

## Some historical notes about Journey Cake Farm

This 19th century structure has, like many of Amherst's older homes, had several lives.

Its architecture is a vernacular Greek Revival style, featuring a gable-end facade with a non-centered front door. Isaac Wheeler built the original part of this house c.1850 when he was a 70-year-old newlywed and intended the house for his twilight years with a smaller farm and fewer livestock than he previously had. In 1849, he had sold the large nearby farm (5 Old Manchester Road) he had owned since 1816. After nearly five years as a widower, Wheeler married Eliza Hildreth, who was nearly 30 years younger than Isaac, and was from a neighboring farm (23 Old Manchester Road). Wheeler had been a ship carpenter before arriving in Amherst, so probably wielded hammer and saw himself.

*Here's a note about Isaac Wheeler from a local newspaper:*

In his 80s, it was "no uncommon thing for him to take an early start and walk to Manchester, a distance of over 10 miles, reaching there at breakfast time" (Farmers 'Cabinet, 12 Aug. 1869).

On the property, Isaac built so many neat, ornamental rock-lined terraces up the hillside in front of his home that the place was called "Rockland Cottage" and "Rockland Farm." The Wheelers sold the place in 1869, which turned out to be the year prior to Isaac's death. It remained a farmhouse for the next 25 years, and then was used as a seasonal property for decades.

We have some information from local newspapers about some of the "summer people" who owned the property through the years.

1894-1937: Frank Arthur Smith (1854-1928) of Lowell, a dealer or retail merchant in fine woolens and textile mills, and his wife Efretta "Nettie" bought the 45-acre place in her name as summer/country home.

In the early 20th century, the local newspaper commented:

"Mr. Smith, the non-resident owner of "Rockland Cottage", has been making extensive repairs on the cottage, whereby much more room is had and the appearance of the buildings on the height much more noble. The deceased Isaac

Wheeler, who did so much stonework about the buildings as to get the name of Rockland Cottage, is well remembered by our people as a man who after his general farm work was done spent all his odd time in improving the place by using well laid pieces of stonework. He utilized what nature spread about him to beautify and better his home..." *Milford Cabinet, N.H., 4 Jan. 1912*

This story from the Milford Cabinet, 14 Aug. 1913, is about a project Mr. Smith undertook on a nearby property he owned:

"To Make Lake in Amherst"

F. A. Smith of Lowell, who has a fine summer residence in Amherst, has awarded a contract to Charles W. Keith [of Milford] which, when completed, will make an important change in Amherst. The specifications call for a cement dam, 100 feet long and 15 feet high, crossing the meadow to the south of the Manchester Road near Mr. Smith's home and 1.5 miles from Amherst village. When completed, the brook which now crosses the meadow will form an artificial lake of about 20 acres. The proposed lake will serve no utilitarian purpose, being planned simply as an improvement to Mr. Smith's property. Contractor Keith states that he has built many dams, but never before has he built one on dry land. The land which was flooded to create new pond probably was part of that farm that Smith had owned on Old Manchester Road. Today the pond is called Lincoln Pond after a later owner of 10 Old Manchester Road.

*From the Milford Cabinet, 24 Feb. 1916*

There was a merry house party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Smith at the farm, when Mrs. Maud Coburn [the Smiths' recently widowed daughter, aged 41] with friends making a party of ten, came on Friday, returning to Lowell on Tuesday. Coasting, skiing, snowshoeing, and sleighing parties kept everyone busy.

1937-1947: Mary (Field) Jackson & Henry B. Jackson of Belmont, Mass., a mathematics teacher at a private school, bought the property as a summer home. They added the swimming pool and a state-of-the art tennis court, remodeled the barn adding huge fieldstone fireplace, and built a small barn.

Here is the story of one of the Jacksons' additions to the property:

From the Milford Cabinet, 21 Oct. 1937

COSTLY COURT CASE.

"A new court in Amherst ... is a tennis court, and a costly one,

completed this week on the estate of Prof. and Mrs. Henry B. Jackson on the Manchester Road. Mr. Jackson, a Harvard professor [*note: this is not quite accurate*] whose winter home is in Belmont, recently bought Mrs. Frances Coburn's place about 1 1/4 miles from Amherst village. It is the property formerly known as the Smith place, across the road from the pond on C. J. Lincoln's estate. Prof. Jackson is making extensive improvements, among them a new swimming pool near the house, and the new tennis court in front of the house. The new court required much grading and has a rock foundation. It is enclosed by a cyclone wire fence. The playing surface, 120 by 60, is surfaced with ground cork put on by the Corkturf company of Utica, N.Y. Cost of the cork surface alone is \$2000. With the added expense of grading, foundations and fence it may accurately be called an expensive court case, and without doubt is one of the best tennis courts in New England. There is a similar court in Fitchburg, on the Crocker estate, and quite a number have been built in New York and in Florida. The patented cork surface can be painted any desired color, usually green or terra cotta. Lines are painted white. The surface is said to be weatherproof, and the nearest artificial approximation to a perfect turf court. Two men from Utica have superintended the entire construction of the new court, helped by local men, and this week completed the rolling of the cork surface."

#### 1947-1953

L. Duane Wallick and his wife Eleanor "Noni" bought the house and land in 1947 and called the place "Jonny Cake Farm" after their young son Jonathan. They also had a daughter, Leslie. According to the 1950 census, while residing here, Mr. Wallick was a retail merchant of televisions. A 51-year-old hired hand also lived in the household.

#### 1953-1990

Arthur and Ann Moody rented the house in 1953 and then purchased it in 1955. The Moodys owned Edgecomb Steel in Nashua, and both were very involved in local and state organizations. Mr. Moody died young (at age 46), and his funeral was held at the Congregational Church of Amherst, where he was a member, and was attended by numerous dignitaries. Ann remained very active as the vice president of Edgecomb Steel, and among other pursuits, was on the board of the Souhegan National Bank, a director of Swift Water Girl Scouts Council, assistant Chairman of the State Republican Party, and was named 1974 Woman of the Year by the southern division of the NH State Federation.

Local residents today remember attending parties given by the three Moody daughters and playing tennis on the cork courts.

#### 1990-2005

Jonny Cake Farm was purchased by Mary and David Dacquino in 1990. In 1997, the Dacquinos sold 70 acres to the Amherst Conservation Commission for one-fourth of the estimated land value. The remaining land and buildings remained a "gentleman's farm." The ACC notes that Mary said "This will help us with closure because we never wanted to leave Amherst and this property. It would have been terrible to come back and see the land developed into house lots. Our intent is to have the land remain wooded for conservation and recreation purposes." Through deed restriction requested by the Dacquinos and management of the property by the Amherst Conservation Commission, their wishes will be respected.

#### 2005-present

Debra Jean Alexander owned the property from 2005-2016, when the current owners Laura and Bill Ferry purchased it. They renamed the property Journey Cake Farm after a previous owner registered the name Jonny Cake for her business. The house is now a lodging and retreat center.