Tenney – Blakslee Farm

While this farm was in the Blakslee family for many years, it started out as the homestead of John and Sophia Tenney, formerly of Alstead, New Hampshire. The Tenney’s came to Dalton in March of 1820, settling on the farm next to John Blakslee’s.

Six children were born to the Tenney’s, although two of them did not survive childhood. Son, Asa W. Tenney became a leading lawyer in New York City, and was a United States Attorney. Honorable Tenney, in 1879, donated the 600-pound bell to the Dalton Congregational Church.

Lucy Ann Sophia Tenney, daughter of settlers John & Sophia, married John Blakslee, Jr. They still have descendants living in Dalton and other area towns today.

The front portion of the Tenney-Blakslee farmhouse was likely built by John Tenney, perhaps as early as 1820. It was expanded in later years, and became a sizeable building. The Tenney’s choice of livestock was sheep, as were most farms in New England of that time period. John Tenney’s town inventory, in 1838, included 36 sheep.

After Sophia Tenney’s death, John moved to Waterbury, Vermont and remarried. He met a tragic death in 1869, when he was run over by a team of horses pulling a sleigh. He was buried with his wife in Johns River Cemetery.

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TENNEY—BLAKSLEE FARM (CONTINUED)

The 1892 map of Dalton shows the home being owned by C. Harvey Aldrich & his brother Charles. Charles’ daughter Mildred was married to William Tillotson. They owned the farm in 1925, when it was purchased by Herbert Blakslee, great grandson of John & Sophia Tenney. When Herbert Blakslee died in 1939, his wife Claribel and their sons Ralph and Charles carried on the dairy farm. The farm was the largest dairy in Dalton and earned awards for efficiency in production.

Over the years, many local boys became employees of the Blakslee farm, learning to feed and milk the cows, assist with calving and work in the hay fields. They learned how to drive tractors and trucks, and discovered what it was like to put in a hard day’s work. Some also helped in the apple orchard in the fall, and sugarhouse in the springtime.

Like many family farms in Coos County, the Blakslee farm finally was sold out of the family, and is no longer a working dairy farm. The farmhouse, with its several gables and attached shed, became run down and was dismantled in 2013. The barn is still intact. The present owners have been working to reclaim some of the fields by having the timber cut, the stumps removed and the soil replanted to bring back the pastoral character of the land.
**DALTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH—CELEBRATING 200 YEARS**

On April 28, 1816, several citizens of Dalton met at the dwelling house of Capt. Benjamin Brooks to organize a church. Reverend Samuel Goddard of Concord, Vermont met with the group and provided the service, during which two people were baptized—Oliver P. Brooks and Mrs. Mercy Wilder. The other members had been previously baptized. The nine original members of the Congregational Church of Christ were Abel Moore, Benjamin Brooks, Oliver P. Brooks, John Putnam, Polly Brooks, Anna Moore, Mercy Wilder, Lydia Brooks and Vina Moore.

New members were slowly received into the church until they numbered about thirty. By now, it was time for their own meeting house, as they were still holding services either in private homes or a school house. A parcel of land was purchased from Jacob Barrows, a Revolutionary War soldier who was actually of Methodist faith. Barrows lived at the corner of the County Road (Route 135), and what we now call Blakslee Road. He was a potter by trade.

A simple structure, without belfry or steeple was constructed in 1830. While it was still unfinished, it proved a suitable place for the church membership.

By 1879, under the guidance of Rev. James P. Stone, the church underwent several changes and improvements, including a vestibule, belfry and steeple. A new bell, weighing 600 pounds, was donated by Hon. A. W. Tenney of Brooklyn, NY. Mrs. S. P. Ruggles of Boston donated a new reed organ and the weathervane.

In a letter written in early January 1880, from Lucy Tenney Blakslee to her daughter Julia Blakslee Mooney, Lucy writes that the bell rang for the first time, and was very clear. She described the organ as a handsome reed organ, but imitates a pipe organ, with 10 pipes and standing 9 feet high. There are new bookstands for the orchestra, a new walnut pulpit, and new black and green carpeting (which she wasn’t fond of).

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ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Society's officers are as follows:

President: Terri Parks; Vice President: Gary Boyle;
Treasurer: Jean Abbott; Corresponding Secretary: Terri Parks; Recording Secretary: Connie Russell

Historical Society meetings are held the second Thursday of each month (weather permitting) at 7:00 p.m., at the old Dalton Town Hall, 741 Dalton Road, Dalton, New Hampshire. Our meeting/display room is in the downstairs rear portion of the building, and can be accessed either from the main floor, using the stairs, or directly through the rear doors, which are wheelchair accessible. Hours are by luck or appointment.

CHURCH—continued

The following was found in an early newspaper, dated January 25, 1819. It was an article from the New Hampshire Missionary Society, extracts from the report of trustees in the fall of 1818. Rev. Johnathan Hovey served the membership in Dalton:

"Go with your missionary to Dalton, and survey the scene of his labours there. He visited every family in town, about 50 in number, kindly attended by some one of the inhabitants, from house to house. Here he found a church of 9 members, 4 males and 5 females, without order, having no records, nothing to prove their existence, as a church. But, by the assistance of your missionary, they chose a moderator and scribe, found a record of their organization, and engaged to preserve order in these respects, in future. Under his labours, this little church was enlarged by 4 in one day."

LOCAL SPORTS

Found in a local newspaper in 1886:

"The game of base ball between the Lunenburghs and Daltons last Saturday resulted in a victory for the former by 20 runs. Guess the Daltons do not feel quite so jolly as they did two weeks ago."

Schools

Our first school building was erected around 1820 to 1822. The building measured 20' x 24', and was constructed at a cost of $190.00, and was heated by a fireplace. The cost for each scholar attending was to be $1/3 cord of good hard wood cut to fit the stove. The wood had to be piled by the schoolhouse by the first of December each year.

Reverend John Russell Meader, and his wife, Mabel Crouch Meader. Rev. Meader was the minister of the Dalton Congregational Church from 1891 to 1901.