## Hebron Historical Society Gazette

Hebron, NH

Volume 6, No. 1, January 2008

www.HebronHistSoc.org

\$1.00 dollar



### Herald of Freedom Abolitionist in Hebron By Ron Collins and Don Towle

In the 1830's and the 1840's an anti-slavery group called the *Orthodox Congregational Abolitionists in New Hampshire* existed here in Hebron.

In the newspaper the *Herald of Freedom* of 1836 page 107 contains a description of a September 13, 1836 Grafton County convention of abolitionists meeting at Hebron, NH. There is mention of people attending from Campton, Canaan, Haverhill, Plymouth, Lyme, Landaff, Lebanon, Alexandria, Piermont, and Holderness. The convention was not permitted to use the meeting house, so they had an encampment, probably where the Audubon field adjoins the Cockermouth River today. The weather was cloudy and warm and there were some 200-300 were in attendance. A local militia company, unsympathetic to the gathering, paraded noisily about on the common, firing occasional volleys, aimed at disrupting the proceedings.

Published from 1836 to 1839 the Anti Slavery Newspaper titled *Herald of Freedom* was edited first by Joseph Horace Kimball and then by Nathaniel P. Rogers of Plymouth, NH and published by the New Hampshire Anti Slavery Society. The Newspapers were printed by Chase & Crosby of Concord, N.H. The *Herald of Freedom* was (and is) considered one of the most outspoken and "radical" anti-slavery newspapers.

The *Herald of Freedom* gained national attention during the years that it was edited by Nathaniel Rogers. Rogers was born in Plymouth, NH on June 3, 1794 the son of John and Betsy (Mulliken) Rogers, and cousin of John Rogers of Hebron. He was a graduate of Dartmouth College Class of 1816. Rogers read law for three years and was admitted to the New Hampshire Bar in 1819. He then established a long-

lived law practice at Plymouth. Roger's own contributions to the content of the newspaper are some of the very best anti-slavery writings. Nathaniel Rogers turned "social activist." In 1835, Rogers was introduced to William Lloyd Garrison, and began to write for the Herald of Freedom. In 1838, he gave up his Plymouth law practice and moved to Concord to become editor of the newspaper. His articles were widely reprinted in the New York Tribune and other anti-slavery newspapers, under the name of "The Old Man of the Mountain." In 1840 New Hampshire Abolitionists sent Rogers as their delegate to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention, in London, England. The Convention refused to seat several American women delegates, however, and Rogers withdrew in protest. He returned to America to find himself a hero for his support of equality of the sexes, as well as for equality of color. Rogers had several offers to head major newspapers, and he spoke publicly on issues of temperance, women's rights and the abolition of slavery. On the issues of human rights, slavery, women's rights, and religion he held strong views and could see no room for compromise.

On page 136 of the same issue of the *Herald* of *Freedom* there is mention of an October 14, 1836 meeting for the formation of a Hebron and Groton Anti-Slavery Society, with a Rev. Baxter Burroughs as Secretary and Rev. Daniel Pulsifer as Treasurer. Rev. Daniel Pulsifer was the pastor of the Hebron and Groton Churches from 1835 to about 1840 according to Robert Lawrence's *The New Hampshire Churches, Comprising the Histories of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches in the State*, 1856.

On page 78 of the 1838 edition of the *Herald* of *Freedom* there is mention of a well-attended antislavery meeting in Hebron where Rev. Burroughs and a Rev. Beach (the Congregationalist pastor in Campton) spoke. There was a comment in the article that "general agents are not needed for such meetings as

(Continued on page 2)

there are powerful speakers on the subject springing up in every country town." On this occasion there was music. "Mr. Curtis' solemn 'Freedom's Alarm' was performed with great spirit by the Hebron and Groton choir. This piece of music is indeed Lovejoy's voice from the grave. It should be sung at every antislavery meeting." (Jonathan Curtis was a Congregational pastor in Epsom and Pittsfield and a very active and prominent abolitionist leader in the state.)

There must have been strong anti-slavery feelings in Hebron prior to the Civil War. In 1840 Nathaniel S. Berry moved to Hebron to open a tannery on Hobart Hill. He later became the Governor of New Hampshire during the early part of the Civil War and played a major, if not the major role, in convincing President Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all slaves and abolished slavery in the United States. Berry had a successful tannery in Bristol, and it is possible he decided to come to Hebron because he shared the anti-slavery sentiments of the town.

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**Hebron's Cemeteries**By Ron Collins, Sexton & Historian

There are four cemeteries in Hebron.

Warren Tripp

Phil & Betsy Twombly

In 1797 at Town Meeting it was voted to create a graveyard. At that point there were already two burying grounds in Hebron. The oldest we now call the Pratt Cemetery and it contains the remains of Hannah Phelps who died on January 11, 1784 and is the first recorded burial in Hebron. She was followed on July 5, 1788 by Jeremiah Ames,. The first recorded burial in what is now the Hebron Village Cemetery behind the Union Church is that of Mary Bartlett, the wife of Jonathan Bartlett, who died on February 8, 1792. She was followed three years later on September 27, 1795, by Isabel Hobart, the wife of Rueben Hobart. Evan Bartlett and Rueben Hobart owned the land that now comprises the Hebron Common, Union Congregational Church and Hebron Village Cemetery. It was probably the case that the Hebron Village Cemetery started as a private Bartlett and Hobart family burying ground and the Pratt Cemetery started as a private burying ground as well. The graveyard referred to in the warrant article of 1797 above must have been to take over and make public the existing Pratt Cemetery as the article read: "Voted that this Town will fence the Grave Yard with a good stone wall on the Road, also, that Benjamin Hazelton & Rueben Hobart be a Committee to procure a Deed and

(Continued from page 2)

fence the Grave Yard." There was never a stone fence around the Hebron Village Cemetery nor does it lie on a road, so the described cemetery was the Pratt Cemetery which does abut Groton Road and does have a stone wall. The land was procured from either David Pratt or Thomas Pratt and as a result is called the Pratt Cemetery. Both the Pratt and Village Cemeteries contain numerous Revolutionary War veterans.

The East Hebron Cemetery started as a private cemetery and remains so to this day. The earliest recorded burial there was that of Betsy Wright the young daughter of Dr. Abijah and Lucy Wright who was buried there in 1801. Dr. Abijah Wright (1746-1829), the first physician in Hebron and a surgeon during the American Revolution is buried there in an unmarked grave as well. The other Revolutionary War veteran buried there is Deacon Enos Ferrin (1748-1811). The latest burial in this cemetery is that of Sarah Emory Youngman (1910-1969). This cemetery today is owned by the Youngman family but it is possible that the town will eventually be ceded ownership.

On top of Plymouth Mountain, just south of Barnard Hill is the Wade Road Cemetery. You can find it near the intersection of Favor Road and Wade Hill Road. In this cemetery, the only known Revolutionary War soldier is Oliver Smith Blake (1742-1823). This cemetery had a sad beginning. In the period between 1812 and 1820, several epidemics came through Hebron including Diphtheria and Typhoid. As a result, many families lost young children. For the families living on Wade Road (then called Bridgewater Hill Road), the first to die and be buried in the cemetery was an unnamed child of Peter & Hannah Wells who died, probably at birth, on August 12, 1812. This infant was followed two years later by another unnamed child, by the same parents, who died on April 6, 1814. Then in the summer of 1817, Zebulon & Abigail Ferrin lost their 3 year old son Sylvester on June 18, 1817, and three weeks later Capt. Joseph & Hannah Taylor lost their two year old daughter Mary Ann on July 7, 1817. Thus was there the need for a cemetery on old Bridgewater Hill Road. The last recorded burial in this cemetery was that of Captain Joseph Taylor who died on June 18, 1844. While there is some question as to ownership, the Wade Hill Cemetery is today considered a town cemetery.

As of Christmas 2007, there are 1352 people buried in the four Hebron Cemeteries. The four cemeteries are laid out for 2130 burial sites in total. Of the remaining 778 empty graves (all in the Village and Pratt Cemeteries), 118 have been reserved by local families and 660 remain available for general use.

#### Deborah Ball Powers 1790-1891 By Howard Oedel

Deborah Ball, born on Tenney Hill in Hebron, N.H. on August 5, 1790, was the last of five girls and the eighth of ten children of Nathaniel and Sarah Nevins Ball. Her parents were hard-working subsistence farmers whose remote hillside farm (some two miles uphill from town) provided a meager living. But Deborah, being the youngest girl, probably escaped some of the drudgery that her older sisters endured, given the myriad of household chores required of a family of twelve. Cooking, cleaning, washing, but above all – spinning weaving, and making clothes kept many hands busy every day.

All of the Ball children were born in a log cabin which burned when Deborah was six years old. In 1797, her father Nathaniel built a substantial two-story house which was still standing in the 1950's, although it had been abandoned for many years The reason the house remained upright until the 1950's was that Deborah, before her death in 1891, saw to it that the house had a new roof.

Deborah attended a nearby school, located on Tenney Hill where the Range Road meets the extension of the Braley Road. There were three or four families in the area, and the children eagerly attended school where they could socialize, as well as learn to read and cipher. Deborah particularly enjoyed the singing lessons where the children - girls especially - learned religious music that would qualify them to sing in the church choir, as well as, songs and ballads, which helped to while away the hours when engaged at the wool-wheel or the flax wheel or the loom.

During Deborah's younger years, however, political turmoil split the congregation into two camps with unpleasant consequences. She remembered well, as a ten year-old, how upset her father was at the number of Jeffersonians there were in town. Nathaniel Ball was a staunch Federalist with hard-shelled opinions. She recalled one time when her father was questioned as to the qualifications John Adams had to run for the presidency in 1800. His retort was, "George Washington said so!" and ,as far as he was concerned, that was the end of the discussion.

Some of the more ardent Federalists, like Deborah's father, were outraged at the Jeffersonians in their midst, especially when the minister himself turned out to be a Jeffersonian. One old Federalist stood right up in the middle of the church service and shouted, "You are preaching Jefferson and him justified; we hired you to teach Christ and him crucified." Her father and mother

often had heated discussions that went late into the night. Fortunately, her mother agreed with her father on politics although her role in these so-called "discussions" was largely to cool the old man down! Deborah and her younger brother John, four years her junior, were greatly bothered by their father's tirades, both on politics and religion. They tended to be very liberal in their views on both religion and politics; a lifelong point of view. In later life her friends recalled how she loved to reminisce about her early years on the farm with countless little incidents about the family and Hebron. How we wish more of those details might have been written down for posterity.

When Deborah was eighteen she spent the better part of a year in Bristol learning to be a tailor. That instruction enabled her to become an itinerant seamstress and tailor, earning \$1.00 a week plus room and board. This was actually the maximum a woman could expect to make in those days and indicates how ambitious Deborah was. Someone who merely spun wool or flax or who worked at the loom - a spinster no doubt - could only hope for 50 cents a week. The drudgery of household chores could provide perhaps 75 cents a week, room and board included, of course.

In 1816, when Deborah was 26, a childhood friend, William Powers, returned to Hebron and asked Deborah for her hand in marriage. With the consent of her father, Deborah readily accepted and the two were married on the 22<sup>rd</sup> of February at the residence of the Reverend Ralph Page.

The following year in 1817, although William Powers was still teaching school, he became interested in the manufacture of oilcloth As one friend put it: "William Powers was too much a Yankee to remain long a schoolmaster."

With Deborah as a close collaborator, William began experimenting with various materials on a sheet of tow cloth attached to the side of the house in which they lived. His trial-and-error experiments were carefully noted by Deborah, and they eventually had a marketable product. For some ten years, this growing business was conducted from the "ell" of their home.

William Powers must have been as personable as he was ambitious. His business thrived, and by 1828, he had borrowed \$8000 - a very large sum in those daysand built a large factory that was five stories high and 150 feet long. In the back of the building were living quarters for the family which now included two boys: 1) Albert Ebenezer Powers (born December 1817), who was named for two of Deborah's brothers, and 2) Nathaniel Ball Powers, who was named for Deborah's father.

William Powers' control of the business in the

new factory was short lived, only one year to be exact. On June 25, 1829, while boiling varnish, an explosion resulted in his being badly burnt. Assistance from his wife, who was also burned, and several workmen put out the fire, but Powers died within 24 hours. It was a disaster!

Deborah Powers was not to be daunted. She demonstrated a knowledge of every aspect of the business, from procuring materials to manufacturing the oil cloth, to keeping the books and selling the product. Although the business was initially heavily in debt, her backers and creditors had complete confidence in her abilities and encouraged her to continue. With two boys, only twelve and five years old, she persevered and prospered. In part her success at this stage was due to her reliance on her younger brother, John Ball, who was then living in Lansingburg, NY and engaged in a law practice

The transaction of the ownership of a major manufacturing business from a husband to a wife may not have been unique, but in 1828 there were very few women engaged in an undertaking as complex as Deborah Powers' oil-cloth industry. As I've already indicated she was involved in all aspects of the trade: purchasing raw materials, manufacturing, and sales, to say nothing of financing and bookkeeping-she did it all.

To show what kind of a business woman Deborah was, one of the first things she did after Powers' death was to set up her brother John as foreman of the factory while she herself took a job in the manufacturing process, replacing one of the hired workers.

John Ball entered into the oil cloth business with considerable enthusiasm and industry and was, I should say, indispensable in its success. But his relations with his sister - in his biography, Born to Wander he never once mentions her by name – became strained as time went on. He demanded one-third of the net profit (a tidy sum of \$1600.) He had every intention of taking over the business. Deborah had every intention of controlling it herself. So, in 1831 when Deborah arranged a partnership with a Mr. John Whipple from Boston, John Ball became disaffected and announced that his connection with the company would be terminated as of January 1, 1832.

John no doubt saved the business for Deborah and got it on excellent footing before he left in 1832. He worked hard at establishing contacts with middle-men merchants in New York City, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, and also obtaining credit from New York financiers - something no woman would have been able to do in those days! But John was uncontrollable when it came to side trips and explorations of one kind or another and Deborah had to rely-most reluctantly-on his

good will. It was not a good arrangement. And it did not continue.

The products Powers sold were somewhat varied-table spreads, floor covers, chaise (or stage coach) carpeting. The demand for oil cloth held up well throughout the 19th century and into the twentieth for that matter. As I indicated before, Deborah bought all the raw materials for the product, did whatever traveling was necessary for the business and did all the sales-work as well. Most often the latter took her to New York City where she was well known to the merchants and middlemen that dealt in oil cloth as well as the financiers. She must have been sharp! And she owned her own sloop for travel on the Hudson in pursuit of business.

Deborah's business thrived and her financial status in the community increased annually. In 1842, her son Albert entered the business and, in 1847, Nathaniel also joined. The company name became D. Powers & Sons Oil Cloth Factory.

Deborah now had time and energy for other projects. She provided money for young children to attend the neighborhood Comstock school. Another venture was the purchase of land and the provision of money for the building of another school – The Powers School. Some of her educational projects were of lesser importance but nonetheless significant – a piano for one school, a playground for another. One wonders if she was acquainted with Emma Willard, one of the first great pioneers in women's education who lived not far away in Troy. I dare say she was.

In the 1870's, when she was in her eighties, she purchased a tract of land across from her home at 415 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. She had the houses on the land torn down, and developed a Memorial Garden on about an acre of land, dedicated to William Powers. She had the land enclosed with a beautiful wrought iron fence and hired a fulltime gardener to care for the plot. It became a show case, not only for Lansingburg, but as a tourist attraction as well. Today, it is still owned by the town but is disgracefully neglected.

In 1877, when Deborah was 87 years old, the Lansingburg Bank failed. Shortly thereafter, it reopened as the Powers Bank.

One of Deborah's last public-spirited ventures was the purchase of one of Lansingburg's most outstanding houses when she was ninety-one years old. She opened it as an Old Ladies Home. The place was to accommodate elderly women with no place to live. The number so accommodated would be limited to ten. I take it she had in mind people of some means, as they would exchange their life savings for life-time care – a rather modern concept. Deborah stipulated that they must be "refined, educated and of irreproachable charac-

ter." She commented at the time that she "would not want to send anybody to live in the home whom, I myself would not like to live with, but on terms of the closest intimacy."

On one occasion, a colored woman "of irreproachable character and exceptional education" applied. Presumably, she was admitted, in keeping with Deborah's lifelong liberal spirit – but the records do not say for sure.

In her old age Deborah's eyesight failed, and she was confined to knitting endlessly. When she was in her middle years she had visited Hebron occasionally and reminisced with old friends about life on Tenney Hill. But the dates of these visits are not known to me. Her father and mother were both long-lived and her father died at age 84 (oddly enough of whooping cough) and her mother at 89. Her maternal grandfather Nevins lived to be 100. The remarkably fine tombstones for her mother and father in the Hebron Cemetery were, no doubt, paid for by Deborah Powers, and I noticed in our annual report that the Deborah Ball Powers gift of \$1000 for upkeep of the Hebron Cemetery is still on the books.

Even in her ancient age, Deborah Ball Powers' keenness did not diminish. On New Year's Day her great grandchildren and boys of the neighborhood remember ringing her doorbell for delicious oval cookies complete with caraway seeds. Then they would run across the street to Powers Park and switch caps for another try for more cookies. They never fooled Deborah Powers!

Deborah Ball Powers died in May 1891 – in her



101<sup>st</sup> year. Her sons changed the name of the William Powers Park to the William and Deborah Powers Memorial Park. Little is known (at least by me) of her son's families or whether there is a Powers family in or near Lansingburg. I would doubt it, as the Memorial Park was deeded over in the early twentieth cen-

tury by Deborah's sons to the City of Troy, of which Lansingburg is now a suburb.

Albert E. Powers died in June, 1910 at his summer home on Nantucket at age 94.

Nathaniel Ball Powers died in June, 1915 at age 82. Both are buried alongside their mother and father at Oakwood Cemetery, Lansingburg.



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**July 12** - Pot Luck Supper with Program: due to popular demand we will again show the three Hebron Videos: Merrill's Campground 1930's, Historical Hebron and The Beauty of Hebron by Ron Collins

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The "Genealogies of The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Residents of Hebron, NH The book of 178 pages and is completely indexed. Price \$20.00 for non-members, \$15.00 for members.

Names Included: Adams, Ball, Barnard, Bartlett, Beede, Berry, Blood, Bowers, Braley, Browne, Butterfield, Case, Cheney, Cilley, Clement, Colburn, Colby, Crawford, Crosby, Cummings, Davis, Dustin, Esty, Farley, Farren, Fowler, Fox, George, Gilman, Goodhue, Gould, Greenleaf, Hardy, Hazelton, Heath, Hobart, Hoyt, Huckins, Jesseman, Jewell, Jewett, Johnson, Kelley, Kendall, Keyes, Kidder, Lovejoy, McClure, Melvin, Merrill, Moore, Morgan, Morse, Moses, Murch, Muzzey, Nelson, Nevens, Nevens, Norris, Noyes, Nutting, Ordway, Page, Parker, Perkins, Phelps, Pierce, Pike, Powers, Putney, Rawlins (Rollins), Remick, Roby, Rogers, Sanborn, Sealy (Cilley), Shuttuck, Smith, Vickery, Walker, Ward, Whipple, Whitmore, Wise, and Wright.

These books and DVD may be purchased directly from the Hebron Historical Society PO Box 89 Hebron, NH 03241

#### **Hebron Historical Society** Hebron Historical Society Gazette **Executive Editor:** Ron Collins PO Box 89, Hebron, NH 03241 Editors: Barbara Brooks, Kathy Begor, Jan Collins, Juli 603-744-1048 Writers: Howard Oedel, Norton Braley, Barbara Brooks, www.HebronHistSoc.org Ron Collins **Layout:** Collins Publishing Officers: **Printer:** Venture Print, Plymouth, NH President & Archivist: .....Ronald Collins **Items for Publication** should be sent to Vice President: .....Barbara Brooks Ron Collins PO Box 152, Hebron, NH 03241 Secretary: ......Kathy Begor or email to

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