

Tuck Museum Barn



40 Park Avenue

An Apple Harvest

When Anna May Cole of Hampton wrote to her brother Ernest in October and November of 1888, their father was busy harvesting and selling apples.

October 12

Father picked our apples in the orchard and found about two barrels of Baldwins. He thought one was as many as we should use, but mother reminded him that you will be home four weeks after Xmas, so he decided we should need two barrels at least. There will be over a barrel of russets.

Later she had a few minutes to write and continued *...father is getting ready to go to the depot. He has a few more barrels to unload from the ninth load. People keep coming for more...*

October 30

Father has had sixteen loads of barrels. I think he will not get any more. They are paying \$1 per bbl. for No. 1 apples, and \$.50 for No. 2's.

November 9

I think a car load of barrels averaged about 205 (apples). 16 car loads would be 3280. Well, he has probably sold 8300. He has probably made \$100 on them. He has no more ordered but says if there is much rise in the price of apples there will be a call for one or two more car loads. \$1.00 is what some offer for apples now – not much profit there to the farmer.

Once Vital Apple Orchards

Apples were a major crop for Hampton at the turn of the 19th century. Farmers grew No. 1's, No. 2's, Baldwins and Russets - to name a few.

In 1892, Hampton shipped 4,000 barrels of apples to Chicago, and Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas. The selling price was \$2 per barrel.

Apples were transported to markets by ship: "Hon. Ezra Winchester was busily engaged with five two-horse teams hauling a thousand (barrels of apples) to a schooner at a Portsmouth wharf..." according to the newspaper.

Apples also went to markets by train. In November 1900, Hampton apples filled 22 railroad cars, leaving few apples for sale locally. In 1900 the price had fallen to \$1.65 a barrel.

Year to year, there were wide fluctuations in the price of apples.

Hampton farmers also sold cider apples, and "drops" that had fallen to the ground. In 1900, drops sold for 50 cents a barrel.

Other fruit crops of Hampton were strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, currants, peaches, pears and even cranberries, but apples had the lead.

Did You Know...

That the Baldwin is an antique apple, discovered in Massachusetts in 1740?

That Russet is used to identify not one, but a group of apples? Russets have patches on their skin that are different colors and textures.

Saving Hampton's Clams

Native Americans, the first settlers and everybody else who lived in Hampton went clamming. Then in the 1900s clams became scarce, and laws were needed to prevent the extinction of Hampton's clams.

A 1902 newspaper article discussed "the importance of a three months' law to protect (clams), either in the spring or autumn, as clams do not grow much in the winter season and in the summer they are needed for food."

In particular, clams were served at hotels and in restaurants along Hampton Beach during the tourist season.

In 1951, Hampton ended commercial digging, allowing only digging for personal consumption.

Around this time, Irving Jones conducted clam-farming experiments to revive clam flats. He placed plastic sheeting over a portion of his clam flats hoping to protect the clam seeds. In other areas he used chicken wire and vertical screening to keep crabs away. Clams increased in the area protected by the screen.

In 1954, the town decided to do some experimenting and voted to fence off an acre of Hampton's clam flats. But storms destroyed the fences, and it was never known whether fencing could be used to increase the clam population.

"Little Egypt"

As you drive past the Old Grist Mill at the lower end of High Street close to Ocean Boulevard, you probably don't think of corn. But corn is the reason why the Mill was built in 1686. For 200 years its millstones ground corn into fresh flour, or "grist."

The seaweed you see as you walk along the beaches in Hampton probably doesn't make you think of corn either. But for Hampton's early farmers, the abundance of seaweed - which they used as fertilizer - resulted in Hampton's abundant corn crop.

Hampton produced so much corn that it was called "Little Egypt." This was in reference to the biblical Jacob sending his sons to buy corn in Egypt where it was so plentiful.

With the passage of time Hampton's corn crop diminished to cattle-feed corn. It was grown in large fields on Exeter Road across from Batchelder Farm, along Drakeside Road and on Towle Farm Road.

Today the Grist Mill and seaweed are reminders of Hampton's time as Little Egypt.

The Pleasure and Beauty of Corn

While corn was important to Hampton's economy, it also had a social side.

Around the turn of the 20th century, townsfolk gathered for old-fashioned corn huskings, which were followed by a big meal and dancing.

And there were corn roasts. Corn was placed on racks and roasted over a roaring fire. Everyone sang songs, sometimes to the strumming of a ukulele or mandolin.

Corn also had aesthetic value. Joseph Dow in his "History of Hampton" writes, "For beauty of summer scenery...a gently undulating surface, spreading broadly to south and north; fields of corn and waving grain of various shades...flanked in the distance by farm-houses..."

Spruce Hill Dairy Farm

Spruce Hill Farm, at the corner of Winnacunnet Road and Park Avenue, was a dairy farm owned by the Johnson family. In the late 1940s, Homer Johnson sold the farm, and so he was the last in the family to work as a dairy farmer.

The Johnsons grew acres of corn for cattle feed on land that they plowed using horses until 1922, when they bought a Fordson tractor. The Winnacunnet High School property was once part of Spruce Hill Farm.

From 1913 through the 1940s, the Johnsons operated a milk route, delivering daily in Hampton and two or more times a day at Hampton Beach. A quart of milk cost 6 cents in 1913.

When the beach area closed for the winter, the Johnsons had extra milk. They made butter, and in the 1920s sold milk to a cheese factory in East Kingston.

In the 1930s, the Johnsons supplied milk to the Barker Farm in Stratham, which sold it to Phillips Exeter Academy.

Frank Freeman bought the farm from Homer and then sold it to Whiting Milk Company in 1956.

Pests

Today, if a hawk is spotted in the sky, people pause to watch its flight.

Not so at the turn of the 20th century. There could be hundreds of hawks overhead, their sharp vision trained on the chickens below, good meals for a small- to medium-sized bird of prey. This is when Hampton men ran to get their guns.

Eggs were a major agricultural product for Hampton, so there was an abundance of chickens. This made Hampton a prime hunting ground for hawks. The town paid a reward for every downed hawk.

A newspaper article in 1894 reported, "It has been a great day for hawks, of which 100 is the estimated number killed. The bounty is 25 cents each which is an effective way to kill them." In 1894 the town paid \$66.75 for 267 dead hawks; the following year it paid \$94.75 for 379 hawks that were shot down.

In 1895, Police Chief Clinton J. Eaton shot 90 of the pests, more than he'd ever shot before or would ever shoot again in one year. For this he was paid \$22.50 in reward money – a nice supplement to his income.

The Rise and Fall of Farming

From the time Hampton was settled in 1638 through the 1880s, most residents were farmers. They grew a lot of the food their families needed, and traded or bartered at local stores for necessities they couldn't produce as well as items such as sugar.

Farming began a decline around 1900. An 1874 newspaper article noted that most of Hampton's 1,200 inhabitants were farmers. In 1907, the number of farmers had dropped to 142, according to the Town Register.

By the 1920s some small farms remained in the center of town, and there were fewer large farms, such as those run by the Holman, Johnson, Toppan and Perkins families, in operation.

Nothing Wasted

Each afternoon, the fishmongers waited with their horses and wagons near the fish houses along North Beach. They watched for Hampton's fishermen to return, in summer, with haddock, pollock and mackerel, and in winter, with cod. The fishmongers bought the fresh, whole fish, then sold it in Hampton and the surrounding towns, just in time for dinner!

The fishermen had been out since early morning, two in a small boat called a dory. One man rowed and held the boat in place while the other hauled in the fish caught in a trawl.

Oliver Page, who at age 14 in 1832 became a fisherman, claimed to be the first in Hampton to use a trawl, a long line of baited hooks set and left overnight to be collected the next morning.

A dory held up to 1, 200 pounds of fish. Larger boats called whaleboats carried four fishermen and up to a ton of fish.

The fishermen took any unsold fish to the fish houses, where they cleaned, salted and dried it on racks. In the winter fishmongers bought the dried, salted fish and sold it from wagons and sleighs.

The fishermen made crude cod-liver oil and fish oil for use in lamps. They dumped what remained of the fish through a hole in the floor and made fertilizer. Little was wasted.

Gunning for Game

Gunning for the abundant game in Hampton's woods, marshes and at sea was first an occupation, then became a sport.

James W. Blake, "a mighty hunter," kept a record of the game he killed and sold from 1857 to 1890 - nearly 7,000 muskrats, minks, rabbits, foxes, gray squirrels, partridges, woodcocks (woodland birds), snipes (wading marsh birds), ducks, marsh birds, teals (small freshwater ducks), pigeons and geese.

Some gunners took their shotguns along when they went clamming and fishing. The stew made from clams, fish, lobster and fowl was a "superior" meal.

Great Boar's Head was a popular place to hunt for sea birds in the spring and fall. At sunrise, men rowed a short distance off shore and set out decoys to attract the flocks of loons, clappers, ducks and yellow-legs, large numbers of which they downed.

The marshes were swarming with wild birds, making them ideal for gunning.

But overkill, which decimated the bird populations, along with stringent game laws, forced hunters to give up the sport in the mid-1950s.

Not Everyone Liked Gunning

Some people were against gunning. There were those who did not like to hear shooting on Sundays, which disturbed the Sabbath. Others did not care for the "sport" at all.

In 1894 a Hampton newspaper correspondent wrote:

"What pleasure they can find in shooting the pretty little sandpipers that flit so happily in the sunshine along the dashing waves I fail to see. But I do see...wounded and fluttering among the rocks poor little birds, whose pitiful eyes make my heart ache...Bang! goes another gun on the beach with probably a broken winged bird left fluttering among the rocks."

Bird Suppers

Bird suppers were popular social events, as is evidenced by a 1901 advertisement:

The citizens of Hampton will have their annual outing and bird supper at the Sea View next Thursday evening. A large attendance and most enjoyable time is confidently expected.

About that same time, citizens of Hampton Falls enjoyed a bird supper at Green's Inn.

Bird suppers were also served at home. It was easy to shoot three-dozen birds from mid-afternoon to sunset, with one person doing the shooting and the other the retrieving.

A bird supper consisted of broiled birds, dry toast, fried potato chips and champagne. It was typically served at 11 o'clock at night.

Hampton's Ice Age

Hampton's ice age extended over 100 years, from the 1870s to the 1970s, but it was at its peak at the turn of the century.

This was a time of ice harvesting, before refrigeration had been perfected. Ice, which came from town ponds, was used in homes and restaurants to prevent food from spoiling.

Ice suppliers cut cakes of ice that were 10 to 11 inches thick, each weighing 300 pounds. A strong team of horses could haul 40 cakes of ice weighing six tons.

1884 was a very good year for ice harvesting. Curtis DeLancey, one of the main ice suppliers, cut cakes of ice that were 22 inches thick!

Ice cakes were stored in icehouses, each holding 1,000 or more tons of ice. The ice cakes were stacked high on top of each other. Hay or sawdust was used between the layers and as a covering, serving as insulation to keep the ice from melting.

When summer arrived the ice was ready for delivery. In really hot weather, ice men made deliveries twice a day and earned more money.

A June 1891 newspaper article reported, "For some days the thermometer has ranged from 90 to 102 degrees, and this causes the ice men to chuckle."

How to Manufacture Ice

Find a small, narrow river. Scoop out an area in the river using your horse-drawn equipment to create a small pond. In the winter, when the pond freezes, harvest the ice. Later you may choose to enlarge the pond in order to produce a larger quantity of ice.

This is how Nathaniel Batchelder created Batchelder's Pond on Towle Farm Road to manufacture ice.

The Birth of the Refrigerator

In 1758 Thomas Jefferson was busy keeping his ice house stocked. But fellow founding father Benjamin Franklin was busy conducting refrigeration experiments with chemist John Hadley. Franklin and Hadley discovered how to make the thermometer's temperature drop to well below freezing.

In 1805, Oliver Evans, a prolific inventor like Franklin, used Franklin's principles and designed a refrigerator.

While in Philadelphia Evans became friends with a young and ingenious inventor named Jacob Perkins. In 1834, Perkins modified Evans' work and designed his own refrigerator, for which he received a patent.

Perkins persuaded John Hague to build a refrigerator from his design, and the first machine for practical refrigeration was born.

Taking "Shorts" Leads to Lobster Shortage

Lobsters were plentiful in the waters of Hampton during the 1800s, and lobstering was a lucrative business. During the summer of 1890 fisherman J.G. Higgins hauled in 350 pounds of lobster one week and 300 pounds the next. In 1893 newspapers predicted a plentiful lobster season.

But during the early 1900s things started to change. Lobsters were becoming scarce.

The limited supply of lobster led to higher prices. And so Hampton lobstermen, known for their independence, ignored the lobster laws requiring them to return lobsters that were less than legal length, called "shorts."

Fish and Game stepped in but the lobstermen put up a fight. After some brawling, arrests were made and fines were imposed. As an example, in May 1914, Benjamin F. Norton was arrested for 28 short lobsters that officers seized from his wheelbarrow, and he was fined \$29.

Taking short lobsters didn't end, and so young lobsters didn't have the chance to breed and replenish the lobster population. The laws later changed, increasing the legal length of lobsters that could be taken, in an effort to stop the decline of lobsters.

Not Just Any Old Chick!

The Nichols Poultry Farm moved into the Bradford Shoe Company building in the late 1940s when shoemaking in Hampton dropped off. Nichols stayed for a few years and moved out when the poultry business in New England declined.

Nichols Poultry Farm operated a distribution center where farmers from New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts delivered their eggs. Nichols sorted, graded and stored the eggs in cool, dehumidified areas before shipping them throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Nichols Poultry Farm also operated a hatchery from which the company supplied day-old chicks to hatcheries and breeders of broiler chickens. But these weren't any old chicks!

Mr. Frederick S. Nichols, through experimentation, had developed a breed of chicken that matured early with more weight and meat at broiler age than other breeds that were available. As a result, Nichols Poultry Farm supplied almost one-third of the commercially grown broilers for consumption across the United States.

Frederick S. Nichols was the founder and General Manager of Nichols Poultry Farm.

Salt-flavored Milk: An Acquired Taste

Salt hay, growing naturally in Hampton's salt marshes, and free for the taking, caught the attention of the early settlers. It was one of the reasons they chose to make Hampton their home in 1638.

Salt hay was a godsend. Even before the settlers cleared the heavily wooded land and planted crops, they harvested the salt hay to feed their cattle.

Marshland was so important to the settlers that when the first land grants were made in 1639, each grantee was given a portion of his land in salt marsh.

The cattle, it seemed, preferred salt hay. They could be coaxed to eat field hay – if it was mixed with hay from the marshes.

Salt hay gave milk a distinctive taste, which many local people preferred. Reverend Roland Sawyer was one of them. When away from home and about to return, he would write to his father and ask him to start feeding the cow salt hay, so he could enjoy salt-flavored milk.

This was not the case with city people. In 1885, when Boston dairies began selling Hampton milk, many customers complained about its taste.

The First Sawmill

When Hampton was founded, houses were made of logs. About 20 years later, settlers started to build framed houses. Robert Page, one of the town's founders, was given the right to build and operate Hampton's first sawmill.

Robert agreed to have the sawmill up and running by a specific date. He proposed to provide 100 boards for 3 shillings, and said he would also take merchandise equal to 3 shillings. He specified that no one person should receive more than 1,000 boards at one time, so that "every man that stands in need shall have the like successively, one after the other."

This arrangement was approved by a vote at a town meeting held in February 1657. Not long after, the town voted to extend the time Robert had to complete the sawmill by one year.

Robert had employed the carpenter William Marston, who was needed to build a house for Reverend Timothy Dalton, who had sold his homestead to the church and town to house a new minister.

No Night Raids!

Seaweed was such a hot commodity that Hampton's early farmers would collect it under the cover of darkness. As fertilizer for corn crops, nothing compared.

In 1757 the town took a stand, and said there'd be no more night harvesting of seaweed - perhaps to give all farmers an equal chance to gather it. So it was by day that farmers harvested seaweed for almost 200 years (through 1945) at North Beach, where it was most abundant.

Hampton's Shoemaking Industry

In the late 1800s, a group of civic-minded men wanted to bring industry to Hampton. They settled on shoe manufacturing and built a factory on High Street.

The Jones Company was Hampton's first shoe manufacturer, operating from 1887-1891, and the economy improved. But when Jones left, the economy remained in a 10-year decline, as a series of companies started, then stopped making shoes.

Then **the Redman Shoe Company** came to town in 1910 and operated at Five Corners. Two descendants of a 1646 Hampton settler founded the company. Redman made slippers for ladies, in particular white wedding slippers, and was a "phenomenal" success. Redman moved to Newburyport in 1935.

In 1918, **the Greenman Company** brought the High Street factory back to life, manufacturing leather outer soles for women's shoes. Greenman remained in operation though the 1970s.

In 1935, another group of civic-minded townspeople raised money and built a new shoe factory, which **The Bradford Shoe Company** took over. Production was up until World War II. Then the small company faced stiff competition and closed in 1948.

Life After Shoemaking

With the end of Hampton's shoemaking industry, the shoe factory on High Street became an egg distribution center.

Later a leather finishing business moved in and emitted a pungent odor. When this business closed in the 1980s, Hampton residents breathed a sigh of relief.

Today the converted factory houses small businesses.

Enoch Young, Apprentice Shoemaker

Enoch Young was apprenticed to his father who, in the mid-1800s, was the principal shoemaker in Hampton. Enoch enjoyed being at the shop when he was not in school because it was a gathering place where townspeople exchanged news. According to Enoch, “Newspapers were scarce and infrequent. Oftentimes one paper answered for four or five families. It was one if not two weeks till the next paper arrived.”

Enoch learned the shoemaking trade, and by his second year in the shop, was able to “bottom and finish several sets of youth’s long top boots for an Exeter manufacturer.”

But shoemaking didn’t hold Enoch’s interest. He “quit for a more muscular employment” – blacksmithing.

Enoch Young wrote stories about life in Hampton in the mid-1800s that were published in The Exeter Newsletter.

When Farmers Moonlighted as Shoemakers

Before shoe manufacturing came to Hampton, shoemaking was done on a small scale in home shops or small, 10-foot square buildings called 10-footers. Shoemakers got shoe parts from factories in Exeter, Newburyport and Amesbury. They assembled and sewed the shoes together and were paid for each shoe they made rather than at an hourly rate. During the winter months, this was ideal work for farmers.