

Rev. Bolduc Discusses Early Settlers Of Lakes Region

BY WINNIFRED N.A. HACKETT

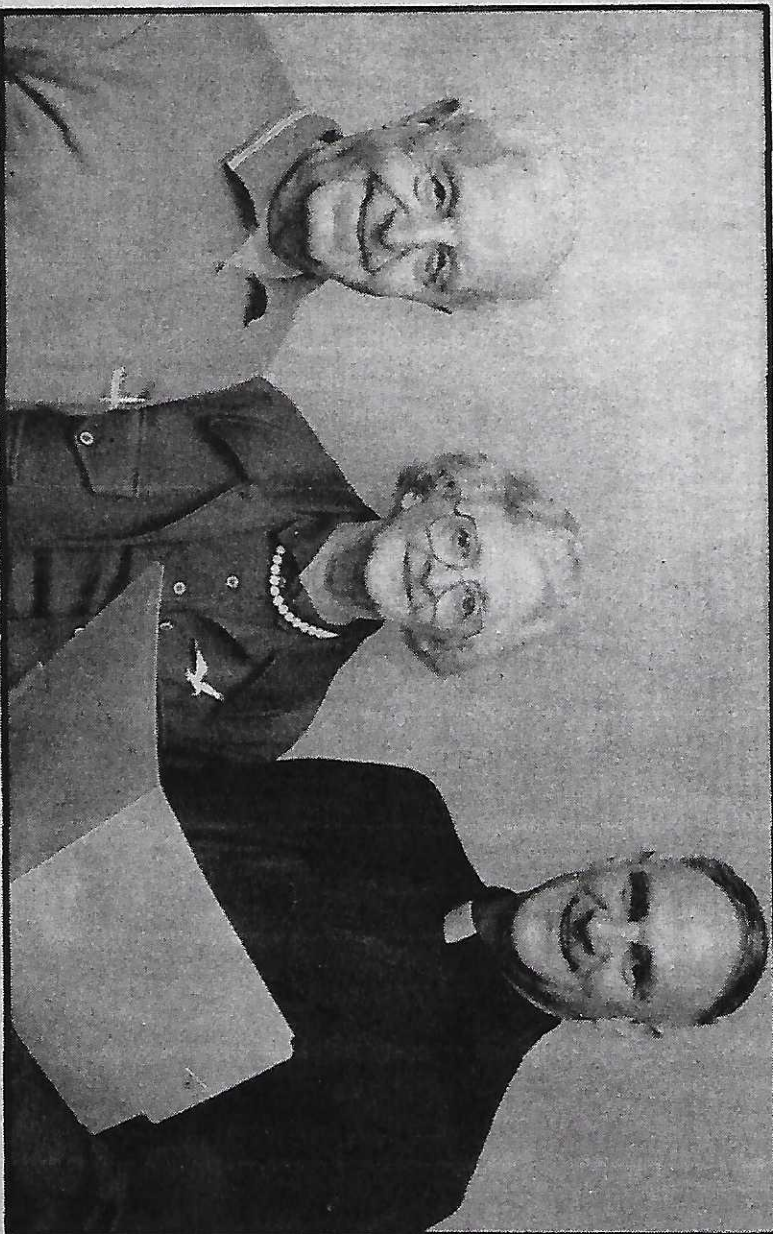
LACONIA — A standing ovation followed Hector Bolduc's talk to the Laconia Historical Society on "Early Settlers" in the area.

The noted historian started his presentation by saying that Laconia was once a part of Giltford and referred to Capt. John Smith, explorer of the Virginia Colony, who gave a very pessimistic view when penetrating the New England coastal area in the late 1500s. He felt that the land was bleak and wild and discouraged settlement. Giltford and Laconia were then part of the lands claimed by Northern Virginia.

In 1620, the Plymouth Colony was established and the Massachusetts Bay Colony; and, then in 1621, the Masonian Grants. The Masonian Grants went as far north as the headwaters of the Merrimac River. The proprietors had great trouble with the grants because the boundaries were undefined, as early explorers failed to bring surveyors with them.

In 1652, Governor Endicott engaged a group of surveyors who pushed on until they reached the Weirs, where they carved their initials in the rock. The surveyors sent reports to England and told of vast forests, rivers, trees for masts and fish for food.

The state seal reflects the reports they sent back. Notations were increased



Discuss Area History

Guest speaker at a meeting of the Historical Society was Father

find them a few years later.

Gilmanton settlers resisted taxes for road building to the north, and it took 55 years to get a road between Dover and Giltford, only 40 miles apart. The road to Giltford finally built at Gilmanton's expense, was finished in 1787.

Settlers had to clear three acres of tillable land within three years' residence, and the proprietors were obliged to build a saw mill, a gristmill, and provide a school lot and lots for the church and parsonage. Captain Gilman was the first settler to arrive in Giltford around 1772 in the Father David

of the Laconia right. On the left are Reginald Bisson and Melba

India wharf in Portsmouth who had sampled a bit of the rum he was carrying. He had gone past the cemetery to Brake Hill and was proceeding down when his brakes failed.

When an object hits a solitary wall, it stops; and so did he, spilling the barrels into the road. Men immediately rescued the rum before they rescued the driver, who was pinned underneath. The local minister chose for his sermon that Sunday, "The Evils of Spirituous Beverages Threatening the Brotherhood of Man."

Haying was done quickly

and smelted down. After an explosion in the mine went off prematurely, killing one of the men, the community lost interest in the mine venture.

The Frohocks at the foot of Rowe Mountain planted mulberry trees for raising silk worms and glass was also manufactured in Giltford. Ink bottles, medicine bottles and slag have been found while renovations were being made to a Giltford home.

Bolduc concluded his talk by saying that he felt that the Laconia Historical Society was playing an important role in

Notelakers were impressed with the large number of fish in the inland streams and lakes. The Indian guides fed the explorers fish caught in these rivers and lakes as a staple. The pine tree on the seal indicates that the Lakes Region was heavily forested with pines and fir trees. England's forests had been denuded and the King looked to America for wood for masts. All pine trees over 24 inches in diameter would be reserved for masts for the Royal Navy and special roads were built to get them out to the coast. The frigate Robin on the seal denotes that it was built and outfitted with New Hampshire wood and by New Hampshire men.

In the late 1500s and early 1600s on the coast, Portsmouth, Dover and Hampton were established; but it was more than 50 years before people came to the Giltford area from Dover. England was embroiled in political strife and many wars; and the Indians got along fine with the settlers until England and France, vying for power, used them for their own purposes by offering bounties for the scalps of their opponents.

As many as 12 peaceful tribes came to the Winnepesaukee each year to fish at its weirs and fast flowing river, but life for the Indians was harsh. The mighty Iriquois would come down and raid the camps, starvation was the rule of the day, and smallpox devastated the Indian villages.

The explorers told of Indians in the Giltford area and with the scalplings, the settlers were not inclined to penetrate the wilderness during these times of war and discord.

✓ Holders of the Masonian Grants sought to make settlement easy and attractive, but the furthest settlement in this area for a long time was

around 1777 in the Lily Pond area, and he built a log cabin there. Samuel Jewett was the first Laconia settler, and his home still stands on Giltford Avenue, between Dewey and Isabella streets.

James Ames settled in the Intervale, and Weeks, Sawyers, Hoyts, Goves, Colbys, Sarbourns, Davises, and Blaisdells came to settle farms in the Giltford area.

From records found in the attic of the 1779 Jewett home- stead where Hector was born, he pointed out the hardships of traveling by oxcart over no more than cowpaths. The roads were poor from the spring freshets, and it wasn't uncommon to see the settlers stop for several days while a blacksmith unpacked his equipment and set up his forge to repair a wagon wheel or axle.

There were no doctors in the new settlement, and Mrs. Ames had to ride all the way to Londonderry, following spotted trees through the forests, to bring back a doctor to amputate her husband's leg which had been caught in a bear trap.

Further records of 1778 reveal felling trees which were six feet thick at the base and three feet in diameter where topped at 100 feet high. Possibly the 48 to 52 inch boards in the Jewett-Bolduc home come from them.

Everyone knew where other settlers were, with the stump fires burning for days and days and days. Later, a magnificent wheel, 15 feet in diameter, was used to hook onto the big roots and pull them out. The farmers used the stumps for fences, as well as the rocks that they cleared from their land.

In 1813, one year after Giltford was incorporated, 294 names were on the tax record. The entire tax assessment for that year was \$1,270.08.

They had to be self sufficient in those days and harder for

hay was done quickly when a keg of cider was available.

The weather was horrendous and set records in the early days. Winters were cruel and hard. Food was scarce at times. They had record snow falls. They had to go out in that snow; and, if the cattle were starving, they had to be slaughtered.

The year 1816 found a "year of no summer." It snowed in May, June, and July; and there was a frost in August. The situation was desperate throughout New England, as indicated by the action of the Sandwich (Mass.) Glass Company which actually sent a ship around Cape Horn to get food from South America and even California.

But, despite the hardships, Giltford persisted as a farming community.

The stone walls were built out of necessity so they could get a toehold on the land and have enough space to farm. If the foundations were built of stone, it was because they had to get rid of the rocks. They used a tube to put corn under the big rocks so pigs could root it out and loosen the boulders. "I think they missed out when they didn't put a stone or a rock on the state seal," Bolduc said.

There was an iron mine on Belknap Mountain where ore was hauled by cart from the Arthur Weeks farm to Lakeport

playing an important role in preserving our heritage and recording the achievements and feats of those who carved out a niche in that wilderness. A question and answer period followed the presentation.

During the business meeting, Warren Huse, president, named new acquisitions: Odell Memorial plaque from Indian Head Bank in Lakeport; also bank pictures of Henry J. Odell, president 1892-1905; Herman J. Odell, Joseph L. Odell, and Charles L. Pulsifer, president 1905-1931 and an early mayor of Laconia; register of Darius Drake G.A.R. post; photograph of Union Avenue, Lakeport, in the 1920s, with trolley car; numerous other photographs; and two storage cabinets.

Also received was the genealogy of the Hogdon family, donated by Kay McGowan; "Laconia, City on the Lakes," donated by the booklet's compiler, Peter Tibbets; autographed photograph of Dr. J. Alonzo Green and New Weirs Hotel menu for July 4, 1901, gift of Ed Shaw.

Other photographs acquired were from 1970 files of the Evening Citizen. The Chamber of Commerce donated a number of special and souvenir editions from the 1930s.

Charlotte Hamilton and her refreshment committee served a delicious punch and cookies at the conclusion of the meeting.

you say

You can win \$10 cash plus WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY OF THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE, Students Edition (c. by Simon & Schuster), if your question, mailed to Junior Editors, c/o this newspaper, is selected for a prize. Be sure to include your name, address and age.)

annually by 2.2 per cent. Without Seabrook and the Canadian electricity, he predicts a major shortfall by the year 2,000.

explained that DC lines are cost effective in carrying tremendous voltage long distances.

Durfee reported that six of the seven original scientists analyzed their 1982 health impact data two years later, using a different statistical method. They came to the same conclusion: "There is no scientific basis to believe that the electrical and magnetic fields and air ions produced by the power line pose a hazard to human and animal health."

The scope of testing was impressive, milk production records for 24,000 cows supplied by a dairymen's association. The power line was found to have no effect on



Malinda
SM

ment easy and attractive, but the furthest settlement in this area for a long time was Gilmanton. Twenty-four Gilmans signed the petition and settled there in the early 1700s. It was a large and prosperous town and it was thought to be the future capitol of New Hampshire, but Concord won by only one vote because of its fast running stream, the Merrimack.

In 1722, heirs of John Mason built two log forts, 50 feet square at Alton Bay and in the Weirs area. The forts proved totally ineffective, however, and fell to ruins. In fact the paths grew up around them so that even the builder could not year was \$1,270.08.

They had to be self sufficient in those days and barter for their goods. For example, Benjamin Jewett traded four pounds of maple sugar for two pounds of nails. The Jewett sugar orchard has been in operation every year since 1778. A cooperage was set up in the area to make wooden casks to be taken down to the coast for rum, salted fish, or cider. For over 75 years, the cooperages in Gifford and Laconia were lucrative.

One story that has been handed down is about a man coming back from the East