

# The Pest House

In many of the histories of various towns throughout New Hampshire and New England, mention of a "Pest House" is completely lacking or just casually spoken of.

*written by someone else?*

My interest on this subject started as a small boy in Concord, New Hampshire. Afflicted with Scarlet Fever, I was sent to a "Pest House" to stay for a period of six weeks.

The Gilford pest House was located on the right hand side of the now Goodwin Road, going south out of the village at the crest of the hill. A house now stands on the location and a bronze tablet 50 feet north, tell of the Pest House Cemetery.

When Reverend Hector Bolduc of Morrill Street was young, he dug up the remains of five people, took pictures, replaced the findings to hide all evidence of disturbance. Just where these pictures are today Reverend Bolduc does not know.

Mary Beth Talbot Holman and I both have seen these pictures and remember the excavation.

A nice old gentleman, Mr. Charles Goodwin for many, many years lived in the house across the street from the pest house and told me this story. This south road was later named after him.

Sickness in the 17th and 18th century was a dreaded unknown malady feared by rich and poor alike. The word disease had not yet come into useage. Doctors of the era received their education be being apprenticed to a doctor who often handed down unproven remedies for a good many conditions.

## Examples:

- Tie a dirty stocking about the neck for a sore throat.
- Use a flax-seed poultice to draw out the poison.
- Carry a horse chestnut in your pocket for arthritis.
- Bilious, dyspepsia, consumption and many, many more unknown maladies were treated.

To be sent to the pest house was the accepted method of quar~~x~~antine, but for the individual a possible death sentence. No one dared go near.

Food was prepared in the house across the street and left on the pest house door steps. The people inside had to take care of themselves.

# THE LEGEND OF THE GOODWIN ROAD GILFORD PEST HOUSE

THIS IS THE SITE WHERE THE PEST HOUSE ONCE STOOD. UNOCCUPIED FROM 1840-1845. BUILT BY THE WHITTIER FAMILY. DURING 1845, FIVE BROTHERS WERE SENT TO THIS HOUSE WHEN GILFORD BEGAN TO ISOLATE THEIR SICK. IT IS BELIEVED THEY HAD "SPOTTED FEVER" OR "SMALL POX". THE BROTHERS DIED HERE. THE HOUSE WAS EVENTUALLY DESTROYED BY FIRE IN 1885. ARTHUR EATON RECALLED. "THE MEN WHO CAME TO FIGHT THE VILLAGE FIRE, TURNED AND FLED WHEN THEY SAW WHERE IT WAS." NOT LONG AFTER THE FIRE, FOLKS IN TOWN REPORTED FIVE HARDWOOD TREES HAD GROWN OUT OF THE ASHES. IT IS SAID THE TREES REPRESENTED THEIR SOULS THUS THE TREES BECAME KNOWN AS "THE BROTHERS". SOMETIMES LATER, A SIXTH TREE TRIED TO TAKE ROOT NEAR THE STANDING. IT IS BELIEVED THE BROTHERS RESENTED THE SIXTH TREE. IT WAS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING AND FELL, BEING QUICKLY DESTROYED.

HECTOR BOLDUC INVESTIGATED THE STORY OF FIVE UNMARKED GRAVES TO THE REAR OF THE CELLAR HOLE AND FOUND THIS TO BE TRUE. THE GRANITE MARKERS HERE WERE SET BY THE THOMPSON AMES HISTORICAL SOCIETY THEY SHOW WHERE THE CORNERS OF THE PEST HOUSE WERE LOCATED.



