

Discover
Amherst

Making History everyday!

*Historical Society of
Amherst, New Hampshire*

Newsletter

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMHERST, N. H. – [HTTP://WWW.HSANH.ORG](http://www.hsanh.org)

Upcoming H.S.A. Programs

Saturday September 7, 2019

Old Home Day!

See you on The Green for fun events and activities all day!

Don't forget to purchase your table tickets for our Community Supper, the biggest yearly fund-raiser for our Historical Society!

J O I N U S F O R O L D H O M E D A Y !

The Amherst Old Home Day Festival is our town's newest tradition, a free day of fun in the Village that includes most of Amherst's civic groups—and offers something for everyone! Enjoy food, music, a craft beer garden, games and activities for kids and adults, an artisan market, village tours, historical reenactments and much more! Here are just some of the exciting things going on September 7:

Food: Smokehaus Barbeque will be on hand for lunch at the Green! There will be hot dogs, bake sales, cotton candy and much more—including the soon-to-be-famous Amherst Apple Pie Contest.

Craft Beer Garden: Adults only—enjoy local NH brews from White Birch Brewing at the Wigwam Museum.

Live Music, Kids Games and Activities, Artisan Demonstrations & Artisan Craft Market. Treasures Table, Visit the HM 10th Regiment of Foot reenactors in their authentic Revolutionary War army encampment on Buchanan field, Tours of the Historic Village and Congregational Church of Amherst, Corn Hole and Bocce Ball Tournaments, Disc Golf Tournament, Rowing Competition, Tennis Tournament and a Town Photograph: be part of the first annual Official Town of Amherst Photograph!

How could you possibly top all this? Keep the good times going into the evening! Get your tickets now and join your neighbors for a festive night of food and fun on the Green starting at 5:30 pm.

This fun benefit supports the Historical Society's Wigwam Museum, and the preservation initiative to repair this priceless building and its collection of all things Amherst. The Historical Society will decorate the Common with festive lighting, tables with linens, and chairs, and a complimentary dessert table. To join in the fun just purchase an entire table for 8 to 10 people at the HSANH website (Early Bird pricing is \$100). Or purchase a ticket for a seat at the community table (\$15). Space is limited so act now!

Then bring your favorite food and drink to our tables on the green and enjoy a one-of-a-kind night out on the town with friends old and new. And know that your donation helps to preserve Amherst's rich history. Tickets and more info at www.hsanh.org! (Rain Date for dinner only is Sunday, September 8th.)

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

Old Home Day	1
Patch Hill Quarries	2
Museums & Artisan Market Are Open!	4
Secomb's Amherst—The Amherst Steam Mill	5
Did you know...	5

PATCH HILL QUARRY

Members of both the Amherst Heritage Commission and Historical Society recently explored the quarry remains on the Patch Hill trails on a field trip arranged by Commission Chair Will Ludt.

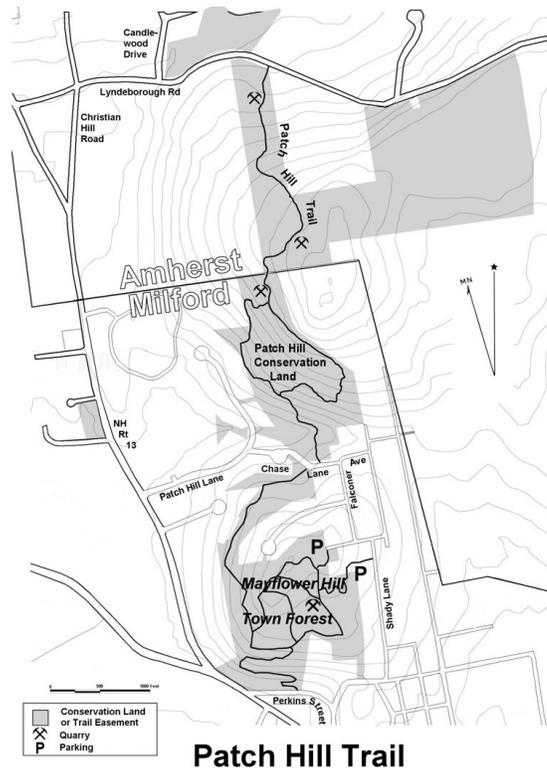
Joining the tour as our guides and educators was the mother and son team of Mary and James Gage, who have been researching stone structures in Northeastern United States since 1992. (Their research has focused on historic agricultural farm structures, stone quarrying technology & methods, and Native American ritual stone structures and landscapes. They have authored journal articles, several books, produced a forty minute documentary film, and maintain the websites www.stonestructures.org & www.mysteryhillnh.info.)

Located just off Lyndeborough Road, the well maintained trail system managed jointly by both the Amherst and Milford Conservation Commissions offers a view into the time when numerous smaller quarries supplied cut granite to customers in the area. (The trail map to the right, shows the extensive trail system, as well as the location of the various quarries along the trail.)

The Patch Hill Trail passes through 4 quarry sites, each providing view of not only quarry-cut stone, but also of the remains of a shaping shed (constructed of granite blocks) and some of the actual equipment that was used as part of the quarrying operation.

Mary and James brought along samples of the hand tools used as part of the quarry operation, which can be seen in the top photo on the right. The photo beneath shows the remains of the air compressor used to drill holes in the granite.

As explained in the educational display sign on site, "The plug and feather method of splitting stone was developed in the late 1700's. The modern version in use today was introduced circa 1803. The method is quite simple. The quarryman would drill a series of round holes about six inches apart along the line he wanted to split. These were generally small holes up to one inch in diameter and from two to four inches deep. Two half-round shims were placed in each hole and a metal wedge was placed between them. The shims were used to keep the wedge from hitting the bottom of the hole. (When a wedge hits the bottom of a hole it often flies out of the hold and becomes a very dangerous flying projectile.) Once each hole was filled



Patch Hill Trail



Tools of the trade



The air compressor used to drill holes in the granite

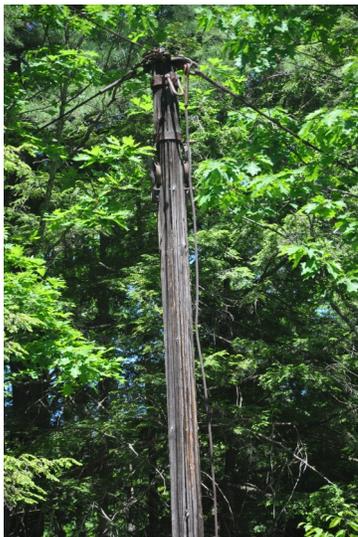
PATCH HILL QUARRY (CONTINUED)

with shims and wedges, a person with a small hammer about three pounds in weight, hit each wedge until he heard a cracking sound. At that point he let the boulder finish splitting apart on its own.”

Also located on the property is an example of what helped lead to the demise of cut granite in many uses—the concrete used as the base of one of the air compressors!



James Gage providing some details about the construction of the shaping shed, built out of some of the left over granite blocks from the four onsite quarries.



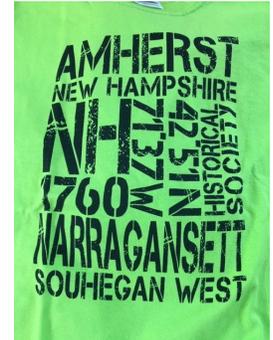
The remains of the derrick (left) used to lift the cut granite and what it looked like in operation (above) with the boom (no longer present) attached.

MUSEUMS & ARTISAN MARKET ARE OPEN!

Don't forget that both of our museums are open on the Second Saturday of each month from May through October - 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm!

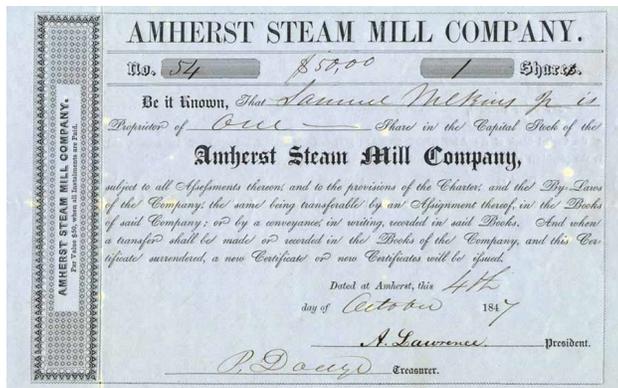
Also, our Artisan's Market, located in the Wigwam Museum (10:00 am to 3:00 pm), is also open during this time featuring a wide array of local artisans, as well as Historical Society books and merchandise, including many new Amherst-themed clothing items!

Our Artisans always include returning local favorites as well as new and unique items from select crafts people from throughout New England, so that there is always something new and interesting for you to choose from. We look forward to seeing you at the Museums soon!



SECOMB'S AMHERST—THE AMHERST STEAM MILL

The subject of building a steam gristmill in the town was agitated as early as 1832, and a meeting was called at Nutt's Hotel, 7 April of that year, for conference in regard to it. Nothing further was done until 1846. In the month of July of that year Samuel B. Melendy, Cyrus Eastman, and Francis Peabody, and their associates, were incorporated as the "Amherst Steam Mill Company," with authority to use a capital not exceeding \$50,000.



The company was organized promptly, and measures were at once taken for the erection of the necessary buildings and machinery for carrying on the business of the corporation. A sawmill went into operation on the 23d of February, 1847, and a gristmill on the 1st of May following.

Shortly after, a clapboard and shingle mill were completed. The buildings consisted of a main building, or machine shop, 100x40 feet, of three stories, designed for manufacturing purposes; an engine house, 36 x 32 feet; and a sawmill, 20x76 feet, well timbered, and built in a firm, substantial manner.

The machinery was driven by a 50-horsepower engine, having a balance-wheel 16 feet in diameter, with a face

of two feet.

In the Cabinet we have the following description of the steam mill buildings and machinery:

6 May, 1847. "Amherst steam mill is now in full operation, so far as sawing and grinding is concerned. The sawmill commenced operations 2nd February, and the grist-mill 1 May.

The gristmill is provided with 3 run of French burr stones, 4 1/2 feet in diameter; 2 superfine bolts, 18 feet long, 40 inches in diameter; a cob cracker; and a smnt-mill.

A clapboard and a shingle mill are nearly completed and will be in operation in a few days.

Engine house, 36 x 32 ; saw-mill, 20 x 76 ; grist-mill, 32 x 34 ; machine shop, 40x100; 3 stones ; engine, 50 horsepower, cylinder, 16 inches in diameter ; balance-wheel, 16 feet, 2 feet face ; 2 boilers, 25 feet long, 42 inches in diameter; 2 return flues, 15 inches in diameter; main belt, 2 feet wide, 110 feet long, connecting balance-wheel with a pulley 65 inches in diameter, on a shaft 26 feet long, which carries the grist and saw mills. Another shaft driven from this shaft, designed to carry the machinery in the machine shop, is 120 feet long, running the whole width of the saw-mill and the whole length of the machine shop."

The undertaking proved an unprofitable one, the expense of operating the establishment being greater than its income justified. The buildings were burned 25 March, 1849.

As Secomb related later: "The Amherst steam-mill buildings were burnt 25 March, 1849. The engine and chimney were but slightly damaged. The loss to the occupants of the shops, in tools and stock, was a serious one. The buildings and machinery were insured for \$7,000. The fire was probably communicated from a heated bearing."

DID YOU KNOW . . .

1793 - The first printing establishment in the county, was set up in this town by Nathaniel Coverly about this time. On the 16 January, "he commenced the publication of a newspaper, called **The Amherst Journal And New Hampshire Advertiser**, which was continued by him and his son till the close of the year. It was succeeded on the 6 January, 1796, by the Village Messenger, edited by William Biglow, a graduate of Harvard College, and by Samuel Cushing. Mr. Biglow, who is known as author of several elementary works for schools, continued his editorial labors but a short time. Mr. Cushing continued to publish it till 18 April,

1797, when Samuel Preston succeeded, who closed the publication of this paper, 5 December, 1801, completing 310 numbers from its establishment.

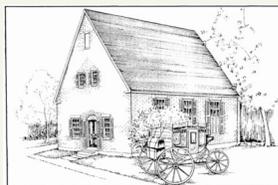
The Farmer's Cabinet succeeded the Messenger, 11 November, 1802. It was edited and printed by Mr. Joseph Cushing, till October, 1809, when Mr. Richard Boylston, the present editor, succeeded to the establishment. A paper called the Hillsboro' Telegraph, was commenced the present year, by Mr. Elijah Mansur.

Historical Sketch of Amherst, John Farmer, 1820

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