

Minutes of the Etna Historians Meeting
Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025
Trumbull Hall, 5:00 PM

Introductions

We started the meeting by going around the room and introducing ourselves, giving our addresses, and making other comments of interest.

Library Updates

Jeff Metzler was unable to attend the meeting, so Liz Marshall gave a brief summary of activities at the library. These include historical documents scanned and posted in the History section of the website. There was a review of the notebooks of materials that have been collected and organized. And a short description was given of the telephone, donated by Liz Burbank of Madbury, NH, whose ancestors set up the Etna Telephone Company. A description of the phone and company are at the end of the minutes.

Recorded Histories

Several interviews have been recorded and these were reviewed. The challenges of converting audio files to written transcripts was discussed. The group felt that it was important to have video, audio, and written transcripts from the recordings. A photo of each speaker should also be included. Some of the meeting attendees offered to help address the problems with generating the transcripts. See the Working Groups summary below.

Jay Barrett's New Book

The library is acquiring a copy of Jay's new book: *Mink Brook & Home: A Postwar Hanover Memoir, Vol. I.*

Cemeteries

Petra Sergent and Kevin Knuuti reported on their work for the Hanover Cemetery Commission. They reported that the commission is planning to place plaques at a number of local cemeteries. Petra gives tours of Hanover cemeteries. She knows about cleaning stones and can train people on how to clean and maintain headstones. She has been doing this for 4 years at Dartmouth. She has also been involved in maintaining old and neglected cemeteries across Vermont.

Petra suggested doing a workshop in the spring in hopes that this skill can be spread to others. She has special cleaning supplies that she will bring to the workshop.

Kevin reported that the Boy & Girl Scouts are a great resource. They helped with the fence at the Etna cemetery and are always looking for public service projects. John Sherman at Hanover Parks and Rec can help us with ideas.

The town cemeteries (of which there may be 10) need better organization. Records may show who bought a plot but not who is buried in that plot. The committee, with help from the Scouts, is starting to work on this, developing maps using town records, aerial photos and measurements. They plan to start with the Greensboro Cemetery and hope to post their results on Google Earth.

Some of the older headstones are unreadable and some of the flat stones have sunk into the ground (or the ground has grown up around them). The hope is to at least obtain dates from the stones. One of the long-term goals is to identify all the veterans who are buried in Hanover cemeteries. Genealogy databases are expected to help.

In the Etna cemetery there is a flag marker with a sunken flat stone. The flag marker indicates that the person buried there was a veteran who earned a Medal of Honor. It is likely that the person is Carleton Camp, possibly born and raised on Chandler Road, who fought in the Civil War. He and a friend, also from Etna, were killed in the Civil War and the friend is buried at Arlington Cemetery.

Petra has compiled a list of Civil War and Revolutionary War veterans currently known to be buried in Hanover Cemeteries. This list is attached with the minutes.

Kevin mentioned that the town is looking for land to construct a new cemetery.

Rogers Pressey House

There was a discussion about the Rogers Pressey house at 81 Goose Pond Road. The owner is hoping for a zoning special exception to repair the house and has been met with some initial opposition. Tabitha Sabky, an architectural historian, has met with the owner to discuss some of the ideas and challenges of the restoration. A description of the house and work to be done is attached with the minutes. This is a topic that may come up again and our group has been encouraged to support any preservation efforts of older houses in our area.

Items from the Hood Museum

Jeff has a file containing images and descriptions of dozens of items that the Hood Museum has and is looking to re-home. Some may be relevant to early life in Etna. This is an idea on hold for now.

Etna Fire Station

Tim Bent has met with people from the town to continue the discussion about the Etna Fire Station. A lot of fire department equipment has been moved out. An old Zamboni is still being stored there and needs to be sold. The primary takeaway message is that the building is getting closer to a point where we might be able to update it and use the space for historical artifacts.

Building and Project Input from Residents

There was a brief discussion about gathering input from neighbors whenever additions or modifications to public structures are planned. For example, Hanover Center neighbors voiced concern when the fence around the cemetery was going to be replaced with a vinyl structure. As a result of this input, the town opted to install a chain between the posts instead. The suggestion was made to consider forming a group to provide input in the future. No further action was taken at this time.

Working Groups

We concluded the meeting asking for volunteers for various committees. The committees and volunteers are listed below.

Website and Library Resources: Jeff Metzler, Paul Tobias, Ann Malenka, Tabitha Sabky, Liz Marshall

Oral Histories: Ron Farr, Ellie Farr, Olivia Gentile, Liz Marshall

Cemeteries: Elizabeth Cornell, Tabitha Sabky, Kevin Knuuti, Petra Sergent, Dick Baughman

Buildings, Land, Mills, Factories and Schoolhouses (including the Fire Station): Tim Bent, Kevin Knuuti, Tabitha Sabky

Origins of the Etna Telephone Company

"Irving Powell Fitts (born 7/26/1856 died 3/11/1936) and Sam Stark ((born in 9/19/1880 - ?) who worked for him on Sunny Vale Farm) started the Etna Telephone Company. They bought a carload of instruments, telephone wire, insulators, brackets and one pair of climbers sometime between 1904 and 1912. Farmers dug the holes and cut their own poles to run the original lines. When enough customers joined, they needed more lines so they set up a switchboard at Nellie Camp's (Millard Camp's widow) home at the corner of Dogford Rd near the cemetery. She ran the switchboard. Irving Fitts put up a private line down the old trace of the Wolfeboro Rd. from Sunny Vale Farm to Manassa Foss' place so the sisters Harriet (Fellows)Perley and Minnie (Fellows) Foss could visit. Perley Fitts (my grandfather) recalls that as a boy he had some fun tapping into the private line and listening in on his grandmother Perley's talks with her sister Minnie."

Excerpted from:

'Fitts Families (Fitts-Fitz-Fittz): a Genealogy'
Sylvia Fitts Getchell c1989 p.253



This is one of the original phones that my grandfather Perley salvaged from Sunny Vale Farm

Donated to the Etna Library by Liz Fitts Burbank, Madbury, NH