

The Story of the Mayhew Turnpike **by Ron Collins, Historian, Archivist – Town of Hebron, NH**

In 1795 the road over New Chester mountain was the most difficult between Concord and Plymouth, and naturally gave rise to many complaints by those traveling over it. In the spring of 1797, a petition was addressed to the Court of Common Pleas requesting that a highway be laid out on the east side of the mountain. The Court sent a committee to view the route with authority to lay out the road if it was thought necessary. This committee decided it was necessary, and laid out a road in September of that year, practically over the same route as that afterwards taken by the Mayhew turnpike corporation between Newfound and Smith's rivers. There was an evident determination on the part of New Chester to avoid, if possible, the construction of this road, on account of the great expense. On February 23, 1798, a town meeting was held, when the subject of the construction of the road was considered, and Major Theophilus Sanborn was made a committee to go to Haverhill in March to lay before the Court the grievance of the town, and see if the Court would accept a road on the west side of the mountain in place of that laid out by the committee. The efforts of Major Sanborn were of no avail, and another town meeting was held May 1, of that year, when it was voted to appeal to the Legislature at the session to be held that month in Hopkinton. This vote was finally reconsidered, and it was decided to send a petition to the Court at its next session to see if it would postpone the execution of its order for the construction of the road. This effort was also a failure; and another town meeting was held August 27, 1798 when a petition was addressed to the Court to see if it would give the town any relief by allowing the road to be carried west from the top of Merrill Hill until it reached the old road over the mountain, and thus avoid the expense of building between the top of the hill and Smith's river. The Court was not interested, and this effort, like the others, appears to have had no effect. At the annual meeting of March 18, 1799, the town voted to raise \$100.00 to construct the road. This sum was entirely inadequate for the work, and apparently no work was done. The subject again came up at the annual meeting in March 1800 when the town voted not to raise any money for the building of this road.

Thus matters drifted till October 27, 1800 when the town chose Colonel Peter Sleeper as agent to appear at the Superior Court of Judicature in November to ask the court to stay a bill against the town for neglecting to construct the road as ordered by the Court of Common Pleas. It was hoped that the court might be induced to do this because of the proposed construction of the Mayhew Turnpike over the route laid out by order of the court. A meeting was held on November 10, 1800 when the town promptly voted to grant the petition of Thomas W. Thompson and others for permission to build a turnpike; but this did not end the difficulty as hoped. The Superior Court did not interfere, and the lower court did not withdraw its mandate for the construction of the road; but an indictment was issued against the town for neglecting to comply with the order of the Court. In the warrant for the annual town meeting in March 1801, there was inserted, therefore, the following article: "To See how much money the Town will Vote to Raise to Build and Repair the Road on the East Side of New Chester Mountain or what the Town will do with Respect to being Sued for not Doing Sd Road."

Under this article no money was raised; but Major Theophilus Sanborn and Ebenezer Kimball were elected a committee to appear at the next June term of the superior Court of Judicature in behalf of the town to present a petition for a new road. The efforts of this committee appear to have been successful, for immediately after their return a special town meeting was called, at which the town voted to raise \$200 for building the road, and the

selectmen were made a committee to superintend its construction. However, the selectmen were instructed to build a road on the west side of the mountain as petitioned for not the east side as ordered by the court, and this west road was constructed, while there is no evidence to show that a dollar was ever expended for the road on the east side. The petition referred to above was dated May 1, 1801, and read as follows

State of New Hampshire, Grafton, ss.

To the Gentlemen, Selectmen of New Chester in County and State.

Whereas a Public Highway has been Laid out and made passable from Rumney through the westerly part of Plymouth and through a part of Hebron by the Easterly part of Newfound Pond so called through Bridgewater which appears to be of public Utility and will be a much shorter way from Rumney to Concord by Several miles therefore wee pray that your Honors will lay out a Road from Newfound River So Called to the Westerly side of New Chester mountain and to strike the Main or River road about Sixty rods below Smith's mills in New Chester and wee your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray. Orford, May 1, 1801.

Isaac Barnard	Joshua Tolford
Theophilus Tilton	John Adams
Peter Mayhew	Abel Chamberlain
Jonathan Tilton	Benjamin Norris
John Brown	Samuel Hazeltine, Jr.
Dean Rogers	William Achin
Benjamin Norris	Samuel Davis 3d
John Bartlett	Moses Hoyt
William Heslern	Nathan Davis
Benjamin Cotton	Thomas Weare
Jabez B. Barney	Samuel Davis
Barrit Blaisdell	Isaac Day
Daniel Page	Aaron Jewitt
Aaron Barry	Nathan Davis Jr.
Rui Mason	Isaac Dean
Israel Hoyt	John Johnson

A portion of the road described in the above petition was the same as that laid out by Bridgewater, in 1796, from the Hebron line to where Edwin T. Pike lived (now called Pike's Point Road). Bridgewater extended this road to the Newfound River at what was then called "Willow Street" now called. The route was from Pike's Point Road to the foot of the lake on the east shore; thence on the high land east of the river along what is now called Mayhew Street (North Main Street) in Bristol. New Chester (now called Bristol) continued this road from this point "in nearly a straight line across the fair ground and Bartlett's plain... uniting with the road on the north bank of Smith's river twenty-two rods west of the present high bridge." This "high bridge" was on Mountain Hill Road. "It crossed Smith's river on this bridge, and then proceeded east on the south bank of the stream fourteen rods; thence one hundred and twelve rods southeast, where it united at the foot of "Goulding Hill" with the old road from the first bridge over Smith's river."

It seems that the matter of a road on the east side of the mountain drifted till the Mayhew Turnpike corporation was granted a charter in 1803, and no further action was taken by either party.

The charter for the Mayhew turnpike was granted Dec. 22, 1803, to Moses Lewis, Thomas W. Thompson, Peter Mayhew, William Tarlton, Peter Sleeper, Ebenezer Kelley and Moses Kelley. They were authorized to build a "turnpike four rods wide from or near Peter Peaslee's in New Chester, to the east side of Newfound pond thence on to a road leading from Plymouth to Coos in Rumney." This turnpike, as constructed, commenced near the Peaslee grave-yard, south of Sinith's river, and extended to West Plymouth, a distance of sixteen miles.

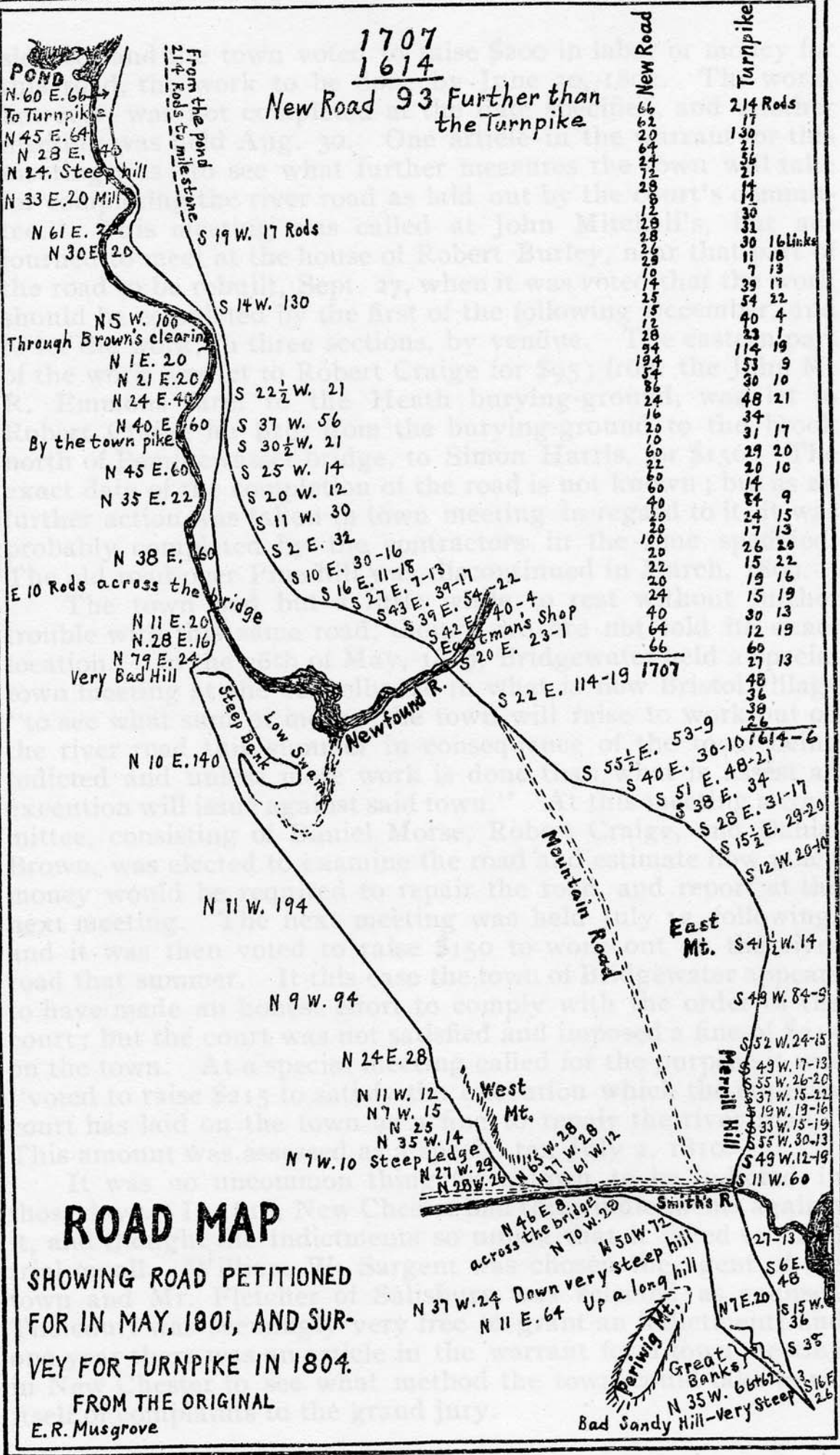
Not all of the villages along the proposed route were in favor of the Turnpike. At the 1803 Hebron Town Meeting, for example, the following was voted:

Vote that the petitioned for Turnpike on the East side of Newfound pond be opposed & that the Select men serve as a Committee to advance and forward suitable objections to the General Court -

The incorporators were authorized to establish as many gates as thought necessary, and the rates of toll for each mile were as follows

Every ten sheep or swine	1 cent
Every ten cattle or horses	2 cents
Every horse rode or led	2 cents
Every sulky, chaise, chair, with one horse and two wheels	2 cents
Every chariot, coach, stage, phaeton or chaise, with two horses and four wheels	4 cents
Other pleasure carriage or carriages of burden drawn by one horse	1 cent
Same by two beasts	1 1/2 cents
For each additional yoke of oxen or pair of horses	1 cent
For each sleigh with one horse	1 1/2 cents
For each sleigh with two horses	2 cents
For each additional horse	1 cent
Sled with one horse	1 cent
With two horses	1 1/2 cents
For each additional pair of horses or oxen	1 cent

It was a condition of the charter that the toll-gates should be kept open when not tended, and there was a fine of three times the toll for turning aside to avoid payment of toll. There were also certain exemptions, as those going to and from church or a funeral, those traveling in town where they resided, and the militia, under arms, going to or returning from military duty. To compensate the corporation for the free use of the pike by the inhabitants of the town, it was



1707
1614

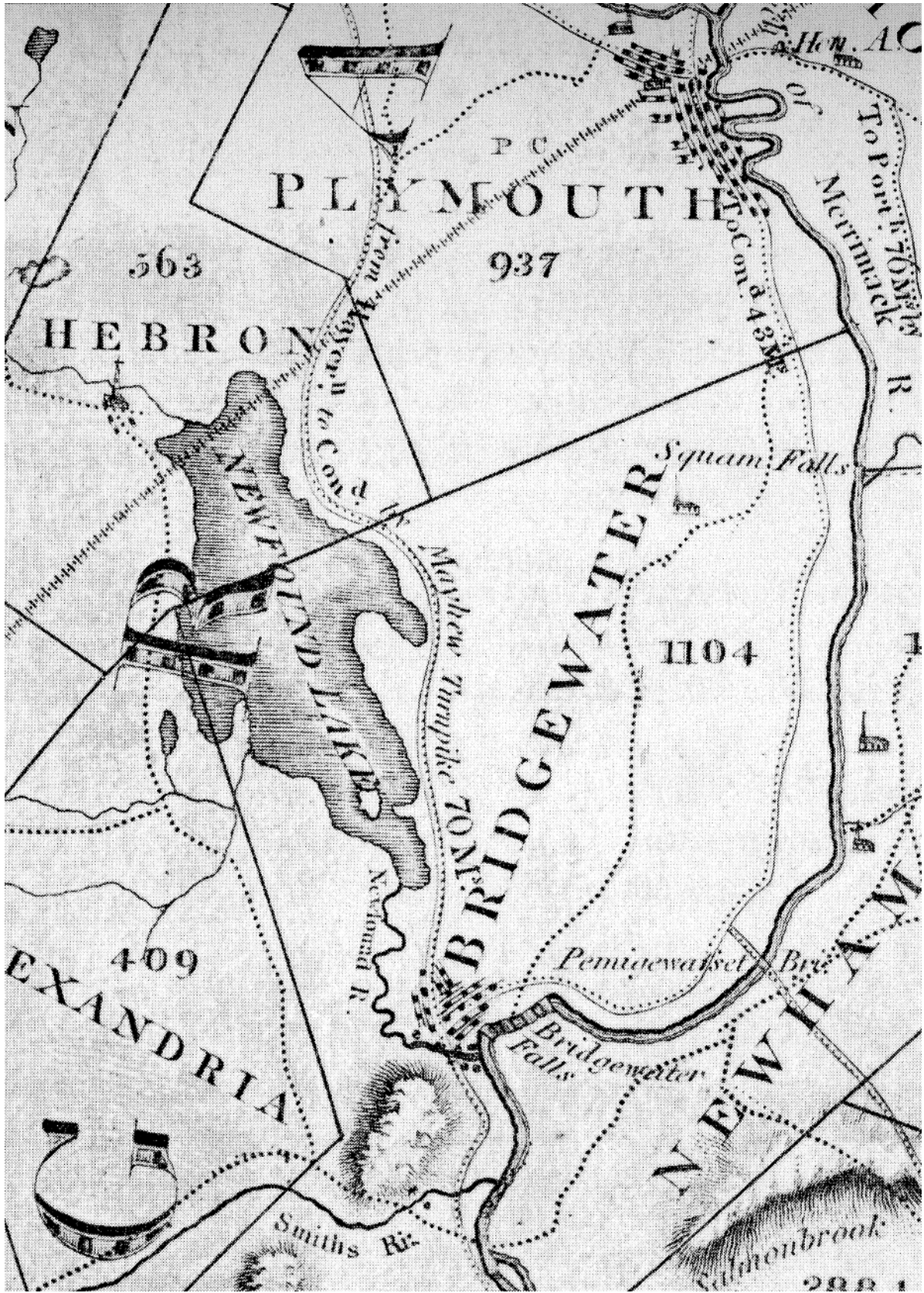
New Road 93 Further than the Turnpike

New Road	Turnpike
66	214 Rods
62	17
20	130
64	21
24	56
72	21
29	17
8	30
12	31
29	31
28	30
26	16 Links
29	18
10	7
14	13
25	39
15	17
12	54
28	22
94	40
194	4
54	23
86	19
24	53
16	9
20	30
10	48
60	21
22	34
60	31
60	17
40	29
20	20
20	10
100	14
20	84
20	24
100	17
20	13
22	26
20	15
24	22
40	19
64	16
66	15
	22
	19
	16
	13
	26
	22
	20
	19
	13
	12
	19
	27
	13
	48
	36
	38
	26
	6

ROAD MAP

SHOWING ROAD PETITIONED FOR IN MAY, 1801, AND SURVEY FOR TURNPIKE IN 1804. FROM THE ORIGINAL E.R. Musgrove

Smith's R.
N 46 E. 8 across the bridge
N 70 W. 20
W 50 W. 72
N 37 W. 24 Down very steep hill
N 11 E. 64 Up a long hill
Periwig Mt.
Great Banks
N 35 W. 66
Bad Sandy Hill - Very Steep



usual for those living along the pike to work out their highway taxes by mending the Turnpike. At the end of each six years, the company made a report to the justice of the superior court, and if the net dividends exceeded nine per cent., the justice could reduce the rates. Three years were given in which to complete the road and the state reserved the right to take the road at the end of forty years by paying its cost and nine per cent.

Peter Mayhew was the leading spirit in the building of this road. He was a Frenchman or a French Canadian and resided in Rumney. His son, William, lived for a few years, while the road was being built and after, in a little house on the east side of the pike just south of Pike's Point Road. The turnpike was largely constructed, and perhaps completed and opened to the public, in 1805. It greatly facilitated travel from the northern part of the state, and increased business in this village, especially among the tavern keepers.

Previous to the building of the Mayhew turnpike, the only road from Bristol to the head of the lake, on the east shore, was by way of Whittemore point. This circuitous route was avoided by cutting a straight road through the woods to just south of the old Hoyt tavern stood (where the Inn on Newfound is today).

The only toll-gate in Bristol was on North Main street, at the crossing of the Newfound River. The toll-gate house was a low posted, one-story structure of four rooms that stood close to the traveled highway. From a post on the west side of the highway swung a large arm or gate across the road to the southwest corner of the house, where it was fastened, when not open for travel, by a wooden pin inserted into the corner post of the house.

STAGE COACHES & MAIL

At first travel and mail delivery along the Turnpike was by horse. The first attempt to substitute the coach for the horse and rider on the route from Haverhill to Concord via the Turnpike was made in 1811; but it soon failed for lack of support. In the spring of 1814, Robert Morse passed a subscription paper in every town on the route for assistance in starting a stage-coach. The result was that that summer a four-horse, covered coach made its first trip from Concord to Haverhill. The event was a great one. Col. Silas May held the ribbons and blew the horn; while Robert Morse and a company of friends filled the coach and had a free ride from Concord to Haverhill. Business was largely suspended along the route, and the people turned out to rejoice over the innovation and to welcome the stage-coach. The running of the stage-coach, thus happily inaugurated, continued; and Robert Morse was for many years at the head of the Haverhill and Concord stage line.

In July, 1821, Robert Morse again electrified this whole section with the announcement that he would run the Haverhill and Concord stage the rest of that season twice a week.

Commencing on January 1, 1833, the local Post Offices each week received three mails from the north and three from the south. A four-horse post coach left Concord each day for the north. One day it traveled on the west side of the Pemigewasset through Franklin, Hill, Bristol, Bridgewater, East Hebron, West Plymouth, Rumney, to Haverhill; the next day, south through Plymouth and New Hampton, and thence to Concord on the east side of the river the next day. After the first coach left Concord another traveled north on the east side and down the west side of the Pemigewasset via the Mayhew Turnpike back to Concord. In 1835, a four-horse coach passed daily along the Turnpike from the north and another from the south. The coaches going south stopped at Prescott's Tavern in Bristol for dinner; those going north arrived at the dinner hour at Hoyt's tavern (where the Inn on Newfound is today), where a stop was made for dinner.

All through these days, the arrival of the stage-coach was an event of great importance, and the entire population was always on the quick to see it. No matter how fatigued the horses might be, the near approach to a village was the occasion for the driver to put on "airs." Cracking his long whip, the horses were brought into a sharp trot; the driver would sound his horn and drive with graceful curves to the door of the inn or tavern. Inside the inns and taverns all was bustle and excitement, especially when, as sometimes happened, two and even three coaches, with four or six horses, were required to accommodate the travel, and all arrived at the same time. As soon as the passengers could alight and partake of a glass of grog or toddy at the bar, they took seats at the tables and helped themselves to food. While the meal was in progress, horses were changed, and in a half hour's time the coach was again whirling over the rough road to its next stopping-place.

With the advent of the railroad to Bristol in 1848, the glory days of the Mayhew Turnpike and the stage-coach disappeared. Instead of four-horse coaches, loaded with passengers, making their daily appearance, three light stages made connection with the train in Bristol, and conveyed the mails and chance passengers: one stage going to Alexandria; one to Bridgewater, Hebron, and Groton, and one to New Hampton,

INNS & TAVERNS

Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
-Goldsmith.

Two hundred years ago, there was necessarily many more public houses, i.e. taverns and inns, than now. All the merchandise for the country stores, and the products of the mills, passed over the highways, and many farmers made at least one trip during the year to Boston, to dispose of the surplus products of the farm. All travelers were obliged to stop where night overtook them, and this made a large number of taverns necessary. At that time the right to "tavernize" carried with it the right to keep spirituous liquors for sale at retail, and very many farmers who had one or two spare rooms, opened their houses as taverns, and thus added to the meager income of the farm.

The entertainment was of the rudest kind. Proprietors charged twelve cents for bean porridge and a chance to sleep on the floor. Along the Turnpike you had Pike's Tavern in Hebron, the Hoyt Tavern and Bridgewater Inn in Bridgewater and several more, including Moses Sleeper's Tavern, in Bristol. Taverns were the news centers of the day. Here the post-rider always stopped, with occasional letters and newspapers, and later the stage-coach left passengers, the mails, and the latest news. Here congregated travelers and teamsters and the residents of the town, when the general news of the day, as well as local happenings, was freely discussed, and the quality of the landlord's grog was tested. One old gentleman said, in speaking of those days: "When I was a young man, we used to have gay times at Moses Sleeper's. He kept good brandy, as well as, other liquors, and men were always found there drinking and wrestling, telling stories, and discussing the news."

About 1800, Peter Sanborn was keeping a tavern in what was then known as the old Whittemore farmhouse at the turn of the road on the Point in Bridgewater. Hearing of the projected Mayhew Turnpike, Mr. Sanborn saw that its construction would leave him on a side road, and he therefore erected a tavern at what was then called the Hoyt stand, on the projected route of the turnpike. A. P. Hoyt was landlord there for many years, and Hoyt's Tavern became a

popular resort and was known throughout the state. It has been many years since the business of the Turnpike and the Hoyt Tavern ended. The place was renamed Elm Lawn, a summer resort, so called because of the stately elms, planted in the early days of the tavern. Today, next to where The Hoyt Tavern stood is the Inn on Newfound Lake.

On the east side of South Main Street in Bristol stood the Dodge Inn. Just when this inn was erected is not known; but Isaac Dodge was landlord there as early as 1814, for there, on December 3, 1814, as an advertisement reads in the *New Hampshire Patriot*, that the proprietors of the Mayhew Turnpike were called to meet at their annual meeting. It was a building of about 30' x 50', two stories high, with basement on the north side, and had perhaps twenty rooms. On the south side and west end was a piazza. At the southwest corner stood the sign post, from the arm of which swung the tavern sign. On this sign was painted a crude picture of Washington, from which fact the Inn was sometimes called the Washington Inn. Extending from the southeast corner was a long two-story building, with an open carriage shed on the ground and a hall in the second story. This hall was reached by stairs from the east end of the piazza. Here the young gathered for dances and singing-schools, and here were held justice trials, political meetings, and other gatherings.

Later the Dodge Inn was taken over by Pry Holt. Mr. Holt was an old stage-driver, and was getting on in years, when on July 11, 1822, he married Hannah, the young sister of Isaac Dodge. He was landlord there as late as 1827. A son, born to the Holt's there, was taught by his father to use big oaths for the amusement of the crowd.

Oliver Smith Blake, Revolutionary War Soldier (buried in the Wade Hill Cemetery in Hebron) was one of the early landlords there as well. Daniel S. Smith was landlord for a couple of years previous to 1834, when he sold the Inn to Jeremiah Prescott for \$2,200. It then became known as the Prescott Hotel. Mr. Prescott rebuilt the hall, and enlarged and refurnished the main building, at an expense of \$1,500. Business was brisk in those days. There was not only the daily stages in both directions, but also long lines of teams of all kinds. There were frequently seventy-five guests at this hotel over night, and sometimes as many as one hundred. It is true that each guest did not have a room to himself, but he was content to share his bed with a fellow-traveler. Each room had two or more beds, if large enough to contain them; while some travelers slept on the floor, even the floor of the bar-room being utilized for this purpose, and some slept on the hay in the stable. Instead of the gas jet or electricity, there was the tallow dip or whale oil lamp, or even the saucer of grease with the rag in it that kept up a constant sputtering in its efforts to burn. Mr. Prescott continued as landlord here till Dec. 3, 1849, when the tavern and hall were destroyed by fire. They were not rebuilt.

THE END OF THE TURNPIKE

During the first forty years of the 19th century the turnpikes of New Hampshire aided materially in the development of the state, but the exactions and burdens they imposed were borne with ill grace by the people. On July 2, 1838, an act passed the Legislature authorizing selectmen and the courts to take the franchise and other rights of corporations for public highways in the same manner as the lands of individuals. This caused an assault to be made against the turnpikes all over the state.

At the November term of court at Plymouth in 1839, a petition was presented by Thomas Paine and others praying that a public highway be laid out four rods wide from the "Inn of Thomas Paine in West Plymouth to the east meeting-house in Hill." This was essentially the full

length of the Turnpike. A hearing on this petition was given at the court of common pleas at Plymouth on the first Tuesday in January, 1840, and, the petition appearing reasonable, Larkin Baker, of Westmoreland, Charles Flanders, of Plainfield, and Hon. Henry B. Rust, of Wolfeboro, were named as a committee to lay out the highway asked for, if, in their opinion, the public good required it. This committee met at the inn of Thomas Paine, Sept. 10, 1840, and gave a hearing, and at the November term of court reported that in their opinion the public good did require the laying out of the highway, and that they had laid out the same four rods wide "from the head of the turnpike between the house formerly occupied by Thomas Paine and that then occupied by Solomon Jones at the intersection of the road leading from Plymouth to Haverhill, and continuing south over the Mayhew turnpike to the southern terminus thereof in the town of Hill."

The damage to the Mayhew turnpike corporation was fixed at \$1,600, and this was apportioned among the several towns interested as follows: Plymouth, \$340.00 ; Hebron, \$366.49 ; Bridgewater, \$337.29 ; Bristol, \$529.09 ; Hill, \$26.43. Thus, this historic turnpike that had so materially aided in the development of this area, was carved up and given to the several towns named to be maintained, and the annoyance of the toll gatherer ceased.

And perhaps it was just as well for in 1848 the railroad put an end to the use of the Turnpike as a major route for commerce or travel.