

EAST STREET

Road to Settling Epsom, NH



Home, History & Heritage

Celebrating the 275th Anniversary
of the Incorporation of Epsom, NH

Created for the Old Home Day Celebration
August 10, 2002

The Town of Epsom was incorporated in 1727 with land being granted to the taxpayers of Rye, New Castle and Greenland – each person receiving a section of land in proportion to taxes paid in their native town. There were several criteria which had to be met, those being 1) That 20 dwelling houses be built and settle families on them within 4 years; 2) that a house be built for public worship; 3) that one hundred acres each be set aside for a parsonage and a school, as long as peace existed with the Indians during the four years. In the event this was not the case, an additional 4-year extension would be granted. Along with receiving these land grants, these taxpayers of Rye, New Castle and Greenland became immediately responsible for paying the costs of the charter and getting the land surveyed, and were known as proprietors.

At the beginning of 1729, the proprietors voted a committee to survey and divide up the town according to the Charter, and in May 1732 it was voted that a location be selected for building a Meeting House and for settling the 20 families who were to start the town. It was decided that these twenty people each would receive a fifty-acre lot in the section that was set aside for the starting of the settlement, plus thirty acres that would be laid out in another part of the town. A committee was formed to find these twenty men who would be able to pay the five shillings and establish themselves on what is called the original 20 home-lots.

1732 was a busy year for the proprietors. In June the 20 families selected for the home-lots drew them with the following results: No. 1, James Seavey; No. 2, Richard Goss; No. 3, Thomas Berry; No. 4, Daniel Lunt; No. 5, Noah Seavey; No. 6, William Locke; No. 7, Samuel Dowst; No. 8, Zachariah Berry; No. 9 Ebenezer Berry; No. 10, Solomon Dowst; No. 11, Samuel Wallace; No. 12, William Wallace; No. 13, John Blake; No. 14, Josiah Foss; No. 15, Simon Knowles; No. 16, Paul Chapman; No. 17, Joseph Locke; No. 18, Jotham Foss; No. 19, Jedediah Weeks; and No. 20, James Marden. In October of the same year it was “*Voted*, That the sd town shall be first Laid out in to four Ranges, each one mile deep, Reserving a Road of Four Rods wide between the first and second Range, & between the third and fourth, the Ranges to run the whole Length of the town, the first Range to begin at the south corner.” “*Voted*, That there be a meeting-house of thirty foot Long and twenty-four feet wide, Imediately Built at the charge of the Propriat, & that Mr. Joshua Brackett, Mr. Willm Lock & Theod. Atkinson, Esq., be a committee to a Gree for the same with any Parson or Parsons shall do it soonest and cheapest.” These 20 lots were laid out along both sides of a road (now Center Hill Road), and each were one hundred and sixty rods in length and fifty rods wide equaling 50 acres.

It was less than a month later that the proprietors met again, this time to draw lots in the four ranges. One hundred and twenty eight men drew the following numbers: No. 1, Nathaniel White; 2, James Seavey; 3, John Odiorne; 4, Benjamin Ball; 5, Israel Mark; 6, Samuel Haines; 7, John Foss; 8, Joshua Brackett; 9, Zachariah Foss; 10, Jonathan Dockam; 11, Richard Jordan; 12, Samuel Weeks; 13, John Underwood; 14, Robert Avery; 15, John Rindge; 16, Richard Tarleton; 17, Henry Trefethen; 18, Thomas Manneren; 19, John Wilson; 20, James Marden; 21, John Othow; 22, Samuel Seavey; 23, John Johnson; 24, John Brackett; 25, Thomas Rand; 26, Alse Clark; 27, Walter Philbrook; 28, Joseph Weeks; 29, Robert Coats; 30, George Wallis; 31, Samuel Haines; 32, Joshua Foss; 33, Mary Randall; 34, Joshua Berry; 35, William Berry; 36, Jeremiah Walford; 37, Samuel Chapman, Samuel Neale, John Hinckson, Samuel Ring; 38, John Card; 39, John Tuckerman; 40, James Berry; 41, Chirstopher Amazeen; 42, Samuel Berry; 43, William Haines; 44, Reuben Mace; 45, John Leach; 46, Nathaniel Berry; 47, Samuel Rand; 48, John Blake; 49, John Philbrook; 50, James Johnson, Ebenezer Johnson; 51, John Yeaton; 52, Elias Philbrook; 53, George Kenston; 54, Joseph Jackson; 55, John Trundy; 56, John Bryant; 57, Jonathan Philbrook; 58, William

Wallis Jun.; 59, Edward Martin; 60, Daniel Lunt; 61, Sampson Shiefe; 62, William Seavey Jun.; 63, Joseph Simpson; 64, Nehemiah Berry; 65, Joshua Seavey; 66, Samuel Brackett; 67, Robert Goss, Robert Goss, Jun; 68, Samuel Wallis; 69, Samuel Doust; 70, John Johnson; 71, James Chadwick; 72, Christopher Treadwick; 73, Richard Goss; 74, Joshua Weeks; 75, John Frost; 76, Solomon Doust; 77, Barnaby Cruse; 78, James Whiden; 79, James Philpot; 80, Joseph Maloon; 81, John Stevens; 82, Widow Hitches; 83, Nathaniel Rand; 84, Benjamin Parker; 85, Philip Pane; 86, William Kelly; 87, Richard Neale; 88, William Bucknell, Thomas Berry, Isaac Foss; 89, William Perkins, John Berry; 90, Thomas Rand, Jr.; 91, John Youren; 92, Samuel Huggins, Nathaniel Huggins; 93, Foster Trefethen; 94, Colonel Shadrach Walton; 95, Nathaniel Johnson; 96, Benjamin Seavey, Jr.; 97, Joseph Youren; 98, Mathias Haines; 99, Samuel Frost; 100, Deacon John Cate, William Cate; 101, William Seavey; 102, Ebenezer Berry; 103, Mathias Haines; 104, Benjamin Muserve; 105, John Whiden; 106, Henry Pain; 107, Jonathan Odiorne, Esq.; 108, Walter Abbott; 109, John Sherborn; 110, Joseph Hill; 111, William Wallis; 112, Jonathan Weeks; 113, John Brackett; 114, William Jones; 115, Widow Folsom; 116, William Marden; 117, Nathaniel Wilson; 118, Samuel Davis; 119, Daniel Greenough; 120, Joshua Haines; 121, Samuel Seavey; 122, Hugh Reed; 123, Benjamin Seavey; 124, Captain Samuel Weeks; 125, Theodore Atkinson; 126, James Randall; 127, John Neale; 128, Nathaniel Morrell.

Even after all the men had drawn their lots in the different ranges, plus the home-lots and their additional 30 acre lots elsewhere in the town, there was some land left over. Some of this land was on either end of the home-lots, and two thousand acres was in the southerly part of the fourth range, and all became known as “common land.” These lands were later auctioned off as late as the fall of 1765.

When the home-lots were drawn, the northern row were numbered from East to West 1 through 10; the southern row just the opposite from 11 through 20. One must remember that in addition to the 20 home-lots there had to be two additional lots – one for a school, another for a parsonage. Most likely these were originally planned to be put at the eastern end of the home-lots on the common land, but instead they were inserted near a more central point of the home-lots; in effect, home-lot number 7 became a place for the minister and un-numbered, bumping the lot numbers one lot to the east. To make things just a little more complicated, they then took the western most lot (home-lot #10, and attached it to the eastern end near the now Deerfield line. This then made the northern row of home-lots 10, then 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, parsonage lot, 7, 8 and 9. The same happened for the southern row of home-lots, with number 11 on the west end being moved to the east end near the Deerfield line. Their new order from West to East would be 12, 13, 14, school lot, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 11. It appears that things moved rather quickly after the lots were re-numbered as the road dividing the 20 home-lots had been built along with the first Meeting House as shown in the following note from a 1733 proprietors meeting: “*Voted*, January 17, 1733, that the name of the Street from the Meeting-House upward West Street & Down ward to Notingham from sd Meeting-House East Street.” Also in the record is a request from the proprietors of Canterbury to build a connecting road through Epsom which would appear to be connecting West Street up though what is now Goboro Road. From various sources it is know that this region was not foreign to Indians, though at this time it seemed relatively calm and safe. The owners of the 20 home-lots, with their first rough road and meetinghouse, appeared able to begin to follow the Charter and establish a home and 3 acres of cleared land for farming. The Indians were not to be their first encounter.

As the 20 home-lots began to be worked on, it must have been quite a surprise to find a small section of the town near Sanborn’s Hill to be already occupied. Charles McCoy was one of many Scots-Irish who arrived

in Londonderry, New Hampshire. He had property in Chester, New Hampshire in the fall of 1728, which he sold, with wife Mary signing, June 30, 1730. Rev. Jonathan Curtis, who wrote the first history of Epsom in 1823, tells that they had a daughter Mary born while they were living in Epsom about 1731. She lived just short of age 100, and it is almost certain that Rev. Jonathan Curtis' information was probably first hand from Mary herself as she lived another 5 years past the date of the Curtis history. In a document that survives at the New Hampshire State Archives is this note to Constable Paul Chapman from Epsom Selectmen dated June 26th 1733, which states in part, "Whereas Information is come to us that Mr. Charles McCoy hath come into our town of Epsom to settle with out our leave...to order you the constable to go and warn the sd Charles McCoy out of the town...in fourteen days" which was done the next day as the reply from Constable back to the Selectmen shows.

The immediate outcome of this "warning out" is unknown, but was later resolved as he was still shown "of Epsom" by a deed dated October 29, 1735. He was later town constable for Epsom and held other offices, and his mark on Epsom history was far from over. Charles McCoy is credited with being the first settler in Epsom and it is likely he was. It would seem that Charles McCoy may not have been the only trespasser, as shown in the following note from a proprietors meeting Dec. 19, 1734 - "Dec. 19, 1734: *Voted* that where as Sundry Persons, without the Leave or License, got in upon Sundry tracts of Land within this town ship, and have committed Sundry Tresspasses upon Sundry of the Propriat particular shears, which may, if not Prosecuted, prove Detrymentell to the said town; and whereas it will be attended with some considerable charge to Prosecute on any one of them, which at Present would be to great Burthen for the Prosecutors; therefore voted that in case any of the Propts in whose Shear any trespass is committed will prosecute such trespassers in an action of trespass that it shall be at the charge of the Propria^{rs} in proportion to the Land or Shier each Propriitor hath in s^d town & the Select men for the time being are hereby impowered and Disired to furnish the prosecutor with money for that end."

Though the home-lots where drawn in 1732, few, if any, of the original proprietors ever lived on them. Records are scant at best, and most of the owners of the home-lots sold, deeded or bequeathed their property with no remaining record. It is apparent that the four year time line for establishing the community was either extended or ignored. Samuel Wallace of Rye was granted home-lot No. 11, which was deeded to his son George Wallace June 1, 1741, "where he now lives" establishing he was residing in Epsom in some type of dwelling before that time. The McClary family was also settled in town early, having purchased several of the original home-lots. Andrew McClary the immigrant settled with his family earlier enough that son John had a dwelling as early as 1740 which still remains. John Blake of Greenland was an original proprietor and was "of Epsom" December 2, 1743, and was moderator of a proprietors meeting held in Epsom that year. His son Samuel, according to Rev. Jonathan Curtis' history, was in Epsom in 1733 at age fifteen, and a note to that effect appears on his tombstone. John Blake Jr., brother to Samuel, had a son born in Epsom in 1741, said to have been the first white male born in the town. Historian John Mark Moses, whose 4 part "Early Settlers of Epsom" appeared in the Granite Monthly magazine, speculates that about this time members of the Locke family may also have been in Epsom. A note in the proprietor's meeting of May 26, 1736 sheds some light on when houses were constructed. It reads: "That Mr. Joshua Brackett, Willm Haines, Willm Wallis and Elias Philbrook a committee to agree with one or more persones to build a saw mill at Epsom, the undertakers to have the priviledge of supplying the town's people with boards for ten years, who are not to buy of any others till the ten years are expired, and the owners of the mill are to sell the boards at the prices they are sold at in other new towns, provided they keep boards to supply the town's people." With no sawmill prior to this time, it would seem any dwelling would have been relatively crude, and would indicate that better homes were not built prior to 1736.

The decade of the 1740's probably seemed pretty bright when it began. Several families were starting a life in the town; early roads were being built; a meetinghouse was in place, and a proprietors meeting was held for the first time in the town proper. All this was still far short of meeting the 20 family quota outlined in the charter. There was no minister. In 1742 the proprietors authorized 30 pounds for hiring a minister. In 1743 it was raised to 40 pounds. In 1750 it was voted fifty pounds old tenor. In 1760 it was one hundred pounds. Whatever promise seemed ahead of them in 1740, the French War of 1745 stopped. Indians once again became a real threat, some of the families left town, and danger faced those that remained. A small garrison was located on the McClary property, near what was later known as the Carter Place, but the best security was the Nottingham Garrison (actually located in what became part of Deerfield, NH), but it was quite a bit further away. The most well known episode of Epsom residents involving the Indians was that with the wife of Charles McCoy.

Rev. Jonathan Curtis in his Epsom History, has perhaps the best account of what transpired, probably first hand from Mary McCoy. Most of it is repeated in the John Dolbeer History of Epsom from the Hurd's "History of Merrimack and Belknap Counties," so here I will relate how the story appears in Potter's "History of Manchester."

While Capt. Eastman's scout was out, the enemy appeared "on or about the twenty-first day of August," at Epsom, and made an attack upon the house of Mr. Charles McCoy as appears by the following Petition.

Province of New Hampshire.

To his Excellency Benning Wentworth Esq. Captain General Governor and Commander in Chief in and over his Majesties Province of New Hampshire. To the Honorable his Majesties Council for said province and the House of Representatives in General Assembly convened.

The Memorial and Petition of Charles McCoy of Epsom, in sd Province, most humbly shews, that on or about the twenty-first day of August last, his wife was taken by the Indian enemy and either killed or carried away captive, and his house burnt. That there is no garrison nor soldiers there, that your petitioner begs he may have some guard to go with him and take care of his cattle and fields there as your Excellency and Honor shall judge necessary.

his

Charles [X] McCoy

mark

Sept. 3d, 1747.

In compliance with his petition a company of twenty-seven men were sent by the Governor to Epsom, under the command of Capt. Joseph Thomas, to "take care of the cattle and fields" of the petitioner. McCoy went with the scout. After securing his property, they continued for a fortnight scouting from Epsom through Nottingham, to Durham. But they did not meet with the enemy. The Indians who made this attack were Sabatis, Plausawa and Christi.

As Christi and McCoy were both from this neighborhood, the former having lived at Amoskeag Falls the latter at Londonderry, we give a more particular account of Mrs. McCoy's captivity in this place. McCoy had moved from Londonderry to Epsom, some years previous to his wife's captivity, but probably was well known to Christi.

“Reports were spread of the depredations of the Indians in various places; and McCoy had heard that they had been seen lurking about the woods at Penacook, now Concord. He went as far as Pembroke; ascertained that they were in the vicinity, was somewhere discovered by them, and followed home. They told his wife, whom they afterwards made prisoner, that they looked through the cracks around the house, and saw what they had for supper. The next day, Mrs. McCoy attended by their two dogs, went down to see if any of the other families had returned from the garrison. She found no one. On her return, as she was passing the block-house, the dogs which had passed around it, came running back growling and very much excited. Their appearance induced her to make the best of her way home. The Indians afterwards told her that they then lay concealed there, and saw the dogs, when they came running round.

McCoy, being now strongly suspicious that the Indians were actually in the town, determined to set off the next day with his family for the garrison at Nottingham. His family now consisted of himself, his wife, and son John. They accordingly secured their house as well as they could, and all set off next morning. McCoy and his son with their guns, though without ammunition, having fired away what they brought with them in hunting.

As they were travelling a little distance east of the place where the meeting house now stands, Mrs. McCoy fell a little in the rear of the others. This circumstance gave the Indians a favorable opportunity, for separating her from her husband and son. The Indians, three men and a boy, lay in ambush near the foot of Marden’s hill not far from the junction of the mountain road with the main road. Here they suffered McCoy and his son to pass, but, as his wife was passing them they reached from the bushes, and took hold of her, charging her to make no noise, and covering her mouth with their hands as she cried to her husband for assistance. Her husband hearing her cries, turned, and was about coming to her relief. But he no sooner began to advance, than the Indians, expecting probably that he would fire upon them, began to raise their pieces, which she pushed one side, and motioned her friends to make their escape, knowing that their guns were not loaded, and that they would doubtless be killed, if they approached. They accordingly ran into the woods and made their escape to the garrison. This took place August 21, 1747.

The Indians then collected together what booty they could obtain, which consisted of an iron trammel, from Mr. George Wallace’s; the apples of the only tree which bore in town, which was in the orchard now owned by Mr. David Griffin, and some other trifling articles, and prepare to set off with their prisoner to Canada.

Before they took their departure, they conveyed Mrs. McCoy to a place near the little Suncook river, where they left her in the care of the young Indian, while the three men, whose names were afterwards ascertained to be Plausawa, Sabatis and Christi, went away, and were some time absent. During their absence, Mrs. McCoy thought of attempting to make her escape. She saw opportunities, when she thought she might dispatch the young Indian with the trammel, which with other things, was left with them, and thus perhaps avoid some strange and barbarous death, or a long and distressing captivity. But, on the other hand, she knew not at what distance the others were. If she attempted to kill her young keeper, she might fail. If she effected her purpose in this, she might be pursued and overtaken by a cruel and revengeful foe, and then some dreadful death would be her certain portion. On the whole, she thought best to endeavor to prepare her mind to bear what might be no more, than a savage captivity. Soon, however, the Indians returned, and put an end for the present to all thoughts of escape. From the direction, in which they went and returned, and their smutty appearance, she suspected what their business had been. She told them, ‘she guessed they

had been burning her house.' Plausawa, who could speak some broken English, informed her they had.

They now commenced their long and tedious journey to Canada, in which the poor captive might well expect that great and complicated sufferings would be her lot. She did indeed find the journey fatiguing, and her fare scanty and precarious. But, in her treatment from the Indians, she experienced a very agreeable disappointment. The kindness she received from them was far greater than she had expected from those, who were so often distinguished for their cruelties. The apples they had gathered they saved for her, giving her one a day. In this way, they lasted her as far as Lake Champlain. They gave her the last as they were crossing the lake in their canoes. This circumstance gave to the tree, on which the apples grew, the name of "Isabel's tree," her name being Isabella.

In many ways did they appear desirous of mitigating the distresses of their prisoner while on their tedious journey. When night came on, and they halted to repose themselves in the dark wilderness, Plausawa, the head man, would make a little couch in the leaves a little way from theirs, cover her up with his own blanket; and there she was suffered to sleep undisturbed till morning. When they came to a river, which must be forded, one of them would carry her over on his back. Nothing like insult or indecency did they ever offer her during the whole time she was with them. They carried her to Canada, and sold her as a servant to a French family, whence, at the close of the war, she returned home. But so comfortable was her condition there, and her husband being a man of rather a rough and violent temper, she declared she never should have thought of attempting the journey home, were it not for the sake of her children."

This was the last attack of the Indians during the war, in the Merrimack valley.

McCoy was not the only person to have contact with the Indians....so did Samuel Blake, known as Sergeant Blake, and his story is told by Rev. Jonathan Curtis.

"The ferocity and cruelty of the savages were doubtless very much averted by a friendly, conciliating course of conduct in the inhabitants towards them. This was particularly the case in the course pursued by Sergeant Blake. Being himself a curious marksman and an expert hunter, traits of character in their view of the highest order, he soon secured their respect; and, by a course of kind treatment, he secured their friendship to such a degree, that, though they had opportunities, they would not injure him even in time of war."

"The first he ever saw of them was a company of them making towards his house, through the opening from the top of Sanborn's hill. He fled to the woods and there lay concealed, till they had made a thorough search about his house and enclosures, and had gone off. The next time his visitors came he was constrained to become more acquainted with them and to treat them with more attention. As he was busily engaged towards the close of the day in completing a yard for his cow, the declining sun suddenly threw along several enormous shadows on the ground before him. He had no sooner turned to see the cause, than he found himself in the company of a number of stately Indians. Seeing his perturbation, they patted him on the head and told him 'not to be afraid, for they would not hurt him.' They then went with him into his house; and their first business was to search all his bottles to see if he had any 'occabee,' rum. They then told him they were very hungry, and wanted something to eat. He happened to have a quarter of a bear which he gave them. They took it and threw it whole upon the fire, and very soon began to cut and eat from it half raw. While they were eating, he employed himself in cutting pieces from it and broiling upon a stick for them, which pleased them very much. After their repast, they wished for the privilege of lying by his fire through

the night, which he granted. The next morning, they proposed trying skill with him in firing at a mark. To this he acceded. But in this, finding themselves outdone, they were much astonished and chagrined; nevertheless they highly commended him for his skill, patting him on the head and telling him 'if he would go off with them, they would make him their big captain.' They used often to call upon him, and his kindness to them they never forgot, even in time of war."

"Plausawa had a peculiar manner of doubling his lip and producing a very shrill piercing whistle, which might be heard a great distance. At a time when considerable danger was apprehended from the Indians, Blake went off into the woods alone, though considered hazardous, to look for his cow that was missing. As he was passing along by Sinclair's brook, an unfrequented place, northerly from McCoy's mountain; a very sharp whistle, which he knew to be Plausawa's suddenly passed through his head like the report of a pistol. The sudden alarm almost raised him from the ground; and, with a very light step, he soon reached home without his cow. In more peaceable times, Plausawa asked him if he did not remember the time, and laughed very much to think how he ran at the fright, and told him the reason for his whistling. 'Young Indian,' said he, 'put up gun to shoot Englishman. Me knock it down, and whistle to start you off.' So lasting is their friendship, when treated well."

As can be seen by the above account, the name of McCoy becomes forever linked with Epsom Town History. The second tallest mountain retained his name, and a second mountain, called Nat's mountain, was named for his son who got lost there. This, along with the capture of his wife Isabella (by deed in 1730 his wife was Mary – his wife that was captured was Isabella – his wife by deed when he left Epsom was Mary, which would be three wives throughout this period) and his early 'warning out' make him perhaps the town's most colorful figure.

By 1750 the Indian threat was gone. The proprietors only met once in 1749, but on August 30 of 1750 they met and seemed to want to get back on track as they voted "That Doct. John Weeks And Francis Lock Bee a Committe To See whather The men That had the Twenty And 30 Akers Lotes Have Fulfiled Acording to the Charter and agreement." Home-lots continued to be bought and sold, and in 1750 the Wallaces, McClarys, Blakes, Lockes and McCoy's remained in town. Finally some of the other home-lots started to show signs of life. William Wallace of Greenland now owned two of the home-lots, and on one of them his son-in-law appeared, a Frenchman by the name of William Blazo. In 1749 James Marden of Rye deeded to his son Nathan one of the fifty acre lots. John and Samuel Libbey bought home-lot No. 8 in 1742 along with shares in a sawmill and remained in town for a time. In 1751 the Allen family came to Epsom, John and Jude. Thomas Bickford was "of Epsom" in 1754; Benson Ham in 1758, and the McCoy's sold out to the Sanborns in 1760. These core families became the life of East Street as Epsom finally began to grow.

Somewhere through this period the original meetinghouse disappears, as the following items appear in the Epsom town books:

"PROVINCE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

"EPSOM, JUNE 25, 1761.

"At a legal meeting held in Epsom at the house of Capt. Andrew McClary, on thursday, the twenty-fifth of this 1761 instant June, according to notification dated June the 20, the free holders met according to notification and thus

"1. *Voted* Capt. John McClary moderator.

"2. *Voted* Mr. John Tucke to be their gospel minister.

“3. *Voted* one hundred acres of Land as a settlement as the charter allowed 50 acres laid out and the other 50 in some Convenient place, reserving the privilege for setting of a meeting house and what of this Lot is taken for setting the meeting be made up in the other Lot.

“4. *Voted* thirty pounds sterling as a salary for the first two years, reckoning dolers at the Rate of a 6 pt doler.

“5. *Voted* That an addition of five pounds be made to sd minister next after the first two years are expired.

“6. *Voted* That thirty cords of wood be annually cut and hauled to his house.

“7. *Voted* abraham lebee, Isaac lebee sen., John Blake, george wallis, cap. John mcclary, ephraim Locke, Samuel blake, Left. Eliphlet Sanborn, nathan marden be a committee to present a call to Mr. John tucke.

“8. *Voted* six hundred pounds, old tenor, towards building a minister’s house, to be paid in Labour if he accepts the call.

“Town meeting ended.

“NATHAN MARDEN, *Clark.*”

August 14, 1761, it was “*Voted* That the meeting house shall stand on the same Lot where the old meeting house formerly stood, at or near the Burying place.”

August 12, 1761, it was

“*Voted* Nathan Marden, George Wallis, ens. Thomas Blake, Ephraim Locke be a committee to provide fro the ordernation and to render account of the same to the Select men.

“*Voted* that the charge of the ordernation be paid by the town.

“*Voted* Benjamin Blake, benson ham, amos blazo be a committee to assist the constable and tithing men in keeping order on the ordernation day.”

The new meetinghouse was still to be built, even though the new minister was engaged. The town appealed to the Legislature for some relief, and those who signed provide a nice list of those who inhabited the town in 1762.

“PROVINCE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

“To his Exelency Benning Wentworth, Esq., Capt. General, Govenour & Commander in Chief in and over his Majesty’s Province of New Hampshire, and to the Honable Councell & house of Representatives now Convened in General Assembly at Portsmouth.

“the Petition of his Majesty’s Good Subjects, Inhabitants of the township of Epsom, in said Province, humbly beg leave to remonstrate our Very Poor Distressing circumstances to your Compassion, & Most Earnstly Crave your Pity, and pray your Honours to Relieve us from our un suportable Burden of Province tax under which we are made to Grone, and Which we think we Cannot Possibly survive Under unless your Honours will be Pleased to Mitigate and free us from.

“Gentlemen our Numbers are Very Small & we are very much Exposed to Losses; our young Cattle, Sheep and Swine are often Destroyed by Wild beasts, and, further, we have Lately Selected a minister among us which we are afraid we shall not be able to Support; by Reason of the Poor circumstances we are now under we are not able to Build a Meeting Hous; that our Minister is obliged to Preach in some of our Dwelling houses; the tax which was Laid on us the Last year many of us were obliged to hire the money to Pay; our Necessities are very Grate by Reason of the Scarcity of Provisions we have been obliged to Lay out all that we have got for years Past & are now much in Debt. this is to entreat your Honours to take of the heavy tax which we now Labour under, & Restore us the money we Paid Last year, & your Petitioners Shall every Pray as in Duty Bound:

“John McClary, George Walles, Nathan Marden, John Black, Ephraim Lock, Reuben Sanborn, Jun., Eliphlet Sanborn, Reuben Sanborn, James Wood, Abraham Lebbe, Abraham Walles, Benjamin Blake, Thomas Blake, Isaac Lebbe, Isaac Lebbe, Jun., Reuben Lebbe, Amos Blaso, Samul Bickford, Samuel Black, Thomas Hins, John Blaso, Ephraim Bery, William Blake, Benson Ham, John MCGaffey, Andrew McClary, Abner Evans.

“In council, June 24th, 1762: Read & ordered to be sent down to the Honble Assembly.

“THEODORE ATKINSON, JUN., *Sec.*”

Again the meetinghouse made the agenda.

April 19, 1764, it was

“*Voted*, that a meeting-house be built in Epsom, the length fifty feet and the bredth forty feet.”

“*Voted*, Isaac Libby, Sen., Thomas Blake, John McClary, George Wallace and Nathan Marden be a committee to carry on the work of said building, and they shall have full power to act and do in behalf of the town in the best manner they can, and take and render accounts to such as shall have authority to demand the same.

“Also, sd committee to vandue of the pews in sd meeting-house or the privilege for sd pews & to take the security for the same.”

“*Voted*, on thousand pounds, O.T., to be paid when sd committee shall call for the same.”

There was no further record of when the committee finished or when the new meetinghouse was completed, though in May of 1764, pews were sold by auction. The church records gives two hints in records of Rev. Tucke of a Church meeting “in the House of God” was December 5, 1766; and “Novr 14, 1765 Smart Storm of Snow & Rain bad travilling Meet in the Meeting House Thanksgiving Day.”

On the 18th of June in 1765, at the home of Andrew McClary, the issue of the school was discussed.

“1. *Voted*, John McClary, Esq., Moderator.

“2. *Voted*, that the bigness of sd house, twenty-one in Length & seventeen in breadth.”

The meeting then adjourned to the 25th of June inst., at the same place, at which time the following votes were passed:

“1. *Voted* that the school-house be built on the Lot comonly called the Scool Lot, whare the Select men think proper.

“2. *Voted* that the cost of sd house be paid in Land or money.

“3. *Voted* that sd house be bid of at vando.

“*Voted* Nathan Marden, Vando master, sd house bid of to Ens. Mcgafey, at 312 O.T., to raise bord, shingle, clabord & flore.”

Epsom was growing. The Canterbury road continued to expand, the current Black Hall Road was constructed, and families headed to New Rye and Short Falls. Mills continued to be built, and farmland readied. Some of the original settlers were aging and being buried at “the old burying ground” near the meetinghouse. . . .the first being William Blazo August 14, 1761.

With the town growing, the school addressed, the building of the meetinghouse, and the hiring of Rev. Tuck, the town finally met the original specifications of the charter. To learn more about the growth of the town and some of its people, it is possible to examine more closely how the different home-lots grew and changed hands.

LOT #10

Home Lot # 10 was originally drawn by Solomon Dowst of Rye, and is one of the re-located lots, having been originally at the West end before becoming the last lot on the East end. To make matters more



confusing, it is still sometimes called Lot #1. It is unclear of the disposition of the 50 acre home-lot, though it would appear it was sold, perhaps to John Blake. William Blake, the son of John, later owned the property and sold a part of it to George Wallace (who owned the home-lot across the street) and the rest to Andrew McClary. The lot was divided, with three smaller sections of the northwest corner having been mortgaged to John Griffin by Samuel Wells (Jr.) on October 2, 1837. Wells paid off the mortgage by 1845. This Samuel Wells was the son of Daniel Wells and Lucy Emerson who lived on the Tarleton Road. It was about this same time that Samuel Wells married Harriet Wicome and the property was mortgaged. In later deeds, this small parcel of land was known as the homestead, and owned by Samuel & Harriet's son James Lewis Wells. James L. Wells married Abbie L. Merserve in 1860, and the property later passed to their son Harvey J. Wells in 1911.

The thirty-acre lot that was given Solomon Dowst as an owner of a home-lot, later was given to his daughter Rachel who married Benjamin Marden. **PHOTO:** The James Wells Homestead

LOT #1

The original proprietor of Home Lot #1 was James Seavey of Rye. Little is known of this lot as to its early owners, though it is well known as being a large part of the old muster field. A Joseph Brown sold it to Andrew McClary in 1757, giving the McClary's both lots one and two. Around 1800 both the lots were owned by Joseph Lawrence, and remained in their family for many generations. It was near this location, as told by John Dolbeer in his history of Epsom, found in Hurd's "History of Merrimack and Belknap Counties, that when the battle at Lexington was announced "by a swift rider, *blowing a horn*, who passed through Nottingham and reached Epsom, it found Captain Andrew McClary plowing in the 'old muster-field.' Like Cincinnatus of old, he left the plow in the furrow, and hastened to obey the summons. With little preparation, he seized his saddle-bags, leaped into the saddle, swearing as he left that he would *kill one of the devils before he came home!*"

LOT #2

Richard Goss of Rye was the original proprietor of Lot #2. "A Sketch Covering Four Generations of the McClary Family" by Horace P. McClary, says the family moved to Epsom in 1738. He is seen in deeds as being "of Nottingham" in 1747, but this is not unusual during this time period and the

Indian Wars. It appears that the actual purchase of the lot was in February of 1756 when by deed the lot was purchased from Joseph Brown and his wife Abgial (Goss) Brown and Samuel Shaw and his wife Margaret (Goss) Shaw, both spouses daughters of the late Richard Goss, original proprietor. Andrew McClary built his house and tavern on the highpoint of this lot along with a small garrison house, used for safety from the Indians if they could not get to the larger garrison in Nottingham. Andrew's oldest son John built a home on the home-lot across from his father about 1741. This firmly establishes the McClary's as one of the earlier settlers of Epsom. Life during the time was described in brief by Horace P. McClary in his book. "There was little time for idleness in the McClary household; the large farm must be tilled, the potash factory looked after, the stores to attend, and presumably some portion of land to clear each season – plenty of healthy work to develop brawny muscle. There was, outside of the home, work waiting for everyone – roads to build, churches and schoolhouses to locate, erect and maintain, dams to construct, mills to build and the thousand and one other things which play a necessary part in the change from the forest primeval to the cultivated and productive farm."

It is easy to see why the McClary family was so influential. They had mills, the tavern and the garrison. In these times, the largest dwelling was the social gathering place for a small town. With no church or meetinghouse, it is clear that this early lot was where many of the decisions relating to the growth of the town were made. The original lot and dwellings passed from the emigrant Andrew McClary to his son Andrew. This son, the Major Andrew McClary died at Bunker Hill, and the property passed to his son



James Harvey McClary who kept up the business and the tavern until he sold the property, including both home-lots 1 and 2, to Joseph Lawrence in 1807. Not long after this the homestead burned, and Joseph Lawrence built the house which remains today. His tavern and business was very prosperous and allowed for several generations of this family to retain this property well into the 1960's. **PHOTO:** The Joseph Lawrence Homestead

LOT #3

As with many of the home-lots, it is difficult to trace how some of the original proprietors disposed of their property. Lot #3 had as its proprietor Thomas Berry of Greenland. It would not appear as though he ever settled here, though it is known that John Blake and his wife Mary later owned the property. The Blake family was one of the earliest families to settle in Epsom. John and Mary had several sons who lived at least for some time in town. Their son Samuel, or Sergeant Blake, was supposedly here by age 15 in 1733; their son John and his wife Jemima, had the first white male born in Epsom, William, in 1741; and son Dearborn Blake also owned property for a time.

John Blake Sr. deeded this home-lot to his son Thomas in 1759, the lot "where my now dwelling house stands" proving his residency at that time. The lot was described as that being the original Thomas Berry lot, but the number given for it was No. 4. The land was later purchased by Andrew McClary in 1771 and sold by the widow McClary to Amos Morrill in 1790.

In 1793, Amos Morrill and family left Epsom for St. Albans, Vermont. In 1795 the property was sold to William Locke, along with home-lots 4 & 5. William Locke sold most of the same property to John Chesley in 1811...with lot 3 being bought by Henry Shapley of Rye. Within 5 years John

Wallace and his family were living on the home-lot and upon his death around 1840, passed to his son John Wallace Jr., he having to buy out his siblings. He did not have it long as the property went through a succession of owners with the next longest occupant being Varnum and Dolly Fisk in 1864, and in 1867 they sold the home-lot to Augustus Lord.

Not much is known of the Lord family, though a Samuel Lord of Portsmouth married Nancy Dearborn McClary, daughter of Michael McClary. One of their children was Augustus Lord. There is some debate as where the old garrison was actually located on the site of a home built by Augustus Lord. In the Dolbeer History he writes, "The proprietors built a block-house, or garrison, for refuge in case of danger. It was built near Andrew McClary's, and the old foundation was disturbed last summer by building the new house for Augustus Lord, Esq." The date of his 'last summer' is unknown, but apparently Augustus died and in 1884 his daughter, Mary E. Morrison, single woman, sold this lot, and one across the street to J.B. Tennant, Warren Trip and James Fellows. Within two years Andrew O. Carter, who enlarged the buildings, making

'the Carter Place' one of Epsom's finest and picturesque places, bought the lot. **PHOTO:** The Carter Place



LOT #4

The history of home-lot No. 4 is not as well known or as active as the lots on either side of it. Though the original proprietor was Daniel Lunt, it soon was in the hands of John Blake. Blake had already left home-lot No. 3 to one son, and in 1754 deeded this home-lot to his son Dearborn Blake. According to John Mark Moses, Dearborn was 'of Epsom' at that

time, but was 'of Epping' by 1764 when he deeded the lot to his brother Thomas. Thomas Blake moved to Chichester, and the property was sold that same year to a distant relative, Jethro Blake of Epping. Jethro Blake sold the lot to Andrew McClary in 1770, and it was sold, as was lot #3, to Amos Morrill in 1790. Jethro Blake remained in Epsom until old age, showing in the list of Association Test signers in 1776, and appears in the 1790 census. He was of Moultonborough 1794.

LOT #5

The original proprietor of home-lot # 5 was Noah Seavey. At some point in time it was owned by Jude Allen as shown in a deed dated 1764. There were several Allen families in town according to John Mark Moses; a John Allen in 1751, and a Jude Allen in 1790 census. It is also possible that there were Joshua or Ephraim Berry on this land, as in 1773, Amos Morrill bought half of lot No. 6 from John Berry (note that No. 6 would also be the same land as lot 5 counting the moved lot as #1 as was done in some cases – Ephraim Berry is also seen in deeds as owner in boundaries stated in deeds concerning home-lot No. 6). By deed it is known that when Amos Morrill sold adjoining lots, he stated that he was living on Lot #5.

Amos Morrill was at Bunker Hill and at the time of his service his residence was given as Epsom. That would place him in Epsom in 1775 and probably lived on home-lot No. 5. He had a blacksmith shop and was very successful, and bought and sold a vast amount of Epsom property throughout his

stay in town. This note is seen in the old town records and was reprinted in the “Historical Sketch of Epsom, N.H.” compiled by Loella Marden Bunker for the town’s 200th anniversary:

“Epsom, 16th March, 1791”

“March 16, 1791:

This May Certify that Amos Morrill has made it appear to me that he has within twelve months past wrought one Hundred Thousand of Ten penny Nails in his own Blacksmith Shop in Epsom.”

“Attest” Michl McClary, J.P.

“August 12, 1791”

Received an order on the Treasurer for five pounds”

“A. Morrill.”

Lot No. 5 was among the three home-lots that Amos Morrill sold to William Locke, and Locke sold lot 5, along with additional property to John Chesley in 1811. John Chesley married in 1797 Elizabeth Blake, a daughter of Sergeant Samuel Blake. He came to Epsom at the age 21 and was a blacksmith. In 1823 he received from his father in law a deed to the farm of the Blake homestead, which he conveyed to his son John (1834). The homestead on Lot No. 5 became well known as the Chesley Place, and after the death of John Chesley, son Jonathan Steele Chesley, who died in 1879, owned the house. His son Walter was the next owner and used the house primarily summers as he removed to Massachusetts. Walter’s daughter Mary Chesley Oldfield was the last of the family to own the home. **PHOTO:** The old Chesley Place



LOT #6

William Locke of Rye was the original proprietor of home-lot number 6 which he sold to William Wallace of Rye June 30, 1742. There is some confusion in various accounts that perhaps he received the land from his father Samuel at the same time he deeded home-lot No. 11. It would seem more likely that it was bought from the Lockes. This William Wallace died five years later leaving three young sons, William, Samuel and Spencer. The estate was not

settled until they were older, and the account from Spencer’s deed to Thomas Ward of Kensington, states the following:

One third part of the 50 acre lot adjoining the land bounded westerly by the Reverend Mr. Tuck, and easterly by the land of Ephraim Berry, on the north side of East Street. Said 50 acre lot was formerly the property of my father, William Wallace, which he purchased of William Locke as by his deed may more fully appear. 15 April 1768.

Brother William bought his brother Samuel's third in 1760, which together was also later sold to Thomas Ward. Once Thomas Ward owned the complete home-lot, he sold it to the Reverend Tuck who was currently residing on the next 50-acre lot. There may have been some land deals between Thomas Ward and other property belonging to the reverend. When the Rev. Tuck was dismissed from serving the town of Epsom he joined the Revolutionary War effort as a chaplain and shortly fell ill and died. His wife Mary continued to reside in Epsom, but quickly was in debt and had to dispose of the property in small pieces to cover them.

About 35 acres of this land passed from Mary Tuck to Abraham Libbey in 1779; he sold to Daniel Shaw in 1798; Shaw sold to Abner Blaisdell of Portsmouth in 1808; and Abner Blaisdell sold it to Simon Sanborn of Epsom in 1811 who probably built a house on the site, he was the son of Eliphalet and Margaret (McClary) Sanborn. He died in 1818 and his widow Harriet lived there until 1836 when she sold the property to John M. Wells of Loudon. Several short-term owners included after Mr. Wells, Abraham D. Swain of Chichester (1836); Wilson Quimby of Epsom (1839); Jonathan L. Cilley of Epsom (1842); William Sanders of Pembroke (1842); Nathan Griffin of Deerfield (1845); Daniel Thomas Cilley (1863).

Daniel Thomas (Tom) Cilley raised his family there and sold the home to his daughter Annie Lydia Cilley during his later years. She sold the house to Albion Ambrose in 1922 who sold it to his son Frank E. Ambrose in 1926. In May of 1929 he sold the property to Timothy B. Langley. The house later burned about 1970 while owned by Herb Yeaton.

PHOTO: Daniel Thomas (Tom) Cilley home

FIRST MINISTER'S LOT



This is one of two unnumbered lots that were set aside for town use. In June of 1761, the town voted the following:

“At a legal meeting held in Epsom at the house of Capt. Andrew McClary, on thursday, the twenty-fifth of this 1761 instant June, according to notification dated June the 20, the free holders met according to notification and thus
 “1. *Voted* Capt. John McClary moderator.
 “2. *Voted* Mr. John Tucke to be their gospel minister.

“3. *Voted* one hundred acres of Land as a settlement as the charter allowed 50 acres laid out and the other 50 in some Convenient place, reserving the priviledge for seting of a meeting house and what of this Lot is taken for seting the meeting be made up in the other Lot.

“4. *Voted* thirty pounds sterling as a salary for the first two years, reckoning dolers at the Rate of a 6 pt doler.

“5. *Voted* That an adition of five pounds be made to sd minister next after the first two years are expired.

“6. *Voted* That thirty cords of wood be annually cut and hauled to his house.

“7. *Voted* abraham lebee, Isaac lebee sen., John Blake, george wallis, cap. John mcclary, ephraim Locke, Samuel blake, Left. Eliphlet Sanborn, nathan marden be a committee to present a call to Mr. John tucke.

“8. *Voted* six hundred pounds, old tenor, towards building a minister’s house, to be paid in Labour if he accepts the call.

“Town meeting ended.

“NATHAN MARDEN, *Clark.*”

And shortly thereafter, on August 14, 1761, it was “*Voted* That the meeting house shall stand on the same Lot where the old meeting house formerly stood, at or near the Burying place.” This indicates a couple of things, first that there was an earlier meeting house on the site, and second that the cemetery was already in use prior to Reverend Tuck arriving in Epsom and the building of the new meeting house.

Reverend Tuck arrived and a home was built for him on the lot. A few years later the meetinghouse was built. Rev. Tuck’s tenure lasted until 1774. The family retained the home-lot, and upon the death of the Reverend in the Revolutionary War, his wife remained until debts forced her to sell the property. This house and lot, less the burying ground and meetinghouse were sold in October of 1797 to Simon Ames Heath of Canterbury who had married the daughter of Capt. Andrew McClary, Elizabeth McClary. Here Simon Heath ran a successful tavern and the property remained in the Heath family until 1864.

In 1864, Simon’s sons Benjamin Moody Heath and John M. Heath sold the property to George W. Batchelder, as they moved to Lynn, Ma.. By will, the property passed to a son of George Batchelder, Alonzo E. Batchelder, on his death in 1889. When Alonzo died 2/3 of the property went to his wife Laura, and 1/3 to his daughter Laura, and both were purchased by Charles Sumner Hall in 1907. He sold it the next year to Bernard S. Anderson of Greenville who just a few months later sold it to Albion Ambrose of Deerfield. The family owned the ‘old tavern’ until it burned about 35 years ago.



PHOTO: The old Tavern, residence of first Minister Rev. John Tuck and sold to Simon Ames Heath who ran the tavern.

The Old Meetinghouse

There are no pictures of the old meetinghouse, but it is known that once the various different church affiliations built their own structures, the town abandon and sold it, and it was moved to Concord. A new town hall was built in 1850, where it still stands today. The only true record of someone remembering the old meetinghouse was in a speech given at Old Home Day in 1901 by Mary L. Cass. Though it is available elsewhere, it is reprinted here:

Reminiscence of an Old Lady

By Mary L. Cass

OLD HOME DAY ADDRESS

August 21, 1901 – Epsom, New Hampshire

Probably there are but a few present this afternoon that ever attended a church service in the old meeting house that stood on the hill at what has been called the “Center.”

I wish I could show a picture of the building, but I do not think there is one in existence. I used to go to the meeting there (as it was called, - not attending church) more than seventy years ago and can remember perfectly well just how it looked and the people who attended the service.

It was a large square building with three outside doors – one facing the South, the front door; one on the East and another on the West; each of these doors entered directly into the meeting room; no entries or halls.

A walk or aisle led directly from the front door to the pulpit stairs. There were several steps up into the pulpit which was enclosed by a partition so high that when the minister was sitting down he could not be seen by anyone upon the floor.

Over the pulpit was the sounding board, as it was called; a sort of canopy attached to the ceiling by a slender rod.

The top of the pulpit or desk was covered with a dark cloth trimmed with a fringe. Upon this desk lay the large Bible and the hymn book.

At the front of the stairs directly in front of the pulpit was the communion table which was a plain pine board hung to the partition by hinges so that it could be let down when not needed for use. Between this table and the pulpit was the Deacon's seat.

There was an aisle around the room far enough from the wall to give room for a row of seats or pews; these pews around the outside were raised one step. There were sixteen of these square pews in the center of the floor – eight upon each side of the center aisle.

There were two long seats in front of the pulpit known as the old men's seats; the tythingman also sat there.

There was a large gallery upon three sides which was reached by two flights of stairs. A row of pews was built against the wall, while in front of the gallery over the front door and opposite the pulpit were the singer's seats.

Upon the East side of the gallery was a long seat where the young women and girls sat, called the girls seat and upon the West side was the boys seat.

Whenever the boys got to whispering or making a noise, you would hear a sharp tap-tap-tap on the floor and see the cane of the tythingman pointing toward the offender. I do not remember ever seeing the cane pointed towards the girls seat; perhaps that was because I never sat there myself.

This building was guiltless of paint either upon the inside or out.

The "meeting" began at half past ten and the form of worship was similar to what is followed at the present, except that the long prayer was a long one indeed; the people were all expected to stand during it and, as many of the seats in the pews were hung with hinges, it was customary to turn them up while the people were standing so that the preacher's "Amen" was frequently supplemented with the slamming of the seats as they were dropped down.

In any of the pews you might see two or three flag bottomed chairs for the use of the older members of the family. These pews could accommodate perhaps a dozen people and were frequently occupied by two or more families.

The morning service lasted until noon, the sermon often being an hour long. Then came an hour's intermission when there was a general handshaking and inquiry after each others welfare etc.. The dinner baskets or bags were opened and their contents enjoyed; and after luncheon was eaten, the snuff boxes were passed and they had a jolly good time. I remember particularly the big bright snuffboxes of Dea. Ira Sanborn and Moses P. Gray, Esq. and how the old ladies seemed to enjoy the treat.

The young women and girls usually went out for a stroll in the graveyard just back of the church if the weather was favorable and then over to squire Merrill's shed to get a drink of cold water from the deep well.

The older men usually remained in the house but the younger men and boys took their dinners out doors and either on the doorsteps or out on the common in groups, ate their lunch and enjoyed themselves.

In the cold weather the men folks would go to Capt. Heath's Tavern (last owner was Watson Ambrose) and warm their feet by his big fire and their goodies with a generous mug of flip. I have frequently been to that same place for coals to replenish the fire in my Mother's foot stove, for during the cold weather they always carried these and went to some of the neighboring houses at noon for new fire.

There were no conveniences for a fire in the old meetinghouse and in the Winter the services were held in the vestry where there was a fire.

At precisely one o'clock the minister came again and everyone at once took his accustomed place and the services were renewed. Before the pastor began his long prayer, he frequently read a note from some of his parishioners asking for special prayer in their behalf; if a person were sick, prayer was asked for him; were there a death in the family, prayer was asked that this dispensation of Providence might be sanctified to the relative and friends; if a child was born, thanks was returned; all joys and sorrows were remembered. The afternoon service was equal to the morning and the last prayer was followed by the singing of the Doxology.

It was generally past three o'clock when we got home from meeting and as we were obliged to leave home by half past nine, we made quite a day of it, - yet there were others who had farther to go.

I could tell much about the occupants of the different pews for they come distinctly to my mind as I think of this old meeting house in which my parents and grandparents worshiped; and not only my ancestors but the ancestors of very many - perhaps most of this company, but lest I weary you, I close.

The Old Burying Ground



The burying ground, we know from several accounts, was behind the meetinghouse. Historical accounts place only a few early burials here, the first burial, according to John Mark Moses, "William Blazo Sr., is said to have been the first person buried in the old cemetery." In an article written for the 'Granite Monthly' magazine he gives one of the early accounts of some of the graves and markers.

At least two hundred and fifty (graves) may be counted that are marked with only common fieldstones, uninscribed. The oldest inscribed stone, on which only a few letters are now traceable, is among the McClary graves, near the south wall, and is probably that of the first Andrew McClary. Near by are graves of the Sanborn, Eliphalet and others; and near them, those of Samuel Blake and wife Sarah. He 'died Aug. 19, 1801, aged 83 years. One of the first settlers of Epsom.' Sarah 'died June 27, 1804, aged 68 years.' Among the Locke graves we find a rough stone lettered as follows: 'E. L. B. F. 10, 1730. D.M. 7, 1798'; and at the left of it another, lettered 'E. L. J. B. M. 7, 1761. D. F. 7, 1771.' [see photo] These are supposed to be the graves of Ephraim Locke and a son,

Ephraim, Jr. Among the Bickford graves is a rough stone, with letters now only partly legible. We can trace the letters 'M.B.B....D...' This is evidently the grave of Widow Mercy Bickford, who died at great age in April, 1824. The uninscribed grave beside it is doubtless that fo her husband, Samuel Bickford, who died in April or May, 1773.

The two Locke graves can still be seen, and the McClary fieldstone may or may not still be visible. Gilbert Knowles, also an Epsom Historian, noted the following: "One cannot now count 250 graves marked with field stones because along about 1920 when the south wall was taken down and replaced with the iron fence given in the will of Mary A. Evans, the Cemetery Trustees removed a great many of the uninscribed stones. This was done to make the mowing and general care of the old part of the cemetery easier."

LOT #7

The next few home-lots heading west, are past the meetinghouse lot which was the dividing line between East Street and West Street, so a little less information will be given here.

The original proprietor of this lot was Samuel Dowst, though it does not appear as though he ever settled on it. It contains what is the newer portion of the McClary Cemetery and runs down past Cass's Pond. The lot went to Nathaniel Huggins who later sold it to Joseph Baker of Durham, with a deed stating it was the original lot of Samuel Dowst. Baker sold it to Ephraim Locke who built a house on the property and settled there, remaining many years. Between 1810 and 1820 Thomas D. Merrill owed the property. He remained in Epsom for about 40 years. The well rock is still in the middle of the road through the cemetery.

LOT #8

Zachariah Berry drew this lot, which was later conveyed to Richard Sanborn and later sold to Samuel and John Libbey of Rye. They also purchased the next home-lot No. 9. Samuel Libbey resided on the lot and he and his second wife Penelpe sold it to Isaac Libbey in 1759. Isaac Libbey was one of the original members of the Epsom Church.

LOT #9

Home-lot No. 9 shares a similar history with the preceding lot. It was drawn by Ebenezer Berry and he sold his title and all rights to Richard Sanborn. It was then sold to Samuel and John Libbey, and John settled on the land after his marriage to Eleanor Berry. They remained on the lot until about 1762.

LOT #11

This lot is one of the lots taken off the west end and moved to the east end of the home-lots. It would be located near the Deerfield line and on the south side of East Street. The original proprietor was Samuel Wallace of Rye, who in June of 1741 deeded to his son George the home lot in Epsom "where he now lives." This makes George Wallace (Wallis) one of the first settlers in the town. He married, about 1739, Margaret McClary, daughter of the immigrant Andrew McClary. He was influential in town affairs and was made the third Deacon of the church in 1769. He lived in town to quite an old age, and in his will, proved 1795 the home-lot was addressed as follows: "*Item. I give and*

bequeath unto my son in law Thomas Babb and my daughter Elizabeth Babb, wife of the said Thomas and unto the heirs of her body the said Elizabeth forever, the whole of my homestead farm in Epsom in the County of Rockingham and State of New Hampshire aforesaid, together with all my buildings, orchard or orchards standing and being on said land, to the heirs and assigns of the Heirs of the body of my said daughter Elizabeth immediately to be possessed and enjoyed by them after the decease of my said son in law and my daughter Elizabeth.” This Thomas Babb was said to have been in Epsom in 1789, but it was probably earlier as a Thomas Babb signed the Association Test in Epsom in 1776. He died in 1808 leaving the property to his five daughters, who together sold it in 1814 to David Griffin. He built the current house on the property in 1824, and it remained in the hands of Griffin descendants until 1941, when Ruth Griffin sold it to George H. Stevens.

LOT #20

Though this lot was drawn by James Marden, it was forfeited and given by the proprietors to Joseph Simpson in April of 1735 for, as stated by John Mark Moses, they had ‘settled a family in the town.’ John Mark Moses says that he sold land to Charles McCoy, and perhaps that is the family referred to. Simpson drew out lot number 63, and probably had an additional 30 acre out lot with the home-lot. Often families had to settle land before they acquired deeds, and this may help define how the McCoy’s stayed in Epsom.

In 1753 Joseph Simpson sold the land to Andrew McClary who later sold it to his son John who lived on home-lot #19. It is not known if any structures were ever on this property.

LOT #19

Jedediah Weeks was the original proprietor of this home-lot. One half of the lot was sold in 1741 to the emigrant Andrew McClary. Weeks sold the other half to Nathaniel Huggins of Greenland, who sold it to Samuel Wallace of Greenland in 1737, who sold it to Andrew McClary in a deed of 1747 - the property being called the ‘easterly’ half. His son John built a home on this lot in 1741 which remains today, the oldest structure in Epsom. He sold his son both lots 19 and 20 in 1747.



PHOTO: The John McClary Home

John McClary married Elizabeth Harvey and had one male heir, Michael McClary, who inherited the house and property. Through both father and son, this homestead was well known, being frequented by most of the influential men in New Hampshire. It was here the Society of Cincinnatus was formed. A well-detailed history of the house was published in the Manchester Union Leader in 1893. Michael McClary died in 1824, and the homestead went to Jonathan Steele who married in

1819 Elizabeth Harvey McClary, daughter of Michael McClary and Sarah Dearborn. The next family member was Michael McClary Steele (son of Jonathan and Elizabeth Steele) who was the owner at the time of the Union Leader article. He died in 1906, and then the homestead went to his daughter Helen Burden Steele Barstow. The house remains in the hands of direct descendants to the current day.

LOT #18

The original proprietor was Jotham Foss, but there appears to be little information on the lot until James Marden of Rye deeded it to his son Nathan in May of 1749. The only description of it was that it was a 50 acre lot on the southwest side of East Street. Nathan Marden was influential in the early town. He was chosen as the first Deacon of the church and served as selectman and town clerk. He was chosen along with George Wallace and Ephraim Locke to secure the original town records that were in the hands of the proprietors, which they later entered into the original town books. Much of that information provides details for the listing of Early Proprietors and town history.

The old town books, which are held at the New Hampshire State Archives, also lists the births of the children of some of the early settlers, and the entries for this Marden family are rather interesting.

From the old town books-

*Nathan Marden Born in the year 1721 on Novm 15th old stile
Susanna his wife Born august 23rd 1725
Married october 6th 1743*

There childrens Ages -

*Sarah Marden was born Novmr 24th 1744 old stile
James Marden was born Novmr 2th 1746 old stile
Lucy Marden was born Novmr 27th 1748 old stile and departed this Life octo 30 1752 in the fourth year of her age
one born June 13th 1751 and departed this Life the same day old stile
Judath (Judith) Marden was born June 13th 1752
Nathan Marden was born Sept 25th 1754 New Stile*

there (their) grand Childrens ages

*(children of) Ithiel Cleford (Clifford) and Sarah Marden his wife {all spelled Cleford)
Lucy Clifford born october 12th 1766
Sarah Clifford born January 26th 1768
James Clifford born March 31th 1769
Nathan Marden Clifford born March 25 1770
John Clifford born august 15th 1772*

*(children of) James Marden and Sarah his wife
Mary Marden born february 1th 1769
Susanna Marden born September 17th 1770
John Marden born September 6th 1772*

Recorded by Michl McClary TC

The Children of Nathan Marden Junr & Sarah Marden
Edward Edmunds Marden Born October 1st 1777
Susanna Marden Born May 5th 1780 - Deceas'd May 30th 1780
Susanna Marden Born Feby 16th 1782
William Marden Born Novr 3d 1785

Though it is probable that Deacon Marden and some of his descendants lived on this lot, there are no remains of any structures known at this time.

LOT #17

Lot number 17 is difficult to trace, though drawn by Joseph Locke, it is assumed that his family had some part in settling the early town. By 1784 the lot was owned by John McClary and it stayed in the family for quite a length of time. The Mountain Road was taken out of the eastern side of this lot and the monument to the capture of Isabella McCoy stands in the northeast corner of this lot.

LOT #16

Paul Chapman of Greenland was the original proprietor of this lot. He was one of the early clerks of the proprietors and was constable in 1733. He had a brother Penuel Chapman who was also clerk for the proprietors. As to which Chapman actually lived on home-lot 16 is difficult to determine, but it was sold by Penuel Chapman to John McClary in 1756. The McClarys owned this land for many years. The current owner of the property is Roland LaFleur.

LOT #15

PHOTO: One of two homes owned by C.M. Steele on the northwest corner of Lot 15.

Simon Knowles drew this home-lot. Later the land was in the hands of a Thomas Berry, but no record of how he received it has been found. In any event, the 50-acre home-lot was sold from Thomas Berry of Greenland to William Blazo of Epsom, the 'original right of Simon Knowles'. John Mark Moses in his 'Early Settlers of Epsom' mentions that William Blazo acquired land in Epsom as early as 1746, and that Jonathan Curtis in his history of Epsom, mentions William Blazo, a Frenchman, as a pioneer settler in the town. The fact that he was 'of Epsom' when he bought the land of Thomas Berry would seem to substantiate that claim. William deeded the property to his sons Amos and John – land, house and barn... a home lot in Epsom... the lot where I now live. William died in 1761, supposedly the first person to be buried in 'the burying place.' His sons left town for Pittsfield and sold the home-lot to Andrew McClary. He in turn sold the property the same year to William Wallace Jr. of Greenland. It is possible that this William Wallace of Greenland was the son of William Wallace of Greenland who drew home-lot No. 12. It was his sister



Abigail who married earlier William Blazo, son of the William Blazo who died in 1761. Certainly they would be more than familiar with the growing town. Church records show that the William Wallace family was here for a short time, and indeed, they sold the lot to Ichabod Weeks of Greenland in 1768. The property bounced around for a while, showing next bought by William Wallace of Epsom in August, and sold to Ebenezer Tabor of Greenland that December. Exactly which William Wallace was doing all the dealing is impossible to ascertain. Moses Locke of Kensington, a distant relative to the other Locke family already in Epsom, bought the property in April of 1769. It stayed in this family passing from Moses to his son Jonathan in 1793, with the provision he take care of Moses (and his wife) Mary for the rest of their natural lives. The house passed next to son David Locke 3rd who moved to Hopkinton and sold to Benjamin M. Heath. The lot passed to his brother Andrew M. Heath who sold it to Thomas D. Merrill, now a lot of 60 acres, land and buildings. Thomas D. Merrill sold it within a few weeks to William McMurphy (recorded Murphy). William McMurphy sold the land and buildings to Abraham D. Swain in February of 1841.

Swain broke up the lot, selling the land and buildings with 13 acres to John Morrill in 1847. Morrill sold this same piece to George W. Swain late in 1849. The relationship between Abraham D. and George W. Swain is unknown. The property continued to have different owners including Frederick Sanborn (1850), Joseph W. Rand (1855) and Alexander B. Forbes in 1865. Forbes married Susan Elizabeth Parsons Brown in 1859 and they moved to Byfield, Ma. In September 1889 Alexander Forbes sold the property to his wife's brother Charles J. Brown. Ten years later Charles J. Brown sold the 13 acres and buildings to Charles McClary Steele and his wife Helen E. P. (Yeaton) Steele. Charles McClary Steele had earlier changed his name from Michael McClary Steele, and was still in town referred to as 'Mike'. The "Mike Steele" house stayed in the family until 1961.

SCHOOL/PARSONAGE LOT

Of all the old fifty acre lots, this one is probably the most interesting, and until now, the least known about. Both the first minister's lot and the original school lot had with them additional land elsewhere outside the 20 home-lots. The use of this land was as resource material for the upkeep of the school and meetinghouse. It could be used for planting, or a source of lumber for building or keeping warm. The first activity on either original lot was the burying ground and meetinghouse on the first minister's lot, and it was even later that the young town began to make use of the school/parsonage lot, which was just across East Street from the meetinghouse.

Since Rev. Tuck outright bought from the town what was set aside as the original parsonage lot, the land across the street, originally set up as a school lot, was the only 50 acre lot on East Street that was town, or common, land. For whatever reason, the town began to sell small portions of the property. One of the earlier transactions was in 1778 when the town sold to James Gray, 2 acres taken from the northeast corner of 'the school lot so-called.' James Gray was a well-known Revolutionary War veteran and a most respected individual. He lived, as best as we can tell, in the area of Sanborn's Hill, and it is known that he was one of the earliest schoolteachers in Epsom. The issue of maintaining a school is even more unclear than the efforts of the town to build a meetinghouse. As early as 1765 it was voted that a school be built on the lot 'commonly called the Scool Lot', and undoubtedly a school was built, but the maintaining of the school remained in question. The selectmen were dealing with how to raise money for the support of the school in 1780, and the following year passed the following vote: "Voted That the school House which stands near the meeting house in said Epsom be this day sold at publick vendue to the Highest Bidder, & the purchased sum

be appropriated to the use of the town.” This shows the existence of a school building in 1781, and if indeed it was sold, it is not known when a replacement was built. There was a petition in 1793 as a grievance against the town for not supporting a school, including ‘power to have a suitable school house in the district completed...’

Meanwhile, the town remained without a minister after the dismissal of Rev. Tuck in 1774. Rev. Benjamin Thurston was invited to take the position, and in preparation the town “*Voted* that there be a Parsonage house and barn built upon the Parsonage lands, where it shall be thought most proper, of the following Dimensions, viz.: the House to be 40 by 30 feet, and 2 story high; the barn to be 35 by 30 feet,



and our elected Pastor to be consulted as to the finishing the Parsonage House as to convenience.” The Rev. Thurston declined the invitation, but it appears the town went ahead and built a parsonage. Finally in 1784, the Rev. Ebenezer Haseltine accepted the call to preach in Epsom and was settled in the new parsonage. **PHOTO:** Another Mike Steele Home on the northeast corner of the Parsonage Lot.

During the time that Rev. Haseltine lived in the parsonage, the town of Epsom sold off another corner of the lot in 1795 to William McClary of Epsom. It was described as follows “a certain parcel of land lying in Epsom aforesaid the same being part of the parsonage lot where the Revd. Ebenezer Haseltine now lives, to contain one half acre to take its beginning at the pound, then to run Easterly as the so ... ministers lot and as far back as well contain the said half acre the same being sold at public vendue agreeably to the Of the Town.” William built a house on the lot and about 1798 moved to Stanstead, Canada, selling part of the land to Michael McClary in 1799 with ‘house, barn and all buildings’ and a portion to David Lawrence Morrill (later Governor of New Hampshire, married Jane Wallace). David Lawrence Morrill was a Doctor and moved his practice to Goffstown, selling the property to his brother Samuel Morrill (also a Doctor) in 1801.

Samuel Peabody purchased the half of this lot sold to Michael McClary from William McClary. Peabody in 1838 sold it with ‘house, barn and woodhouse, to John Folsom and Samuel Chapman of Tamworth, who in 1842 sold it to John C. Hall. This is most likely the site of the John C. Hall home, which burned Old Home Day 1916 after being struck by lightning. This starts to give us a picture of what this lot appeared to look like, the frontage on East Street having houses on both the east and west ends of the lot, with the parsonage building between and set back from the road. Also in the area on the west end, the town pound, a small common and somewhere, a schoolhouse.

After thirty years of preaching, Rev. Haseltine died, and the town picked up the expense of his funeral allowed his widow the use of the parsonage and the rest of his earnings for the year. The town, with the beginnings of other religious societies, could not come to a common agreement in hiring a new minister, and a new ‘Congregational Religious Society of the Town of Epsom’ was formed, and in 1814, voted to ask the Rev. Jonathan Curtis to be the new minister. He accepted in January of 1815 and was given the use of the parsonage land and buildings. Since the town could not band together in the hiring

of Rev. Curtis, and with other religious organizations beginning to flourish, and yet further with an eye on frugality (remember Rev. Tuck bought the original parsonage lot), they sold the parsonage lot to the Rev. Curtis in December of 1816. He remained minister until January of 1825, and kept many good records and seemed quite successful. He wrote the first published history of Epsom in 1823, which was reprinted about 1889. During the later part of his ministry, the use of the meetinghouse became a troublesome issue for the town. Other religious societies demanded use of the building, forcing different denominations there during different parts of the day. The Congregational Society chose to meet at Captain Heath's hall for the 1820 season and look into a new meetinghouse for the Society. In 1821 a committee was named to help settle the issues with the town, but complications with the various pew holders made a resolution impossible. It was not until 1845 that the Congregationalist's built a church in that part of town known as 'slab city.'

Rev. Curtis began to preach in Pittsfield following his tenure in Epsom, and remained owner of the parsonage and property until he sold it to Joseph Spaulding of Windham in 1836. It is unknown if it was occupied after Rev. Curtis stopped preaching, or whether he remained and traveled to Pittsfield to preach. It can be assumed that after 1836 he lived in Pittsfield as his wife, who died in 1840, and is buried there. Rev. Burbank, Rev. John A. Putnam and the Rev. Abel Manning succeeded Rev. Curtis as minister during this period. Whether they used the parsonage is unknown, but if they did, they did so with the blessing of the Rev. Curtis, but there is evidence some of them were right next door. **PHOTO:** The Old Parsonage

The small two-acre section of land sold off from the eastern part of the parsonage lot and facing East Street



also went through many owners. Originally sold to James Gray by the town to raise money for schools in 1778, he sold it in 1789 to John McClary Jr., one of the son's of Maj. Andrew McClary. Though bought with no mention of buildings, he sold the lot 'with the buildings thereon' to William Duncan of Concord in 1792. Maj. William Duncan did not hang on to it very long as he sold it about two years later to Solomon Sutton, who may have lived there a while. Solomon was 'of Epsom' when he sold to Ebenezer Virgin of Concord – the complete two acres, land and buildings. It came back into the hands of the McClary family in December of 1799, as James Harvey McClary, brother to the John McClary who sold it in 1792, bought the property. At the time James Harvey McClary was living on his father's and grandfather's homestead, which he sold to

Joseph Lawrence, and moved down to this lot. Most historians agree that he built the house currently standing there, and the architecture probably bears this out. He was running the old tavern and store from the homestead, and apparently ran some sort of store from his new home. In 1810, suffering from an illness, he sold the property 'being where he now lives' to his cousin Michael McClary. James Harvey McClary died eight days later. By deed of February 1814, his widow again owned the property, and years later rented the store to James Babb who bought the property in October of 1825. Just a few weeks later, he sold it to Thomas D. Merrill, who was soon to become one of the most successful businessmen in Epsom. It was in January of this same year that Jonathan Curtis ended his tenure as minister in Epsom.

Thomas D. Merrill lived on what is now the western end of the McClary Cemetery, his property joining the old burying ground. He bought and sold a lot of property, was a holder of many town

offices, active in town affairs, handled many legal affairs, and was a strong supporter of the Congregational Society. As such, although it is not entirely clear, he saw to it that this property was used as the parsonage. The actual parsonage lot and buildings were sold by Joseph Spaulding to John Chesley on the third April 1839, and sold it two days later to Hanover Dickey Jr. In the description of the property, it is stated that it starts 'at the Northwesterly corner of land now occupied as a parsonage and sold by Thomas D. Merrill for that purpose.' That would put the Rev. Winthrop Fifield in the home on this 2-acre lot, he following in 1837 Rev. Abel Manning. It would appear that perhaps most or all of the successors of Rev. Curtis may have stayed here. In 1845, the same year as the Congregational Society built its church, Thomas D. Merrill sold the property to William Wallace of Epsom – 2-acres, land and buildings, which he sold to the Rev. Rufus A. Putnam in 1847. The Rev. Putnam being the successor of Rev. Fifield, and the first pastor at the new church in 'slab city.'

Rev. Putnam sold this small lot to Perley Giles in 1856, and he in turn sold it to Nancy B. Brown the next year. After owning the property for nearly 8 years, it was sold to Hannah P. Swain of Chichester who married first Elbridge L. Swain who died in Civil War service, then Charles Augustus Steele. It passed to her son from her first marriage, Joseph L. Swain who sold it to Michael McClary Steele (later changed name to Charles M. Steele), son of Hannah Swain and her second spouse, Charles Augustus Steele. In the same deed of 1839 when John Chesley sold the former parsonage to Hanover Dickey (known for quite some time after as 'the Dickey Place'), part of the bounds included land of Benjamin Hall to 'the parade grounds.' This was often referred to later as the 'commons' and was part of that small corner of the parsonage lot which included the old town pound. Hanover Dickey sold the old parsonage in 1858 to John



C. Hall who sold it the next day to Samuel Wiggin, at this time equaling 8 acres, land and buildings. The property was reduced in size even further when Wiggin sold 2 acres, land and buildings in 1867 to Charles C. Batchelder. Due to some domestic problem, the Supreme Judicial Court awarded it to his wife Ursula Batchelder of Northwood, and she sold it to Charles Sumner Hall (son of John C. Hall) in 1875. He held it only a few months before selling it to Betsey L. Piper, and it remained in the Piper-Oscar Hall-Cox family until 1945. **PHOTO:** The John C. Hall home, burned in August of 1916 on the

western end of the parsonage lot.

Gilbert Knowles in a paper prepared for the Epsom Historical Association in 1975, wrote the following:

Although I have found nothing written up about it, Mr. Luther Hall, who died in 1939, and lived in the beautiful house just west of here until it burned, told Mr. And Mrs. Lewis Nutter that an ell part of the "parsonage" was sold and moved by oxen down the lane and then made into another house on the lot where Charles and Ruth Batchelder now live. Mr. Hall told that in turning the corner on the main road with the oxen and their load there was some damage to the grounds of the property of George Batchelder (now Watson Ambrose) and that Mr. Batchelder made quite a fuss about it. As Mr. Batchelder died in 1889, the date of the ell moving must have been a number of years earlier.

Old Epsom Centre

As a small footnote, this small section of town was referred many times as ‘the old center.’ The small section of land taken from the original school/parsonage lot at different times contained a small parade ground, latter called the common; the town pound; the schoolhouse, likely later the current Center School; and across the street the meetinghouse and burying ground. The following is a note found in town records –

“Record of trees set out on the School House Common and by the Cemetery Wall. Those trees on the Commons and by the Cemetery Wall were all set out in 1857 except the Chestnut at the East end of the Cemetery Wall that was set out by John C. Hall. The Elm that was set there in 1857 died. There were originally 28 of them. They were all dug up and set out by Simon A.H. Weeks, Eben B. Hoyt, Edwin and Joel L. Sanborn and Charles Jeffrey Brown. Some of them came from the Range Road near the Pettingill House, some from the roadside near Joe Eastmans (Byron Ambrose) and the rest from the roadside near Deacon John Eastmans (Manson Griffins). They dug them and brought them on their shoulders and set them out and took care of them.”

Many of the towns around Epsom retained some type of town center. As roads became better and more numerous, and the addition of the railroad from Gossville to Short Falls, the population shifted dramatically. Epsom Center became the area around the new town hall, New Rye grew, and schools appeared in numerous ‘districts’ throughout Epsom. The examination of many deeds and old accounts helps us now to be able to recreate in our minds that section of East Street, the old Epsom Centre, which was unknown before. **PHOTO below:** Home of C.J. Brown

LOT #14

The next few lots being west of the meetinghouse are on West Street. This lot was drawn by Josiah Foss and soon after bought by William Haines. Samuel Blake bought it in 1742, at that time already being ‘of Epsom’. Over time, he sold the frontage facing East Street in smaller lots to several people, among them Thomas D. Merrill and Ephraim Locke. Another familiar name as an owner of one of these smaller lots was Charles Jeffrey Parsons Brown, current site of David Noyes.

LOT #13

John Blake (seen originally as Black) was the original proprietor of this home-lot. He deeded it to his son Samuel who settled there, and for generations was known as the Blake Homestead. He also sold some of the East Street frontage of lot 13, including one which was later owned by Jeremiah Prescott who sold it to James and Samuel Weeks, being known for a long period of time as ‘the old Weeks place. Samuel’s daughter Elizabeth married in 1797 John Chesley, and the homestead passed to them and remained in the family through his son John; his son Daniel Gilman Chesley; to his daughter Eleanora



Chesley who married Lewis Nutter. She prepared a talk to the Epsom Historical Association in 1970, which gives a wonderful history of the homestead.

Epsom was incorporated May 18, 1727. Although my house is not one of the oldest in town, it was built by one of the earliest settlers. Samuel Blake is reported to have come to Epsom in 1733 as a boy of 15. His father, John Blake, was one of the 20 proprietors whose requirement was to build a house and plant or sow 3 acres on each home ot, so called. Apparently there was no requirement as to length of their stay. Until the close of the French and Indian Wars, about 1749-50, probably no great attempt was made a permanent settlement.

A meeting of the proprietors was held in 1743 but these meetings were not necessarily held in their township. The early settlers spent the warm months of the year on their Epsom acreage and returned to their former homes in Rye, Greenland or other towns for the winter.

In 1749 John Blake deeded to his son Samuel Lot #10 of the Home Lots. Samuel also owned Lot # 9 as a later deed for the property showed. {Actual lots 13 & 14} These two 50 acres lots were laid out in 1732. They were bounded on the north by that part of the Center road known as West Street, and extended in a southerly direction 160 rods up Sanborn Hill to land of Charles McCoy, an early settler. He sold his land in 1760 to Reuben and Eliphalet Sanborn and it has been in possession of the Sanborn family until recent years. This is how Sanborn Hill got its name. There was an early house on one of these lots on the Center Road at the corner of the old Sanborn Hill Road. This may have been the home of Samuel's older brother John.

Samuel was married in 1743 and probably about that time built his house on the location where my present house stands.

He was a friend to the Indians and in fact paid them for the land he had already been granted. The price was ten shillings but for one of these shilling he gave them his knife which they had much admired. So the story had always been told that he bought his 100 acre farm from the Indians for 9 shillings and a jack-knife. He also invited the Indians into his house to partake of meat roasted in the fireplace, which pleased them very much. Once when he was searching for his wandering cow, one of his Indian friends warned him of the presence of Indians of an unfriendly tribe so that he was able to return home safely.

The first house was destroyed by fire. Evidence of the fire remained for many years as one of the young Lombardy poplars in front of the house was badly burned. These trees had been brought from England and lived to grow to great size, and were finally blown over by strong winds when about 150 years old. The fire burned one of them but it still grew with deep indentations in its trunk. In later years its girth going in and out of the indentations was 28 feet.

The present house was built soon after the American Revolution, 1784. Its Colonial style is very similar to that of the one built on the Parsonage Lot on Center Hill about the same time, now the home of Mr. Hughes, also the Sanborn House, now the home of Dr. Clark.

The foundation of the house is of granite, the great blocks having been hauled from the quarries in Hooksett and Allenstown by ox teams. The house was built facing the Center Road with the end and side entrance facing the old Sanborn Hill road. The road we now use was built many years later,

about 1847, as the town had grown in the direction of the village on the new turnpike road. This was shorter and avoided the steeper hills.

Lumber for the house was no doubt cut on the farm and sawed in the mill of which Samuel Blake was part owner. Supporting timbers were hand hewn. The large central chimney rests on a great pile of rocks in the middle of the cellar. Rocks were no problem to obtain as every hillside farm had them in abundance as is evidenced by the miles of stone walls all over the countryside, and the rock piles which were enlarged year after year by rocks picked up from the field as they were prepared for cultivation. Another method of disposing of large rocks was to sink them by digging a hole at the



side and tipping them over into it. Even so, many extra large rocks were left in the fields, which interfere greatly with present day machine work. To return to the chimney, it was built with five flues to serve five fireplaces, two of them in the front upstairs rooms. The one in the main room served as kitchen, dining room and living room is large enough to accommodate a 4-foot cordwood stick. It also has a brick oven and ash pit. There are 9 rooms in the main house

with a large open chamber and full size attic. The present ell was added nearly 100 years later to replace a small summer kitchen. The rooms are large (15 by 16) to provide for the large families of those times. Samuel Blake had 19 children. The flooring is of wide boards. The boards in the main room are 20 feet long. All of the downstairs doors are of the Christian type except for one narrow cupboard. All doors had latches.

The upstairs rooms were not completely finished off until Civil War times when it was easy to obtain competent labor from skilled artisans, men working their way to Canada to escape the draft. It may have been at this time that the windows with small panes were replaced with four pane windows. Four of the original windows were left in the attic, two at each end.

Other changes to modernize the house have been the removal of corner posts in the east front room or parlor, changing of several latches to doorknobs, and papering over wide paneling. All of the fireplaces were bricked up. We have opened two of them and probably will open the others. Seven generations have enjoyed the privilege of living in this old house. If the walls could talk, what interesting stories they might tell!!

LOT #12

The original proprietor of this lot was William Wallace. In 1754, according to John Mark Moses, Thomas Bickford was 'of Epsom' when he exchanged his property for home-lot number 13. He lived there until 1764, and during that time, his neighbor, Samuel Blake, married his sister. He moved to

lot 95 on the present day Route 4, and sold 50 acres of that lot to his brother Samuel, whose descendants live there to the present day.

CONCLUSION

Epsom grew rapidly after 1761 and quickly spread out to become one of the most important of the Suncook Valley towns. The information provided here was done so on the 275th anniversary of the Town of Epsom, 2002. All of the existing histories used were cited throughout, but a list of them is given for those who wish to pursue additional information with additional sources. Most of the information is available at the Epsom Public Library or the New Hampshire Historical Society. Newer research from compiling this booklet reveals that indeed Epsom had a meetinghouse built prior to the one in 1764 during the time Rev. Tucke was in town. A review of the old town records at the New Hampshire State Archives in Concord show at least six mentions of it. The first is in May 1732 that 'there be laid out a convenient place in the town suitable for the Building a Meeting house.' On July 4, 1732 that 'there be a meeting house of thirty foot long and twenty-four feet wide, immediately built.' It would appear that this was done as in January 1733 we see in the notes of the proprietors meeting 'that the name of the Street from the Meeting house upward West street and downward to Nottingham, East Street'. In May of 1743 we find this entry: 'The meeting that was held at Epsom at the Meetinghouse May the 4, 1743 is adjourned till the 2 Wednesday in June,' which shows that the building was in use. Next some money was paid in 1743 as shown in this note: 'Mr. William Lock received thirty-seven pounds five shillings towards building said meetinghouse as per his receipts.' Finally, in 1761 we read 'that the meetinghouse shall stand on the same lot where the old meetinghouse formerly stood, at or near the Burying place', which gives us the location. The tablet currently at the site states it is the site of the first meetinghouse - and it is, but the date of 1764 is now incorrect.

History of Epsom by John Dolbeer from the *History of Merrimack and Belknap Counties*, D. Hurd, 1885

Historical Sketch of Epsom, NH by Rev. Jonathan Curtis, A.M., published in No. 11 *Collections, Historical & Miscellaneous: and Monthly Literary Journal*, published by Jacob B. Moore, November 1823.

Early Settlers of Epsom by John Mark Moses, published in 4 installments in the *Granite Monthly Magazine*, 1909-1910

The First Church of Epsom, 1761-74, by John Mark Moses, *Granite Monthly Magazine*

Historical Sketch of Epsom, NH, compiled by Loella Marden Bunker for the 200th Anniversary, 1727-1927, Concord Press 1927

Epsom – Historical documents, Biographical Information and Interesting Facts, 4 volumes, compiled by Philip S. Yeaton for the Epsom Historical Association

Manuscripts from the Epsom Historical Association, including presentations by Mary L. Cass, Gilbert Knowles and Eleanora Nutter.

Deeds and old town records from NH State Archives, researched by Joyce & Carleton T. Rand

Photos courtesy of the Epsom Historical Association.

PHOTO ADDENDUM



Left: The Griffin house on Home-Lot #1. **Right:** Monument marking the site of the Andrew McClary Homestead.

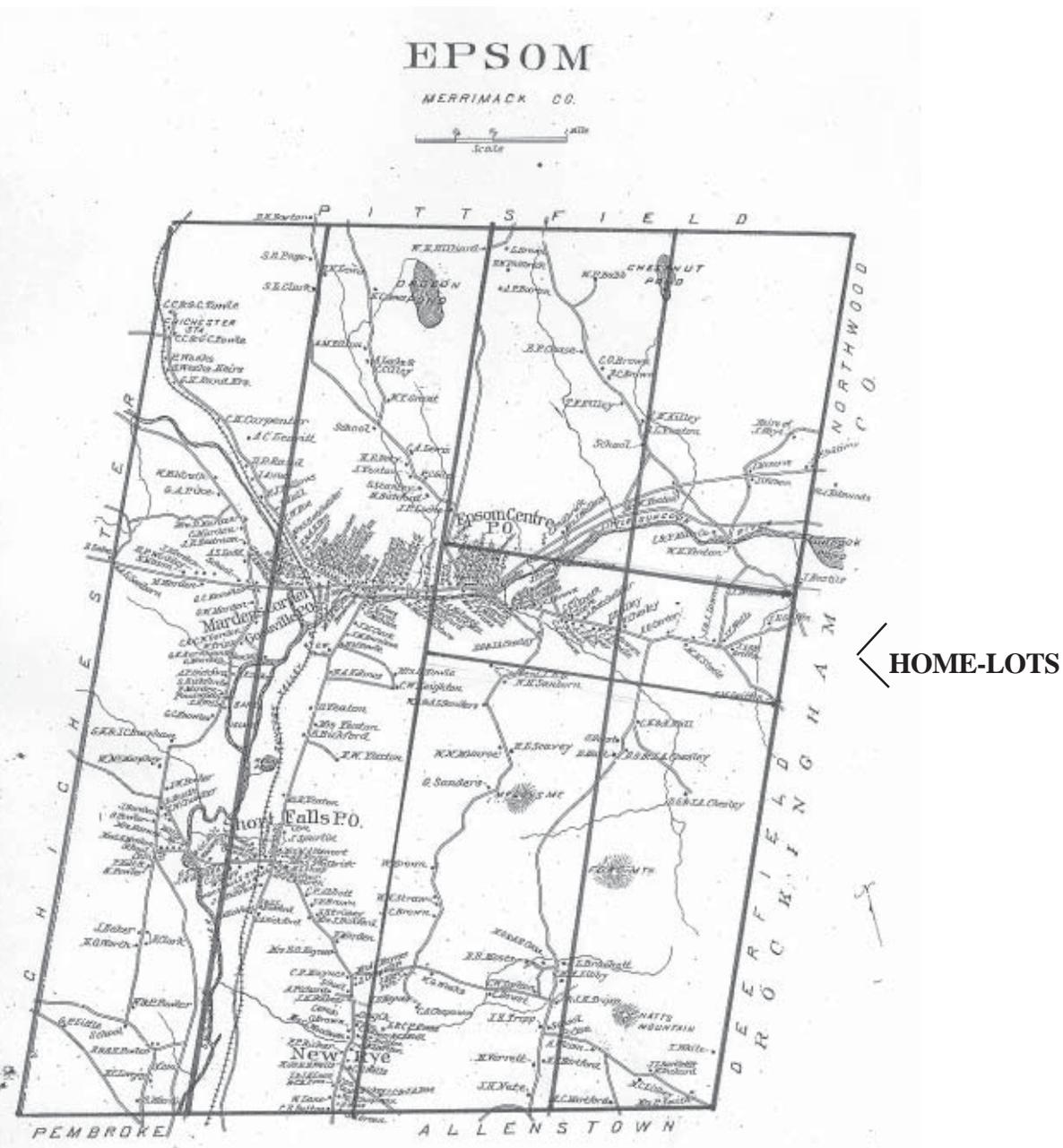


Left: The Center Hill School across from the McClary Cemetery. Former John C. Hall house in background. This area part of the old 'common.' **Right:** Monument to the capture of Isabella McCoy



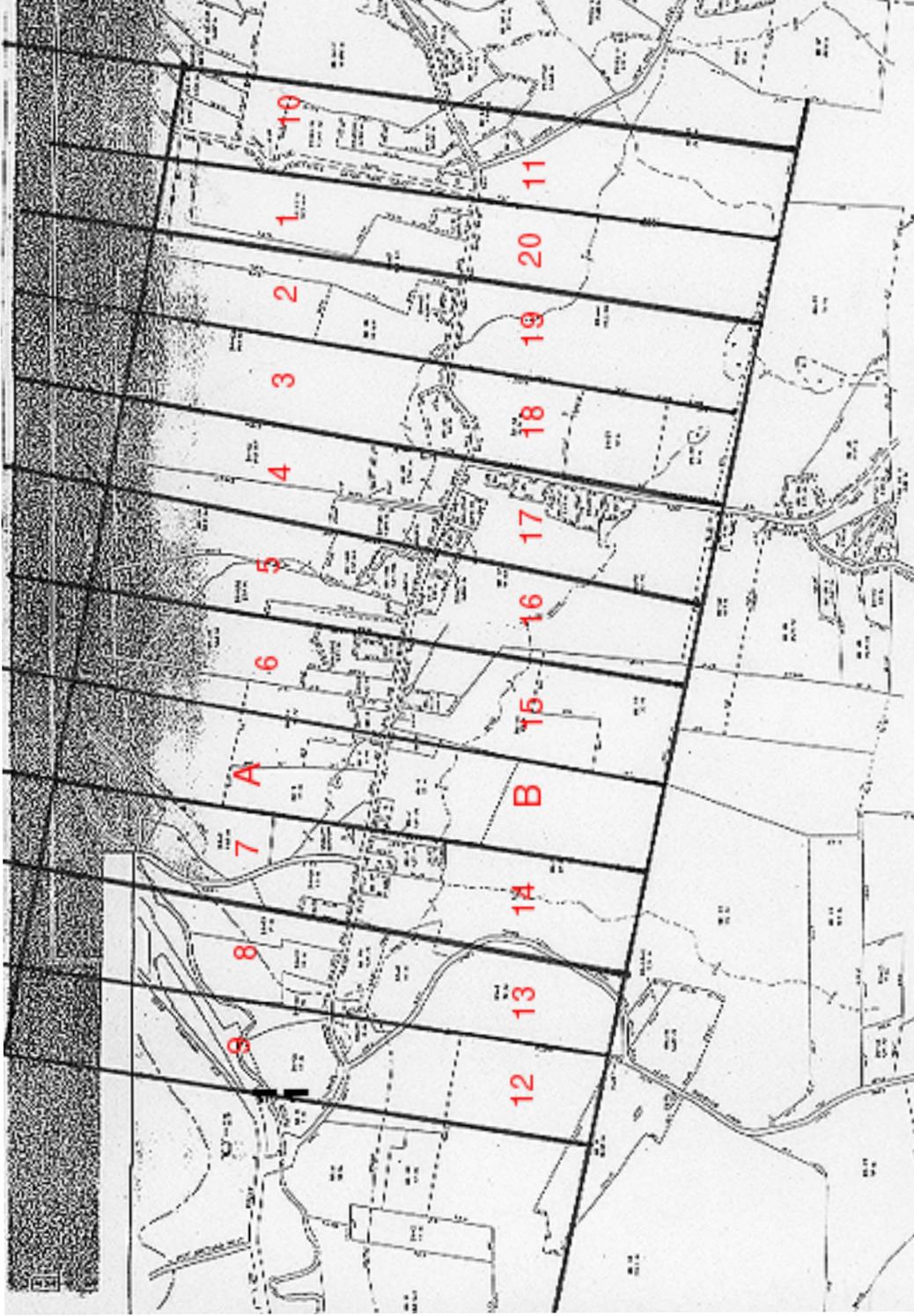
Left: One of the last photos of the old tavern. **Right:** Monument dedicating the site of the first meetinghouse. Note the old stone wall, later replaced by an iron fence.

LINES ARE FOR APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF RANGES AND LOTS; NOT TO SCALE



4th Range 3rd Range 2nd Range 1st Range

E A S T



W E S T

HOME-LOT NUMBERS

A - First Minsiter's Lot **B** - School/Parsonage Lot