

ETNA

New Hampshire



Hayes Store and Meeting Room  
Etna, New Hampshire

by Andrew Crow

with Morris and Ethel Hayes, Phoebe Stebbins,  
Blanche Penfield, Cliff Elder and Edgar T. Mead

One Hundred Years 1884-1984

Birthday Party at  
Trumbull Hall, September 13, 1987

The Etna Ladies Aid

## Foreword

In honor of Etna's 100th Birthday and Commemorative Plaque, these few lines are being offered with the conviction that many more stories wait to be told and that another volume will surely be required. Meanwhile, I am deeply grateful to those who came forward with pictures and anecdotes which we can share with our fellow residents.

Edgar T. Mead  
Etna, N.H.

## ETNA

The story of Etna really begins with the founding of Hanover. In the 18th century, Royal Governor Benning Wentworth sold rights to tracts of land ranging from 300 to 500 acres, called the New Hampshire grants. Naturally, much of the best land went to Wentworth friends, including investors from the old country. Certain stipulations were laid down as to what had to be done in the way of township improvement. Schools and roads were to be provided for; unfortunately, some of these agreements were observed and others were not. Dartmouth College, for example, spent funds to improve what became Landaff, only to have Connecticut speculators take over after a disastrous legal trial. Many settlers came from the area of Mansfield, Connecticut, and in fact, many town names were derived from Connecticut, especially after the Peace of Paris of 1763. The tide of early settlers included Edwin Freeman III and Deacon Jonathan Curtis.

Hanover's charter was applied for in 1760 and granted in 1761. The first Town Meeting was in 1767. (At that time, the exact center of the new township was east and south of the present hamlet of Hanover Center.) The Wolfeboro Road crossed Hanover from west to east and by 1772, Governor John Wentworth could travel by that route on his way to a Dartmouth commencement.

Important to what later became Etna was Mink Brook, which was dammed up to provide power sites for lumber, grist and cider mills. In fact, the community became known as Mill Village. There were various neighborhoods which included one-room school houses such as Goose Pond, Tunis Road, Goss, Moose Mt., Rudsboro, Arvin and North Neighborhood. There was a school in what became Etna Village, another on Etna Highlands.

Problems arose in 1880 since there was another Mill Village in New Hampshire, leading to mail being shuttled back and forth. There are two stories concerning the renaming according to Lord's History of Hanover. One was that George Bridgman, Town Clerk, looked above his desk and saw a calendar for the Aetna Insurance Company. Another story concerns a contest for a new name, and two ladies entered a crossword puzzle answer and won. The name was spelled Etna, not Aetna. In October 1884 Etna and the Post Office became Etna. For many years town meetings were held above the C.W. Hayes Etna Store, and applications for all licenses were obtained in the George Bridgman house nearby. The store burned in 1919.

The earliest firehouse still stands, a gray structure across the street from the Etna Town Library. There was a Model A Ford (still in existence) and a Buick, both local conversions. The Buick was eventually sold and converted in turn into a "Doodlebug", useful for towing hay rakes and other light work.

Gradually, portable steam rigs were purchased to power Etna mills when Mink Brook became dry. Cliff Elder tells of a one-armed fireman who was apparently best able to keep up with heavy demands from the mill sawyer.



The Etna Library and Debating Society was organized in 1883 and a Library building was completed in 1905. Etna was growing. Trumbull Hall was added to the Etna Baptist Church in 1898. A town garage was built behind what is now the Etna Firehouse. Previously, town equipment had been stored in horse stalls behind the church.

Etna, by the way, is considered to be all that territory east of the height of land where East Wheelock and Trescott Roads join, and north of the Fullington Farm on Lyme Road.

North and west of the Hanover Center Green was a grove of trees where people would hold picnics on Sunday afternoons. Picnic tables were provided.

When Blanche Penfield moved to Etna in 1909, various groups held dances in Hayes Hall (above the store). There was a stage at one end with a piano. A small kitchen behind the stage would serve coffee and doughnuts. Clint Reed, Blanche's father, was the popular caller. Sometimes a travelling show would rent the hall, often with the purpose of selling patent medicines and the like.

In 1924, voters agreed to construct a new firehouse for \$1,000.

After the Hayes Hall fire of 1919, town meetings were held in Hanover at the Grange Hall or the old Nugget Theater. Old-timers insist that Etna was obliged to join Hanover mainly to help with tax revenues.

The recent Etna Store was organized in 1930 and operated as a local concern for 40 years.

The Hanover Center Church was at first Presbyterian. The original structure burned and was replaced by the present church after the Revolutionary War. The First Baptist (American) was built in 1827.

The date of the change from Mill Village to Etna is believed to be October 10, 1884. May the second hundred years be as bright as the first!



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Etna, N.H.

