

Highland Lake Grange Hall Built to Provide Secondary Education

Formerly known as the “Highland Lake Institute”

Susan Norris
Andover Historical Society

NB: Most of the quotations in this article come from Ralph Chaffee’s monograph about this building; some are from the school 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. 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 signed on, buying shares at \$5 apiece, 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 August 21, 1850 with an enrollment of 86 pupils: “45 Gentlemen and 41 Ladies.”

The school catalog 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 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 procure “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 New Hampshire towns, including Salisbury, Danbury, Nashua, Rochester, and Danville, and from towns in other states, including 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.

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.

It’s interesting that 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 interesting. For 40 years various teaching activities 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 Grange for its meetings. In 1939 the Grange purchased the Hall. In 1991 the Congregational Church bought the building, now

known as the Highland Lake Grange Hall.

A decade ago, several East Andover citizens (Irene Jewett, Ginny Newton, and the late David Jewett, Don Gould, and Wanda Walker) were key in raising funds and locating resources and volunteers to begin restoration and maintenance of this historic building, now listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the East Andover Village Center Historic District. They managed to add a new basement, improved plumbing, a nifty kitchen, and heat.

More recently, Donna Thompson, treasurer at the East Andover church, is spearheading fundraisers (coffeehouse catering, yard sales, bake sales) to further restore the Grange Hall, an enterprise a structural engineer has estimated will cost \$250,000. It will involve new walls, floors, roof, and foundation.

Donna plans to apply for grants as well. This summer she is hoping to pull off a Scrape and Paint the Grange project, a volunteer community endeavor. Anyone interested in donating time or dollars should contact Donna at 603 744-6858.

The Highland Lake Grange Hall is a building worth saving – 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 Highland Lake and up at Kearsarge, you owe yourself the pleasure. And it’s charming inside as well.

One hundred seventy-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, but 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 *East Andover and Its People; A History of Andover 1900-1965*; many articles for the *Franklin Journal Transcript*; as well as his monograph about the Grange building and other facets of Andover life.

THE 15TH!
Please have everything to the *Beacon* by the 15th of each month!



MARKET
Featuring BBQ, salads, butcher meats & desserts
Wed - Sat: 12 PM - 9 PM

RESTAURANT
Reservations Encouraged
Wed - Sat: 12 PM - 9 PM

TAKE-OUT
Wed - Sat: 12 PM - 9 PM
Kitchen closes nightly at 9 PM

GIFT CERTIFICATES
available by phone order or pick-up in the market



refinerynh.com
 603 977-0194
 4 Mill Road, Andover, NH



Huckleberry Propane & Oil LLC
Family Owned and Operated
All of our staff members live in the communities we serve

Huckleberry, a company dedicated to you, our customer.
We strive to earn your business every day and we appreciate every order.

Call today to switch to a company that cares about its employees, the community and YOU.

HUCKLEBERRY
Propane Heating Oil
“Local, honest and committed to keeping you warm”
603 796-2007
BOSCAWEN, NH
License # MBE1000505

CALL Today For Your Personalized Fuel Price



Four Seasons | Sotheby's INTERNATIONAL REALTY

NEW LONDON
259 MAIN STREET
603 526.4050
Each Office Is Independently Owned and Operated.

Our Expertise is Local, Our Reach is Global.
Locally owned for over 110 years, we don't just work in the Lake Sunapee region, we live here too.

