

Hebron Historical Society Gazette

Hebron, NH

Volume 3, No. 2, July 2005

www.HebronHistSoc.org

50 cents



Dick Merrill Recalls Twelve Years as Hebron Chief of Police

by Howard Oedel

Dick Merrill was Hebron's Chief of Police for twelve years beginning in 1969. He was 29 years old and began his career equipped with a cap, five badges and a "sap" (a slang word meaning a short club). As for a uniform, he had to buy that with his own money. Pay was \$5.00 per hour and the police budget was left to the discretion of the Selectmen, usually \$2000 to \$4000. It was never enough to cover costs.

Nelson Adams had previously been Chief and he stayed on as a police officer and helped Dick settle into the job of Chief. (Nelson had taken over from old Fred Barnard who had been Chief for many years).

Dick reports that his interest in law enforcement came from an incident in the Bahamas where he was commandeered into a posse seeking a known murderer. When he and several others apprehended the man it gave Dick considerable satisfaction.

Dick spent two very profitable years attending (2 nights a week) the White Mountain Law Enforcement Institute held at Plymouth State College. It was taught by state police detectives plus other experts, including marines. In addition to the course work there were hands on activities such as how to disarm people, pistol practice, etc.. Dick is proud of his diploma earned by completing the course.

I asked Dick how the job went. Well, in the summer time, with lots of summer people in Hebron there were few burglaries but many more

accidents. Lots of trouble came from stealing boats, etc..

In the winter time, with summer cottages vulnerable there were more break-ins, usually by youngsters looking for booze or hunting rifles. Dick figures there were some twenty plus motor vehicle accidents in a year, some of them involving fatalities. Dick's work with the local police departments in surrounding towns was very cordial. Bristol, Alexandria, Groton, Plymouth were all cooperative. On Tuesday nights Dick attended court in Plymouth with judge Leonard Sawyer presiding. There he had a chance to "hobnob" with fellow officers.

Dick has many stories – some humorous, some pretty serious.

He (and Betty, his wife) used to get many weird phone calls – at any time of the day or night. There was a cat stuck on a roof, or some lonely widow thought she heard a suspicious sound; or other times people called to ask how the fishing was or if there would be a frost! On Dick's first day on the job he had to investigate an "untimely death" of a close friend and neighbor. It was a suicide. Oddly enough, 13 months later another "untimely death" turned out to be another suicide – this time the husband of the first victim.

One story interested me personally. At the time Dick was police Chief, George Road was not plowed in the winter but in the spring, many people tried their luck at getting through, only to get stuck in the mud! One unhappy evening a young couple got stuck in the mud and made it back to my home where they broke in and spent the night.

(Continued on page 3)

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(Continued from page 1)

New Hampshire law states that anyone stranded may seek shelter – and, as they reported the break-in to the police the next morning, they were exonerated. All Dick did, under the circumstances, was to repair a broken window, for which, hopefully, I thanked him.

One unusual experience Dick had was a break-in at the store in which liquor was stolen. Inquiries at Nutting Beach revealed that there had been a good deal of revelry at a certain house nearby and an irate parent soon produced the “merry makers.” Unfortunately, his own 18 year old daughter was a “lookout” for the juveniles and was the only one arrested for the robbery.

Dick once called to check on a young man who was lying in the road, frozen to death. That mystery never had a satisfactory answer.

Another time there was a murder at the store! It seems a woman, estranged from her husband was living with another man in the apartment above the store. Between them, they had seven children, also living with them at the store! The woman’s husband came “to visit the children” at 3 AM but an altercation ensued and with two other associates of the husband beat the “other man” to death. One can only imagine the screaming from one woman and seven children! Dick arrived on the scene and promptly removed the children. It was an unholy mess, but the perpetrators, who had informed the Bristol police of the beating, only had to serve nine months and two weeks in jail for the murder. The Attorney General who became involved in this case was Warren Rudman.

One time a young runaway girl had been apprehended, and Dick was driving her to the jail at Woodsville. She implored him to stop at the nearest rest area so she could go to the bathroom. After a long wait Dick discovered her trying to escape out the bathroom window!

One odd case involved a large black hearse, filled with tools, parked at the Marina. The hearse had Kentucky plates. It seems a brother and sister owned the hearse and had spent the night in a nearby camp. The man had taught at the New Hampton School, was fired, and took his revenge by raiding the school’s workshop and stealing the

tools.

My favorite story involved a rowdy party at the town beach. Dick was called to “do something about it.” When he arrived things had quieted down and he was informed that Andy Warhol was one of the guests. “Never heard of him,” said Dick. “You guys clear out of here!”

The most celebrated murder in recent memory was that of Rodney Adams. After the dastardly deed, Rodney’s pickup truck had been stolen. As it turned out, the murderer was apprehended in Massachusetts and confessed to the murder. Rodney’s body had not been found. The description from the murderer as to where the body could be found was faulty. From December 15 to 17 the search continued. Finally, Dick and his good friend, Nelson Adams, found Rodney on a logging road near Sculptured Rocks. “That’s Rodney all right,” said Nelson, at first sight of the body, “I recognize his boots.”

So, Dick put in twelve good years (“too many,” he says now) doing police work. It was interesting, sometimes rewarding, but he was not unhappy to give up those midnight calls when some little old lady thought she heard a suspicious noise.

Community Quilts in Hebron by Kathy Begor

Hebron has developed into a unique community in many ways and is especially renowned for the talented people who create works of art in pottery, woodworking, painting and drawing, literature and poetry, calligraphy, landscaping, knitting and crocheting, and quilting. In addition, the citizens of Hebron have also demonstrated a deep appreciation for dedicated service to the town, a caring and generous spirit, and an ability to work together for a cause. All of these special attributes have come together in several special and amazing quilting projects in the past.

In 1979, Isabelle Blodgett retired after 50 years as Hebron's Town Librarian. She had also taught grades 1 through 8 in our “one room school” for over 20 years! Realizing that such dedication to our community deserved special recognition, Jane Ramsay organized a very ambitious project. Women from around the community were invited to contribute one square each for a very special tribute quilt for Isabelle. 42 squares were individually hand crafted and each one had a special connection to Isabelle's life in Hebron. The squares in-

cluded flowers, books, special buildings, and quilted designs. It was a unique tribute to this amazing woman! Jane assembled all of the squares, added the colorful blue sashing, and embroidered a centerpiece square with "You Have Touched Our Lives". It was a daunting task to coordinate the colors, add the batting & backing, and then to tie it all together, but Jane was able to have it all finished for Isabelle's retirement celebration! (The finished quilt was so huge that when it was displayed during the Bicentennial Celebrations in 1992, it was hung in the foyer of the church in order to show the entire collection of squares.)

Special recognition was also foremost in everyone's mind when Dick Merrill retired in 1984 after 12 years of service to the town as Police Chief. Again, Jane Ramsay organized a community quilt as a special recognition of his dedication to the community. This quilt was a collection of individual squares with a focus on Hebron buildings or items related to his career. These unique contributions in cloth included the church, store, school, Selectmen's office & Library, the well, and town beach. They even included his tractor, sugar house, the Hebron fire truck, and his cruiser! Jane again did the piecing and hand stitched a centerpiece that appropriately read, "Thanks for all your sleepless nights." A group of women were able to help Jane finish the project by hand tying it and it was presented to Dick and Betty Merrill at his retirement celebration.

A third unique community quilt was created for the Hebron Bicentennial in 1992 (pictured below).



Donna Esty was the organizer for this ambitious undertaking. The twenty stitchers for this project, with ages ranging from 17 to 77, used the library as their "base camp" and worked there to cut fabric and discuss designs. Although the squares were completed individually, it was a collaborative effort by a group of women who wanted to display the important historic buildings and events that helped to shape our town. The colorful quilt can be seen in a special case in the foyer of the town library and is awaiting the final stages of the actual quilted stitching. Donna anticipates this will be a group project later on this year. Also in the library is a booklet, by author Donna Esty, which gives historic details and credit for each square - a "must read" once you have seen the quilt itself!

More recently, a new quilt was created by another group of Hebron women. They work together as a group, "Hands to Hearts", and meet regularly to sew large and small items for humanitarian causes under the leadership of Barbara Brooks and Barbara Nicholson. In 2002, they began a quilting project to raise funds for EMT programs in Hebron, Alexandria, Bristol, and Bridgewater. This quilt was different from the previous community quilts in its cause, in its creators (who come from each of these communities), and in its design. The blocks were all completed in a "crazy quilt" pattern at the weekly meetings of this special group. These ladies worked cooperatively in assembly line fashion with a variety of tasks going on at the same time. The 63 squares were cut and assembled, with a patterned trim added to the edge for color. The entire piece was then painstakingly hand quilted on a frame by the group and led by stitching expert Flora Braley. The amazing finished quilt was raffled off at the July 2004 Hebron Fair and was won by Barbara Nicholson's own daughter!

Quilts and quilting bees have long been an important part of our New England heritage, but have taken on new meaning as community projects here in Hebron. Imagine the hours of individual effort that went into each square and each completed quilt! These works of art are a compliment to their originators, the "stitchers", the honorees, and the community for encouraging such fantastic efforts!

Tidbits of Hebron History

The oldest continuously operating boys camp in the U.S. is Camp Pasquaney. Camp Onaway is also one of the oldest operating girls camp in the U.S.

John Ordway's Connection to Hebron by Ron Collins

One of ten children, Sergeant John Ordway, third in charge of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, was born in New Hampshire on a farm on the Bow-Dunbarton town line in 1775 and was living in Hebron, New Hampshire at the time of his enlistment around 1800.

In 1757 Sergeant John Ordway's father, John Ordway Sr., then of Amesbury, MA enlisted and served during the French and Indian War under Capt. George Worthen, the same George Worthen who later moved to Cockermouth (now Hebron) NH and built his house on the east side of the lake (now the Hillside Inn). (source – New England Historical Genealogical Society)

Sometime around 1790, Stephen and Daniel Ordway, brothers of Sergeant John moved to Hebron, NH. In the tax lists of 1794 of Free Holders living on Tenney Hill in Hebron, NH include: Capt. Jaazaniah Crosby, Enoch Cheney, Nathaniel Ball, Stephen Ordway, and Daniel Ordway (brothers of John Ordway). This same list appears in 1795.

Between the "tax census" of 1795 and 1796 a John Ordway moved to Hebron onto land adjoining the brothers Stephen and Daniel. This was probably John Ordway senior as his son John Jr. would have only been 20 years old. By 1796 the list of adjacent tax payers includes: Capt. Jaazaniah Crosby, David Cheney, Nathaniel Ball, John Ordway, Stephen Ordway, Daniel Ordway. By the time the list was compiled in 1797 Daniel Ordway is gone, as the 1797 through 1799 list included: Capt. Jaazaniah Crosby, Nathaniel Ball, John Ordway, Stephen Ordway.

Around 1798 the father, John Sr. moved in with his son Stephen, abandoning his old house. In was in 1799 that the town "voted that ... an open road be laid out and recorded in the Book of Records of Roads in said Hebron beginning at a Beach tree on the line between Stephen Ordway and Nathaniel Ball thence running southwardly about forty rods to were old Mr. Ordway's house stood." Thus indicating that even though a John Ordway owned land in Hebron, it was not

Old Mr. John Ordway, the father, but rather John Jr. the future Sergeant. In 1799 "Old Mr. Ordway" would have been about 63 years old.

Around 1800 John Jr. left Hebron and headed west. His land became part of his brother Stephen's holdings. He enlisted in the Army and in his enlistment papers he lists his home as Hebron, NH. By 1803 the only Ordway owning land in Hebron, NH was Stephen.

In 1804 John Ordway sent a letter to his parents in Hebron, NH via his brother Stephen:

Addressed as follows:

Mr. Stephen Ordway
Hebron

New Hampshire

*divert this to Concord Post Office it being older than
Plymouth Post office or Hanover Post Office.*

Camp River
Dubois April the 8th 1804

"Honored Parents

I now embrace this opportunity of writing to you once more to let you know where I am and where I am going. I am well thank God and in high spirits. I am now on an expedition to the westward with Capt. Lewis and Capt. Clark, who are appointed by the President of the United States to go on an expedition through the interior parts of North America. We are to ascend the Missouri River with a boat as far as it is navigatable and then to go by land to the western ocean, if nothing prevents, &c.

The party consists of 25 picked men of the army & country and I am so happy as to be one of them picked men from the army, and I and all the party are, if all live to return, to receive our Discharge when ever we return again to the United States if we chuse it. This place is on the Mississippi River opposite the mouth of the Missouri River and we are to start in ten days up the Missouri River, this has been our winter quarters. We expect to be gone 18 months or two years. We are to receive a great reward for this expedition when we return. I am to receive 15 dollars per month and at least 400 ackers of first rate land and if we make great discoveries as we expect, the United States has promised to make the great rewards more than we are promised.

For fear of accidents I wish to inform you that I left 200 dollars in cash at (unreadable) put it on in-

(Continued on page 6)

terest with a Substantial man by the name of Charles Smith & Co Partnership which were the more Substantial men binding with him and Capt. Clark is bound to see me paid at the time and place where I receive my Discharge, and if I should not live to return my heirs can by applying to the Seat of Government. I have red no letters since Betsey's yet but will write next winter if I have a chance.

Yours John Ordway “

Among the young, rambunctious Kentucky and Virginia woodsmen of the Corps of Discovery (as the Lewis and Clark Expedition was officially called) who signed on for the adventure, John Ordway was a bit of an exception as he was from, New Hampshire and nearly everyone else on the trip was from Virginia or Kentucky or other western outposts.

In 1803 he was in Captain Russell Bissell's Co. of the 1st Inf., stationed at Kaskaskia, Illinois in the fall of 1803 when Capt. Meriwether Lewis came in search of volunteers for an expedition to the Pacific Coast. Such a journey through a country much of which had never been seen by a white man, appealed to his adventurous spirit, and he was one of the first to volunteer. Capt. Bissell released Ordway so that he could join the expedition. On Jan. 1, 1804 he joined the Lewis and Clark expedition. Ordway was a major contributor to the expedition's success. Ordway, age 29, was “regular army.” He was the only one of the original sergeants to come straight from military service and Ordway was well educated, which set him apart from most everyone else on the expedition, except for the captains. As a result, Lewis and Clark assigned him a number of administrative tasks: his many responsibilities included issuing provisions, appointing guard duties, keeping all registers and records, and commanding the group during absences of Lewis and Clark. He was also instructed to keep a journal, and his descriptions about the Native American life provide a valuable historical account.

As the Corps was about to begin the journey, Ordway wrote the letter above to his parents. He was a major note taker during the expedition, along with Captains Lewis and Clark. He also figures into one interesting note recorded by Cap-

tain Clark but which did not show up in his own notes. Captain William Clark's journal entry of November 22, 1804 reads: "he the Husband observed that one of our Serjeants Slept with his wife & if he wanted her he would give her to him, We derected the Serjeant (Ordway) to give the man Some articles, at which time I told the Indian that I believed not one man of the party had touched his wife except the one he had given the use of her for a nite, in his own bed, no man of the party Should touch his squaw, or the wife of any Indian, nor did I believe they touch a woman if they knew her to be the wife of another man, and advised him to take his squaw home and life hapily together in future ..."

He was discharged in Autumn of 1806 and returned briefly to Hebron, New Hampshire to visit his parents and brother. After the expedition, Lewis and Clark had the task of preparing a work of their journey. They agreed to buy Ordway's journals and incorporate his writings in their book, and paid him \$300 for the journals. However, the journal was “lost” after Lewis' death in 1809 until being found a century later. It was published in 1913 and was notable for the detail in which it named the hunters, saltmakers, and scouts at the various places along the expedition. That human element had been edited out of earlier versions of the journals from the trip. Ordway's description of Indian culture also provided valuable history.

For the trip to the Pacific Coast John received \$15.00 per month and at least 400 acres of land. He also bought claims of three other members of the party thereby acquiring 960 acres in addition to his own.

In 1807 he married Abigail "Gracey" Walker. Gracey died soon after, and in 1809 he married Elizabeth Johnson, a widow. He returned to the Cape Girardeau district in Missouri and settled in 1809, quite prosperous with the land he owned. He died on February 5, 1818 of unknown causes. His wife and two children, Hannah and John, outlived him and applied for lands appropriated for the relief of earthquake sufferers. No doubt, John was the reason his brothers Daniel and William found their way to Missouri.

Hebron Historical Society Program Events Calendar for 2005.

This calendar will be filled out as the year progresses and will be updated in each issue of the Gazette.

September 10 - Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper with Program: "Hebron's Governor: Nathaniel Berry" by Ron Collins

If you have a suggestion for a program please do not hesitate to tell us. Just call Ron Collins at 603-744-1048 and he'll be happy to hear your idea.

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Hebron Historical Society Gazette

Executive Editor: Ron Collins
Editors: Barbara Brooks, Kathy Begor
Writers: Howard Oedel, Norton Braley
Layout: Collins Publishing
Printer: Venture Print, Plymouth, NH
Items for Publication should be sent to
Ron Collins
PO Box 152 , Hebron, NH 03241
or via email to
President@HebronHistSoc.org

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