



**Franconia Area Heritage Council**  
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## Settling Down: Celebrating Franconia's 250th Anniversary July 7-9, 2023

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*By Marcia Roosevelt*

This year, the second weekend in July has been set aside to celebrate Franconia's settling in 1773. These first settlers were a collection of hearty German immigrants arriving from Ashburnham, Massachusetts which they had also previously founded.

In the mid-1700s the country north of the White Mountains was the object of speculation by different German immigrant groups (the naming of Franconia in the original charter is testament to this) but they failed to act on these obligations and the land was subsequently regranted under the new name of Morristown in 1772.

The first settlers—Jacob Schoff (an agent for land speculator James Richardson), Philip Grapes (his son-in-law) and Philip Verbeck—arrived, purchased 500 acres from Richardson on November 3, 1773, divided it up and got to work “making the wilderness into a home” and building a busy grain trade with the Army.

The settlers arrived with their families in tow: Schoff and Verbeck each had 8 children and the Grapes had three children. These early years were difficult ones as the Revolution had created unrest even in the remote areas. Men enlisted in the army for months at a time, leaving wives and children behind. Two years after arriving (1775) Schoff's 16 year old daughter, Katherine, was registered as Franconia's first death and five years after that, Schoff's grandson Haynes French Schoff was the first child born in Franconia (December 15, 1780).

Their homes were built on Easton Valley Road: Schoff's homestead was across from the entrance to the Coppermine Trail, the Grapes were on the present day site of the Franconia Inn, and the Verbecks were on 150 acres between the two which at one time had been the site of the Franford Lodge which burned in 1964.

New settlers were arriving from Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut and land disputes were not uncommon. After ten years of working hard on the settlement, our first settlers unloaded their homes and moved north to Maidstone VT, Northumberland and Stratford, NH. It is likely their move was

precipitated by the 1779 sudden decision to disavow the second land grant and revert to the original 1764 Franconia grant.

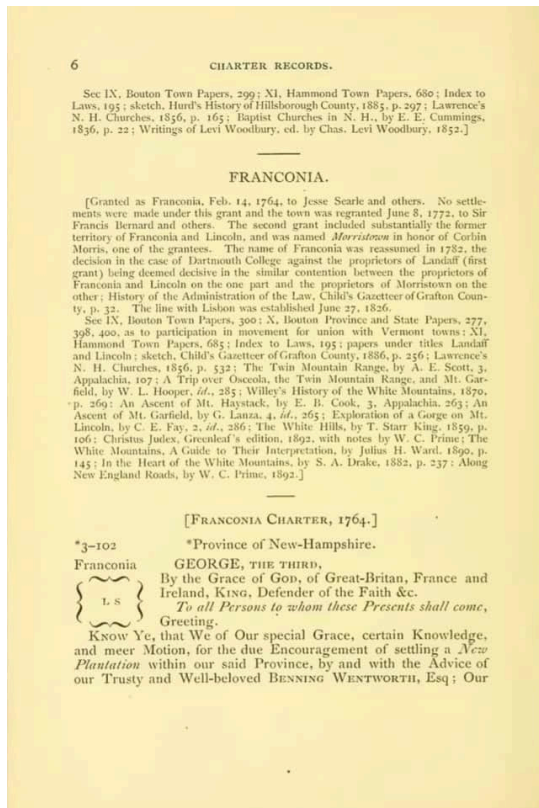
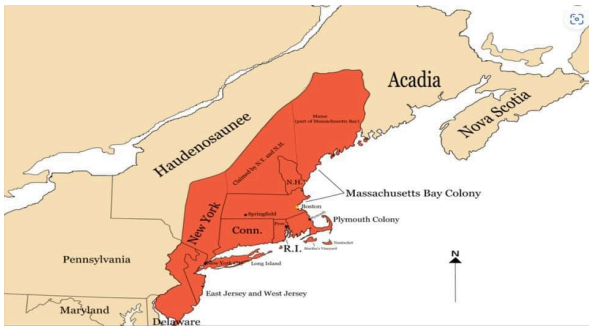
“It is difficult to comprehend the logic of (this decision) for none of the 1764 grantees had fulfilled the requirements of the charter, whereas real efforts had been made by the 1772 grantees (and 1773 settlers) to settle the land.” It has been suggested that a contributing factor for this reversal may have been the conviction and arrest of land speculator (and primary landowner) James Richardson on counterfeiting charges.

Those who arrived to take the place of these original settlers were of a much different background, being nearly all of English descent and having lived in the Colonies for over one hundred years.

Sources:

“The Early History of Franconia, NH” by Phyllis Bond Herbert

“Biographical Sketch of Jacob Schoff, First Settler of Franconia, NH” by Jeffrey S. Bartlett



Settler's Rock, Easton Road between Coppermine Road and Pinestead Farm

## SETTLING DOWN IN FRANCONIA (2): THE YANKEES

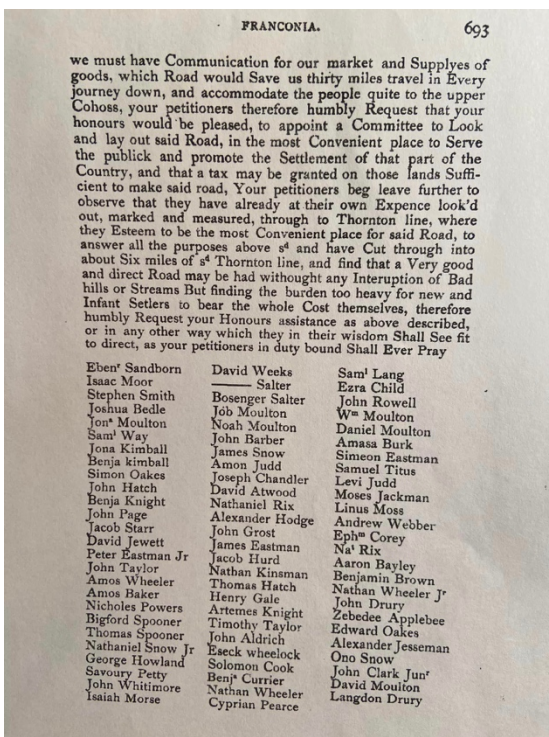
During the French and Indian War (1754-63) there are stories of captives from the Baker River Valley who were taken to Canada. They travelled north along the Connecticut River and it is said “they saw fertile land in that locality and when the war was over the white people began to move there to settle.” The towns along the Connecticut River were settled first; towns like Franconia followed.



“Forest Fight” by Randy Steele

## AFTER THE ORIGINAL SETTLEMENT

Shortly after Franconia’s first German settlers arrived, they were joined by English colonizers. In 1774, one year after Schoff, Grapes and Verbeck arrived on the Easton Valley Road, settlements were made by Zebedee Applebee, Captain Artemis Knight and Lemuel Barnett.



Early Franconia residents writing to petition for a road to go through the notch. Early settlers were reliant on revenue from agriculture; they needed a reliable route to the cities.

Names of note: Kinsman, Knight, Applebee, Spooner, Moulton, Taylor, Eastman, Oakes, Jesseman.

**NEW ENGLAND NATIVES SET DOWN ROOTS** Captain Knight at one point owned a greater part of the town. Later, when iron was discovered in the western part of town and the Iron Company was formed, he moved his house toward the center of town. "It took 40 pair of oxen to move the house."

Zebedee Applebee acquired the property where the Franconia Inn now stands and built a homestead. Twelve years after it was built the Applebee home was host to an unbroken line of Franconia Town Meetings. His daughter, Rhoda, would soon meet her husband in Franconia.



**The original home of Zebedee Applebee, where the first town meeting was held, later became the Spooner Farm and when additions were put on, was the McKenzie Hotel. It now operates as the year-round Franconia Inn on Route 116.**

### THE ORIGINAL BROOKS BROTHERS

Meanwhile, in Stow, Massachusetts, two brothers, sixth-generation New Englanders Luke and Timothy Brooks, came to the realization that as the younger sons in a large family, they stood no chance of a landed inheritance in their birthplace. And so they struck out for the northern frontier, arriving in Franconia, New Hampshire, sometime between 1793-1797. By 1798, Timothy married Rhoda Applebee—daughter of Zebedee Applebee and Joanna Sly—with whom he had 4 children.

Luke Brooks bought the property across from Coppermine Trail (fits the description of Jacob Schoff's original 1773 homestead), married Susie Smith, a girl from Stow in 1795. They had seven children: Dolly, Amos, Luke, Lydia, Ira, Jane and Horace. Seven generations of Luke Brooks family have lived in Franconia, raising their families a stone's throw from the original settlement.

## GENERATIONS OF FRANCONIANS

As part of Franconia's 250 year anniversary, we'll be sharing the living history of that family. Stay tuned.

SOURCES: "Franconia Notch History and Guide" by Sarah N. Welch

"Homecoming: Home of the Old Man of the Mountains" program July 2-4, 1955.

State of New Hampshire, Department of State, Division of Records Management and Archives

"Franconia Inn: A Brief History" [www.Franconiainn.com/about](http://www.Franconiainn.com/about)

Franconia Heritage Museum, family records and files

BOOKS ON FRANCONIA'S HISTORY, including the first two, are available for sale at the museum or online at our website [www.franconiaareaheritage.org](http://www.franconiaareaheritage.org)

## SETTLING DOWN IN FRANCONIA (3): THE INDUSTRIAL ERA

Early settlers (1774-1800) set up homesteads along the Ham Branch River to raise crops and harvest trees. In both of these endeavors it was important to have large parcels of land.

### IRON ORE DISCOVERED IN 1790

Then, in 1790 in Lisbon, iron was discovered and the rush to smelt iron in Franconia was on. The first iron foundry—the Upper Works, called the Haverhill and Franconia Iron Works, was located on the Ham Branch just over the bridge that leads to Ridge Road/Bickford Hill Road. Ore was delivered to the Lower Works (location of iron Furnace Besaw Interpretive Center) at \$6 a ton. Twelve to fifteen tons of iron were produced in a week. At that time, this location "was practically wilderness. But through this town and for a distance of ten miles ran a belt of superb iron ore about two and one-half feet wide, no one knows how deep. Consequently from that time on for many years was heard the blows of the hammer, the sound of blasting, and unceasingly, man and beast toiled in the underground passage".

Sea merchants from Salem, Massachusetts formed the New Hampshire Iron Factory Company with profits from foreign trade. The current furnace was built in 1805 on the site of an earlier forge.

The Ore was of very high quality—56-63% pure. The Lower Works once owned 1,300 acres in the village; iron from these works was said to have been used in warships in 1812.



The Lower Works located downstream from where the Gale River and Ham Branch merge. A dam about 200 feet upstream provided water for the iron smelter and for grist, saw and bobbin mills on the town side of the Gale.

The company provided housing for workers along Main Street. Many are still standing.

## COPPERMINE BROOK

An alloy was made at the Upper Works using copper from a mine said to have been on Cannon or Kinsman, “hence the name Coppermine Brook.”

“There was a gold mine up here too—a silver mine and a copper mine...in the diaries we stumbled upon that on one of the maps. There was some writing where Horace (Brooks)...bought the rights to the goldmine.” (Bob Sherburn interview, descendant of Luke Brooks)

## MEANWHILE.....

The Old Man was discovered. A new business opportunity was to come to this industrial mining village.

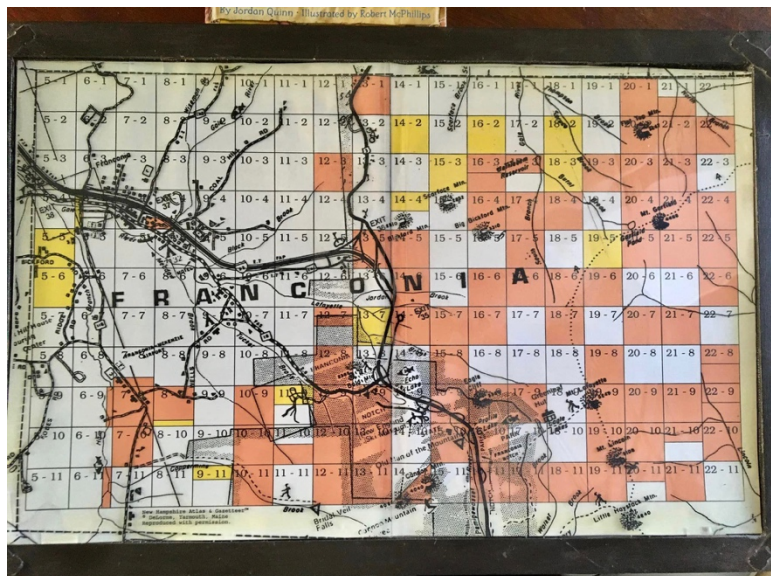


The Old Man of the Mountain was discovered by Luke Brooks and Francis Whitcomb in 1805 while surveying. They came over the mountain near nightfall and set up camp at the upper end of the lake instead of the regular camping ground at the lower end of the lake.

In the morning both men went to the lake to get water for breakfast. “When Luke straightened up with his pail of water he looked up and saw the Old Man and called to Francis Whitcomb nearby to look up and see the profile too. They thought it so resembled Thomas Jefferson that they exclaimed “That is Jefferson!” Thomas Jefferson was president at that time.” (source: Franconia Notch History and Guide” by Sarah N. Welch revised Edition 1981)

This map shows parcels of land in Franconia. Luke Brooks’ property is in red and the property of his youngest son, Horace, are in yellow. If you blow this map up, it looks like Luke Brooks owned Cannon Mountain, Mittersill and Lafayette.

Luke Brooks eldest daughter Dolly would marry Manning Whitney in 1819.



SOURCES:

“Homecoming 1955: Home of the Old Man of the Mountains” program July 2-4, 1955

“Franconia Notch History Guide” by Sarah N. Welch, revised edition 1981.

Interview with Sherburn Siblings, April 13, 2023

SETTLING DOWN IN FRANCONIA (4): “THE FULLNESS OF LIFE”

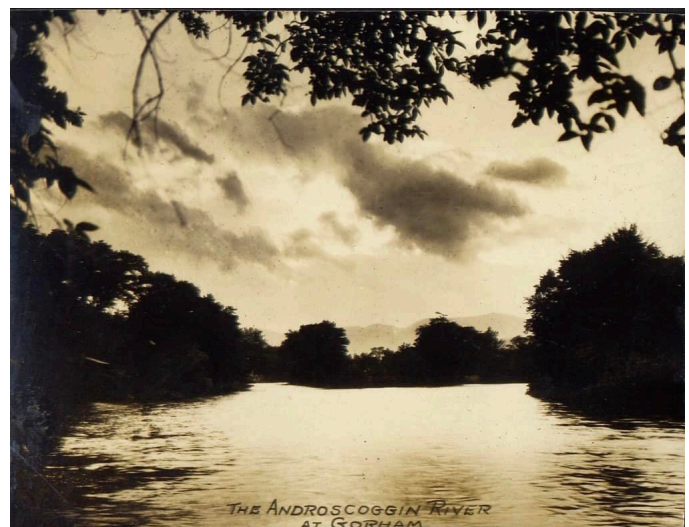
In the White Mountain guide of 1872 Samuel Eastman wrote of Franconia:

“Here is rest; here is comfort. Beneath the shadow of these solemn mountains the weary soul finds composure. Selfishness and worldliness are rebuked. The most thoughtless are hushed to reflections, and a better understanding of life grows up in the midst of Nature’s grand instructions.....(visitors are) open to every good influence and will make life more rich and beautiful, and fair.”

AND YET “THE ROCKS ARE STUBBORN AND THE FROSTS CAPRICIOUS”.

Since it’s settling, farming has always played a role in Franconia. “Throughout the years the work has been good work, and ability and native ingenuity have ever been present. “

We see two threads of Franconia’s history emerging side by side: a year round farming population and a growing landscape/tourism trade.



My Great Grandparents  
Manning <sup>born</sup> Sept 8, 1795 - <sup>died</sup> June 24, 1841  
Dolly Brooks W. Nov 18, 1795 - Aug 5, 1881  
Their Children  
Emeline Feb 25, 1820 - April 13, 1895  
Daniel Nov 27, 1821 - Sept. 15, 1898  
Henry Oct. 31, 1823 - Oct 27, 1891  
Sydney B. Dec 7, 1827 - Nov. 2, 1891  
Jane B. Sept 15, 1831 - Sept 9, 1908  
Sally D. Aug 20, 1834 - July 16, 1847  
  
My Grandparents were:-  
Harriet Jessiman Whitney 3rd  
Henry P. Whitney  
Henry died at the age 67 yrs 11 mo 21 days

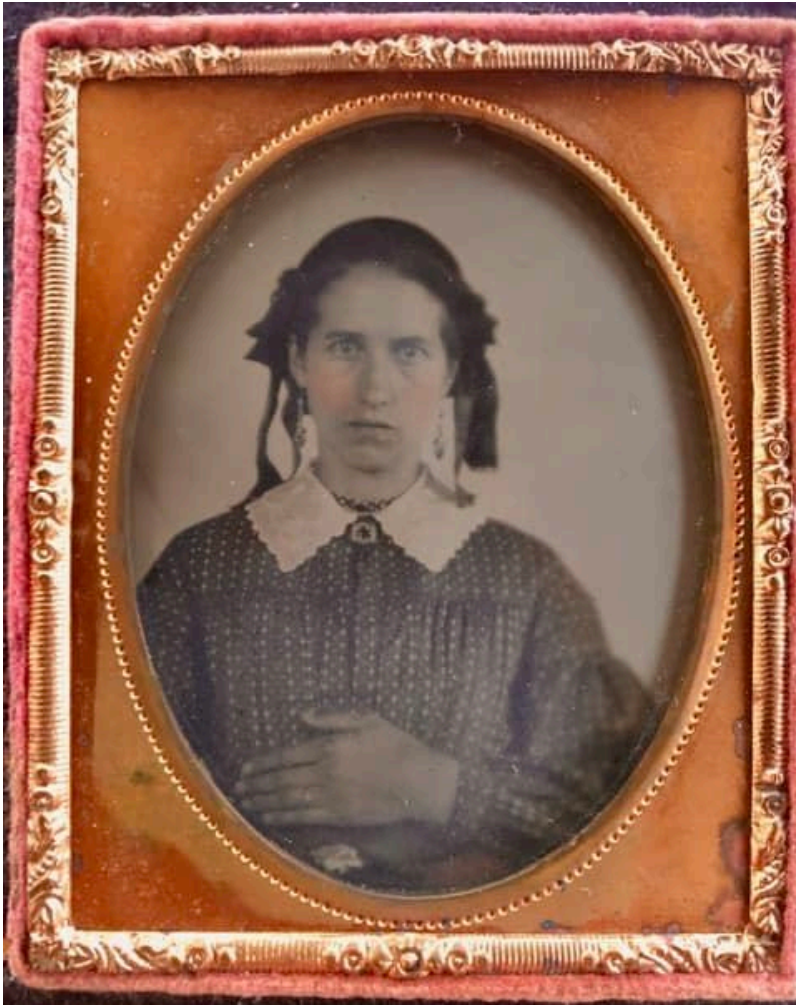
In the valley, Luke Brooks’ daughter, Dolly, was ten years old when her father discovered the visage of the Old Man while fetching water on the north side of Profile Lake. She married Manning Whitney in 1819 and lived to be 85 years old.

Dolly’s son, Henry, built their home, the site of the present Pinestead Lodge in 1852.

SOURCE: “Homecoming 1955”

## SETTLING DOWN IN FRANCONIA (5): DEVASTATED

In the late 1800s the Whitney family was devastated with illness. Henry and Harriet Whitney lost their two little ones, ages 2 and 4, in 1864. Three years later, they had daughter Susie and four years later, daughter Mary. When baby Mary was only 7, and Susie was 11, they lost their mother. Henry Whitney's sisters, Lydia and Jane, moved into the farmhouse on Easton Road with their older brother, Henry, to help care for the two young girls.



Harriet Whitney 1831-1878



Harriet Whitney Death Notice

## MARY WHITNEY'S DIARY

Mary Whitney wrote in her diary daily: about the weather, how much butter was churned, and keeping track of how much the hired hands were to be paid. In the fall of 1891, Mary followed her sister, Susie, into teaching. After three weeks of teaching, she writes in her diary: "September 25—I'm not feeling well at all. I've had severe headaches all week. Came home tonight with the mailman."



Then there is a break from the customary diary entries.

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Mary returns to her diary three months later with a single entry:

“SEPTEMBER 26-DECEMBER 30, 1891

“Was taken sick Sept 26. Had Dr. (?) of Littleton. Sept 30 he pronounced it Typhoid fever. Was nearly 4 weeks before I was dressed. Am able to go out now.....Aunt Jane was taken sick Oct. 7 with some disease having returned home to help care for me. She is gaining now but hasn't been out of doors yet...Aunt Lydia was taken sick with the same disease Oct. 10. Her fever was high but it turned and she seemed to gain although she grew poor until Nov. 1 in the morning she seemed quite smart. Sat up in bed and ate her breakfast. In a little while she was taken with a chill, caused by her heart. In the evening she had another (chill) after which she failed fast until Monday, Nov. 2 at 11 pm when she died from heart trouble. She was buried Nov. 4. Father was taken sick Oct. 16. The doctor pronounced it Typhoid fever but his fever was very low and some of us fear the Dr. was mistaken in the disease. Heart trouble set in and he died Oct. 27. Lydia and Jane were so sick we could have no funeral then. Did not even tell them he was worse. Avila and Susie did the work and



Mary Brooks Whitney (1871-1962)

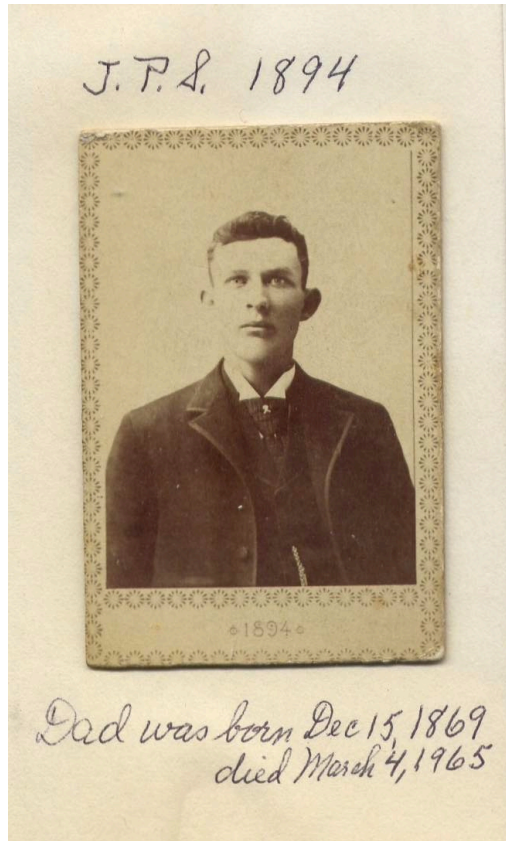
took care of us while we were sick except nights the neighbors sat up a part of the time and Mrs. Pease helped a few days. Will Aldrich is staying with us this winter.”

By the end of 1891 Mary (age 20) and Susie (age 24) are orphaned. Extended family, friends, neighbors and hired hands rally to the sides of these two young ladies. Their aunt Jane Whitney was crucially important, but she was forced to call off her wedding years earlier when her sister in law died. At the age of 60, she cared for her sick niece Mary and lost two siblings in the same month all while battling typhoid herself. She never married.

SOURCE: Mary Whitney diary, 1891

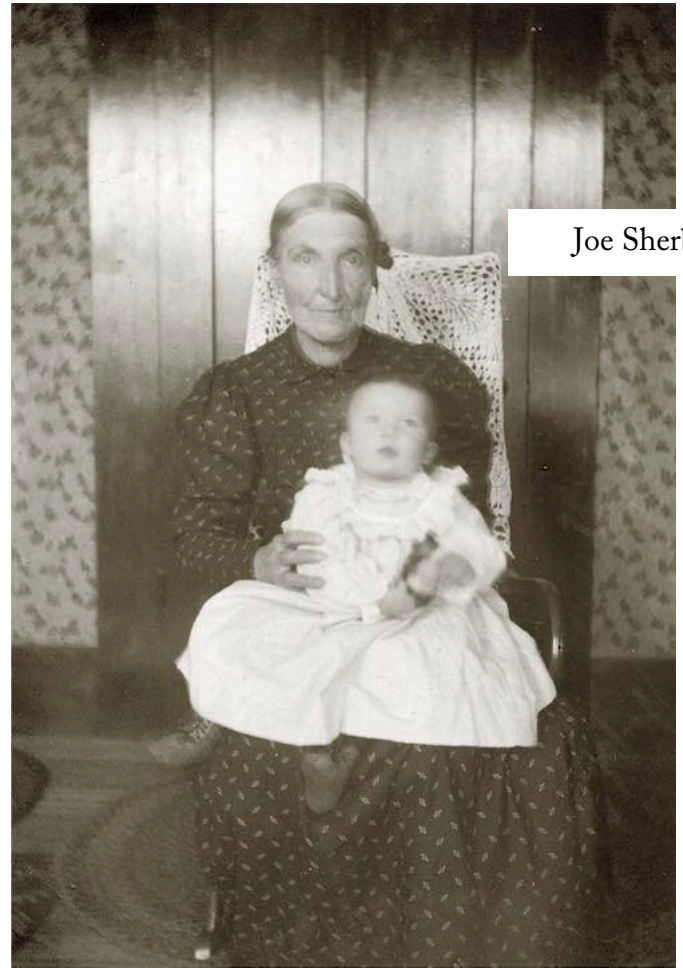


Susie Brooks Whitney (1867-1952)



Joseph Perry Sherburn arrived to work on the Pease Farm (now site of McKenzies) in 1895.

On March 30, 1895 Mary writes in her diary: "Joe Sherburn is to work for us this summer for \$24 per month. He intends to commence April 8th. He has gone home to see to his business now."

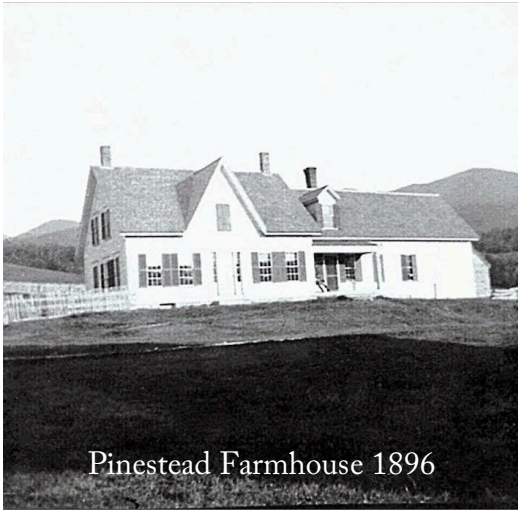


Joe Sherburn

Jane B Whitney (1831-1909) holding her great-niece, Grace.



Joe Sherburn and his team



Pinestead Farmhouse 1896

## SETTLING DOWN IN FRANCONIA (6): MARY AND JOSEPH MAKE ROOM AT THE INN

In 1895, Joseph Sherburn begins to work for the Whitney sisters at the Pinestead Farm. "This is when he starts bringing Mary and Susie out to a dance or to a little Christmas gathering at the Aldriches. He brings her things for her garden from his mother's garden. And, you know, they end up getting married in 1897." (a)

**"GRACE GIVES YOU THE STRENGTH YOU NEED TO OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLE"**

After the heartbreak and struggles young Mary endured, there could not have been a more perfect name for Joseph and

Mary's baby Grace, who arrived in 1899 at Pinestead Lodge with the first summer boarders.

Siblings Myra (b. 1904) and Robert (b. 1908) followed. The three siblings helped out at the farm, swam in the river and later filled the home with music.



Baby Grace Sherburn b. 1899  
At Pinestead Farm



Grace, Bob and Myra 1910  
At Pinestead Farm



The Sherburn's had a knack for having fun. Here is the Pinestead Farm float for Franconia's Old Home Day in 1910

#### TOURISM MEETS FARMING: A RURAL IDYLL

IN 1899, two Ross sisters arrived together to spend the summer at Pinestead Lodge and they returned the following year. It became known as "a place of rest and relaxation for a large group of people, many of whom came year after year to enjoy its hospitality, its fresh fruit and vegetables and its abundant supply of fresh milk.....Mr. Sherburn raises all his vegetables and other farm produce for the table and also has a small herd of cows which furnishes milk of the best to the summer guests." (b)

Family members recollect "they fed them breakfast and dinner and then they put up a box lunch...and in the real old time they would take them with a horse and wagon around."

"(Joe) was a jokester and he used to pick on the guests. You know they'd come up from New York City, and he convinced them that you had to pump the tail to get the milk out of the cow and do stuff like that with them." (c)

#### A KNACK FOR BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

"We kept boarders in the summer. That whole end of the house. My father (Joseph) took out all the petitions and that was the boarders' dining room. In the winter, we shoved those tables together. If they thought we were going out too much, they'd say "Why don't you have a party?" We'd make ice cream and cakes and things. People from Easton and Franconia would all come. Sometimes people wouldn't be speaking to each other (but) they would come to these parties." (d)



Emma Ross, Pinestead Farm  
Boarder, 1899



Boarders at the Pinestead Farm

SOURCES:

- (a) Alyssa Sherburn (great-granddaughter) interview 2023
- (b) "New Hampshire—a History" 1928
- (c) Sherburn sibling (grandchildren) interview, 2023
- (d) Myra Sherburn interview, an oral history recorded by Charles Stewart