

History Corner #26
Downtown New Hampton Was Once "Smith's Village"

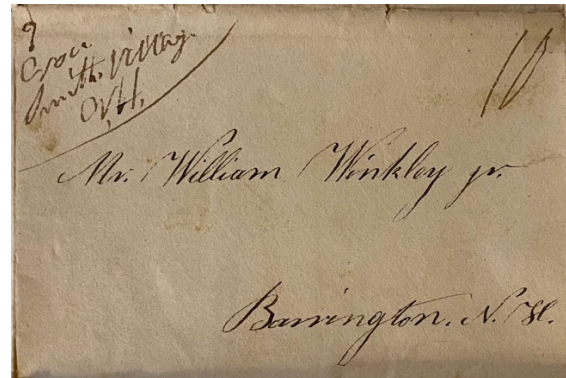
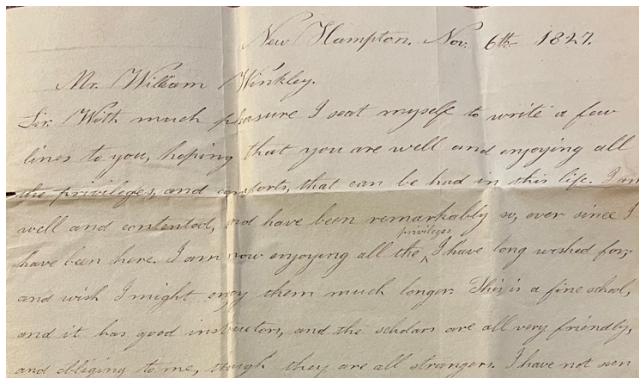
Captain Daniel Smith (1767-1828), son of Daniel Smith of Exeter, came to New Hampton from Meredith. He settled in the village and became so successful that the center was soon called "Smith's Village." He started a grist mill below Hatchery Pond, built Smith's Tavern at the corner of Shingle Camp and Main Street, and created a toll bridge across the Pemigewasset River. Elected as a selectman, he served in town government for many years.

Featured today is a letter from 1827, with the extremely rare postmark, "Smith's Village." Samuel Winkley of Barrington, NH enrolled as a student in New Hampton School in the fall of 1827, and in this November letter to his brother, William, he looks to arrange travel home. He writes:

Sir, with much pleasure I seat myself to write a few lines to you... I am well and contented, and have been remarkably so, ever since I have been here... This is a fine school, and it has good instructors, and the scholars are all very friendly, and obliging to me, though they are all strangers...

I wish that whoever comes [for me], would come on Friday the twenty third day of this month; the school will finish on that day, and I should like to go home the next day, or if you could make it convenient; I should like to go to the Shakers and stay all night and go to meeting; as it would not be much out of the way. I board at Mr. James Howes, about one mile northeast of the Academy. The Academy Is about 5 miles West of Fogg's Tavern.

...You all have my best wishes for your health and prosperity for the future. I wrote this letter in a hurry; therefore it is full of many irregularities.



Surprised at the idea of the Shakers offering a "B'n'B", I checked with the archivists at Canterbury Shaker Village and found that, indeed, the Shakers welcomed overnight guests. NHS students boarded at the James Howe home on Straits Road, and Fogg's Tavern, between Winona and Waukewan, was a popular stopping place for travelers in the region.

Post Script: There is a story that has come down through time about Captain Smith and his bridge over the Pemi:

At one point when floodwaters swept the bridge away, it is said that Smith stood on the shore and remarked bitterly, "There goes some more of my property to hell." Upon hearing which, a bystander is said to have replied, "Well, you can recover it when you get there, Esquire Smith!"



Collapse of a Toll Bridge (built after Capt. Smith's)

With thanks to:

A Small Gore of Land: A History of New Hampton, New Hampshire Founded in 1777, Pauline Swain Merrill, John C. Gowan and others, 1977

New Hampton, New Hampshire: A Chronicle, Kathy Neustadt and Tom Curren, 2003

"Fogg Tavern (for) American Studies," Kathie Harpole, 1969, Gordon-Nash Library archives

Note: copies of the first two books above are available for sale in the Gordon-Nash Library.

For more information on the history of the town, please visit the newly updated New Hampton Historical Society website at <https://www.newhamptonhistory.org/>

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