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TALES OF SOUTH WOODFORD

Introduction, Summary, and Chapters 1 – 7
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Introduction

There are many old stories about the folks who lived on Woodford's old turnpike a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago [ca 1790 to 1840]. There is little truth in some of these stories but they are still worth repeating if the truth about the people concerned can be discovered at the same time. It will take a lot of words to do that. Should readers prefer a mere summary of the facts, it is presented here. Should they care for more detail about some of the people or places mentioned in the summary below, the relevant chapter numbers are inserted for convenience.

Summary

1. Woodford was early divided into two districts by the establishment of an arbitrary boundary called the Bingham Line. The Hamlin District stretched eastward over five miles to Readsboro and Searsburg. The Robinson District extended westward about one and two-thirds miles to Bennington's east line. Most of the people lived in the western quarter of the town.
2. Location of early roads and homesteads virtually separated the town into North Woodford and South Woodford. The story of South Woodford is essentially the story of the Old Turnpike. This road with its habitations can best be considered as consisting of three sections: the first [furthest east]; in the Hamlin District (about 5 miles); the second from Bingham Line [west] to the "Elbow," nearly a mile; and the third from the Elbow to the Bennington line, about 1.6 miles. [See map drawn by Walbridge.]
3. The Bigelow Pitch was probably the first inhabited place on the east part of Woodford's old Turnpike. Lt. Jonathan Rich built a camp Bigelow sold to Caleb Moore in 1790. Moore sold to Martin Scott in 1794. Scott sold it in 1796. More about the Bigelows later.
4. Capt. Oliver Perry bought Martin Scott's farm (the Bigelow Pitch) in 1796. He died there in 1820. His widow leased it to Perry Jewett in 1824. Rider Jennings came then and stayed until 1851. Tall stories were told about Capt. Perry.
5. Perhaps the Pease family was the only other one living on the Turnpike east of Bingham Line prior to 1800. Ebenezer Pease bought in 1794, 200 acres south of the road next to Bingham line and lived there until 1800.

6. David Spooner's farm stood North of the old turnpike something less than a mile east of the Hamlin Line. He occupied the north half of the Reed Pitch by 1808 and lived there until 1812 or later, near where Dunnville stream crossed the turnpike road.
7. Before 1821 Jennings Rider lived on the Spooner's farm and it came to be known as Rider's clearing. Rider was in Woodford by 1810. Many people confuse this place with the Perry place.
8. The Camp or Clough place was a later development half a mile east of the Perry place. The Camp descendants have not many facts to contribute. The Cloughs succeeded the Camps.
9. There were other early residents some of them transients. There were a few families later off to the north and the south of the turnpike road. There were Garys, Pikes, and perhaps Harrods.
10. Dunnville and Wallings Pond region should be mentioned in passing.
11. Between the Bingham Line and the Elbow Matthew and Zerah Scott were among the earliest residents. Zerah was an early town clerk. Matthew was a resident at least as early as 1788.
12. Noah Bigelow re-enters our story. There were in fact two Noah Bigelows, father and son. One of them owned a 25 acres lot and built his house about an eighth of a mile east of the Elbow on the North side of the road. He lived there a few years but was a resident of Cambridge, NY in 1793. But in 1823 a Noah Bigelow of Bennington sold land in N. W. Woodford to Giles Hollister.
13. Benjamin Reed, Innholder, built his house, also in 1788 between Bigelow's and the Elbow. Woodford Town Meetings were held there from 1792 to 1795, inclusive.
14. Josiah Lawrence owned land near Matthew Scott's home lot and probably had a house there before 1790. But he was a resident of Bennington when the census of 1791 was taken.
15. Isaac Kibbe of London, MA purchased a 100 acre lot southeast of Josiah Lawrence's and half a mile from the road early in 1795. He was a resident of Woodford in 1800 when the census was taken but apparently moved away soon afterward.
16. Paul Phelps bought land of Matthew Scott about 1797 and built and occupied a house thereon before 1800. He sold it later to John Phelps who owned it until 1816. John lived in this house sometime before 1810. This house was on the north side of the road about .2 mile west of the Bingham Line.
17. John [?Daniel] Diver's house was on the north side of the road about halfway between the Elbow and Bingham Line. He bought land and built his house in 1797 and occupied it until after 1810. It became the property of Moses Robinson, Jr. and here his brother, Fay Robinson, youngest son of the Governor, died "in wanton intemperance" in [1816?]. [An entry in the Harwood Diaries for 29 December 1815 says "Nathan Robinson died at the former Diver house on the turnpike in Woodford."]

18. Oliver Knox purchased his 50 acres north of the Turnpike Road in 1806, came from Blandford, MA and built his house that year and lived in it, or in a new home across the road until 1817 or later. This farm bordered on the Bingham Line. [Walbridge apparently missed a land purchase by Oliver Knox in 1800.]

19. Samuel Orcutt's name is not in the Woodford Census of 1791. He became a Freeman in 1792. He bought Noah Bigelow's house in 1793, but he sold most of this lot to Benjamin Reed. Orcutt probably lived somewhere north of the Elbow. Perhaps in Zerah Scott's house, perhaps in the Beeman place but possibly east of the road only 20 or 30 rods south of Beeman's, where Elijah Pierce owned later.

20. Rufus Barney acquired land throughout the Robinson District between 1800 and 1810. In due course he built his house east of the Elbow at the crest of the hill.

21. Another Camp family lived at the top of the mountain between the Elbow and Sucker Pond.

22. Elijah Pierce owned, in 1808, lands halfway down the mountain on the east side of the road. There is some reason to believe there was a house here.

23. The Beeman place stood west of the road near the foot of the steep pitch quite recently known as Beeman Hill.

24. The Greenslet place is still standing. It is generally known as the "last house" since it is the last one standing on the way up the mountain. It was quite recently occupied by the DeForge family. Perhaps it is best known as the Kate Brown place.

25. Jonathan Smith owned in 1792 what is better known as the Robert Hill place. The house stood a few rods north of the Greenslet place and on the east side of the road. Woodford Town Meetings were held at Hill's from 1797 to 1802.

26. Arnold Woodward was a later occupant of a part of Robert Hill's land. He built, about 1824, what is now the Harry Walker place, about opposite the end of the Gore Road. His father, Ichabod Woodward, did not live long in one place.

27. The Jonathan Cummingham or Arad Terril farm lay north of the Gore road and both sides of the road. Terril owned it at least as early as 1782 but it is uncertain whether he was a Woodford resident. Jonathan Cummingham was --- [Not completed]

28. The Crawford Place --- [Not completed]

29. A few other residents or possible residents should be mentioned. Nathaniel Rugg has been named living on the east end of Hill's land.

30. Stage coaches traveled over the old Turnpike Road for well over 30 years, until a new turnpike was completed. There were stories about some of the old stage drivers.

Chapter 1 - Woodford's Two Districts

The town of Woodford was divided, early, into two districts by the establishment of an arbitrary boundary called the Bingham Line.

This line parallels the west line of Woodford (or east line of Bennington) from Pownal to Glastenbury. Between Bennington and the Bingham Line lies an area of 6400 acres or more, being over six miles north and south and about one and two thirds miles east and west. This area is called the Robinson District.

East of Bingham Line lies the Hamlin District, so called, comprising nearly three quarters of the area of the township. The origin of the name of this district is not clear. Hamlin is not an old Woodford name. (Original grantee?) Perhaps it was the name of some official of the Province of New Hampshire who had a hand in laying out the plan of Woodford township. For, Hamlin District approximated Woodford township as originally chartered 180 odd years ago, less perhaps as small overrun on the west.

When the township was granted, all of the Hamlin District except a narrow and irregular strip in the south portion and some odd pieces in the west part, was laid out in rights. There were two divisions of rights. The first division was a solid block of numbered lots in the north central portion, while the second division consisted of lots with matching numbers lying south, east, and west of the first division. Each of the sixty four grantees received one lot, or right, in each division, or about 275 acres in all.

After these grants were made and about four hundred sixty acres near the southeast corner were reserved for the governor, there remained something like 3,000 acres, which Governor Wentworth had failed to apportion.

By means of Jonas Galusha's tax sales individual pitches were established on this remaining land.

As in other towns of the New Hampshire Grants, the Governor's Right and the rights of many of the original grantees were eliminated in due course by tax sales called Vendues. Woodford land records date back in no case earlier than the late 1780's. By that time the pitches had been made and many original grants had been bought up by David Lyman and others. These earlier transactions are treated in the Woodford Records as accomplished facts and no special list is recorded. Tax vendues continued after the town was organized (about 1792) and these are a matter of record.

The Robinson District, lying between Bennington and the Hamlin District contained land originally granted to the town but not included in the plan of first and second division lots. It contained also lands representing an overrun in surveying the original west line of the town, and finally included a strip of land abandoned by Bennington. For Bennington's early proprietors, not satisfied with their east row of rights, had in 1764, abandoned a strip of land three quarters of a mile

wide on the east of that town and carved out a new row of rights from land they liked better lying west of their original township. Woodford ultimately absorbed this land abandoned by Bennington.

The narrow Robinson District contained most of Woodford's population in early days. Many of the early settlers of Woodford lived within the original town of Bennington. Woodford's early roads were former Bennington roads or extensions of Bennington roads. Much of the present "Woodford Hollow" road and most of the earlier Waters Hill road lay within the original limits of Bennington. Practically all of the road running southeasterly from the "Guideboard" [junction of today's Route 9 and the Burgess Road] for as far south as the "Elbow" lay within the original town of Bennington. And the Robinson District extended easterly for near a mile further to the Bingham Line.

East of the Elbow, half a dozen or more dwellings lay within the Robinson district on the old road to Wilmington via Heartwellville. At the north this district included all of the Waters Hill Road, all of Woodford Hollow, and the present road to Woodford City, nearly as far as Dunnville Notch. The Old Camp Comfort development, Bickford Hollow, much of Hell Hollow and all but half a mile of the Woodford portion of the old Glastenbury Railroad were or are within the Robinson District. Before 1825 Woodford's Hamlin District had practically no residents except in a few scattered homesteads along the old Elbow road.

The Bingham line did not divide early Woodford into districts even roughly equal either as to area or population. But a line running east and west through the center of the township would have done so.

Chapter 2 - South Woodford's Old Road

Location of early roads and homesteads virtually separated the town into North Woodford and South Woodford. So considered, the two halves of early Woodford would be more nearly equal in population. Until Lyman's Forge was established near "The Rocks" in 1802 there were more homes in the south half and until the "New Turnpike" through Woodford City was well established, the south did not fall far behind.

The Waters Hill Road through the Northwest corner of the township was dotted with farms and homes. The Old Road in the northwest section turned eastward at the Elbow and extended across the south part of the town to Heartwellville or Heartwell's Village as it was then called. Before 1789 a rough trail ran southward from near Bickford Hollow, crossed the Elbow Road near Rider Clearing and continued southward into Stamford. At the west end of the town the two main roads were found only by Bennington roads. By these roads Waters Hill residents traveled to freemen's meetings near the Elbow from 1792 to 1802.

All of the Robinson District was sold to General David Robinson of Bennington at a public sale in 1794, in order to clear up conflicting land titles. During that year Robinson quit-claimed to various parties and they to others. It is largely from these deeds that we can now trace early titles and locate early homes. There are few earlier deeds in the Woodford land records, though a few can be found in the 1780's. And some early deeds to Woodford property can be found in Bennington. Others were later copied into Woodford records, from Book IV onward.

As this is the story of South Woodford, it is essentially the story of the Elbow Road. It is interesting to notice that this, the first known road through the Hamlin District passed entirely over pitched or ungranted land. It was obvious not a road planned by the original grantees or laid out for their benefit. In fact it was not originally laid out by or for Woodford people at all.

It was an old trail. It is said some Guilford men came that way to the Bennington Battle. It is said that William Bruce of Heartwell's Village used to walk over that road to Safford's mill and walk back home with a sack of meal on his shoulders. That would be about 1779, before there was a gristmill in Readsboro. Certainly before Blodgett made his map of Vermont in 1789 there was a road of sorts there. It was probably a poor cart road but it was a road. By 1790 there was a camp, perhaps a trapper's cabin, on the Bigelow Pitch. In 1795 Ezra Doty moved his family from Wilmington to Bennington over that route. His daughter Almira refers in her diary to the terrible condition of the road.

In 1796 a survey of this road was made by the turnpike company [Windham Turnpike Company] then in the process of formation. The survey called for [building] a road four rods wide but it is extremely unlikely that width of road was even maintained over any part of this course. The turnpike company did, however, greatly improve the road. Toll gates were installed and daily stages ran. After the stagecoaches ceased to travel that way the road was maintained by the town of Woodford (as town road #6) through the 1840's and part of the 1850's. Afterward one used it at his own risk and it deteriorated rapidly. It was probably not all abandoned at once by the town, even

east of the Elbow, and some portions of it have stood up well or been kept in condition by loggers or the lumber companies in recent times.

The town of Woodford worked the old road as far south as the Elbow until 1882 or later. In 1880 the Guilford mills at the east end, on the West Branch of the Deerfield, were in operation and a good road into Heartwellville was maintained. And there were families of employees living nearby. Northeast of Sucker Pond L.J. Barton's chair factory, better known as Marshall's Mills, gave employment to about thirty men, several of whom had houses nearby.

One more bit of late South Woodford lore. Homer Lyons used to say that most of the land around Sucker Pond was once fine meadowland and that after the turnpike was abandoned both Stamford and Woodford men went to harvest the hay regardless of whether it was in one town or the other. The Woodford crowd had a poet of sorts in Rastus Bronson. One of Bronson's verses was:

" When Limpin' Janus met the Stamford forces
He bent his axe to break their backs
And ended their discourses."

Mr. Lyons thought Limpin' Janus was a Janus Rider. We shall hear of a Jennings or Gimmings Rider who may have been the man - if he limped.

[In 1797 the state of Vermont passed legislation authorizing turnpike roads. The Vermont State Papers, volume 80, describe turnpike petitions and related actions between 1800 and 1817.
NOTE : Get VT State Papers material about turnpike.

There is considerable information about old Vermont turnpikes in The Turnpikes of New England by Frederic J. Wood (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1929). The Windham Turnpike Company was created on 1 November 1799. It took over the route from Bennington to Wilmington which an earlier company, the First Vermont, had failed to improve and had a further right to extend this road to Brattleboro. According to Wood, five tollgates were to be installed when the first seven miles of road were completed, one near the east line of Bennington, one in Readsboro, one in Wilmington, one in Marlboro, and one in Brattleboro. Wood says that the Windham Turnpike operated for about 12 years.

Further information about the construction of the Turnpike can be found in Massachusetts Court of Common Pleas documents from 1804, and Supreme Judicial Court documents from 1805 and 1807. The plaintiffs in this Action of Trespass case were Isaac Gould and Benjamin Maxwell, Jr. of Massachusetts and David Spooner of Woodford; the defendants were David Robinson, Thomas G. Wait, Samuel Thayer, Solomon Safford, David Weeks, and Samuel Safford, Jr., all of Bennington.

At a meeting of the Windham Turnpike company in Readsboro, VT on 18 March 1801 it was voted to pay Samuel Thayer, David Weeks, David Robinson, Thomas G. Wait, Solomon Safford, and Samuel Safford, Jr. \$3.70 per rod "to make seven miles of Turnpike road, beginning at the dwelling

house of said David Weeks in Bennington and to extend seven miles eastward, amounting in the whole to \$8,400 and to take their pay for the same in shares in said road provided the said road be made agreeable to the conditions of a certain bond given to said Corporation.

Chapter 3 - The Bigelow Pitch

The Bigelow Pitch was probably the first inhabited place on the eastern part of Woodford's old Turnpike. Somebody built something there before 1789 since William Blodgett showed a building labeled "Bigelow" on his map prepared that year. What was shown may have been only a camp and Jonathan Rich had built a camp. But if there was no farmhouse there in 1789 there was soon to be one.

Here is the first authentic camp in Woodford. It is in fact the earliest specific reference to a camp that this writer [Walbridge] has seen in any land records. What sort of a camp it was we are not told but it is mentioned in the three successive deeds to which this chapter will refer.

The first of these deeds is recorded first in the Bennington land records perhaps because Woodford had not town clerk as yet. The two later deeds were recorded in Woodford.

March 16, 1790, Noah Bigelow conveyed his 200 acre pitch to Caleb Moore of Readsboro. In describing the parcel conveyed the deed says:

"Begin fifty rods west of a camp built by Lieutenant Jonathan Rich on the road that crosses the Green Mountain."

More will be said about the Bigelows when their 25 acre home lot near the Elbow is discussed in Chapter 12.

Rich is given his title of "lieutenant" only in the first deed.

Who was the Jonathan Rich who had built a camp on the Bigelow Pitch by 1790?

It is possible that he was the same Jonathan who was born at Didley, CT in 1740, son of Paul Rich who died in 1756 at the time of the French and Indian Wars. That Jonathan Rich married Abigail Barton who died in 1820 in Hamilton Co., NY. One of their sons, Joshua, was born in Massachusetts, probably at Charlestown, in 1762. Joshua married Anna Livermore and they lived for some years in Halifax, BT where at least two of their sons were born, Calvin in 1790 and Arad in 1796. They removed, Joshua and Anna, and their sons Calvin and Arad, to Lake Pleasant, Hamilton Co., NY in 1805. It was at Lake Pleasant that Joshua's mother, Abigail, died in 1820. In 1821 Joshua moved again, this time to New Albion, Orleans Co., NY. Here his father, Jonathan Rich, died in 1825.

It is suggested by the above that Jonathan Rich who certainly lived with or near his son Joshua at Lake Pleasant and New Albion, NY, may also be lived with, or within a few miles of him in Southern Vermont before 1790. At that time he would have been not over 50 years old. He may have been the Jonathan Rich who built the camp on the Bigelow Pitch, a dozen miles or so from Halifax.

And who was the Caleb Moore who bought the land on which Rich had built his camp?

Caleb Moore of Readsboro in 1790 was a resident of Woodford in 1791 according to the census. He was a freeman in 1792. In 1793 he was elected selectman and was chosen delegate from Woodford to a convention to consider revision of Vermont's constitution. In 1794 Moore was elected constable. He had bought the Bigelow pitch most likely with no dwelling house or other buildings thereon, unless Jonathan Rich's camp still stood. He must have built a house and lived on the place for three years. On 17 November 1794 Moore deeded the farm to Martin Scott, grandfather of the late Giles Olin Scott of Bennington.

Major Martin Scott, son of Jonathan and Abigail (Safford) Scott, was born 22 December 1768. He died at Charleston, SC about 1815. Scott married 6 February 1794 Mary (or Polly) Billings, daughter of Samuel Billings of Bennington, and lived in 1795 on the Bigelow pitch. This is evidenced by a survey of adjoining property made in that year in which this place is mentioned as "Martin Scot's homestead farm." He [Scott] seems to have tired of living in Woodford and removed to Bennington the next year. This was not the glamorous Martin Scott who told Daniel Boone stories about himself. But the man who succeeded Scott on the farm was one of the most talked of men Woodford has produced.

On 7 February 1796 Scott sold his 200 acres to Oliver Perry who deserves a chapter of his own.

Chapter 4 - Oliver Perry

Oliver Perry of Hebron, NY bought Martin Scott's farm (the Bigelow Pitch) in 1796. He lived in Woodford until 1820.

There is quite a lot of truth that should be told about Captain Perry because so much that is untrue has been so widely circulated. To be sure many of the yarns that have been told are the same fantastic tales that have attached themselves to inns and innkeepers in many places. Others arise from inaccurate recollections or confused associations of names and places.

"Old Captain Perry told Captain Gore he remembered seeing the soldiers march past his place to the Battle of Bennington." So a nephew of Captain Gore's as well as several other informants have assured us.

But Perry had no place on the turnpike for some 20 years after the battle; few soldiers traveled that route anyway; and finally, Captain Perry died in 1820 and Captain Ransom O. Gore was born in 1834.

It is nearly a century and a quarter since Oliver Perry died. In less than half that time people could forget the facts and believe any sort of story.

What is set down here is a mixed version of several typical tales. No sensible person should believe a word of it. On second thought a few truthful contradictions will be inserted in parentheses.

(Oliver Perry was not old when he died.)

They say Captain Perry got pretty greedy in his old age, and withal, so grouchy that no one could live with him. Though deserted by his family (Facts about the family later) he stayed on and ran the tavern - pretty successfully from his point of view. He contrived to attract travelers and custom was good. But the old captain's avarice knew no bounds. It was observed that many prosperous travelers, doubtless well supplied with funds, were seen to enter his establishment but were never seen to come out again. It was generally understood that he murdered his victims and took their money. But so cleverly did he dispose of their bodies that no proof of his crimes could ever be found.

It is said that as times passed and his evil character became better known, he was avoided and his tavern shunned by all decent folks and he was left alone to gloat over his ill-gotten gains. Still he made no display of his wealth.

They tell how the old miser finally died, deserted by all except a Brattleboro physician who was somehow prevailed upon to attend him in his last illness. After he died he was buried in a lonely grave in a nearby knoll. (There were other graves than the Captain's on the Perry place.)

Later his lonely burial was explained. They say his physician one day lapsed from sobriety and revealed the secret. Perry it seems had all along been hiding his gold in that knoll and had prepared his grave there near his treasure.

No bait would ever coax the doctor to give any further information, nor even to admit, again, that he knew anything about it. Anyone could see he must have been well paid for his silence. But the secret was out and word got around.

While decent folks avoided the place until the buildings went to ruin, thieves came in the night. The grave was violated, the soil of the knoll sifted for gold. But if any of the searchers found the treasure, their success was not advertised. So it came about that the grave was many times molested. As the years rolled by it was several times necessary for folks with some sense of propriety to restore the grave. So it is said.

Many versions of this and similar tales have been told.

After all these years during which such unpleasant tales have been told about Captain Perry, we should do what we can to set matters right. Though the truth may be less exciting it is interesting and the search for it has not been dull. That search has led to the belief [by Walbridge] that, after all, stage-coaches did leave at the Perry Tavern many well-heeled guests who never emerged from said tavern to board a departing stage.

As already stated Oliver Perry came to Woodford from Hebron, NY, having purchased in 1796 the 200 acre Scott Farm or, as it was better known even then, the Bigelow Pitch.

His was one of 27 families in Woodford when the census of 1800 was taken. His home, probably the same one in which Caleb Moore and Martin Scott has resided, stood on the north side of the old turnpike. No doubt he enlarged the house. Probably no one now lives who ever saw that house. It burned some years after the Captain's death. Perry Jewett built a new house on the site and that one also burned. One of the barns is said by reliable witnesses to have been standing in 1880.

Captain Perry was moderately active in town affairs, regularly attending freemen's meetings, and held various town offices. He traded much in Heartwellville but was frequently in Bennington where he was favorably known. The Harwoods, Robinsons, Saffords, and other Bennington families exchanged social visits with the Perrys. One of his daughters, Laura, married, in 1815 Levi Jewett whom the diary-keeping Hiram Harwood described as [the] "only and spoiled son of Mr. Frederick Jewett." Hiram adds that Miss Perry, not yet 20, weighed 185 lbs.

The Perrys were all large. Captain Oliver is reported to have stood six feet, two inches "in his stocking feet." He was a sober, kindly man whose judgement and character were alike respected. He was a member of the Masonic fraternity and was buried with Masonic honors according to Hiram Harwood. [ADD date of entry or text from diary for reference.]

Captain Perry died generally respected, his family about him. There was, of course, nothing unusual in the fact that he was buried near his home. This was the usual practice in remote places in 1820, especially in the winter.

After his death, Mrs. Perry and a married daughter continued to reside in the house and to conduct the tavern for a few years. Mrs. Perry was a large, self-reliant woman said to possess prodigious strength. A story is told about her. It is said the tavern ran out of cider and Mrs. Perry drove along the "pike", to the next tavern to get some. The man of the place rolled out a full barrel of cider and started back for planks to enable him to roll it onto the Perry cart. As he turned his back Mrs. Perry is said to have picked up the barrel, set it on the cart, climbed to the seat, and driven away, laughing at his astonishment.

On 1 April 1824 Hepzebah Perry leased the Tavern and farm to Perry Jewett of Pownal, for five years, describing it as "that well known tavern stand situate on the turnpike road in Woodford -- about 200 acres of land together with all the building thereon standing --- the same formerly possessed and occupied by Oliver Perry." Jewett occupied and operated the tavern during this time and in 1826 purchased an additional 130 acres lying south of the Perry farm north of the Stamford line, and bounded on the east by the turnpike.

Sometime before 1830 Mrs. Perry relinquished the Perry Tavern to Jennings Rider, who operated it until 1851. During a part of this period half of the home was occupied by another family. The parents of Theron S. Plumb, later of Bennington, started housekeeping there about 1837.

Jennings Rider abandoned the name of the Perry Tavern and called the place "The Rider Stand," creating a great deal of confusion thereby. The original Rider place was at Rider Clearing, two and a half miles further west, where the old Dunnville road crossed the old turnpike. Rice's county map of 1856 indicated as "Old Rider Place" what was definitely the Perry place, and ignored Rider Clearing entirely. This was an unfortunate blunder.

George R. Smith, in an article which appeared in the "Bennington Banner and Reformer" of 17 November 1904, wrote "The Riders hung on at the tavern" (after the stages ceased to pass that way) "making a precarious living out of the charcoal men and the lumbermen." Much other useful material has been found in the information furnished by Smith, who was a grandson of Jennings Rider and knew whereof he wrote. (However, Mr. Smith, it must have been Perry Jewett and not Sam Jewett, as you state, who rebuilt the Perry Tavern when the original building burned.)

The Riders were the last regular occupants of the Perry place. Aside from transient families, or squatters, it was deserted after their departure.

It was many years later that the evil stories got about. The grave of the blameless Captain was, in fact, many times disturbed. At least one new gravestone was provided and the grave was several times refilled, until, a hundred years or so after his death, the remains of the much abused Captain Perry were removed by descendants to a more peaceful grave.

The tales of travelers robbed of their money may be true tales. But, if so, Captain Perry was a loser and not the guilty party. George W. Plumb suggests an explanation for which he modestly gives credit to Tom Canedy late of the Heartwellville Hotel.

The explanation is that prosperous travelers stopping at the tavern were met by professional gamblers who enticed them to nearby cabins for a little game and won away their money. Ashamed, or perhaps afraid, to face their landlord, whose reckoning they were now unable they sneaked away. They walked through the woods to await the stage at a point out of sight of the tavern. Hence stage drivers may indeed have left at the tavern many prosperous travelers whom they did not later carry away from the tavern door, picking them up, instead, a few rods away.

Chapter 5 - Ebenezer Pease

Perhaps the Pease family was the only other Turnpike family living east of the Bingham Line before 1800. The Moores, the Scotts and the Perrys had occupied the Bigelow pitch before that year.

Mathew Scott deeded Ebenezer Pease 300 acres on 29 May 1794. But it is possible that Pease was already living on the place. For 1794 was the year in which disputed titles were being adjusted in the Robinson District and in May of that year Scott issued deeds to several nearby pieces, solely for the purpose of clarifying titles. There may have been an earlier deed of which no record has been found.

Pease had 100 acres west of the Bingham Line and 200 acres east of the line in the Hamlin District. He lived on the east portion, where his land extended one hundred rods eastward along the south side of the road and ran south a full mile to the Stamford line.

Pease does not appear to have been a resident of Woodford in 1791 according to the census taken that year nor is his name found in the census of 1800. Presumably he came to Woodford after 1791 and left before census time in 1800. In 1798 he sold 68 acres to Solomon Safford, one of the turnpike proprietors. On 26 February 1800 he sold the rest of the 200 acres, including his house, to Safford. On the same day he and Mathew Scott jointly conveyed the Robinson land to [Archabald] Black and [Thomas] Green. This hundred acres was later part of the Oliver Knox farm.

These deeds of 26 February 1800 describe Pease as of Woodford. He must have left soon afterward.

Nothing is known to the writer [Walbridge] concerning whence Pease came nor whither he went, whose child he was, nor what children he had. There are not even any stories. There is just one miserable little jingle, possibly as unfair to Mr. Pease as the Perry stories were to the good Captain Oliver. The verse is about as follows:

Ebenezer loved his ease,
Too tired he was to cut down trees;
Every winter'd well nigh freeze
Neglectful Ebenezer Pease.

The three deeds furnish the little evidence we have. He lived south of the road, not over a quarter of a mile east of Bingham Line, lived there before January of 1798, probably by 1795, and until February of 1800 but not much longer. The two hundred acres which for the short time was the Pease lot was the old Phineas Scott Pitch, sold by Phineas to Mathew Scott in 1782. This conveyance is found in Bennington land records. On later timber charts, this is shown as the Downs lot.

Chapter 6 - The Spooner Farm at Rider Clearing

Daniel Spooner's farm stood north of the Old Turnpike something less than a mile east of the Hamlin Line.

One of the two hundred acre "pitches" sold for taxes by Sheriff Jonas Galusha years before Woodford was organized, was purchased by Benjamin Reed and was long known as the Reed Pitch. The old road cut across the middle of it so that 100 acres lay to the north and 100 acres to the south of the highway. Each half extended back from the road for half a mile; consequently the pitch was 100 rods wide from west to east. The Spooner farm was the north half of the Reed Pitch.

The Reed Pitch had again been sold for taxes before 1795 and the north half had been bid off by Mathew Scott.

On 30 October 1795, Mathew Scott sold the north half of the Reed Pitch to Smith Clark of Haddam, CT. Clark sold the same piece to David Lyman of Middletown, CT on 1 November 1797. Ten years later, in October of 1807, Lyman sold it to Daniel Spooner. There had been an Eliakim Spooner in Woodford as early as 1799 but this seems to be the first mention of Daniel.

In 1808 a conveyance of adjoining land mentions "land now occupied by Daniel Spooner." In a mortgage given to Moses Robinson Jr. in 1809, Spooner mentioned "my homestead or lot I now live on." It is so described in another mortgage in 1811. In October 1812 Spooner sold his homestead, including house and barn, to Samuel Faxon of Rensselaer Co., NY.

We have no further concern with Mr. Faxon. The land passed from his possession. We know not where Mr. Spooner came from nor what became of him. He was a selectman in Woodford in 1809. In 1810 he, Oliver Perry, and John Wilson were designated by the selectmen, constables and justices as men "Suitable to keep Inns or Houses of Public Entertainment in the Town of Woodford the ensuing year." Perhaps then, for a year or two after 1810 his house was one of the stage coach stops.

Mr. Spooner may have moved his family away about the time he sold his farm in 1812 or he may have stayed on for a time as a tenant. We have no more facts about him.

This seems as good a place as any to introduce an old story. Whether this yarn is spun around the Spooner family or another is anybody's guess. The Spooner place has its own, but different tale of hidden treasure.

It is said that one day a foot traveler came along the pike and stopped at this farm. He asked if he might work for his supper and did so and was fed. After supper he helped finish up the chores and was allowed to sleep in the barn. The next morning he earned his breakfast then asked if he could not stay on and work for his keep. He explained that he had no folks, his wants were few, and promised no trouble. He had made a good impression and an arrangement was made.

He continued to make himself useful and to keep out of the way. The family liked him. After a time he asked if he could cut lumber on the place and build himself a cabin "out back." The owner consented but explained he could furnish nothing but the standing timber. The man was satisfied and set about building his cabin.

And though he had seemed to be destitute it was noticed that he was somehow able to provide the hardware and other necessities for the building and to furnishing it in cozy though simple fashion. When it was finished he established himself there and lived by himself though continuing to help about the place as usual. For this he received firewood and food, managing in some manner to clothe himself.

One morning he failed to appear to help with the work. No smoke arose from his chimney. One of the family went to investigate and found the old man lying on his cot near to death. He was able to ask for a decent burial and to indicate where money was concealed in the hearth to pay for it; then he died.

Proper burial and headstone were provided.

Of course the story got about! And somehow it was noised about that in addition to the burial fund there had been mention of a greater treasure concealed elsewhere which the family had not been able to discover.

About this time the family decided to sell out and move away. The story has it that "Dick" rider's father bought the place and left no stone unburned in an unsuccessful search for treasure. Meanwhile it was reported that the family that had lived there before - and lived in very moderate circumstances - had moved to Connecticut and bought a fine fertile farm, well stocked and equipped with the best of everything to replace their poor Mountain farm.

I [Henry Walbridge] like that yarn, and others do, for I have heard it many times! As a story.

Of course it does not fit the facts. Spooner did not sell to Rider. But in due course Dick Rider's father did live there. He may even have been the next tenant. For, the Spooner place was at what we now know as Rider Clearing, near where Dunnville Stream crossed the Old Turnpike road.

There is a gap in the record of the north half of the Reed Pitch (as Spooner described his farm) from 1812 when Daniel Spooner sold it, until 1821 when there was another tax sale.

Chapter 7 - Rider Clearing and the Riders

By 1821 Jennings Rider lived on the Spooner farm which has since come to be known as Rider Clearing.

Parcel Number Eight of a tax sale held in 1821 was that same north half of the Reed Pitch that Spooner had occupied before 1812. But it was now described as the north half of a two hundred acre pitch "on which Ginnings Rider now lives." The record further state that the tax was "paid by the committee for Ginnings Rider."

But Rider was not the owner. Five years elapsed. In March of 1826 John and Eunice Whiton of Bennington, as heirs of Moses Robinson, Jr., quite claimed to Dr. Heman Swift of Bennington, all their Woodford land "including the 100 acres known by the names of the Spooner lot and was deeded to him by Moses Robinson," (Jr.). Again in this deed it is described as the lot "on which Ginnings Rider now lives."

It was time, however, for another tax sale. In July of 1826 this piece was again advertised. "Ginnings" Rider again paid the tax, evidently by agreement. Tax and costs totaling \$4.35 were paid by Rider on July 26 "without the deed" but the record says one acre at the south end of the piece (that is, on the road) was sold to him. On the same day Rider also paid tax and costs of \$4.35 on the hundred acres on the south side of the road. For this service he seems to have received half an acre at the north end, that is, opposite his acre across the road. This seems to be the first land Rider owned on the turnpike. How much he acquired after 1826 is not clear. But he seems to have occupied, until 1829, most if not all of the Spooner farm and some lands south of the road. It is probable that his son, Dickerman A. Rider, lived there for some years after Jennings moved to the Perry place.

Jennings Rider married at Whitingham, VT on 3 August 1806 Sally (or Sarah) Allen of that town. After residing there for a time they removed to Woodford in 1809 or 1810 as indicated by the birthplaces of their children which Rider recorded with Woodford's Town Clerk as follows:

Alvin Rider	b. Whitingham, 21 March 1807
Dickerman A. Rider	b. Whitingham, 11 October 1808
Moses Rider	b. Woodford, 18 July 1810
Arabella Rider	b. Woodford, 5 January 1812
	d. Woodford, 15 May 1813
Isaac Tichenor Rider	b. Woodford, 1 May 1814
Arabella Rider	b. Woodford, 17 July 1815
[Record torn]	
a daughter	b., Woodford 10 March [torn]

One of the daughters was the mother of George Smith who was mentioned in the chapter about the Perry Place. The second son, Dickerman Rider, married at Pownal 25 January 1831, Amelia Lillie. They lived for many years in Woodford, some of that time at Rider Clearing. Later

Dickerman rider acquired other Woodford land on the west slope of the east mountain near lands of George R. Burgess. Then he moved over the town line into the eastern part of Bennington near the end of the Gore Road. He died in Bennington 22 September 1889. Mrs. Rider, born in 1811, died in 1891. They had three children: Charles, a chairmaker of Woodford; Lucy, who married Wm. H. Bently and lived for a time near the junction of the Gore and Burgess roads; and Jesse who removed to Chicago.

Alvan Rider had a son James, born at Bennington 11 September 1843.

There is probably no error in presuming from the birth records cited above that Jennings Rider was living in Woodford by 1810. He is probably the Rider meant by the listing of a James Rider in the census of 1810 for no other reference to a James Rider is found. He may be presumed to be the Rider who served as petit juror according to the Woodford records of 1813.

In what part of Woodford he first resided is not clear. Nor do we know when he first lived on the clearing that still bears his name. He must have known Daniel Spooner; he may have been Spooner's tenant. Perhaps he moved into the house soon after Spooner moved out. Perhaps he came there to hunt for treasure. And perhaps he later moved to the Perry place for the same reason. Or perhaps another member of the family started both treasure stories. The reader may decide; deponent sayeth not further.

Except that Jennings Rider did us wrong when he moved from Rider Clearing, two miles and a half to the east, to the Perry place and renames that "The Rider Stand." Mapmaker Ed Rice increased the confusion when on his county map of 1856 he ignored Rider Clearing and labeled the Perry place "Old Rider Place."

DRAFT 18 September 2002

Chapter 18 – Oliver Knox and the Blandford Connection

Oliver Knox “of Blandford” purchased 100 acres in Woodford on 17 December 1800 and an additional 50 acres on 6 February 1807 (Woodford Town Records, Book 2). He built a house on the north side of the turnpike near the Elbow and, perhaps, another building on the south side of the road at this same location. Oliver acquired an additional 317 acres of land in Woodford in 1809 as the result of a lawsuit involving James Loyd of Blandford. This appears to be the same 317 acres described in a 1810 mortgage deed to Moses Robinson as “my home farm on which I now live.” The mortgage, payable in 3 years for “200 sheep worth \$400,” suggests that Knox was raising sheep on his farm.

Oliver Knox was one of several members of the Knox family of Blandford, MA to purchase land in Woodford between 1797 and 1800. John Knox, John Jr., and Samuel Knox also acquired land but only Oliver appears to have settled in Woodford. He was elected Hayward and Surveyor of Highways at the Woodford Town Meeting on 2 March 1802. He appears on the Woodford list of Freemen in 1809 and in Woodford on the 1810 U.S. Census. But Oliver had begun selling his Woodford land by 1807 (Woodford Town Records, Book 3) and he had left Woodford by 27 November 1815 for on that date Thomas Trenor purchased 302 acres of land “called the Knox farm” for \$9.52 in taxes and the cost of the sale.

But Oliver Knox had two daughters who remained in Bennington. Julia Knox married Stephen Pratt, Jr. and became the mother of Julie Ann (Pratt) Hawks (1807 - 1864) and the grandmother of William E. Hawks, Sarah (Hawks) Huling, and George M. Hawks. Catharine Knox (1787 – 1878) married William Burt, Jr. in 1807 and had seven children: Catharine (Burt) Cromack, Sarah (Burt) Cromack, William S. Burt, Daniel R. Burt, Ruth (Burt) Rockwood, Almira (Burt) Gould, Job H. Burt, and Amanda (Burt) Winslow. In February 1933 Henry Walbridge interviewed two of Catharine’s grandchildren, Sidney A. Burt and Job Oliver Burt, to learn the stories she had told them about her life in Woodford.. That interview supplied some of the material for Walbridge’s *Tales of South Woodford*. In 1999 Catharine’s great, great granddaughter discovered this interview and the Walbridge materials; this motivated her to complete Walbridge’s work and create this document.

The Knox family were not the only individuals from Blandford who purchased land in Woodford. Others include Archibald Black, Reuben Boice, David Cannon, Daniel Diver, James Loyd, Abner Ranney, Ann Weaver, and John G. Wilson. Why were so many people from Blandford, MA interested in buying land along the future turnpike in Woodford, VT? The answer is suggested by the following from *Roads and Travel in New England: 1790 – 1840* (by Roger N. Parks, published by Old Sturbridge Village, 1967).

Levi Pease, a blacksmith in Blandford, MA in 1783 decided to start a stage line between Boston and Hartford. “Pease and his partner started the business with two coaches and twelve horses, persisted and ... by 1786 had thrice weekly stages running between Boston

and New York. By 1795 there were 'upwards of a hundred horses and twenty carriages employed' between Boston and New York and competitors were trying to emulate Pease's success."]

NOTE - find Sumner G. Wood, "The Taverns and Turnpikes of Blandford"

Draft 21 September 2002

Chapter 26

Arnold Woodward was a later occupant of a part of Robert Hill's land. He built, about 1824, what is now [when Walbridge was writing] the Harry Walker place, about opposite the end of the Gore Road. His father, Ichabod Woodward, reportedly settled in Woodford in 1818.

Arnold Woodward was born in Swanzey, NH on 29 April 1803 (Maria Woodward Walbridge family Bible, Bennington Museum) or on 28 December 1803 (New Hampshire vital records). On 2 February 1824 in Guilford, VT he married Jane Ferrell Rogers, who had been born in Palmer, MA in March 1802. According to Woodford records at the Bennington Museum the couple moved to Woodford about 1825 and lived "on the Old Turnpike."

Arnold and Jane had nine children: Charlotte 1824 – 1890, m. ? Wrisley; Henry 1825 – 1857; Alonzo 1827 – 1914; Maria J. 1829 – 1918, m. Henry S. Walbridge, the grandfather of the Henry Walbridge who compiled the Tales of South Woodford; Arnold Wells 1830 – 1917, m. Eunice Lyons; H. Finette 1832 – 1880; O. Rogers 1834 – 1916; Mary 1837 – 1870, m. Henry E. Burgess, and Marilla H. 1839 – 1890, m. ? Cutting.

Ichabod Woodward was born in Sudbury, MA 3 August 1771, the son of Daniel and Susan Woodward. He lived in Swanzey, NH prior to 1811, in Brattleboro, VT from 1811 to 1814, in Bennington from 1814 to 1817, and in Woodford from 1818 until his death on 26 August 1837. [CHECK for him in Woodford records.] His wife, Hepzibah or Hepzibath Scott, was the daughter of Nathan and Ruth (Allen) Scott and, according to family tradition, was related to Ethan Allen's brother, Heman. An article about a reunion of the descendants of Arnold and Jane Rogers Woodward (Bennington Banner 18 August 1924) contained a poem by Mrs. W. R. White of North Bennington that included the following:

"Many are the stories told us
Of our relative Heman Allen
And his famous brother Ethan.
We repeat them as we heard them
From the lips of Grandma Woodward"

Ichabod and Hepzibah Woodward had three other children in addition to Arnold. They were: Roxanna 1798 – 1877, m. ? Hall; Rachael 1807 – 1891, m. Joseph Wickwire; and Maria 1809 – 1907, m. Henry Jewett. Maria and Henry Jewett moved to Illinois after their 1834 marriage and their descendants were living in the state of Washington by 2000, but the identical story of the relationship to Heman Allen was alive in that branch of the family as well as among the Bennington area descendants.

In a 1933 interview with Henry Walbridge, Sarah (Burgess) Woodward said that about 1856 Richmond and Josephus Burgess bought an old tavern on the west side of Harmon Hill from Isaac

Weeks. The house next to the tavern was the Arnold Woodward place. She said the Woodwards in her husband's family were from Sandgate and were not related to Arnold Woodward.

2 November 2002

TALES OF SOUTH WOODFORD

Chapters 8 – 30

By Ruth Burt Ekstrom and John Irons
Based in part on material from
Henry B. Walbridge

Chapter 8 – The Camp or Clough Place

According to Henry Walbridge, the Camp or Clough place was a later development than the Perry, Pease and Spooner places. It was located half a mile east of the Perry place. There was a family of Camps at Camp Meadows some years before the Civil War. There was another Camp family between the Elbow and Sucker Pond at about the same time. But the old Camp place was at neither of these locations. It is older than either and not much is now known about it.

There were Camps among the original grantees of Woodford but there were not among the organizers of the town. They do not appear to have settled in Woodford before 1815, perhaps a few years later. Walbridge says, "We must write of them [the Camps] much as we might write of Prehistoric Man – since there are no records."

The old Camp place was south of the Perry place and half to three-quarters of a mile away. Leslie Weld told Walbridge that he thought there was an old inn or tavern at this location even before the Camps arrived. Weld told Walbridge a story of travelers demanding roast lamb when the lady of the house was there alone. She was said to have coaxed a pet lamb into the kitchen, killed, dressed, and cooked it and served the travelers their meal.

Walbridge felt that there was probably not an inn or tavern at this location "but householders on lonely roads expected in those days to provide meals for travelers who could pay for them."

The Camps were said to have had three daughters who married Henry Bent, Lyman Fradenburg, and Charles Bent. There is a stone in the Village cemetery in Bennington for a Nancy Camp, born 1849, died 1926, who married Charles Bent (1847 – 1895).

Walbridge said, "Enough good can be said of the Camps so that a malicious story can be told." [NEED to FIND story or omit this paragraph.] This story reportedly involved a stolen heifer and the suicide of one of the Camps. The same story, according to Walbridge, has sometimes erroneously been connected with Rider Clearing.

The Cloughs succeeded the Camps. The Clough house was standing as late as 1862, according to Walbridge, but it had been deserted for some years. In the 1840s, after the opening of Woodford's New Turnpike through Woodford City and the consequent abandonment of the Elbow

road, Charles Clough moved back to Readsboro. Part or all of the Clough farm was later sold to the E.P. Hunt Company.

Chapter 9. There were other early residents some of them transients. There were a few families later off to the north and the south of the turnpike road. There were Garys, Pikes, and perhaps Harrods.

Chapter 10. Dunnville and Wallings Pond region should be mentioned in passing.

Chapter 11. Between the Bingham Line and the Elbow Matthew and Zerah Scott were among the earliest residents. Zerah was an early town clerk. Matthew was a resident at least as early as 1788.

Chapter 12 – The Bigelows

Noah Bigelow re-enters our story. There were in fact two Noah Bigelows, father and son [CHECK 1791 census?] One of them owned a 25 acres lot and built his house about an eighth of a mile east of the Elbow on the North side of the road. He lived there a few years but was a resident of Cambridge, NY in 1793. But in 1823 a Noah Bigelow of Bennington sold land in N. W. Woodford to Giles Hollister.

Genealogical records provide some possible identifications of the two Noahs. A Noah Bigelow was born in Westboro (Worcester) MA 29 January 1766 and died ca. March 1844. He married, ca. 1790, Cynthia Scott, born about 1769 in Vermont. [? Is she related to Scott families who owned Woodford land?] Another Noah Bigelow, who married Elizabeth Gooding at Cambridge, NY on 18 March 1778, died on 29 March 1833.

Chapter 13. Benjamin Reed, Innholder, built his house, also in 1788 between Bigelow's and the Elbow. Woodford Town Meetings were held there from 1792 to 1795, inclusive.

Chapter 14. Josiah Lawrence owned land near Matthew Scott's home lot and probably had a house there before 1790. But he was a resident of Bennington when the census of 1791 was taken.

Chapter 15 – Isaac Kibbe

Isaac Kibbe of Loudon, MA purchased a 100 acre lot southeast of Josiah Lawrence's and half a mile from the road early in 1795. He was a resident of Woodford in 1800 when the census was taken but apparently moved away soon afterward.

The Vital Records of Otis, MA show that Isaac Kibbe of Loudon married twice in 1788. The first marriage, on 16 June, was to Naomi Kibbe of Loudon. The second on 21 December was to Margery Sears, widow, of Blandford, MA; this marriage was held in Blandford.

Chapter 16. Paul Phelps bought land of Matthew Scott about 1797 and built and occupied a house thereon before 1800. He sold it later to John Phelps who owned it until 1816. John lived in this house sometime before 1810. This house was on the north side of the road about .2 mile west of the Bingham Line.

Chapter 17 – The Divers

John Diver owned a house on the north side of the road about halfway between the Elbow and Bingham Line. He bought the land and built the house in 1797 and occupied it until after 1810.

Woodford records show land purchases by a John Diver and a Daniel Diver, both from Blandford, MA. John Diver of Blandford brought 100 acres of land from Elijah Boardman of Herkimer County, NY in May 1797 “beginning at the southeast corner of the Robinson district”; this was “recoveyed”, naming John Diver, merchant of Blandford, as the buyer and John Boardman of Troy, NY as the seller in October 1798. John Diver of Blandford also bought a lot of unspecified size “beginning at Lt. Solomon Safford’s northeast corner” from Martin Scott of Woodford in September 1797. John Diver of Woodford bought 278 acres “first and second division lots in the Hamlin district” from Benjamin Fassett of Bennington in July 1798. In May 1798 Daniel Diver of Blandford bought 700 acres from Benjamin Fassett of Bennington “beginning at the line between Stamford and the Bigelow pitch.”

John Diver appears in Woodford, VT as a head of household on the 1800 and 1810 US Census. [Check for household composition.]

In 1805 John Diver “of Bennington” testified in the turnpike lawsuit that he had worked to help build the turnpike near his father’s house in Woodford in 1801. This may be the John Diver, Jr. who was born in Blandford, MA about 1 July 1782. Some records show him as the son of John Diver, other as the son of Daniel Diver. [CHECK further] The 1790 Federal Census for Blandford, MA shows a household headed by a Daniel Diver and a household headed by a John Diver. It is perhaps this John Diver who was the merchant who purchased the Woodford land.

[An entry in the Harwood Diaries for 29 December 1815 says “Nathan Robinson died at the former Diver house on the turnpike in Woodford.”]

Walbridge said this house became the property of Moses Robinson, Jr. and here his brother, Fay Robinson, youngest son of the Governor, died "in wanton intemperance" in 1815.

Chapter 18 – Oliver Knox and the Blandford Connection

Oliver Knox “of Blandford” purchased 100 acres in Woodford on 17 December 1800 and an additional 50 acres on 6 February 1807 (Woodford Town Records, Book 2). He built a house on the north side of the turnpike near the Elbow and, perhaps, another building on the south side of the road at this same location. Oliver acquired an additional 317 acres of land in Woodford in 1809 as the result of a lawsuit involving James Lloyd of Blandford. This appears to be the same 317 acres described in a 1810 mortgage deed to Moses Robinson as “my home farm on which I now live.” The mortgage, payable in 3 years for “200 sheep worth \$400,” suggests that Knox was raising sheep on his farm.

Oliver Knox was one of several members of the Knox family of Blandford, MA to purchase land in Woodford between 1797 and 1800. John Knox, John Jr., and Samuel Knox also acquired land but only Oliver appears to have settled in Woodford. He was elected Hayward and Surveyor of Highways at the Woodford Town Meeting on 2 March 1802. He appears on the Woodford list of Freeman in 1809 and in Woodford on the 1810 U.S. Census. But Oliver had begun selling his Woodford land by 1807 (Woodford Town Records, Book 3) and he had left Woodford by 27 November 1815 for on that date Thomas Trenor purchased 302 acres of land “called the Knox farm” for \$9.52 in taxes and the cost of the sale.

Although he left the area, Oliver Knox had two daughters who remained in Bennington. Julia Knox married Stephen Pratt, Jr.[year?] and became the mother of Julie Ann (Pratt) Hawks (1807 - 1864) and the grandmother of William E. Hawks, Sarah (Hawks) Huling, and George M. Hawks. Catharine Knox (1787 – 1878) married William Burt, Jr. in 1807 and had seven children: Catharine who married Joseph Cromack; Sarah, who married Charles Cromack; William S. Burt; Daniel R. Burt; Ruth, who married David Rockwood, Jr.; Almira, who married Newton Gould; Job H. Burt; and Amanda, who married William Winslow. In February 1933 Henry Walbridge interviewed two of Catharine’s grandchildren, Sidney A. Burt and Job Oliver Burt, to learn what she had told them about her life in Woodford. In 1999 Catharine’s great, great granddaughter, Ruth Burt Ekstrom, discovered this interview in some of Walbridge materials at the Bennington Museum; this motivated her to complete Walbridge’s work.

The Knox family were not the only individuals from Blandford to purchase land in Woodford. Others include Archibald Black, Reuben Boice, David Cannon, Daniel Diver, John Diver, James Lloyd, Abner Ranney, Ann Weaver, and John G. Wilson. Why were so many people from Blandford, MA interested in buying land along the future turnpike in Woodford, VT? They might have wanted to farm the land. They might have been interested in the wood and cutting it for lumber or to make charcoal for the near-by ironworks. Or they might have been speculating that the land would become more valuable when the turnpike was built and would therefore be a profitable investment.

One possible reason why Blandford folks were interested in turnpikes is suggested by the following from Roads and Travel in New England: 1790 – 1840 (by Roger N. Parks, published by Old Sturbridge Village, 1967).

Levi Pease, a blacksmith in Blandford, MA in 1783 decided to start a stage line between Boston and Hartford. "Pease and his partner started the business with two coaches and twelve horses, persisted and ... by 1786 had thrice weekly stages running between Boston and New York. By 1795 there were 'upwards of a hundred horses and twenty carriages employed' between Boston and New York and competitors were trying to emulate Pease's success."

So it seems likely that the Blandford group were speculating on land in Woodford, probably with the hope that the turnpike that was being built there would be successful and enrich them. But neither Oliver Knox or any of the other Blandford land-owners are documented as share-holders in the turnpike corporation.]

NOTE – find Sumner G. Wood, "The Taverns and Turnpikes of Blandford"

CHECK – Is Levi Pease of Blandford related to Ebenezer Pease who settled in Woodford?

Chapter 19. Samuel Orcutt's name is not in the Woodford Census of 1791. He became a Freeman in 1792. He bought Noah Bigelow's house in 1793. but he sold most of this lot to Benjamin Reed. Orcutt probably lived somewhere north of the Elbow. Perhaps in Zerah Scott's house, perhaps in the Beeman place but possibly east of the road only 20 or 30 rods south of Beeman's, where Elijah Pierce owned later.

Chapter 20 – Rufus Barney

According to Walbridge, Rufus Barney acquired land throughout the Robinson District between 1800 and 1810. In due course he built his house east of the Elbow at the crest of the hill.

Barney had come to Bennington from Taunton, MA about 1789, accompanied by his brother-in-law, Ebenezer Chase, George Godfrey and William Burt according to Jennings (Memorials of a Century), who says they sailed from Taunton to Troy, NY, then traveled by road from Troy to Bennington. Barney, Chase and Burt all purchased land in Woodford as well as in Bennington and were involved in activities connected with iron working.

The Genealogy of the Barney Family in America, (E.D. Preston, Barney Family Historical Association, ?date and place), says that Rufus Barney was the son of Elisha and Silence (Eddy) Barney and was born at Taunton 22 July 1754. He married at Taunton 18 September 1774 Sarah Holmes, born in 1753. Rufus and Sarah had ten children: Jane, who married Elijah Greenslit; Lemuel; Silence, who married Levi Scott; Libeus; Betsy, who married Elisha Downs; Ward; Anne; Clarissa, who married George Barney; and Charles.

Rufus had served in the Revolutionary War in a variety of capacities, dating from 1775 until 1780. He was commissioned as a captain in the Bristol county regiment of the Massachusetts militia on 3 August 1778. He also served as a captain in Colonel Carpenter's regiment in 1780. According to the family genealogy, he is called "Ensign" and "Captain" in Taunton records. He sold his home in Taunton about 1788 and moved to Bennington.

"Rufus Barney was connected with the iron works in Bennington in 1788," according to the family genealogy, "and held land there in common with Ebenezer Chase in 1790. In 1798 he went to Swanton, Vermont with his brother Elisha, his son Lemuel, and his son-in-law Levi Scott to establish an ironmaking business. He later turned over his interests to Lemuel and returned to Bennington. 'He was a man of more than ordinary ability.'"

There is considerable information about Rufus Barney in the Vermont Historical Gazetteer (Abby Hemenway, Montpelier: 18??, Vol. IV, p. 1108 – 1109) in a section about Swanton written by his grandnephew, George Barney. "He (Rufus), in order it would seem to give his brother and sons a fair start in life, determined on securing some favorable location in the then northern wilds of Vermont, where they might settle and engage in the manufacture of iron or some other business. ... they came to Swanton and ... purchased of Silas Hathaway the equal undivided half of 200 acres of land on the west side of the river ... the deed bearing date Feb. 23, 1799. The other half of this tract was owned by Simeon Hathaway of Bennington. ... After division of the water privilege there was a line drawn ... Above this line was to belong to Simeon Hathaway, and below this to the Barneys, which was then known as the forge privilege. Capt. Rufus, as he was called, came on here in the spring of 1799 and commenced the forge flume. ... He returned to Bennington in the fall of 1799 and about the month of May 1800 came on here again bringing his men with him. ... the forge was started in the fall of 1800. Capt. Rufus returned in the fall to Bennington, but came up the next year and the year after to give proper direction to the business, and when he saw (it is presumed)

† that they could get along without his aid, he, in 1803, gave up the concern into the hands of his brother and sons, taking no further interest in the business only to come up to see how they were doing every two or three years until about 1814, when he made his last visit to Swanton. ... From what I have learned from those who were acquainted with Capt. Rufus, I conclude he was a man of broad views, intelligent, of kindly feelings, strong will and much force of character, with considerable dignity of bearing.”

Sarah (Holmes) Barney died 3 December 1815 and Rufus Barney died 28 February 1826. They are buried in the Bushnell lot in Pownal, VT.

Chapter 21. Another Camp family lived at the top of the mountain between the Elbow and Sucker Pond.

Chapter 22. Elijah Pierce owned, in 1808, lands halfway down the mountain on the east side of the road. There is some reason to believe there was a house here.

Chapter 23. The Beeman place stood west of the road near the foot of the steep pitch quite recently known as Beeman Hill.

Chapter 24. The Greenslet place is still standing. It is generally known as the "last house" since it is the last one standing on the way up the mountain. It was quite recently occupied by the DeForge family. Perhaps it is best known as the Kate Brown place.

Chapter 25. Jonathan Smith owned in 1792 what is better known as the Robert Hill place. The house stood a few rods north of the Greenslet place and on the east side of the road. Woodford Town Meetings were held at Hill's from 1797 to 1802.

Chapter 26 – Ichabod and Arnold Woodward Families

Arnold Woodward was a later occupant of a part of Robert Hill's land. He built, about 1824, what was, when Walbridge was writing, the Harry Walker place, about opposite the end of the Gore Road. Walbridge says that Arnold Woodward's father, Ichabod Woodward, moved to Bennington with his family in 1814 and operated a tavern at the Demmick Stand from 1814 until 1817 or 1818 when he moved to a place on the turnpike in Woodford and operated a tavern, said to have been located one-quarter of a mile or less west of Dunnville Stream on the north side of the road, until 1829 or later..

Arnold Woodward was born in Swanzy, NH on 28 December 1803 (New Hampshire vital records) or on 29 April 1803 (Maria Woodward Walbridge family Bible, Bennington Museum). On 2 February 1824 in Guilford, VT he married Jane Ferrell Rogers, who had been born in Palmer, MA in March 1802. According to Woodford records at the Bennington Museum, the couple moved to Woodford about 1825 and lived "on the Old Turnpike." Walbridge says they initially lived at the Kate Brown place, then elsewhere on the turnpike until 1829 when their house burned. The later lived at the Myron Woodward place. After Jane Woodward's death in 1875, Arnold Woodward sold his home to Myron Woodward (1840 – 1925) subject to a life tenancy lease. Arnold died in Woodford in March 1888 during the great blizzard of that year.

Arnold and Jane Woodward had nine children: Charlotte (1824 – 1890), who married ___ Wrisley; Henry (1825 – 1857); Alonzo (1827 – 1914); Maria J. (1829 – 1918), who married Henry S. Walbridge, the grandfather of the Henry B. Walbridge who compiled the Tales of South Woodford; Arnold Wells (1830 – 1917), who married Eunice Lyons; H. Finette (1832 – 1880); O. Rogers (1834 – 1916); Mary (1837 – 1870), who married Henry E. Burgess, and Marilla H. (1839 – 1890), who married _____ Cutting.

Ichabod Woodward was born in Sudbury, MA 3 August 1771, the son of Daniel and Susan Woodward. He lived in Swanzy, NH prior to 1811, in Brattleboro, VT from 1811 to 1814, in Bennington from 1814 to 1817, and in Woodford from 1818 until his death on 26 August 1837. [CHECK for him in Woodford records.] His wife, Hepzibah or Hepzibath Scott, was the daughter of Nathan and Ruth (Allen) Scott and, according to family tradition, was related to Ethan Allen's brother, Heman. An article about a reunion of the descendants of Arnold and Jane Rogers Woodward (Bennington Banner 18 August 1924) contained a poem by Mrs. W. R. White of North Bennington that included the following lines:

“Many are the stories told us
Of our relative Heman Allen
And his famous brother Ethan.
We repeat them as we heard them
From the lips of Grandma Woodward”

Ichabod and Hepzibah Woodward had three other children in addition to Arnold. They were: Roxanna 1798 – 1877, who married ___ Hall; Rachael 1807 – 1891, who married Joseph

Wickwire; and Maria 1809 – 1907, who married Henry Jewett. Maria and Henry Jewett moved to Illinois after their 1834 marriage and their descendants were living in the state of Washington by 2000, but the identical story of the relationship to Heman Allen has remained alive in that branch of the family as well as among the Bennington area descendants.

In a 1933 interview with Henry Walbridge, Sarah (Burgess) Woodward said that about 1856 Richmond and Josephus Burgess bought an old tavern on the west side of Harmon Hill from Isaac Weeks. The house next to the tavern was the Arnold Woodward place. She said the Woodwards in her husband's family were from Sandgate and were not related to Arnold Woodward.

27. The Jonathan Cummingham or Arad Terril farm lay north of the Gore road and both sides of the road. Terril owned it at least as early as 1782 but it is uncertain whether he was a Woodford resident. Jonathan Cummingham was --- [Not completed]

Chapter 28. The Crawford Place --- [Not completed]

Chapter 29. A few other residents or possible residents should be mentioned. Nathaniel Rugg has been named living on the east end of Hill's land.

Chapter 30 – Stage Coaches and Their Drivers

Stage coaches traveled over the old Turnpike Road for well over 30 years, until a new turnpike through Woodford City was completed.

The Weeks family started a small tavern on the west of the Elbow Road. Later they had a big house east of the road. David Weeks was responsible for the horse concession for the turnpike which, Walbridge believed, may have involved as many as 100 horses. Each stage had two to four horses. The horses were changed every four miles. The average speed of the stages was four miles per hour. The stages operated as regularly as possible. Usually there was one stage each way each day.

There were stories about some of the old stage drivers. James Hicks, Jr., a hotel keeper, sometimes drove a stage. John Hicks drove more regularly. Other, later, drivers on either the old or the new turnpike, reportedly were: Bill Gould, Wesley Townsend, Hen Norton, Mort Snow, Uncle Billy Child, Charlie Temple, Elisha Wadsworth, Melvin Wadsworth, and Lyman Harwood.

In February 1944 Walbridge obtained extensive information about Lyman Harwood, a stage driver, from his daughter, Mrs. Fannie (Harwood) Clark. She gave this information to Charles Beach who had become acquainted with her father when Beach went to work at the Bradford Mill in June of 1888. At that time Harwood was working at the mill washing and sorting wool. Beach commented "I remember some of his quaint remarks, and good judgement in business, and also his agility, well up to an advanced age."

The family name was always Harwood as far as Mrs. Clark ever heard. Some people thought the name was Harrod or Herriod but Mr. Beach thought that came from a "backwoods pronunciation" of Harwood.

Lyman Harwood was born in 1819 "on the mountain near the Dick Rider place," which Walbridge believed referred to Rider Clearing, confirming what some "old timers" had told him about Harwoods living at the Clearing. Lyman was one of eleven children. "He was ambitious and left home at eleven years of age, going to live with Mr. Isaac Weeks." While still a very young man he began driving a stage between Bennington and Troy "over the stone road;" he continued to do this for a long time. Mrs. Clark said he sometimes made the trip to Brattleboro by the Mountain Road around the Elbow near Sucker Pond "driving a six horse hitch." Beach and Walbridge thought this must have been on the Woodford City route, not on the old turnpike. In response to a question, Mrs. Clark said that her father had never worked as a teamster or otherwise in connection with the near-by iron mines. Lyman Harwood married Mary Ann Digman [check vital records for date]. Mr. Harwood was reported to have been 28 and his wife only 16 when they married. The young couple first lived with Mr. and Mrs. Weeks. Later they lived in a white house on Main Street in Bennington near Bradford's Mill until their deaths, he in 1906, she in 1915. Lyman and Mary Ann Harwood had four children: Kate, Frank (1854 – 1901), Fannie, and Eleanor (called "Nellie") [check vital records].

After they left the turnpike the David Weeks family lived in a house on Main Street that was owned by William Hawks [check land records, city directories]. Later Mr. Weeks built himself a house on his property on what is now called Weeks Street and the couple lived their until their deaths at ages 86 and 87.

There is another story that was told to Henry Walbridge by Mason Knapp, age 85, in 1933. Knapp said he heard the story from a former stage driver. One day when he was making the trip from Heartwellville to Bennington he had an empty stage. He had driven some miles along the road when he overtook a man walking in the same direction. The driver stopped and offered the fellow a ride which he accepted, remarking that the driver would be well-paid for his kindness. When they reached the west of the mountaintop, where there was a large and prominent rock by the roadside, the driver was requested to stop for a few minutes. His passenger got out, disappeared behind the rock, and after a few minutes returned and gave to the driver a number of silver knives, forks and spoons which he begged him to accept as a reward for his kindness. The man then got back in the stage and they resume the trip to Bennington. As they went along the passenger explained to the driver that some years before, he and a companion had travelled from New Hampshire into the West and had come this way. As they had no money, the two adventurers supported themselves on the journey by stealing such articles of value as they conveniently could do. The silver was part of the loot. Knapp said that, in telling the story to him, the driver admitted that he still had the silver which he regarded as his own because he had no idea of the original owner nor just when or where it had been stolen.