

History of the Highland Lake Grange Hall

By Suzy Norris
Andover Historical Society

(Most of the quotations are from Ralph Chaffee's monograph about the Highland Lake Grange Hall. Others are from the Highland Lake Institute catalog.)

Anyone who drives through East Andover notes the white church on the hill and may even know that the quaint, white building next door was the Highland Lake Grange Hall. What one may not know is the history of the Grange building.

It was built in 1850 as Highland Lake Institute – the dream of The Mountain Club, an East Andover literary group who "felt the need to somehow provide secondary education for those scholars who wished to continue their studies beyond the district school." Fifty residents

gust 21, 1850 with an enrollment of 86 pupils: "45 Gentlemen and 41 Ladies."

The school catalogue from 1850 reads: "This institution ... is located on the line of the Northern Railroad near the Ragged Mountains and Loon Pond [present-day Highland Lake] in a pleasant and healthy village, free from all inducements to vice and idleness."

Each of the four school terms was 11 weeks long. The standard curriculum was Latin, French, and English (both "common" and "higher"). Chirography (penmanship – I had to look that one up!), anatomy, physiology, drawing, painting, and music were offered at an extra price. The standard rate per course was \$3 to \$4.

Students could board out with "good" families in the area for "seven shillings and sixpence to nine shillings per week" or obtain "convenient rooms, suitably furnished at a reasonable price."

In that first year, quite a few students came from East Andover, but there were many from other towns: Salisbury, Danbury, Nashua, Rochester, and Danville, as well as Fletcher, Vermont and Lawrence, Massachusetts. The school lasted five years and in its heyday enrolled 143 students from 30 New Hampshire towns and four New England states.

"Declining Interest"

In 1855, "lack of funds" and "declining interest" forced the closing of the school, "never to go again." One can only guess, but one wonders if perhaps with the shareholders' children having completed their high school educations, support and zeal for

the Institute petered out.

Around the same time Highland Lake Institute was established (1850), over in Andover, Proctor Academy was also being established (1848).

The interest and support of the local citizenry in both East Andover and Andover to encourage and provide secondary education for their children is impressive.

After its closing, the history of Highland Lake Institute was long and inter-

esting. For 40 years, various teaching continued on a piecemeal, private basis, providing a place for various entertainments and exhibits in what was now called Academy Hall.

In 1893, it became The Union Hall, a meeting place for the community, and was leased to the Highland Lake Grange for its meetings. In 1939, the Grange purchased the Hall. In 1991, the Andover Congregational Church bought the building.

Several East Andover citizens (especially David and Irene Jewett, and Don Gould along with Ginny Newton and Wanda Walker) have been key in raising funds and locating resources and volunteers to restore and maintain this historic building now listed in the National Registry of Historic Buildings.

It has a new foundation, basement, improved plumbing, a nifty kitchen, and, most recently, heat! It's a fabulous place for functions ranging from meetings, bridal and baby showers, receptions, speakers, suppers, reunions, and birthday parties.

If you've never stood on the Grange porch, looked out over the lake and up

at Kearsarge, you owe yourself the pleasure. And it's charming inside as well.

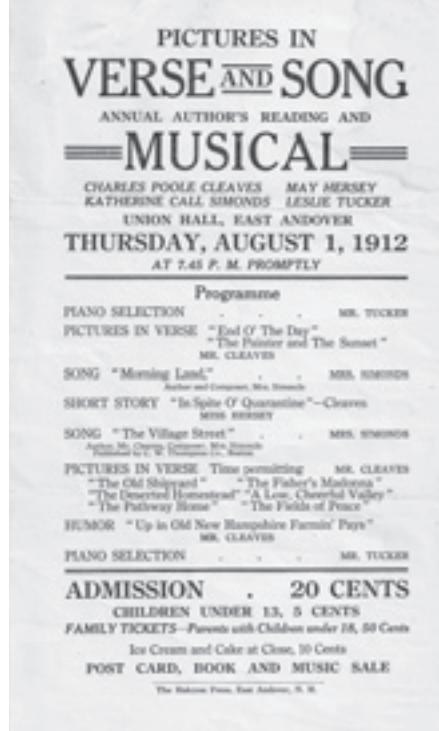
One hundred sixty-two years ago, citizens of East Andover supported the promotion of secondary education by



building Highland Lake Institute; we are grateful that the roots of this ambitious, unique, short-lived enterprise have been preserved.

Postscript

Without Ralph Chaffee's tireless research and writing, the history of the Highland Lake Grange Hall might well be lost. He also wrote the books *East Andover and Its People* and *A History of Andover – 1900-1965*, plus many articles for *Franklin Journal-Transcript* as well as his monograph about the Grange Hall and other facets of Andover life.



signed on, buying shares at \$5 apiece, with each shareholder "entitled to vote according to the number of shares, in all matters in relation to the building and locating of said house."

One hundred shares were sold, and one of the subscribers, Joseph Osgood, who lived where Kathy and Wyman Ordway now live, "volunteered to give a plot of land for the new Academy." Building commenced immediately, and Highland Lake Institute opened on Au-

gust 21, 1850 with an enrollment of 86 pupils: "45 Gentlemen and 41 Ladies."

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ing knowledge on this "magical" man who brings fame and pride to Andover. I continue to work on the compilation of all that can be found on the Potter family and will eventually create a comprehensive booklet on the life and times of Richard Potter.

Donna is a genealogy researcher affiliated with the Association of Professional Genealogists, Ancestry.Com, and National Archives and Records in Washington DC. She holds memberships with many historical societies throughout New England. She provides public speaking engagements and workshops on the subject of genealogy research.

Potter from page 24

of which two died at very young ages in Andover. Their seven-year-old son is buried at the Old Center Cemetery in Andover.

Richard Potter died on September 20, 1835 in Andover, followed by his wife Sally, who died a year later on October 24, 1836. Their headstones are located in Potter Place. Nearby is now a public garden, which invites the public to contribute perennial shade plants to the area to continue the tribute to the Potter family, who once had their own lovely gardens on the Potter homestead.

I am hoping to share and gain fur-