



Bears on the Move

Bear Family is on Walnut Hill Rd. in Amherst on May 3rd at around 5:45pm. Photos were taken near the Deer Hollow and Walnut Hill Rd. intersection. They scampered off and headed toward Route 101.

► Annual Student Art Show continued from page 1

has been a huge success for over 15 years. They sponsor and coordinate all the activities from picking up the art at the schools to hanging them throughout the Library, to contributing cookies and punch for the student reception, to removing the art and returning them at the end of the month.

The Friends are now seeking volunteers to help with various projects throughout the year. If you are interested in contributing to the community with some of your time and enjoy working with a fabulous group or people please contact Kim Ayers for details at 249-9108.



Six Amherst Men Participated In "Epic Man" Triathlon

Four years ago Amherst's Seth Bradbury (one of two founders) created the Epic Man Triathlon. Each year the group has grown in numbers and this year there were approximately 20 people involved.

"The Epic Man" gives a select group of people the chance to push their physical limits through a one

of a kind adventure, while raising funds for their favorite charities. Participants challenge themselves to Be Epic, which in turn inspires others to carry on the Epic message.

Sunday morning Souhegan High School's alumni Edward Aten, Seth and Tyler Bradbury, Forrest Butler,

Caleb Ginsberg, Nick Pelletier, and the other participants took the ferry to Peaks Island Maine. They kayaked from Peaks Island to Portland Maine, rode bikes 150 miles (with a two hour stopover in Portsmouth New Hampshire) to Hopkinton, Massachusetts and then ran the Boston Marathon in 90.2 days

heat.

Fourth from the left Edward Aten with Nick Pelletier behind him. Front center Forrest Butler, third from right Tyler Bradbury and first on right Caleb Ginsberg. Missing from photo, Seth Bradbury.

► Auctioning Off Care of Poor Until Alms House Founded continued from page 4

who was among the poor people housed there." Nothing about that appears in the newspaper, but there is a disconcerting notice from Asa Burns of Milford in Feb. 1830 (in winter!) that a pauper named William Bradbury "had an iron ring on his neck" when he ran away "from suitable provision."

In 1825, Amherst filed this list with the secretary of state: "16 paupers of whom 1/2 exceed 70 years of age, 2 are non-compos [senile], 1 an idiot, 1 distracted [insane], 1 blind, and the remainder debilitated." Expenses for their care cost the town \$1,1041.11, which included physicians' fees for attending the sick and a suit with the town of Concord respecting one Tina Bell. Several county paupers, for whose care Amherst was reimbursed \$155.43, also resided in town: an old woman aged 90, a widow with children, and an old man who died.

A new way of handling the town's obligation to the poor was already under consideration, namely an alms house supported by income from a town-owned farm. It was believed, or hoped, to be better economically – but perhaps also better morally in that such a permanent arrangement would be more respectful of the poor.

Timeline of Alms House

1817: Committee formed to consider purchase of town farm to support paupers.

1830: Voters finally approved purchase.

1831: Town bought 276-acre Kendrick farm on south bank of Souhegan River from blacksmith John Mack for \$3850.

1847: Fire set by insane inmate destroyed barn with livestock.

1892: Alms house burned.

1898: Town sold farm with rebuilt house for \$5100 to Frank A. Holbrook, dairy farmer.

Overseers of the Poor

The practice of typesetting the annual town report began with the "Account of the Expenses of Supporting the Poor in the Town of Amherst" at the close of the first year the alms house was in operation. This was, after all, a huge investment by the taxpayers. (Two years later, the selectmen started printing up town budgets and school reports too.) In Amherst, the three Selectmen were usually also Overseers of the Poor, but remunerated separately for the two offices. The exceptions were in 1846/7, when neither of the two Overseers of the

Poor was a selectman at the time, and the three years from 1870-1873 when Samuel Wilkins was elected the single Overseer of the Poor. The Overseer(s) had fiscal oversight of the town/poor farm but also arranged for aid to the needy not requiring full support and therefore living in their private homes or "off the farm." Such needy might still be town paupers even if they resided elsewhere, so the overseer had to settle with those other towns. The town farm, a large enterprise for the time, and its alms house were run by a Superintendent and his wife, the salary being for both their services. In 1832 that salary was \$200.

Number of Paupers "on the Farm"

1832 March 25 (the first report): "[O]n removing the poor to the Farm purchased by the town, there were 17 in number, 2 of them children – 5 others came on immediately after, so that we commenced the year with 22. Others have since come on, and one has deceased [Elizabeth Whiting aged 86], so that the number now consists of 28 – 10 of which are over 70 years of age, and 11 whose ages average 39 years and 7 under 7 years old. The number of paupers last year supported by the town [via auction method] was 18, at the expense of \$528."

The first year costs for supporting paupers on the farm were: provisions and store bills \$337.86 + clothing & bedding \$98.38 + shoe bills \$25.31 + doctoring & medicine \$22.42 + aid for pauper not at farm \$52, for a total of \$535.97, not counting furniture, superintendent's salary nor farm, tools & livestock. The selectmen reckoned the total as \$415.83, counting bedding on the credit side too, like the furniture.

1832/3: About same number of paupers as prior year. 1833/4: 3 died; 9 others left and support themselves; 4 were added; 20 paupers at year end in alms house. 1834/5: 3 died; 27 at year end – "none of whom are able to do anything of consequence towards their support." Yet the report also said, "Much of the labor in preparing a foundation for the new Barn, taking down and removing the old Buildings, not connected with the ordinary business of the Farm, having been done by persons on the Farm." 1835/6: None died; 28 at year end, "none of whom, (the males especially) are able to do anything of consequence towards their support. [This refrain will be repeated for the next couple of years.] The hired help considerably more than last year." 1836/7: 4 died; 26 at year end. "The extra help of course must be large to carry on the farm. The crops of grain being generally cut off, the high prices of almost every article, op-

erated very hard against the farm. There also has been a great amount of sickness among the paupers, which increased the expense of doctoring, compared with former years." 1837/8: 2 died; number of paupers increased to 35; average of 30; 27 at year end. 1838/9: 2 died; 30 at year end. 1839/40: 2 died; 23 at year end. 1839/40: 2 died; 23 at year end. 1840/1: None died; 4 added; 27 at year end.

Then a sudden drop in numbers, perhaps because more were able to stay in their homes with varying amounts of aid from the town. 1841/2: 5 died and others left; no additions made; leaving only 16 at year end, "the smallest number since the Town owned the Farm." 1843/4: 4 died; 17 at year end. The town also aided six people "off the farm," including giving shoemaker Levi McConihe \$10 for supporting his mother-in-law Rachel Cash while she was sick. In 1851, the town would reimburse McConihe \$33.50 for her final sickness and funeral.

Fire in 1847

On 8 April 1847, the Farmers' Cabinet reported: "DISASTROUS FIRE. On Saturday morning last, at about 3 o'clock, the large barn on the pauper farm of this town [Amherst, N.H.] was discovered to be on fire, and was entirely consumed, with its contents of hay, grain, farming tools and twenty-two head of cattle. ... The barn was large, 100 by 40 feet, recently built at an expense of about \$1200. The crop of hay, a quantity of rye, oats, corn, buckwheat, &c., necessary for the subsistence of the paupers and the cattle on the farm ... were lost in the conflagration. ... no insurance ... It has been fully ascertained that the fire was set to the barn by one of the inmates of the house, an insane woman, a county pauper, under the impulse of a hallucination of mind ... The farm being situated at a distance of above two miles from the village, and remote from neighbors, no assistance was rendered, and the inhabitants of the place were not aware of the fire until the morning. ... The inhabitants of the town, who had been struggling for years with heavy taxation for the payment of the Poor Farm, had in the last year become completely exempted from the debt, and were looking forward with a hope of relief from a burden which is now again heaped upon them with redoubled weight. But the poor we have always with us, and they must be provided for."

1848 March 4 annual report: "The number of Paupers now on the farm is 18, which [was] about the average number for the past year. A large majority are far ad-

vanced in life; 13 are upwards of 75 years; 2 are upwards of 90; consequently but little labor can be expected from them. Two town Paupers are now at the Insane Asylum, Concord, one of whom has never been chargeable to the town, until the past season. Arrangements have been made with the Superintendent of the Asylum, so that in future the expenses will be but 1.25 per week each. A considerable amount [was] paid for the support of Paupers in other places, [including] bills paid the city of Manchester for supporting a Pauper, without notifying the town until the expiration of three months, [and to] Lyman for the support of a Pauper since September last, now chargeable to the town at the rate of 2.50 per week; but being in a very feeble state of health, it would be imprudent to attempt to remove her."

1848/9: 4 died; 16 at year end, same as average for the year – 3 aged upwards of 85 years, 8 upwards of 75 years. One person was supported at the state insane asylum. (The Overseers of the Poor placed notices in the paper to forbid all persons harboring or trusting town paupers Sally Phelps in June and Sally Truel in Sep. '48. In 1842, Amherst had reimbursed Manchester \$24.85 for support & doctoring of Truel in sickness and paid to have her moved here.) 1849/50: 5 died, 3 males and 2 females; 14 paupers at year end, which was less than the average number during the year; 3 aged upward of 85; 5 under 85 and over 60; and 2 county paupers.

The 1850 census of Amherst's "Poor Farm" lists the superintendent, whose occupation is given as "farmer," with his wife and three children aged 12, 4 and 2, and enumerates 12 "paupers": Roger Elliott, 80 [died here Aug. 1851, aged 88]; Mansfield King, 80; Daniel Clark, 86, [d. here Aug. 1856]; Lucy Clark, 85, [as Lucy Truel had married Daniel in 1793; d. here Aug. 1853]; Betsy Jewett, 75; Polly Wheeler, 45; Betsy Truell, 80; Cyrus Jewett, 35; Jane Howe, 80; Betsy Stevens, 75; Mary Ann Truell, 35; and Joseph Winn, 80, [d. here Aug. 1856 aged 84]. (In this census, no occupation was noted for any women, even if they had one, whereas an occupation was given for each of the men, farmer for Mr. Elliott and laborer for the others, although presumably these were past rather than present occupations.)

The mortality rate shouldn't be surprising – the alms house essentially turned into a nursing home, with more female inmates than male. Many of them were widows with no family to support them and most, men and women, were too elderly or ill to support themselves.

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