

June 11th, 2007

Oral History by Alice Lynn, a life time of memories, family, friends and changes in Newbury NH over the last eighty nine years.

Alice begins:

I was born in 1917 on Baker Hill in a farm house at the end of Stony Brook road and the intersection of Baker Hill road going towards Sutton.

My father bought a forty acre farm there. He had to fix up the farm house before my mother and oldest brother could move into the farmhouse. My mother often said you could see day light coming through the house. My father worked hard during the day and by lantern at night getting the farm house ready for our family to live in it. In the mean time my mother lived in New London with her mother-in-law.

My second brother was born in the farmhouse. I was number six in a family of ten children. Six boys and four girls.

Our farmhouse was in a beautiful spot, as kids we could explore. So that's the story of my birth.

My 3 oldest brothers and one sister went to the Baker Hill School. The only time I went to the Baker Hill School was when I was 2 or 3 years old. The teacher used to ask my mother if she would send me to the school so I could recite the little poems and sing songs I knew. The only thing I remember about the school house was it was up hill all the way to the Digillio farm house and my little legs got so tired my brothers used to take turns piggy backing me up the hill.

They closed the Baker Hill school and I went to the school house at the corner of Rowell road., until the Center School opened in 1927. This is the building that is now the "New Town Hall" located next to the Newbury Library on route 103.

The teacher was Mrs. Simons, she lived in the house just up the street at the corner of Birch Bluff and what is now route 103A. When Mrs. Simons would go to Florida for a couple of weeks Mrs. Gove from Mount Sunapee would be our substitute teacher. Also once in a while Helen Coburn from South Newbury would substitute, but she was the teacher at the South Newbury School.

Then we had Edith Watson, just nineteen years old, who came from a little town east of Hanover. She was a cracker jack teacher. She had eight grades to teach. Every morning she had every grades regimen on the black board. She always made sure we got outside everyday. If it was raining we all crowded on the little porch that is there now. She always played baseball with us, that was our favorite sport. She used to board at the farm at the bottom of ledge hill, where the auction barn is now. Miss Watson stayed for thirty two years. She knew every subject perfectly. She graduated from the Donald School in Keene. I was the only one in my grade, I never had a class mate. So I would go with the class ahead of me. I learned nine years of school in eight years. Most everyone loved her.

Miss Watson would take us on the steamboat that went around the lake after the 10:30 train left. We would take our lunches and go around the lake. They would stop around the lake to discharge or pick up mail. We had a great time. Sometimes she would take us on a hike up to Lake Solitude.

We would raise money having card parties for our parents at the Kings Hall, (now the Vets Hall). Then Miss Watson would rent a cottage at lake Massacecum. The older kids

would go to the cottage for a week or two depending on how much money we raised.

Miss Watson came from Lyme NH , she returned there after teaching and became the librarian, for many years. She died at at age 83 or 84. I felt so bad I never stayed in contact with her. I had thought she had died in Texas many years earlier.

I didn't go to high school, I went to live with my aunt in Waltham Mass. I always tell people I came from the school of hard knocks. My mother came from Waltham, she met my father in Waltham. He worked at a factory were they made automobiles, I think it was a car called the Metz.

They married when my mother was twenty two and my father was ? My mother, when we got her Baptism papers for social security we found out she was born on 1884 not 1885 well we don't know if that was a mistake by the Catholic Church or whatever.

My oldest brother George and his wife had a little girl who died of meningitis. They moved to Lowell Mass where he started making plush velvet.

My fathers mother moved to New London, that's how we came here in 1910. When the Farm house was ready we moved to Baker Hill. We had cows, chickens, pigs, milk and huge gardens.

There weren't many neighbors, The Messers, the Digillios, and Robbie Hill. When we ran out of milk we would buy some from Robbie. There was a man named Bill Connor we always hired him to slaughter the pigs so there wern't many neighbors.

My Grandmother lived in the 1779 House just beyond the little Stone Episcopal Church on King Hill road.

We were Catholic and the nearest Catholic church then was in Sunapee. My mother taught us our prayers. My mother's sister used to come to visit and they would have little spats about not going to church, when you have a horse and buggy you don't go to far.

I found my own religion when I moved to Massachusetts. I got a job. I used to go to the different churches. I ended up becoming a Methodist. When I married my husband we lived in Reading Mass. We taught Sunday School for 12 years. There were a hundred or so kids. I became the leader of 14 teachers. Getting volunteers was very hard to do. I would call parents to participate and they would say that they were playing bridge on Sunday afternoon. I Have a theory about that, I think every parent should give up a year of their life to their child's Christian upbringing. I couldn't talk people into it.

I also taught Sunday school in the Sunapee Methodist church for 6 years. I don't go to church anymore I can't hear the sermons.

My husband died in April of 1961, my mother died in August of 1961. My father would come to visit and say "Alice you need to come to NH with those two girls to live. I will give you a piece of land and you can build a house on it" So this is it. This is the main house built in 1962 In 1968 I added 24 feet for a beauty shop. Then I went to beauty school when I was 50. I retired in 1983. Until two years ago I did everything around here myself, the house is getting too big for me.

God has been good to me, I am going to be 90 in August. I can still do things and I can still think.

Years ago, April 1926 these roads were all dirt. My father worked as a state patrolman from the New London line to center of town at the end of the lake. There weren't many houses on the road at that time. The Morison's lived across the street from my brother Walter Croteau, who was the town treasurer for 28 years. There was the house at the

corner of Birch Bluff and a few cottages down by the lake.

There was a Mrs Hayward who was the head of the Girl Scouts of America. She would come to Newbury to spend the summer. She had purchased land from the Stevens where Chalet Hill used to be. Next were George and Marie Thomas on the lakeside. Next was the Knollwood Inn, which has been torn down. Beyond that was a Dr. MacMillan an eye doctor in Concord. I got my 1st glasses when I was 13 from him.

I got a letter from his Grand daughter, she knew I was connected to him through the Center Meeting House. She said she had the first organ that was in the Center Meeting House and would I like it? I said yes. But there was a little problem. I couldn't go to get it. I didn't think I knew anybody who would get it. I was talking to Chuck Kennedy and he went down just a year ago and got it. It was quite a find I guess. The organ in the Center Meeting House now goes back to 1892 or maybe before that.

Doris Newell has played the organ for 30 some years. Now she plays the organ at the South Newbury Church.

Helen Nye and I used to get the Ministers for the Center Meeting House. When she could no longer do it I took it over for ten or twelve years. Helen was a school teacher in Warner for many years. Helen married Harling Nye in the forties and became a substitute Librarian here in Newbury for 42 years.

The Library for this part of town was in the Kings Styles Hall. Mrs. Spaulding was the Librarian for a time. In the winter she would take the books to her house, which is Bald Sunapee now. Clifford Ayers Grandfather built that house, I think he was a Coburn.

Then if we had an overdue book we had to pay a penny, now we are free. I am in my 20th year working at the Library. Of course I only work one day a week.

In 1965 we built the Library where it is now. It was where the Children's room is now. That's where I started working. That's the story of the Library and the Center Meeting House. I am a trustee of the Center Meeting House.

The Library for South Newbury was in Sherman Hall upstairs. Helen Rich used to man the Library.

I have been on various boards for the town of Newbury over the years. When I was on the committee for the Caboose, Dennis and I and Dickie Wright went to Laconia to look at the Blue Caboose. I never in my life saw a Blue Caboose!

As a kid my sister and I used to go down when the train came in, Mr Brockway, Charlie Brockway. We would watch him hold up the stop sign. Its funny the things you remember when you're a kid.

The Brockways built the house that the Town just bought next to Bald Sunapee. That belonged to a virgil Brockway and Charlie Brockway lived across the street and he was the Station Agent. We aquired a nice piece of land in the center of town.

We are trying to work on the Center Meeting House right now, we have raised the money to fix the foundation, now that's done and I think the steeple is next. We have to thank John Hay Sr for his help in preserving the color of the inside of the Meeting House,. I guess some one wanted to change the color and he said no way! It is apple green and he would not let anyone alter the original color. I hope whoever we get to do the inside and the outside of the building knows what they are doing.

We have to be very grateful to the Hay Family for saving the original apple green, and preserving the building in its original state whenit was built in 1832. It is one of only

three buildings like it in New England.

I am in the process of trying to put together the names of all the ministers we have had. When I was a kid a minister Knotts lived up Baker Hill and preached down here for a number of years. I don't know where we are going from here but we are fighting to keep the building. It is actually the Center.

The first Center Meeting House was at the corner of Province road and the old County road on Bly Hill. A girl came to the Library and said she just bought some land in Newbury. I asked her where and she said next to the cemetery on Bly Hill. I got out the old map and lo and behold is right where the old Center Meeting House was, some of the beams from the old Meeting House were used in the present Center Meeting House. The rest of the lumber went to someone on Mountain road, I have forgotten the name.

There was one like this Center Meeting House in Sunapee, it burned in the 20's .

There is 2 other Churches like the Center Meeting House, one in Wolfboro and one in Sturbridge Massachusetts.

There was a man who built the beam structure for several churches in the area, one of them being the South Newbury Church. It was built the year before The Center Meeting Church. The original church in South Newbury burnt and was replaced I don't remember who rebuilt it.

I am so glad the Meeting House will be restored, probably not in my lifetime, but I know there are younger people who will carry on.

I'm so glad that I moved back to Newbury my old birthplace. When I had my shop people would call and complain about this and that, I would tell them to talk to there selectman, I can't help you.

I have been on the planning committee, scencic byways committee, upper valley planning for the Historical Society, the caboose committee, lets face it I didn't know how to say no!