



Sebago
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEBAGO ECHOES

JANUARY 2024

VOLUME 24 • ISSUE 1

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FLINTSTOWN!

Flintstown, the parent town of both Sebago and Baldwin, is 250 years old this year -- that's 250 years since the land grant that created the town was issued. The second land grant, that is, not the first one -- there were two land grants, but the first one fizzled out. It is a familiar story to many people, but with this "semiquincentennial" anniversary at hand, it's worth recounting it in detail.

The origin of Flintstown winds way back to John Flint of Concord, Mass. and others in a militia from the towns around Concord. These men fought in conflicts with Native Americans during the late 1600s/early 1700s. At the time, Massachusetts was paying militiamen not just with money but with land in its vast unoccupied territory. Flint, on behalf of his fellow militiamen, petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for one of these grants in 1730. His original petition has been lost, unfortunately; we know of its existence only through references to it in the Mass. House Journal. And so we don't know who the other men in the militia were, what service they gave, or in which of the many conflicts they fought.

The petition took six years to wind its way through the legislative process, but it was finally successful, and in 1736 Flint et al. were given Township No. Three on the east side of the Connecticut River, in the northwest corner of the land Massachusetts claimed. "Claimed" is the important word; New Hampshire claimed it, too. The border between the two colonies had never been firmly established, and there was a large swath of land both believed was theirs. The Massachusetts Governor made a number of land grants in the disputed area around this time, thinking perhaps to bolster the Commonwealth's claim to the territory by stocking it with Massachusetts families. As Flint and the others took up their grant, they must have had confidence in the Governor's plan.



Cumberland County as it appeared in 1773, with just a big empty space west of "Sabago Pond or Lake." The territory beyond was so little known that the mapmakers said the lake was fed by a tributary of the Androscoggin.

A Plan of a Township granted by the General Assembly of the State of Massachusetts Bay on the eighth of February 1774 in lieu of a Township No 3 on Connecticut River originally granted to Capt John Flint and others lost by the late running of New Hampshire line which Plan was accepted by the General Assembly of said State on the 16 June 1780.

Attest John Avery Secretary

An inscription on the map submitted to the Legislature, making it official:

“A Plan of a Township granted by the General Assembly of the State of Massachusetts Bay on the eighth of February 1774 in lieu of a Township No 3 on Connecticut River originally granted to Capt John Flint and others lost by the late running of New Hampshire line which Plan was accepted by the General Court of said State on the 16 June 1780. Attest John Avery Secretary”

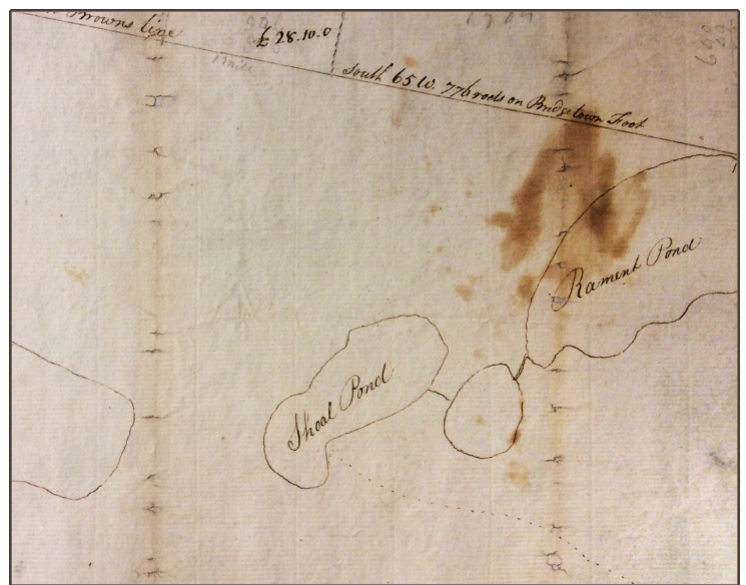
The grantees, known as the Proprietors, went to work immediately, meeting for the first time in Concord on Sept 13, 1736. The minutes of their meetings, held together in the Proprietors Book, survive to this day. It gives a day-by-day account of their actions. John Flint was chosen as moderator, and from the beginning the town was informally called Flints Town. They started to survey the town and divide it up into lots, and to lay out roads and sawmills. They settled on lands to be set aside for a church and minister, for schools, and for common land, all part of the requirements of their grant, and divided up the rest of the land between themselves. They considered how to attract settlers to the town and assessed themselves money to pay for all the work. The grant, or in the language of the day the “propriety,” was a going concern.

Then, in 1740, the border line between Massachusetts and New Hampshire was established, and Township No. Three was discovered to be north of the new border — and not by just a little, either. It was 38 miles into New Hampshire. You can imagine the proprietors’ dismay! Massachusetts appealed, but lost the appeal in 1741. The Proprietors Book shows that the proprietors kept meeting occasionally up until 1751, and there is discussion of petitioning New Hampshire to confirm their grant.

The 1740s saw a new outbreak of the French and Indian wars, in which Massachusetts militias were heavily involved. It was not a safe time to be building new towns on the frontier, and the issue was not pursued.

In 1752, the final blow fell. New Hampshire refused to confirm the grant, and instead conferred the township to a group of New Hampshire men, who went on to develop it as the town of Walpole, NH.

The Proprietors Book falls silent for the next 20 years. The grant was lost, their investment was lost, and visions



An excerpt from the map, showing what they thought the Peabody Pond area looked like. Their understanding of the terrain was still pretty sketchy!

of big profits from selling the land had vanished. John Flint was gone by this time — he died in 1746 — and the last and biggest of the French and Indian Wars was just breaking out. It was time to let go of the claim.

Twenty years later, things were looking different. Peace with the Native Americans had held for many years, and the frontier was a safer place to be. The sons of the original proprietors were grown men now and had inherited their fathers’ claims. Samuel Whittemore and Amos Lawrence took up leadership to pursue the grant, and in 1772 they petitioned the state, laying out the history of the first grant and the effort and expense they had lost in it. “. . . Wherefore your Petitioners in behalf of themselves and said proprietors of said township humbly pray your Excellency and honors would take their case into your wise Consideration & make them a grant of some of the unappropriated Lands of this province adequate to their Loss.”

FLINTSTOWN CONT'D

Maine at that time was still part of Massachusetts, which had plenty of unappropriated land in the “District of Maine.” The coast had been settled since the 17th century, and settlement had been moving inland for some time. Still, a map of Cumberland County from 1773 shows just a blank white space west of Pearsontown (today’s Standish) and “Sabago Pond.”

The Massachusetts House proposed a bill granting Whittemore lands “adjoining to Some former grant to the Eastward of Saco River” in June 1773, but it was voted down. Whittemore petitioned again in early 1774, and this time, on February 8, 1774, it was passed. (You have to wonder what politicking went on in the intervening months!)

“ . . . *RESOLVED* that in Lieu thereof there be Granted to the Original Proprietors or Grantees, their Legal Representatives, Heirs or Assigns a Township of the Contents of Seven Miles Square; Provided the Grantees settle thirty Families in said Township within Six years and Lay out one Sixty fourth Part for the use of the ministry, one Sixty fourth part for the first settled minister, one Sixty fourth part for the use of the Grammar School and one Sixty fourth part for the use of Harvard College. Provided also that said Township be laid out in that part of the unappropriated Lands belonging to this Province on the Eastward of Saco River adjoining to some former Grant (except the Tract of Land petitioned for by Suncook Proprietors) and Return a Plan taken by a Surveyor and Chainman under oath into the Secretary’s Office within one year for confirmation.”

A hasty survey of the unoccupied land between the Saco and Standish was made and submitted in June 1774. But of course, in 1774, bigger things were happening in Massachusetts. Just a few months earlier, the Boston Tea Party had taken place; the British government retaliated with the repressive “Intolerable Acts,” and that fall the Continental Congress started meeting in Philadelphia. One year later, in Concord – the hometown of the proprietors – the first battle of the American Revolution broke out. So it wasn’t until 1780 that the House turned their attention back to the grant. The survey, though inaccurate in many details, was accepted and the grant confirmed. It was known as the Plantation of Flintstown, and included most of the territory that now comprises the towns of Baldwin and Sebago.

Flintstown remained a proprietorship for another 20 years, and as such it was run by the proprietors, like shareholders running a private company. In 1802, the Massachusetts legislature incorporated Flintstown as a town, and its name was changed to Baldwin – and that’s a whole ‘nother story for another time. In 1826 residents of the northern section, citing the difficulty of crossing the mountains that ran through the middle of the town, petitioned to have the town split in two. The northern section of the former Flintstown, now called Baldwin, became our town of Sebago.

So, in honor of our roots in old Flintstown, lift a glass on February 8th and wish us all a Happy Birthday.

RECENT EVENTS



Artists Wendy Newcomb, Richard Allen and Molly Mains in front of the completed mural. Not pictured: Nancy Fitch and Deb Dolan, who also assisted in the project.

Sebago folks turned out in great numbers on Jan 18 to admire the town mural in the meeting room at the town office and applaud the artists for their extraordinary creation. A project of the Sebago Artists group, with assistance from the Historical Society, it imagines the center of town as it might have looked in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Potter Academy presides over the scene, the Fitch House shines in the sunlight, and a moose wan-

ders by the pond. The mural will be a town treasure for generations to come. Be sure to take a look next time you’re at the Town Office.

Made possible by a grant from the Maine Arts Commission. The mural is dedicated to the late Margaret R. Allen, a founder of the Sebago Artists group as well as an officer of the SHS.

WHAT IS IT?

Last summer, while prospecting with her metal detector, SHS President Sherrill Brown found this object. It was on the far side of the Northwest River, not far below the outflow from Peabody Pond, where sawmills had been operated since the time of the earliest settlements in this area. The object was not buried deeply, and came out of the ground easily. It measures about 12 inches in length and about 5 inches in width. What is it? Leave a guess on our [Facebook page!](#)



THANK YOU to members who have sent in their dues for 2024. If you haven't yet, please do! (Please due?)

NEW PHOTO ACQUISITION



Thank you to Becky Benvenuti, granddaughter of Gordon and Valma Irish, who donated a glass negative of this photo of the Irish home in Mud City. The negative had been in her grandparents' house, and is undated.

Glass negatives were the preferred medium for photography in the latter half of the 1800s, since the film available then was not stable. It could stretch and warp, distorting the photo. When better film became available around 1920, glass faded out of general use.

Thanks also to Becky's sister, Shelley Cummings, for providing a print made from the negative.



OUR MISSION:

To encourage and promote an interest and appreciation of the history of the Town of Sebago through the collection, research, and preservation of such information, materials, or items and to develop educational programs of historical or genealogical importance relating to Sebago's history.

MUSEUM:

347 Convene Road, Sebago

MAILING ADDRESS:

PO Box 59, Sebago, ME 04029

EMAIL:

contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org

WEBSITE:

sebagohistoricalsociety.org

MEMBERSHIP:

Please become a member to support our work. An annual membership for an individual is \$10, or a family membership is \$15. Student memberships are free. To join, please download the [membership form](#) and mail it with your check to the address above.

OR now you can sign up and pay online at sebagohistoricalsociety.org/membform.php.