



Members Quarterly Newsletter

*Issue LII
2nd quarter, June 2020

Pittsfield Historical Society
13 Elm Street
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Pittsfield, New Hampshire – The Gem of the Suncook Valley
Liz Dimmick & Bill Provençal, co-editors

Accessions

1955 Valley Times, NH in the Great Rebellion, and View of Pittsfield

Many thanks to Millie Dustin, a long-time resident of Pittsfield, who donated a copy of *The Valley Times* from 1955, which is solely dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of the Pittsfield Savings Bank.



Mrs. Dustin also donated a copy of *Pittsfield, N.H. in the Great Rebellion*, written by Otis Frederick R. Waite. This historical book on the Civil War contains histories of several New Hampshire regiments and brief biographies, including men from Pittsfield.

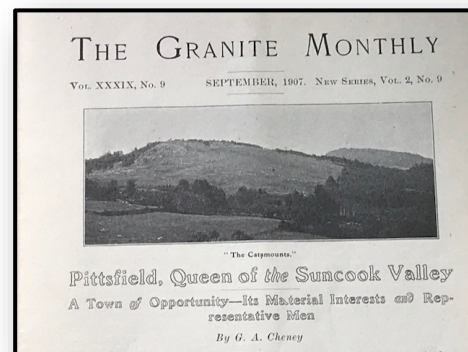
Additionally, a *View of Pittsfield, Merrimack County 1884* drawn and published by George E. Norris was also donated by Ms. Dustin.



Accessions

Granite Monthly

Many thanks to Susan Bleckmann for donating a copy of the September 1907 *Granite Monthly*. This issue contains a comprehensive article of Pittsfield, "Queen of the Suncook Valley," which describes the idyllic and wonderful days in Pittsfield.



Pittsfield Gas Street Light

Thanks to the Duane and Cindy Eckhardt Elkins, the Historical Society has acquired an original Pittsfield gas street light. Ralph F. Eckhardt and Jean Eckhardt, long-time residents of Pittsfield, fortunately saved the gas light that once stood at the corner of Main and Blake streets.

The light was converted to electric power and then installed in front of their home, where it resided for numerous years, until it was generously donated to the Society. This authentic piece of Pittsfield's history will find a new home at the new Historical building on Oak Street.

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Pittsfield Gas Street Light-continued



Duane Elkins with gas light before dismantling



Larry Berkson, Duane Elkins and Fuzz Freeze removing light

In January 1888, the plant and all properties were purchased by the Pittsfield Aqueduct Company and a new company was formed, the Pittsfield Gas Company.

As early as September 1887, editors of the local newspaper asked if there was any chance of streetlights being lighted by gas. To encourage this new idea, Mr. Knowlton provided outdoor lighting in the vicinity of the watering trough in front of Washington House and in Railroad Square free of charge. However, the townspeople voted to postpone a proposal to contract with the gas company for street lighting.

In 1890 the gas company finally was awarded a contract to provide street lighting. Thirty iron gas posts were purchased. By July lights were being placed on Elm, Chestnut, Bank (Carroll), Depot, and some other streets. However, these new lights were unsatisfactory—they were too expensive. And soon after Pittsfield went back to “moonlit streets.”

In 1892 kerosene lamps were put back in place.

Gas Street Lights Experiment in Pittsfield

Research provided by Larry Berkson

In September 1886, nine local men secured a franchise from Pittsfield’s Selectmen to bring gas to Pittsfield. This company, Pittsfield Gas Light Company, sought local investors; but people were unfamiliar with gas operations and did not financially support the company. Money was raised from people outside of Pittsfield with most funds provided by Daniel C. Knowlton, a broker in Boston.

This was a big endeavor for Pittsfield, with the main building erected at the intersection of Fairview Road and what is today Clark Street. Meters were given to users to measure the amount of gas used. The cost was one-half cent per hour for each burner used. This was allegedly cheaper than kerosene that was previously used.



13 Carroll Street—with gas light in front



15 Park Street—with gas light in front

2021 Calendars

The Pittsfield Historical Society has unveiled the theme for its 2021 calendar – “Before and After” – featuring pictures of locations throughout the town of “before” structures, as well as the “after” structures, and a brief history overview. With the COVID-19 pandemic in our midst, the Society has lost its crucial fundraising venues, Old Home Day and the Hot Air Balloon Rally. As the calendars will be our major fundraiser for the year, we hope the community will support us fully. The retail price for the 2021 calendar will be \$15.

They will be available in mid-July and will be sold at the Historical Society, the Josiah Carpenter Library, and the Town Hall. You may also call the Society at 603-435-8004 to leave a message or Fuzz Freeze at 603-848-4488.