

NEWSLETTER



Holderness Historical Society

Summer 2020

Volume XXXX

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HAPPY SUMMER

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www.holdernesshistoricalsociety.org

The HHS building will be open by appointment only for Summer 2020. Call Missy Mason 968-3334 to arrange an appointment or Tink Taylor (for dugout) 968-3846.

Moon Island

Letter from Isabella Curtis to her mother, August 22, 1905

Dearest Madam,

I expect you may be getting tired of hearing that each day is absolutely the most beautiful not only that exists---but that ever has existed..., but so it is---yesterday was the ne plus ultra. We rowed up to a lovely spot in Rattlesnake Cove where we had tea and then slowly crept through the rocks by a winding channel into Squaw Cove where the sun set behind a dark purplish blue wall---leaving clouds that baffle description & we came slowly out down a vision-like lake and got home at about 8.

The last glacier, a wall of ice a mile thick, moved through central New Hampshire from northwest to southeast, scooped deep basins in the soft rock, but left hills and ledges where the rock was harder. When it retreated 12,000 years ago, the basins filled with water and formed the lakes we see here today. One was Squam, a lake of meandering shorelines, deep coves, and islands of ledge and glacial till.

On the oldest maps and tax ledgers, one of Squam's many islands appears as "Flat Island". It is something less than half a mile from corner to corner and an eighth-of-a-mile wide. For the later part of the 19th Century it belonged to George Mooney, who had a farm on the nearby Holderness mainland. Mooney may have kept sheep on the island, but he and the sheep were long gone by the turn of the 20th Century, and the island was for sale. In true New England fashion, the island's name changed to "Mooney Island" once Mooney no longer owned it.

Today, a mature forest of shade-tolerant beech and hemlock dominates the island's interior, but the tall paper birches of a century ago have mostly fallen, unable to survive without the sun. Along shore, where the light is better, white pines, red maples, tupelos, and an occasional yellow birch thrive, while at the northeast end of the island, blueberries grow in abundance.

In the decades following the Civil War, an extraordinary group of siblings were growing up in Massachusetts. There were ten of them, five boys and five girls. They lived on Beacon Hill in the winter, and in a house overlooking the sea in Manchester, Massachusetts during the rest of the year.

Of the five sisters, only one ever married, while the other four lived together for their entire lives. All the sisters traveled widely and engaged in charitable activities. One was a member of the Boston School Committee and unsuccessful candidate for Mayor of Boston. Two sisters founded an outpatient clinic for low-income families north of Boston. Two became the National Women's Golf Champion of America and one of those was also National Women's Tennis Champion. One was Dean of Women at Hampton Institute. And one bought Moon Island...

...Isabella Curtis was born in 1876, the second oldest of the sisters. She could be sarcastic and critical, and her siblings felt the sting of her wit. They called her by a number of nicknames, including "Beast". To her nieces who adored her, she was "Aunt Bog" or "Aunt Bolla".

We know of Moon Island in the Twentieth Century through a memoir by one of Bella's nieces. Isabella "Ibby" Halsted, was born in 1907, and from the time she was old enough to swim, visited her aunt at Moon Island every summer.

In her eighties, Ibby Halstead wrote a delightful Memoir of her mother's four sisters. Published in 1992 and appropriately called *The Aunts*, this charming book is the source of many of our descriptions of Bella Curtis and of Moon Island in the decades of Bella's ownership. Ibby Halsted died in 2006, well into her 100th year.

continued on page 2

The President's Corner

Partnered with the Holderness Library we were to present five programs this summer, but due to the pandemic we will have to present those programs next summer.

Our special exhibits this summer were to be **Art & Memorabilia of Helen Nicolay** (The paintings are on loan compliments of Patty Sue Salvador.) and our **dugout canoe** discovered in Squam Lake in 1939 will also be postponed until next summer. This summer the building will be open by appointment only.

An ongoing project is a collection of pictures and stories of Holderness historic buildings. Does your home or building have a story? Please share your story with us. If you have any information that you are willing to contribute to this collection, it would be most welcome and will serve to preserve our town's history and give it perspective. The work of cataloging our books and pamphlets to make research simpler continues. When we are open our library area allows people to research families, cemeteries, camps, historical events and places. Several DVD's including Holderness 250th will be available in the museum when we reopen.

Thank you for your continued support by way of membership dues and contributions. If you have not renewed your membership for 2020, please use the enclosed envelope to do so. Your ideas, suggestions, and help will be enthusiastically welcomed. Please contact me or any other board member if you can help or for more information. Linda Foerderer

FPLinda@aol.com (603) 968-7487
mid April to mid November or (561)
279-9720 mid November to mid April.

Continued from page 1

In 1902, when she was thirty, Bella Curtis went to visit her cousin Alice Longfellow in Holderness, New Hampshire, and for the first time saw Mooney Island.

Bella Curtis had explored this island by canoe. She paddled around it, noticing its many little beaches, its dark groves of hemlock and pine, its charming silver birches and luxuriant high-bush blueberries. There were no buildings, and no human voices to be heard. In 1904 she bought it, and christened her paradise "Moon Island."

A camp of rough boards was built that first summer and this remained unaltered for the next 40 years. It consisted of a big central room with fireplace, three little bedrooms each equipped with two cots and a door opening out into the forest, and a small kitchen with a diminutive wood burning stove. There was no running water; a pump outside the kitchen door drew water from the lake, to fill the pails---two big enamel ones for the kitchen, three smaller ones for the bedroom wash stands. There was no electricity, no telephone, no communication with the outside world except the mail boat which came every day at noon bringing that unfailing letter from Mother Curtis, and frequent food supplies...

Bella was never alone on the island. Relatives and friends took turns staying with her, in well-planned succession. As soon as her nephews and nieces were old enough to know how to swim, they became her enthusiastic companions.

As soon as she owned the island, Bella laid out trails and began to name things---beaches, paths, geographic features. A few names have been lost to time, but many remain in the memories of those who knew them, and some may yet be found on the island map published by the Squam Lakes Association.

All the beaches and paths on the island had names, too. To get to "Edna-Maude" beach you walked along the "Romany Patteran," so named for the many Gypsy moth nests found on its bordering trees. "Birch Boulvard" naturally ended in "Birch Boulevard Beach" and another good swimming place was reached by strolling down "Crossed-in-Lovers Lane" a path hacked out of the forest by two maiden ladies then past their prime, but retaining their sense of humor. For half a century Aunt Bog reigned over her magic kingdom. But alas, as old age crept up on her, it brought with it crippled limbs; no longer able to climb in and out of boats, stroll down woodland paths or swim off a favorite beach, she gave up her beloved island to spend her summer days at Manchester, Massachusetts... But "the Island" lived on. All the rules and regulations, the customs and the names for paths and beloved objects were kept alive by the new owner, Uncle Steen's daughter, Fanny Ham, "Finny."

Finny Ham was born in 1908. Twenty-two years later, just after she had graduated from Smith, the Boston Globe noted that she was a "fine field hockey player," a member of the second All-American team, and for two years had been the Massachusetts State junior tennis Champion in singles and doubles.

In 1936, Finny married Thomas Hale Ham. An influential Cleveland hematologist, he developed a revolutionary approach for educating medical students that would be adopted by medical schools across the country. They had three children: Tom, Polly, and Lola who grew up spending summers on the island, and in time granddaughters who visited regularly until the cabin burned in 1984. To the granddaughters, Finny and Hale were: "Nonny" and "Gobby."

Like all Aunt Bog's nephews and nieces, she had always loved staying on Moon Island for a week or two every summer, and now she and her husband Hale and their children made it their summer home and made it flourish once again. Except for a motor-boat and a few other modernities, they made time stand still.

Polly Snyder tells us ...my grandmother, Nonny was an incredible person. I'm so sorry that my kids won't meet her and understand the presence that she had up here. She was smart and tough and intelligent and well educated and would go out and split wood even at the age of 65, if not 70 with her axe and there she was: this little old white-haired lady in tennis shoes--as she used to say---splitting wood at dawn... she kept the island going and she kept it the way it was, and she respected traditions and that's something we all tried to do and inherited from her. She had her rules and she enforced them but she was warm and loving and loved sharing the island with other people and taught me a lot about respecting traditions and being open-minded, and caring for others and giving to others, and thinking about the world around you.

Continued on page 3

What I remember the most is...the rhythm of the days...endless days, but that may be just a child's memory or a child's sense of time.

There was no electricity in the camp and so I really remember the evenings...Dad would go out back...and pump up the Coleman Lanterns. I just remember when he'd light the match and the little white filaments would go Poof! And then there would be light. There was a process...with many things on the island---there was a process and a way of doing things that was the right way---lots of traditions.

When we looked at photographs from my great aunts' day, they would be out chopping wood in long skirts, and long blouses, and they did all the stuff at the camp...

We had this wonderful Morris canoe that was a hundred years old, that was just this beautiful canoe with enough of a keel on the bottom that we could go around the edges of the island and pick blueberries and we could even stand in the canoe. I mean we usually didn't but you could kneel and it was such a stable canoe---it was remarkable---all of our favorite canoe.

At the very end of the island is a big rock...and it looks directly out at Mount Chocorua...

I remember getting really excited when it rained and there were storms, because that meant that people in boats were going to have to dock and come for shelter, and we might meet new people. And that was really exciting. There were a lot of routines on the island. My grandmother was very tradition oriented... There were ways to do things and ways not to do things... There were just a lot of traditions... It was just a really magical place.

And people were more creative then. That's I think what I really miss. There was no TV, no electronics, and people did crazy things...but there was a sense of community and a sense of fun that maybe we miss these days.

It is all gone now...In 1984, when the summer season was over and everyone had left, a fierce thunderstorm swept over the island. A bolt of lightning struck the camp. The towering flames of the burning building were soon seen from the mainland, and

men set out in speedboats. But by the time they reached the island campsite, they found nothing but smoldering embers. I think it was important to my grandparents...to make sure that everybody could have access to places on Squam.

...They sold the island to the Squam Lakes Association in 1986. There really weren't public places on Squam before they sold the island to the Squam Lakes Association, and I think to them, to my grandparents, that other people be able to share, and enjoy, and love the lake as much as they did.

Its beaches and trails remain, and are open to visitors stopping at the island. Three campsites are available for rent, and every week in summer, a group of young people from the Junior Squam Lakes Association (JSLA) spend a night on the island and may hear stories of its history. At trail junctions, the SLA has posted maps, and many of the trails and beaches are marked with the names Bella Curtis gave them at the beginning of the last century. But newer maps replace the older, some of the names disappear. They shouldn't.

After the island was sold, Finny Ham returned to Squam Lake for a few weeks each summer. She rented a mainland house on the water, a short canoe trip away from the island. While the cabin is gone...the fifth generation,...know the old Moon Island only through stories.

The customs of Bella Curtis's generation were recorded and preserved by a second, followed and remembered by a third, and then a fourth generation. The descriptions of island life in the 1920's and 30's are so like those of the 1950's and 60's, and again like those of the 1970's and 80's that they seem interchangeable. On Moon Island, for 80 years, time did seem to stand still.

This article was written by Dan Kemp. It has been abridged to fit our space.


Dan's sources were: "The Aunts" by **Isabella Halstead** (Ibby) who was Bella Curtis' niece, an interview with **Polly Snyder** who was the Great Granddaughter of Finny Ham, an interview with **Polly Ham** while on a walk around the island. She was the daughter of Finny Ham who was the niece of Bella Curtis who inherited the island from her.


Keep up the Good Work!

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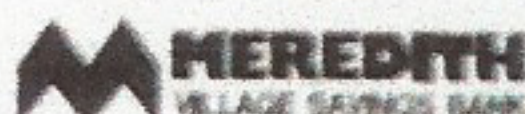
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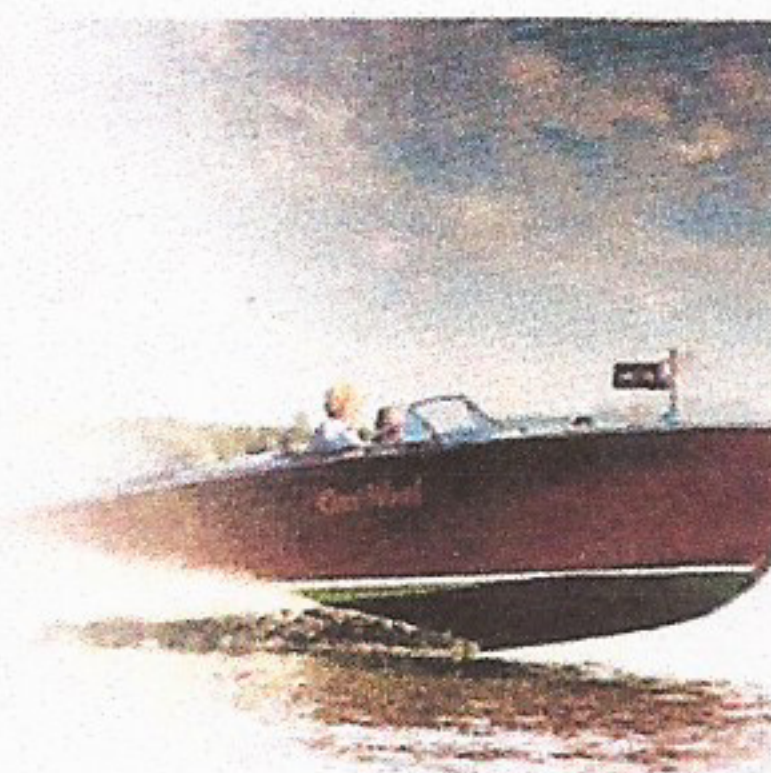
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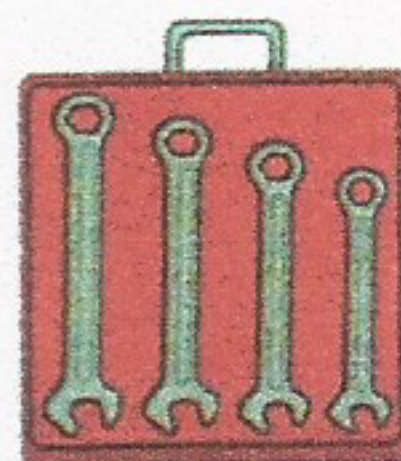
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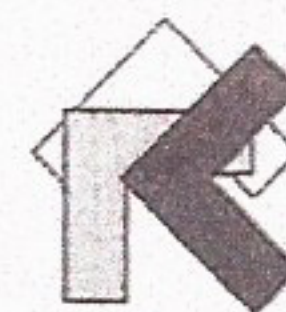
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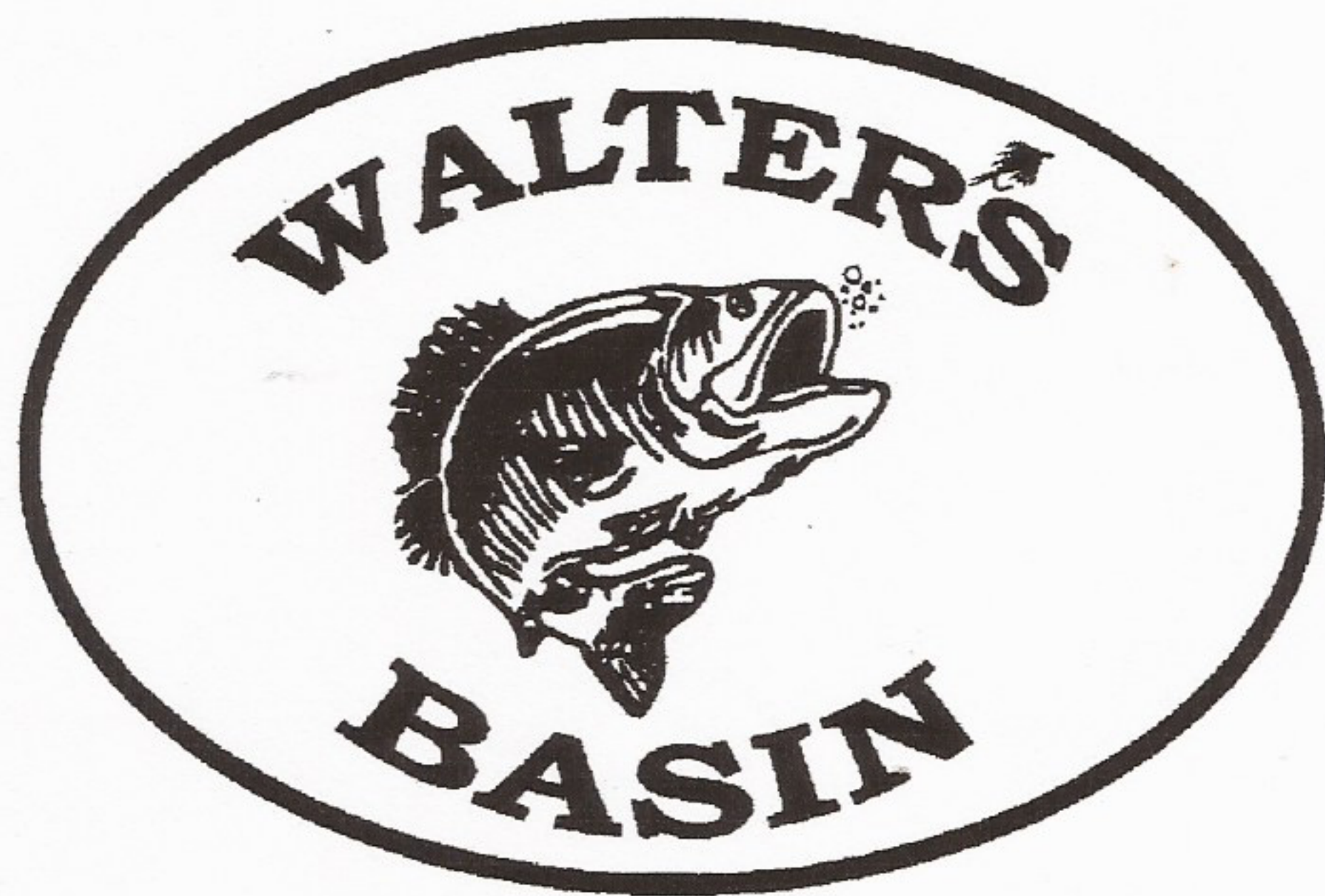
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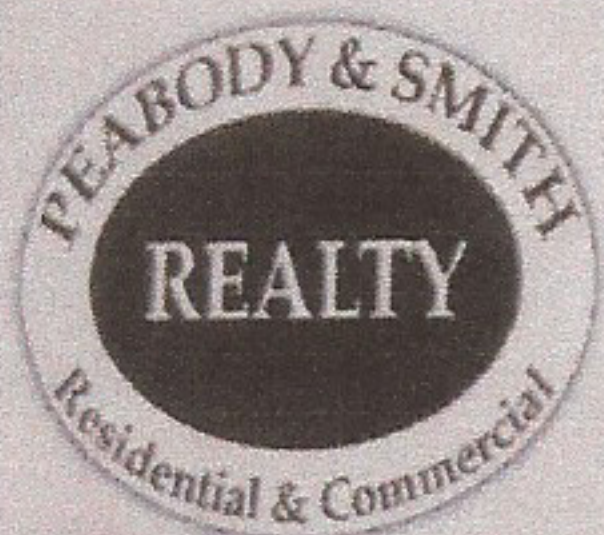
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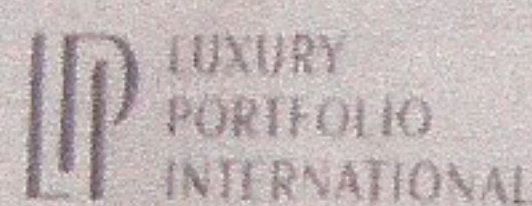
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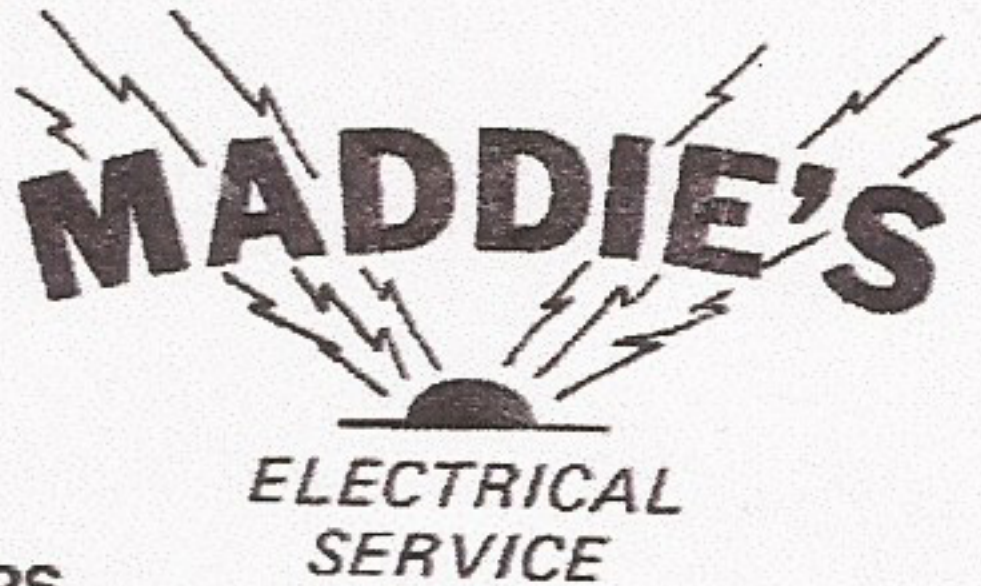
Pictured: The Holderness Inn, Holderness, NH
New Home of Samyn-D'Elia Architects, P.A.

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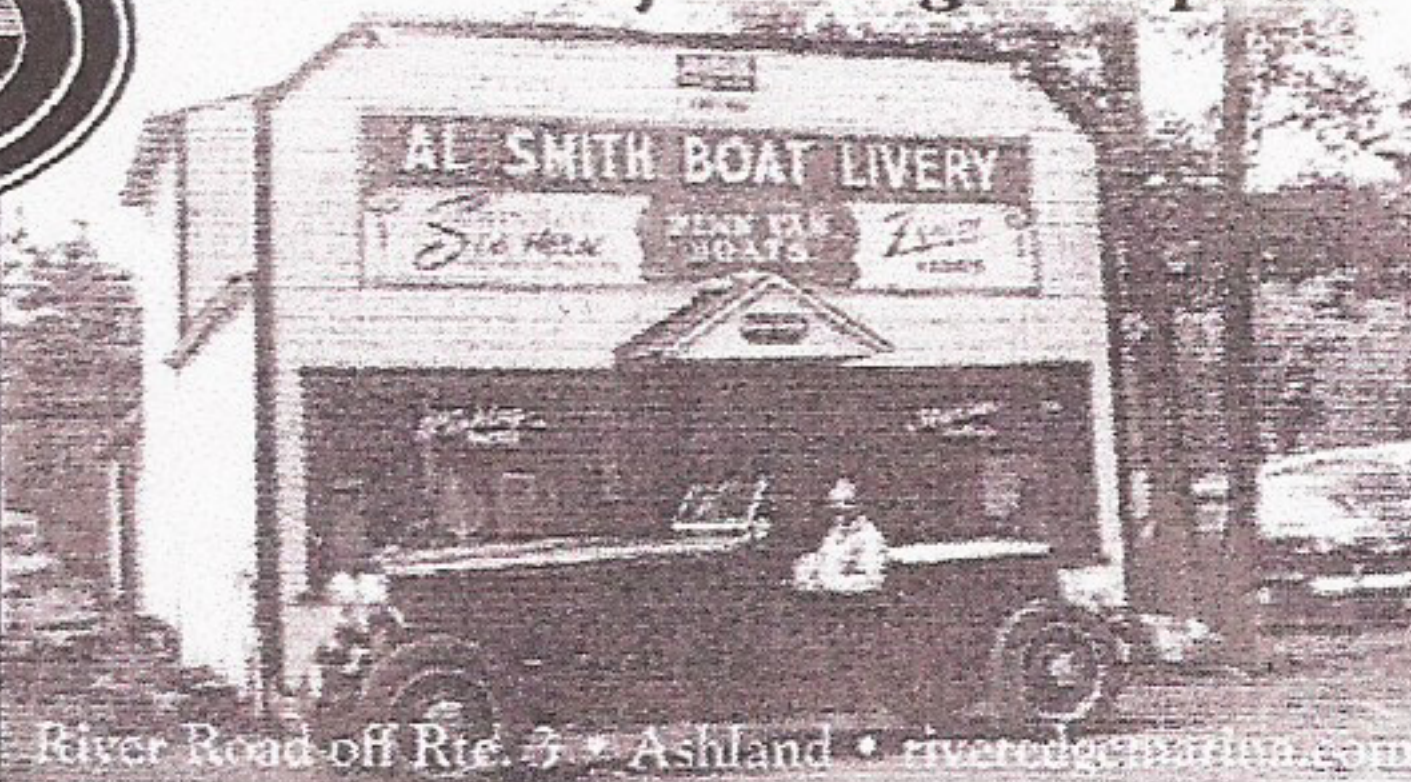
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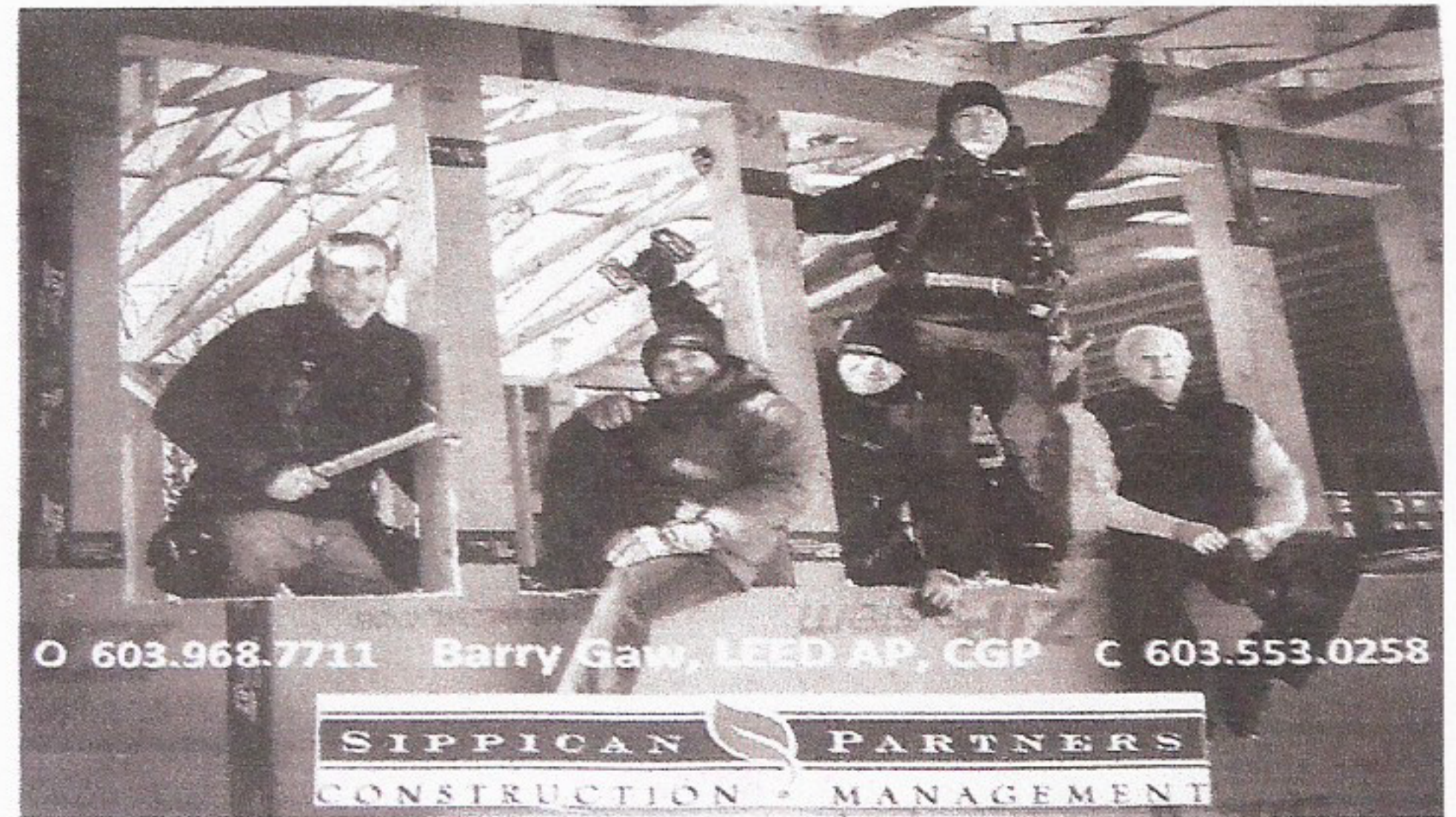


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Flowers on the Bridge

Red and yellow double profusion zinnias were planted May 26. Many thanks to Sally and Tom Daigneault at Squam Boat Livery for keeping the irrigation control system and paying the electric bill. K-Mac Construction repaired two of the boxes which were built in 2012 by Doug Ross' PRHS woodshop students. Dodie Greenwood and Missy Mason did the planting with an assist from Georgene Fabian. Thanks to Liz Greason for ongoing technical advice.

Gifts in memory of Mary Elizabeth Nielsen as well as from the Lovett-Woodsum Foundation and Robert Harrity helped fund the irrigation system work, new potting soil and flowers. If you enjoy the flowers, please donate because the Flower Fund was emptied when we had to purchase a new pump last year. Our main purpose is to maintain our building and collection. To continue the flower project, we will need additional contributions. We also need additional volunteers! Thanks to Earl Hansen for planting the HHS flower box.

Holderness' Oldest Resident

Harold Webster celebrated his 101st birthday in April. Campton Congregational Church organized a parade in his honor which he watched from his front porch. Mr. Webster once lived in the Captain Russell Cox brick house on Route 175. He has generously given the Historical Society an old map showing the 18th century property divisions and a copy of a poem extolling the Reverend Robert Fowle, first Episcopal minister of Holderness.

In Memoriam

John Echlin, who with his wife Nancy has supported HHS over the years, died June 24 in Savannah, GA. John lent us steamboat memorabilia for our summer exhibit in 2015 as well as letting us all get a close look at his steamboat *Liv-Slo*.

Treasurer's Report

We are in the black. Our financials were filed with the Town and the NH Attorney General's office May 8.

We purchased a humidifier to keep the lower level between 45% and 60% humidity for the dugout canoe as the Shelburne Museum recommended. Since water in the building was off for the winter, Ron Huntoon and Missy Mason kept the humidifier going by bringing in jugs of water. We will be looking for a more efficient process for the coming winter.

Additions to the Collection

A copy of the Forest Society magazine from Fall 2019 containing an article by Tink Taylor "A Look Back at Forty Years of Wetland Protection."

Additional pictures from *George Ashbridge* of Columbia, South Carolina of his relatives who once owned most of Pinehurst.

From *Carl and Sandra Lehner* a copy of the Spring Tour Guide for the Society of Architectural Historians, New England from May 1993. The Webster homes were part of the tour.

Town Report 1918-19

There is a lot of information in the old Town reports. Back then Charles A. Haskell, Ethan Allen and W. Irving Brown were the Selectmen. Robert P. Curry was Town Clerk and Treasurer. The Warrant for the March 11 Town Meeting listed the areas where voters would be asked to approve projected costs and appropriations for repairing highways and bridges (and to see if the Town would accept State Aid), for the Library, to decorate soldiers' graves, to support cemeteries, to suppress gypsy moths, to "hire" money in anticipation of taxes, to offer Old Home Day and to build a fireproof vault in which to keep Town records and books.

Taxes assessed for State, County, Town and Schools were \$14,667.39. Mill rate \$11.30 per thousand. Non-resident taxes were \$6226.44; resident taxes were \$8440.95. Assessed Values totaled \$1,262,247.00.

Noted among the various receipts for that year are a bowling alley license for Frank Francesco for \$8.00 and a \$13.00 State bounty on hedgehogs and wildcats.

Of special interest this year, four people died of influenza in the pandemic of 1918. William Avery, Claude Stanley, Richard Porter and Selena Greenwood all died in October of that year.

The Historical Society has a collection of Town Reports dating back to the 1870s.

Livermore Falls Update

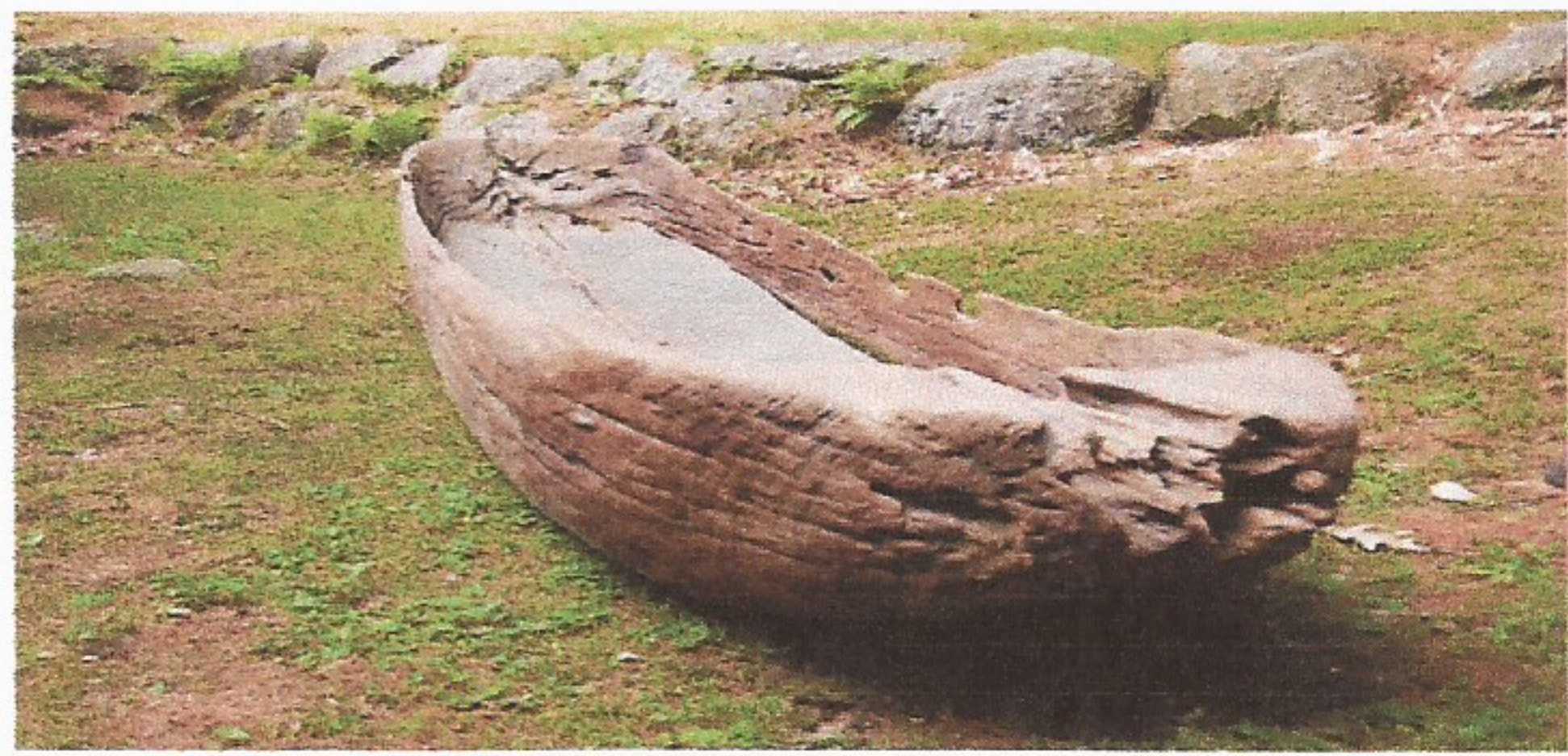
New Hampshire's newest state park at Livermore Falls, shared between Holderness and Campton, was the site of a mid-19th century industrial community (The Hollow) located upon an east side river edge terrace just below the falls where timber was sawn and beaten into pulp from logs driven downriver; coffins manufactured, shingles milled and barrels fashioned by taking advantage of the power of falling water here. There was also a Tannery. Seven company houses sheltered employee families. So the Hollow was an ideal industrial location. About mid century along came the railroad tracks from Lincoln along the west side bringing logs south to Livermore Falls until clear-cutting of the forest brought this to an end. In 1886 a wrought iron bridge was constructed across the gorge for highway traffic. Most of the bridge is still in place.

But long before the industrialists arrived there were the indigenous people. From artifacts recovered by archaeologists over two summers of excavations - ceramic vessel fragments, stone tools, granite chips, animal and fish bones and other reminders of these Native Americans - their lives of 3,000+ years ago have been carefully reconstructed.

In 1877 taking advantage of the abundant spring waters nearby, a fish hatchery was constructed on the east side with a wooden hatching shed and holding pool. In October of that year the first shipment of salmon eggs arrived. But they were not of the Atlantic salmon species. They came from the Sacramento River in California being Chinook salmon eggs. Two years later the hatchery was producing 100,000 fish eggs per year. It became a widely renowned fishery. The hatchery was closed in 1907 as there were too many barriers across the Pemigewasset and Merrimack Rivers for them to migrate to the sea.

In 2014 the Livermore Falls property was transferred from the NH Fish and Game Dept. to the Division of Parks for development as a state park. To reach this special place, at Holderness School make a sharp right turn onto Rt. 175, go 1.7 miles to Livermore Rd. on your left into the parking lot at a sign reading Livermore Falls State Forest with the gate usually open. A short walk down hill over a gravel road will take you to a beautiful sand beach and several cookout grills and tables.

Tink Taylor



Dugout found in Squam Lake in 1939

Recovered from Squam Lake some 81 years ago, the dugout canoe has now been dated to the mid-17th century, a hundred years before there was a Holderness or a New Hampshire or the United States of America. The test to establish this timeline has been provided by the Paleo Research Institute in Golden, Colorado and conveyed to the Holderness Historical Society. Private contributions made the dating of the dugout possible.

By chance, this dugout was discovered by three fisherman from Tilton during the fall of 1939 lying in the bed of the lake under 14 feet of water in Veerie Cove along Squam's northwest shore. Lacking local interest at the time, it found its way first to a garage in Tilton and then to the Shelburne Museum in Vermont where it was identified as characteristically Native American. In January 2019 the Society was offered its return to Squam. The offer was enthusiastically accepted and on July 17, 2019 volunteers, towing a well-padded trailer, traveled to Shelburne, VT to bring it home. Since its return local interest has been high with visitation to the Society's building at Curry Place in Holderness dramatically increased!

The highly complex procedure for dating this artifact - gouged out of a fallen tree trunk by first burning its upper surface, then scraping away the charred wood, burning again with repeated gouging, all with stone tools - was to take a very small sample of the wood and expose it to a series of stress tests: freeze drying the sample to -107 degrees C removing all moisture. Next heating the wood sample to +110 C to remove any trace of iron and calcium carbonates. The instruments used to extract this sample first had to be sterilized. It was then placed inside a quartz tube to withstand +828 degree heat after adding cupric oxide and silver to drive off any residual carbon.

If all of this wasn't enough, the "ash" was next sent to Keck Carbon Cycle AMS (Accelerator Mass Spectrometry) lab at the University of California to determine how much carbon-14 had been given off since the tree was felled thus yielding how long Before Present this had taken place.

Knowledgeable experts theorize that, since there are no saw or discernible metal tool marks on the dugout, and because it is minus a square stern and with an up-sloped bow, that this boat is undoubtedly Native American most likely made during what is referred to by archaeologists as the Early Contact Period. By the mid-1600s, it is noted, the more maneuverable and lighter weight birch bark canoe had replaced the heavy, cumbersome dugout. So it is likely this Squam Lake artifact had been abandoned by whatever Natives were still here, perhaps as they fled to take refuge further west or north to Quebec. In 1751 the King's surveyor, Samuel Lane, was here to lay out by chain and compass what would become the township of New Holderness ten years later. He noted the presence of abandoned cornfields, charcoal pits and other signs of Native American occupancy above Livermore Falls on the Pemigewasset River where he began his survey.

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