

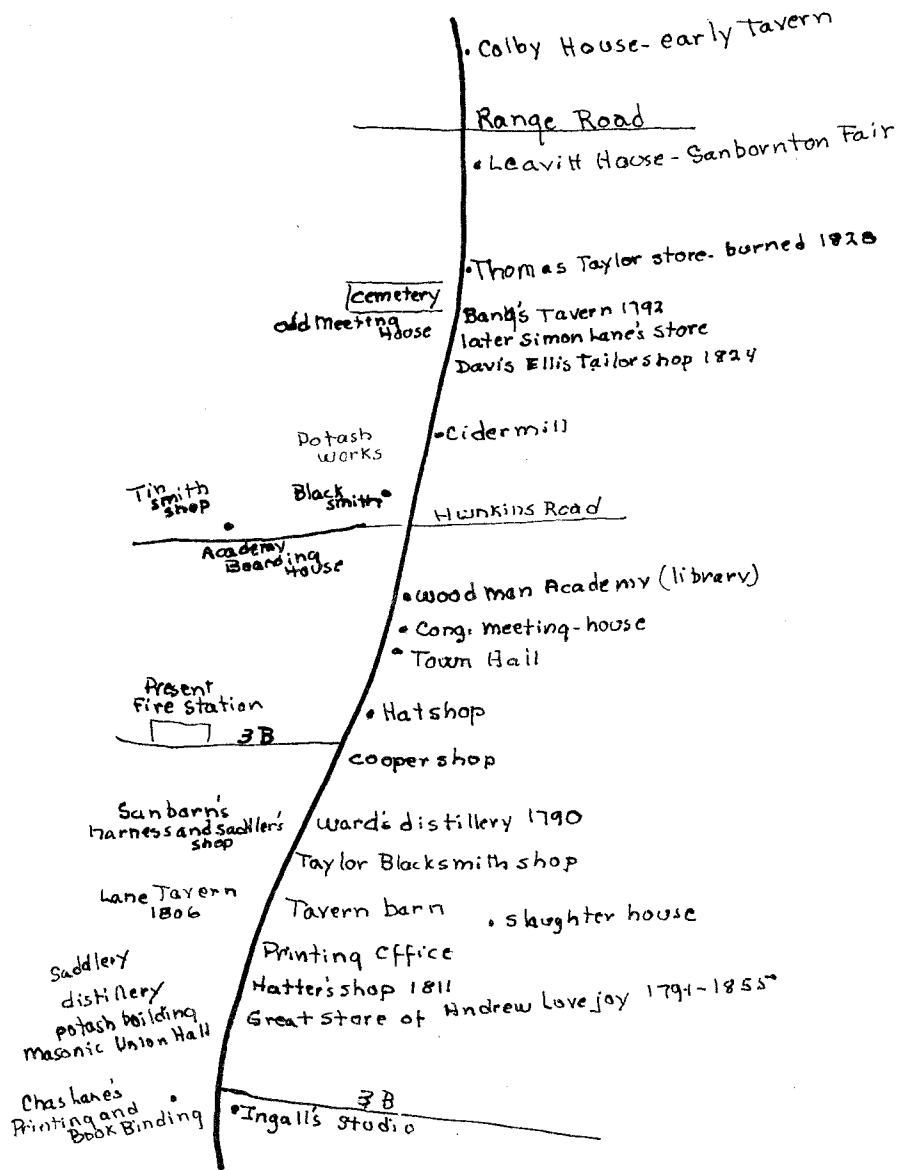
SANBORNTON

N. H.

1770 ~ 1970

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Sanbornton Historical Society

# Sanbornton Square



Not drawn to scale



The "Senter Squaire"

P. Terri's

In 1882 the History of Sanbornton, by the Rev. M. T. Runnels, was published recording the early settlement and development of the community. It is from this source that much of the following brief summary is written.

In 1748 sixty men petitioned King George the second for a township. A survey was done in 1750, 80 lots being plotted from the Great Bay to the Pemigewasset River. All lots were laid out and drawn prior to 1753. It was called Sanborn Town since no less than 12 by the name of Sanborn were found among the original "grantees". Each man was obliged to clear three acres, build a house, to live there for six years and to clear six more acres in that time.

The earliest records show that by 1764 nine men had moved into the town. In 1766 Sergt. John Sanborn put up the first part of his house near the present Hunkins Road and brought his wife there. There were 32 families in the area by 1768. In 1770 a petition for incorporation was made which was granted to Sanbornton March 1770 by George the third.

One of the provisions of the original grant was to set aside a share for a minister of the Gospel and one for the support of the Gospel ministry "for ever". Six acres were left for the building of a meeting-house and a burying ground. The owner of each "right" was taxed for the support of the minister. The Rev. Joseph Woodman was ordained as minister in 1771, but the meeting-house on Tower Hill was not ready until 1775 when Mr. Woodman preached his first sermon there. The building was finally completed in 1789.

Unwilling to join the Congregational Church, a group of Baptists built its own church west of the meeting-house on Perley Hill. In 1825 the Parsonage interest money was divided between the Congregational Church and the Baptists. In 1833 the first Baptist Church was moved to its present location in the Chapel Area. The second Baptist church at the Bay was built in 1808, moved and remodelled in 1836. The town relinquished its rights to the Meeting House in 1834. It was then dismantled, moved to its present location where it was rebuilt as the Congregational Meeting-house. The third Baptist church, originally built on Pine Hill, Meredith, was moved to North Sanbornton in 1840. Unused for many years, it collapsed under the heavy snow of 1969.

Following the Act of Incorporation Daniel Sandborn (sic) called the first town meeting, probably the last Tuesday of March, 1770. Although there is no record, tradition has it that it was held in the house of Lt. Chase Taylor. The first selectmen were Aaron Sanborn, Cole Weeks and Stephen Gale. At subsequent meetings such familiar items as roads, bridges and schools were considered. In 1794 the date of the annual meeting was changed to the second Tuesday in March. By this time the Meeting House was the scene of action. In 1809 two representatives instead of one were chosen for the General Court. A petition for moving the Postoffice to the center was submitted in 1816. As has been noted, in 1834 the Town

gave up its right to the Meeting House. In May a special town meeting voted to build a Town House. This was the origin of the present Town Hall which is located just South of the Congregational Meeting-house. It was a one story building with a gallery in the rear and a selectmen's room under the north side. The interior had rows of long seats on the side and an enclosed platform for the town officers on election day. Although the Town Hall is still used for meetings and for the polls, the Selectmen's office was moved in 1964 to the new building that houses the fire station.

Of the offices provided for in 1771, the moderator, clerk, selectmen and auditor have survived. The selectmen now act in the capacity of assessors, and the road agent has replaced the highway supervisor. The offices of constable, tything man, hayward and lot layer have disappeared. Others, such as informer and complainant, fireward, pound keeper, hog reeve and fence viewer were added but later discontinued.

While the spiritual and temporal needs of the community were served, the education of the young was not neglected. In the original grant, one share "forever" for the schools was provided. Master Abraham Perkins taught all the schools in town about 1775, using private houses, barns or even the old Meeting House before its completion. Some of the pupils used birch bark to write on.

From inception to 1887 schools were run on the old district plan. In 1774 it was voted to hire a school for a part of the year. Thirty dollars was raised for the purpose. There seem to have been involved four districts. By 1800 there were fifteen. The amount of schooling from six to twenty five weeks. (!) The teachers earned four to five dollars per month. In 1886 the School District of Sanbornton was created by State law, increasing the school year to twenty six weeks. The pay of the teachers had risen to twenty to twenty eight dollars a month.



The Ingalls Studio

By 1921 there were six districts. In this year the State was divided into Supervisory Units with thirty six weeks of required schooling. In 1946 a site was purchased and the Central School was built. The first class entered in the fall of 1949. The last step was the formation in 1966 with Tilton and Northfield of the Winnisquam Regional School District. The use of busses made it possible for the seventh and eighth grades to go to Junior High School and made High School available to all. All high school students were gradually enrolled in the Tilton-Northfield High School.

Institutes of higher learning had temporary existence in the 19th century. The earliest was Sanbornton Academy at Sanbornton Bridge (Tilton). It was incorporated in 1820 and was in session only in the spring and fall. In 1845 it was merged with the school opened under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the forerunner of the present

Tilton School. In 1826 the Woodman Sanbornton Academy was established at the Square. The Academy building was built just north of the site of the present Congregational meeting-house. Dyer H. Sanborn, the last Preceptor at the Sanbornton Academy, was the most noted Preceptor at the Woodman Academy.

As the Square "decayed", the academy gradually diminished in pupils and efficiency. Its limited funds were exhausted in support of the school and boarding house. The last term was in 1857. The neglected building was taken over in 1867 by the School District. The upper floor was used as a Public hall and the lower room for classes until the opening of the Central School.

The 1840 catalogue for the Woodman Sanbornton Academy is interesting in view of present costs. 109 males were enrolled and 71 females. They lived either at Noah Smith's boarding house or with families in the village. Tuition was \$3.50 for 12 weeks. Board was 8 shillings including washing but not wood or light. Beside Latin, Greek, grammar and declamation there were "Philosophical and Chemical Apparatus connected with the Institution; and a Cabinet of minerals--to which the Students have access".

Like other communities in the late 18th and early 19th century when transportation was difficult, Sanbornton became a flourishing and virtually self supporting community. Some of the occupations in the Square were: storekeeper, blacksmith, tinsmith, hatter. There was a distillery, a slaughter house, potash building, a printing shop and several taverns. The map in the frontispiece gives the approximate site of many of these. Particular mention should be made of the great store of Andrew Lovejoy, an early entrepreneur, studio of Walter Ingalls, later the office of the doctors Abbott and the boarding house of Henry P. Wilson on Tower Hill.

Actually Sanbornton was a community of hamlets.

One of them was Sanbornton Bridge (Tilton). In 1820 there were 12 homes and 6 places of business including a grist mill, a tailor shop and a hotel. Tin Corner, which was located at the crossroads near the present Soldier's Home, was a "first class hamlet" many years before Sanbornton Bridge. There could have been found a tavern, blacksmith, house joiner and cabinet maker. In 1808 Timothy Gridley came from Exeter and introduced the art of making tin ware. He traded all over the state, bringing back sheepskins that were processed at the tannery just east of the corner. Eventually many of the businesses and buildings were moved to the Bridge, and Tin Corner became but a name. The hamlet of Salmon Brook was another "industrial center" boasting saw, grist, textile and shingle mills.

Clock making was almost a major industry. Simon Cate at Tin Corner and Elisha Smith at the Bay built tall clocks, and examples of their work are extant. At Salmon Brook the Johnsons, father and sons, specialized in clock works. They built the observatory clock at Dartmouth which has been keeping accurate time and records for over 100 years.

In the early days Gaza, known as Clark's Corner, was long a business center. In 1880 Sanbornton's only store was located there. There had also been a wheelwright and a blacksmith.

From a start of six men in 1764 population rose to 1587 in 1790. 1820 was the heyday with a population of 3329 which declined to 1236 in 1870. Communities along the rivers expanded and new towns were formed. In 1823 land was ceded to Franklin Falls and in 1869 Tilton took a bite. Population was at its lowest point in 1920 with a census of 617. To-day (1970) the resident population numbers 946 with non-residents nearly twice as many. From its beginning to the early 20th century Sanbornton was predominantly rural in character. Today it is both a summer haven and a growing community of homes.

The first library was incorporated in 1796 as The Sanbornton Library Association with 300 books to its credit. Each volume had the following label: "This book is not to be lent out of the house of the proprietor who takes it out of the Library. To be returned in ten weeks" -- no speed reading there! The library was finally broken up and distributed among the heirs of the proprietors. Not until 1903 was anything further done. At that time a warrant was submitted and passed. Gardner Ward was the first librarian for the books housed in a small room in the Town Hall. About 1936 the house now owned by the Cotsibases was bought and converted into a pleasant library. In 1948 the present building was purchased and the library again moved. While Mrs. Eleanor Morse was librarian (1950-61) the children started coming from the Central School to take books out. Under Mrs. Ruth Wiggins (1961-66) cataloguing of the books was undertaken. Mrs. Barbara Powers, the present librarian, is carrying on both services.

The town Centennial was celebrated July 4th, 1876, to coincide with the national observance. Many of those present were direct descendants of the original proprietors. A large tent was erected between the Academy building and the Congregational meeting-house. A "procession" led by the Hill and Sanbornton Cornet Band preceded the address of the Rev. Frederic Perkins.

The Hill & Sanbornton Cornet Band was only one of several musical groups. There was a Cornet Band at the Bridge, and at the Bay the Sanbornton Cornet Band flourished for a few years; but the most famous is Moulton's Band. It began in 1891 casually but in 1894 it became a full fledged band with uniforms. The band stand was built in 1900, now is too small for the growing number of players who come from the surrounding communities as well as Sanbornton.

In the late eighties Sanbornton was predominantly rural with good and productive farms. A fair was the chance to show the fruits of labor. In 1882 the first

fair was held behind the Town Hall. In 1885 the Leavitt place on Tower Hill was purchased and was the site of the fair until its end in 1934. The lower floor was used for exhibits and dinner was served on the second. In 1903 it was estimated that 2000 people attended. Dinner was 25¢. The fair became the victim of "progress" when in a car it became possible to drive 50-100 miles to attend a larger fair with more to offer. The property was sold in 1940 to Earl Turner. The area north of the range road was given to the town for a Town Forest.

Not only in the Square, but throughout the township within the last 20 years many of the old houses have been lovingly and carefully restored. There are two in the Square of historic interest. The first is the studio of Walter Ingalls (1805-1874) who was a portrait painter with studios both here and in Washington. His works are to be found in museums and in private hands.

Although there were several taverns in town, the Lane Tavern was one of the largest and was the last to close.



The Lane Tavern

P. Terris

It was a way stop on the stage run from Concord to Plymouth. Built early in the 1800's it was a Tavern until 1844. With the coming of the railroad stage coaches were doomed and the tavern closed. In 1965 the Sanbornton Historical Society acquired the building, which is being restored to serve both as a local museum and a meeting place for all Sanborntonites.

The involvement and concern of the people of Sanbornton is manifest in the organizations they support. They are listed on the next page.

