. He has been a participant in the parade for as long as he can recall.

"I can remember when I was very young being in the Old Home Day parade with my grandmother. Both of us were riding in a horse-drawn sulky. When I was older, and I was on the cross-country team in high school, I won the road race that was held during Old Home Day. It has always been a fun day," he said.

Fun in the Colby family wasn't reserved just for Old Home Day. One treasured childhood memory is a ride on the old steamer Mount Washington before it burned and sank in Lake Winnepesaukee. He was 5 years old at the time. He can also recall the maiden voyage of the new MS Mt. Washington.

"I think I'm still mad at my father for not taking me to see the new ship when it first set sail," he said. "It was too tall to fit under the bridge at the Weirs, so my father and a large number of men jumped onto the deck of the boat so that it sat lower in the water. I just wish I could have witnessed that!"

He spent his formative years on the farms of a rural Gilford and like so many other young men in town, helped keep the town's farms running.



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“When I got a little older, my family’s farm was no longer a working farm, so I worked for people throughout town, such as Harry Bean. As a member of Future Farmers of America, I worked on the farm of Arthur Weeks, and I kept a diary of the summer I spent working on his farm.”

Once out of school, he became a member of the Air Force and enjoyed a 20-year career with the military in which he saw many parts of the world. He can still fit into his original uniform and uses it as a way to control his weight. If his uniform begins to get a little snug, he cuts back on his eating until it fits more comfortably. That way, he can wear it each year as he marches in the town’s Memorial Day parade.

Now a father to two daughters and one step-daughter, he has the advantage of being able to look into his family’s past as well as see into the future through the eyes of not only his children and but his three grandchildren.

“I do miss the old-time Gilford. When I came to Gilford in 1948, the population in town was 600, and it was a time when everyone knew each other. There are so many more people now, but I still know everyone!” he said laughing.

He does indeed seem to know everyone in town. Stand with him in front of the Gilford Village Store, and there are sure to be lots of waves and shouts exchanged between him and passers-by.

“Everyone is busy these days,” he said. “But, we were just as busy back then, too, and our survival depended on it because we had to grow our own food and grow the food needed to keep the farm animals going through the winter, too.” We never said to each other that we were too busy to help out. If someone called for help, we would drop what we were doing or say that we’d be over as soon as we

finished what we were working on at the time. We knew that we could then always call if we needed help and help would be there for us. It was a good way to live.”

Having had a career with the military he could have chosen to settle anywhere in the world, but Gilford is the only place for him.

“Yes, I’ve been to a lot of places in the world, but Gilford is where my roots are, and this is my home,” he said with pride.

Gilford is lucky to have residents like Colby who are proud of their heritage and work closely with the town’s historical society to ensure that this important part of the town is preserved for generations to come.

Gilford’s Thompson-Ames Historical Society welcomes stories of local history. The Society may be contacted via e-mail at: [www.thomames@metrocast.net](mailto:www.thomames@metrocast.net). Be sure to check their web-site for upcoming programs and events at: [www.gilfordhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.gilfordhistoricalsociety.org).