

Town News

► Amherst's Top Ten continued from page 9

farming town, and its center would have remained in Upper Flanders [where Bob and Helen Rowe live] as a run-of-the-mill crossroads.

The third is the **Rev. Jeremiah Barnard**, who was Amherst's second, and most controversial, minister. His arrival on the scene in 1780 aggravated the tensions between the village-dwellers in the center and the farmers in the north- and southwest parts of town. What started as a clash over taxes to pay the minister's salary soon became political as the Rev. Barnard, a staunch Federalist, could not resist mixing politics with religion at the pulpit. The reaction of the Jeffersonian-Republican farmers was visceral, which ultimately led to the southwest parish splitting off to become Milford in 1794 and the northwest parish doing likewise in 1803 to become Mont Vernon. These separations left Amherst fifty percent smaller, and decidedly Federalist and conservative in its politics. Had it not been for the Rev. Barnard, Amherst would be a geographically larger town, its village center probably would have shifted in the 19th century to the deeper waters of the Souhegan River at Shepard's Mill [which is now Milford's center], and its politics would have been more [small-d] "democratic."

The fourth is **Joseph Cushing**, the first publisher of *The Farmer's Cabinet*, which is now known simply as *The Cabinet*. Cushing's weekly was Amherst's third attempt at establishing a sustainable newspaper, and the third time was a charm. *The Cabinet* not only thrived, it held the distinction of being the longest continuously-published newspaper owned by the same family until it was purchased by *The Nashua Telegraph* in 2005. From its start in 1802, *The Cabinet* was an important newspaper. According to Amherst's first historian, by 1837, *the Farmer's Cabinet* was "one of the best family newspapers in the state, and has exerted a very salutary influence by means of its moral and religious department." Had it not been for *The Farmer's Cabinet*, Amherst's political influence in the county and state would certainly have been much smaller.

The fifth is **Dr. John Farmer**, who wrote the first history of Amherst in 1820, called *An Historical Sketch of Amherst*, in the County of Hillsborough, in New-Hampshire, from the first settlement to the present period. [Incidentally, this work was also the first local history written in New Hampshire.] Farmer published an expanded edition of his *Sketch* in 1837, which is still in print [and can be purchased for a mere \$15 from the Amherst Historical Society!]. In his introduction, Farmer revealed his objective when he wrote, "The preservation of historical facts is supposed to confer an obligation on posterity." By recording the past, Farmer hoped to force the hands of us in the future to respect our history. And it worked. Had Farmer not documented critical facts before they were lost, it is doubtful that Daniel Secomb would have succeeded in writing his voluminous 1883 *History of Amherst* in a short four years. Secomb's work inspired Edward Boylston to write a 2,000 page unpublished history of Amherst, and Boylston inspired his daughter Emma Locke to write *Colonial Amherst* in 1916. These histories provided the fodder for numerous historical discourses

given at anniversary celebrations of buildings, monuments, and the town itself. Believe it or not, there are many towns in New Hampshire that still haven't written their first histories. Had it not been for John Farmer's seminal *Sketch*, Amherst might not have had the same reverence for its past that it has enjoyed over its 250 years.

The sixth is **Edward Dudley Boylston**, who was editor of *the Farmer's Cabinet* during the height of railroad-building in New Hampshire. For thirteen years, starting in 1836, Boylston editorialized for the extension of a railroad from Nashua to Amherst's village. Boylston's moment came in 1849 when the Railroad Commissioners weighed competing proposals for the building of a line from Wilton to Nashua and settled on a route that would first go east through Milford's village, proceed to Amherst's "plain," and then turn south toward Nashua through the Poor Farm, now the Amherst Country Club. There was a lot of political jockeying—and I suspect a little palm-greasing—and to Boylston's consternation, the commissioners changed their minds at the last minute and took a more direct route along the current 101A. Had Boylston's wishes come true, Amherst's village would have developed around a busy railroad station and certainly not look like it does today.

The seventh is state representative **Orson Bragdon**. Bragdon was the "godfather" of the limited-access Route 101 bypass. He worked at least a dozen years for its passage, and saw it finally constructed in 1973. Had Orson Bragdon not prevailed, we would have 18,000 cars driving past Walt's gas station every day!

The eighth is Robert T. Crouter. With the backing of the Amherst Historical Society, Crouter spearheaded a six-year effort to list Amherst's village on the National Register of Historic Places, which succeeded in 1982. Crouter's efforts complemented the earlier adoption of an Historic District by Amherst's voters in 1970, and ensured that the village would forever maintain its historic charm.

The ninth and tenth I will mention together. The ninth is **Ted Sizer**, the nationally-recognized educational reformer whose progressive philosophy was adopted by Souhegan High School at its founding in 1992. The tenth is the **Amherst Planning Board** of the past 20 or so years, which has been responsible for the management of the town's commercial development, especially along 101A. Although opinions have been strong on both sides, objectively, we won't know for some time still whether or how much these two experiments have helped or hurt Amherst. Nonetheless, with the jury still out, I thought it would be useful to future historians to flag them for posterity with a mention here.

And this brings us to today, one day shy of the 250th anniversary of the incorporation of Amherst, which is tomorrow. We are indeed very fortunate for the efforts of our predecessors. What lays ahead for Amherst, no one knows. But, if past is prologue, at critical junctures our capable citizens will continue to rise to the occasion and steer the ship in the proper direction.

Thank you very much.

Historic Amherst

The Foundry on Foundry Street: Its Origin, Heyday and Demise

Part One

BY KATRINA HOLMAN



The 3-story brick building ("Cushing's Folly") that housed Capt. Hartshorn's foundry from 1841-1850. From *Stereoscopic Views of Amherst*, photographed and published by B. F. Foster of Milford, 1873: 7. "Old Stove Building."

We have in our Village a road called Foundry Street. It was named for a foundry that stood back from the road, next to the cemetery, opposite today's Clark School. In its heyday it was one of Amherst's biggest employers, if not THE biggest. Here's how it got started.

Capt. Daniel Hartshorn

In January 1840, an ad by Daniel Hartshorn appeared in the *Farmers' Cabinet* of Amherst, offering an Air Tight Stove with great improvement in use of fuel, for which he had obtained the right of making and vending in Hillsborough and Merrimack Counties from Mr. Orr, the inventor and patentee. Hartshorn was 47 years old when he began this new venture.

A year later, in February 1841, Daniel Hartshorn (1792-1871) bought the 3-story Brick Building that stood opposite the Farmers Bank (where now Moulton's Market). His occupation given in the deed, by the way, was "gentleman." In May he announced that he had fitted up the large Brick Building as an iron foundry and offered mill, machinery & stove plate casting, done at short notice by experienced and skillful workmen. He further offered cooking and parlor stoves, Franklin fire places, fire frames, cauldron kettles, ashpit and boiler doors, and oven mouths, plus stove furniture such as hollow ware. In February the next year, ploughs and cultivators were added to his product list.

Daniel's brother James in Milford had begun manufacturing and selling T. Woolson's patent improved cooking stoves, some suitable for large boarding houses and taverns, in October 1833, giving as reference David Stewart of Amherst and noting that such stoves could be found in Lowell and Dunstable too. James moved to Nashua around 1839 and opened a stove and tin ware manufactory and a stove foundry under the firm Hartshorn and Ames for about a decade.

Competitor Woolson

Daniel Hartshorn wasn't the first iron founder in this town. Back in December 1814, E. & T. Woolson had lately erected a furnace in Amherst (didn't say where) for casting iron. They advertised that they could cast machinery of any kind on short notice, if conve-

nient patterns were offered; supply cotton and woolen factories with castings of soft iron fit for their particular purposes; and make hollow ware and flat-irons, as well as sleigh-shoes more durable than those of steel. They wanted old pot metal and would pay 1 ½ cents per lb. in cotton yarn or cast iron. Another notice about this furnace appeared in the newspaper May 1815; then no more. In 1833 when an inventory was made of the industries in Amherst, there was no foundry nor iron casting.

In February 1838, Ezra Woolson & Son informed the public that they continue to carry on the Casting business at their furnace in the westerly part of Amherst, offering stove plate or machinery castings. Their products included fire frames, cart and wagon boxes, and brass top and common andirons. They accepted old machinery and pot iron in payment for castings. In 1839 they offered ploughs and cultivators too. In October 1841, now that they had a competitor, they ran a lengthy ad listing their various product lines, noting they continued "at their old stand, 2 miles west of the [Amherst] Meeting House...They are determined to sell Castings as low, and of as good quality as can be bought elsewhere." Nathaniel Woolson (presumably the "Son") as agent advertised "Iron Castings &c at the Old Foundry in Amherst, NH" in 1842. To combat their competitor's central location, they arranged that "all orders left with Mr. Lawrence at the Post Office, will be promptly answered and upon terms as favorable as anywhere else." Alas, in February 1843 they gave up, and the list of items for the auction, held at the "house of Ezra Woolson & Son," shows just how poor business had been: besides their 100-acre farm with saw mill and iron foundry, 10,000 lbs. iron castings consisting of stoves, fire frames, oven mouths, ash and boiler doors, cauldron kettles, plough points, pipe boxes, 40 new ploughs, 8 new cultivators.

Hartshorn outlasted his competitor but his deeds reveal that he was having a tough time making a go of it. He borrowed the full cost of the building, \$800, at the outset. Just seven months later, he mortgaged the farm from his father for \$1000; and when he paid that off in



Iron cook stove by Hartshorn, Lawrence & Co., Amherst, NH, 1851, in Wigwam Museum.



The dwelling built by Capt. Daniel Hartshorn ca. 1843 at 3 School St., next to Bank.

February 1843, he turned around and borrowed the same amount from another person (discharged in May 1845). The next month he paid off the initial loan but immediately mortgaged the foundry building again, getting \$400 from Melendy & David, the whip manufacturers next door, which wasn't discharged til March 1858, and the other \$400 from a new lender which he repaid by 1850. All with interest.

Partners

One month after the close of the Woolsons' foundry, which was four years after Hartshorn began his venture, he took on Pliny Whitney as partner. This partnership lasted four years til January 1848. Their Amherst Iron Foundry continued to manufacture many patterns and sizes of stoves, with and without elevated ovens; box and air-tight stoves; etc. They also had a shop for brass, copper & tin ware connected with the foundry.

The next partnership, with two local merchants/traders, brought not only a new name but likely also a much needed cash infusion. Their first ad in the *Farmers' Cabinet* was in July 1848: "Souhegan Iron Foundry: HARTSHORN, LAWRENCE & CO., Iron Founders, Manufacturers & Wholesale and Retail Dealers in Stoves, Fire Frames, Hollow Ware, Ploughs, Cauldron Kettles, Also, Pit, Boiler, and Oven Mouths, and Castings of every description. Russian and English Funnel, Pumps, Lead Pipe, Zinc, &c. D. Hartshorn, A. Lawrence, C. B. Tuttle. Amherst, N.H."

In another ad in the same issue, Hartshorn, Lawrence & Co. called themselves "Copper, Tin, & Sheet Iron Workers" who offer a "complete assortment of Japann & Britannia Ware" in a sales room 1st door east of the Foundry (still in the 3 story brick building). So far there wasn't much new.

Move to Foundry Street & Creation of Sunset Road

In Sept. 1850, Daniel Hartshorn, Aaron Lawrence and Charles B. Tuttle, all of Amherst, manufacturers, bought land on the north side of Foundry Street (the Old Vestry street, as it had been called before) for \$55.40 and erected the first foundry building there. As a back entrance, this firm laid out "a fifty feet street" that was 159.5 feet long, now called Sunset Road. Today it dead-ends at Meadowview cemetery, but back then it made a left turn at the end down to Foundry St.

In the 1850 census of Amherst, there were 12 men whose occupation was listed as "iron founder." These included Daniel Hartshorn, age 57; Harrison Eaton, 32; his brothers Samuel Eaton, 23, and James Eaton, 21, already living at 6 Foundry St.; and Sylvester Colby, 40, living at 8 Foundry St.

The partnership with Lawrence & Tuttle was dissolved in Aug. 1852, when Lawrence bowed out. When Tuttle also quit two years later, Hartshorn briefly continued a stove and foundry business "at the old stand" with new partner Willard Danforth from March 1854. In October 1855, Hartshorn sold his stock and tools of the store and shop in the Brick Foundry Building, and he and the other owners sold the Foundry Street land. That year he also sold (or lost to foreclosure) the house he had built at 3 School Street about 1843. (This same house would later become the final home of Aaron Lawrence (1804-1867). Capt. Hartshorn and his wife moved to a house next to the courthouse (now Town Hall) and he changed his occupation to carpenter.

Daniel Hartshorn's story ends here, but the story of the foundry will continue, its heyday yet to come.

Credits: The historic image is from *Historical Society of Amherst's digital collection*; see hsanh.org for more. Thanks go to curator Jackie Marshall for photos of stoves in museum.

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