## BETHLEHEM NEW HAMPSHIRE

# BETHLEHEM NEW HAMPSHIRE

### A Bicentennial History

(Updated 1999 Edition)

edited with introductory chapters by GEORGE C. WILSON

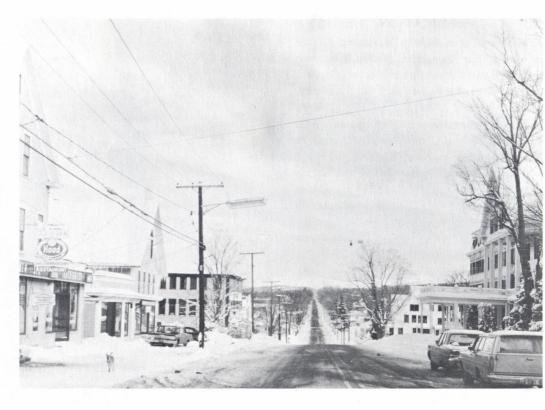
and 1974–1999 update by
MIKE DICKERMAN

and written by the people of Bethlehem with dedication to Hattie Whitcomb Taylor 1999

> Published by Bondcliff Books for the Town of Bethlehem, New Hampshire

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	4
THE TOWN'S HISTORY by Gregory Wilson	
The Indians of Bethlehem	6
White Man Comes North	8
The First to Awaken Slumbering Echoes	15
Early Life	19
The Civil War	27
The Grand Hotels	29
The Cottage Community	62
Railroads	75
White Mountain Echo	79
Town Improvements	80
Stage Coach Days	90
The Turn of the Century	100
Modern Times	118
Bethlehem, the Beautiful,	
poem by Frances Ann Johnson Hancock	129
Bethlehem Village Precinct	
by Doris Stevenson	130
Bethlehem From My Window	
poem by Stasia Rawinski	130
Scouting by Philip Lyster	131
Uppermost House by Nicholas Howe	132
History of the Jewish Community	
by Rabbi Seymore Brickman	135
They Came to Breathe by Ruth Pactor	137
National Hay Fever Relief Association	
by Sarah Masor	140
One-Room Schools by Margaret Cyr	142
Bethlehem School by Melody Brown	145
White Mountain School by Linda Davis	153
Durrell Memorial Church by Hattie Taylor	156
The Catholics	159
Sun Fire Festival by Kay Reid	160
Bretton Woods Boy Singers	
by Frances Ann Johnson Hancock	166
Women's Civic Club by Fay Scholz	170
Odd Fellows by James Blaney	172
Rebekahs by Esther Lowell	174
Ski Club by Carol Boucher	175
The End is the Beginning by Gregory Wilson	176
Bethlehem (1974–1999) by Mike Dickerman	177



#### BETHLEHEM HUMOR

The Yankee sense of humor has been a part of Bethlehem life throughout the years. The *White Mountain Echo* carried many stories and we have selected one from the August 18, 1833 issue:

"It's astonishin'," said an aboriginal to the writer, "haoew this 'ere place has come up. Why, when my father settled here fifty years ago deer was as thick as boarders naow, and a dum sight better. I've seen deer feedin' on Mt. Agassiz there, right in with cattle and sheep, and it wa'nt nothin' to see bears; father had to repair his barn a heap 'o times to keep 'em aout. A hull family got in once where he kept his maple sugar; haow they found it aout I don't know, but we heard a kind o' snarlin' and went aout, and there they had busted open a bar'l o' sugar and was fightin' over it. When we went in they lit aout for a hole and got jammed, and we killed the old one and three cubs with pitchforks; they'd jest tore the bottom of the planks clean off. Red foxes was common too, and panthers and wild cats, and sich.

"No never know'd any one to be killed by a panther, but I've seen a wildcat break up a camp; you'd never a-knowd there'd been one there. I was one of the parties myself. You see that little knoll like jest over there?" (He pointed in the Twin Mountain direction.) "Well, thirty years ago that was as wild a place as you could pick aout. We had considerable head o' steer, and some wandered off, and a peddler lettin' on haow he'd heard a tinklin' off in that direction, four of us started, and right near that knoll we stretched a tent at night and turned in. Haow long we'd been dozin' I can't tell, for I'm a master hand at sleepin', but all to once I woke up and found myself a sittin' up on the bed; it was fir branches, but we'll call it bed.

"First I thought I'd had the roarers—kind o' night-mare like; but all to once I cast my eyes over to the left, and there was two fiery, gleamin' eyes, just like two coals o' fire a-glowerin' at me. First I thought it was Pop; then I see it couldn't be, and grabbed something that happened to be a tin pan and let drive. Well." (and here the old man lay back and laughed

at the recollection), "I've seen circuses and sich, but this beat anythin' you ever seen or heard on.

"The critter gave a leap at me, tryin' to get aout, and took me in the shoulder, and daown we went on the rest, and in two minute, pans, dishes, fir limbs, boots, guns, clothes, four men, and a 'tarnal big wildcat were all dancin' araound in abaout four foot square; the other three, not knowin' what was up, a-yellin', and every one of us gittin' a dab from the cat. To make matters worse, daown come the pesky tent, and ef the critter hadn't broke through I think it would have cleaned us aout, sure.

"We didn't sleep any more that night, and the way things was busted up was a sight. You see the critter smelt a ham we had hangin' up, and had crept in under the cloth and couldn't get aout, and when I hit him with the pan he made a break. We never see hide nor hair of him sence."

Another amusing story appeared in the *Granite Monthly* of July 1894 in the article, "A Sketch of Bethlehem":

The people of Bethlehem were slow to appreciate their advantages, and the summer visitors were not held very high in the esteem of the villagers. As showing the attitude of some of the natives toward the tourists, it is related that some years ago a party of Harvard dons, among whom were Professors Felton, Agassiz, and Gray, made a tour of the White Mountains, and engaged a carriage for a drive along one of the charming roads of Bethlehem.

They had not gone far before one of them jumped out to chip off a specimen of rock, another to chase a butterfly, a third to gather a plant or fern, and so on, until at last all had descended from the carriage with the exception of the driver and Professor Felton, who cared more for Greek roots than for the rarest herbs or other country messes.

Jehu's curiosity was somewhat aroused at what appeared to him the mad antics of his passengers, and inquiring of the only one left in his carriage who the people were, received for reply, "They are naturalists from Boston."

A few days later, while the driver had the care of another party of tourists, he was asked if he had driven anybody in particular lately. "Not that I know of," he answered. "But I drove a rum set of fellows t'other day—they were naturals from Boston, at least so their keeper said!"

Many stories have been passed down via the oral tradition and the following story was supplied by Al Reid:

The "veteran whips" had little patience with some of the city visitors. Sim Connery who on one ride constantly answered a passenger's query "What mountain is that" with the name of the mountain. The passenger would then look in his guide book and correct Connery. After several corrections, the coach was entering the Notch which was shrouded in fog and the rider asked Connery, "Do you think it's going to rain?" Connery snapped back "Why don't you look in your god damn book?"

#### TOURIST LIFE

From 1865 to 1900 the popularity of Bethlehem grew. Hotels were built each season and summer homes became a popular trend. Bethlehem was a fun place to visit. One of the best descriptions of life in Bethlehem during this period can be found in the very readable book by Karl P. Abbott, Open for the Season, Karl's father, Frank P. Abbott, was the owner of the Upland Terrace Hotel, now the Chase Golf and Tennis Camp, and a native New Hampshireite who pioneered in the hotel business both here and in Florida. Karl followed in his father's footsteps and became a famous hotel man. The following are passages from his excellent work: "Our guests had no planned sports or amusements but filled their days with simple enjoyments. Breakfast was one. Every morning they faced a choice of steaks, chops, eggs, bacon, ham, sausages, griddlecakes, coffee and fruit. Today, given the same list, guests order orange juice, toast, and coffee, but in those days people ate their way through the menu. Then they went out and sat in the red and green chairs. They had to: after breakfast the men sat in one group and the women in another. The men read the Boston Globe or the New York Tribune and the women sewed and talked. After an hour or so they played croquet, or walked up the hill to the Indian camp, or down into town to look around the stores. Mid-day dinner was twice as impressive as breakfast. In the afternoon they climbed into the long mountain wagons and drove to Sugar Hill or to see the Old Man of the Mountains.



The interior of the Maplewood Dining Hall about 1890.



Consomme Julienne

Mock Turtle

Boiled Penobscot Salmon, Anchovy Sauce

Baked Lake Trout, Madeira Sauce

Olives

Cucumbers

Raw Tomatoes

Potatoes a la Duchesse

Boiled Calf's Head, Brain Sauce Sugar Cured Tongue Young Turkey, Oyster Sauce

Roast Sirloin Beef, Dish Gravy Spring Lamb, Mint Sauce

Green Goose, Apple Sauce Ham, Champagne Sauce

Fricandeau of Veal, Jardiniere Breast of Duck aux Champignons Chicken a la Mar yland Spaghetti Italienne Bayarian Cream Cakes with Jelly

Mashed Potatoes Boiled Sweet Potatoes Boiled Rice Green Corn Shell Beans Stewed Tomatoes Squash Stewed Parsnips Cold Slaw

> Buked Indian Pudding, Sea Foam Sauce Cocoanut Merangue

Apple, Lemon and Washington Pic Wine Jelly Chocolate Blanc-Mange Velvet Cream

Vanilla Ice Cream Pine-Apple Sherbet Angel, Sunshine and Lady Cake

Nuts and Raisins

Maccaroons

Pears

Apples

Bananas

Grapes

Crackers and Cheese

September 14, 1890.

"After supper most of them just sat around. Mother kept two stereoscopic sets and stacks of 'views' on the marbletop table in the parlor . . . Some of the guests made up charades, whist, euchre or hearts. They did not play for money but for inexpensive prizes. Every Wednesday evening there was a progressive card party . . .

"Tuesday nights the tables were removed from the dining room. A three-piece orchestra came from Whitefield, and our city folks and guests from other hotels appeared in all their finery and took their places in the chairs that went all around the room for the 'hop.' It opened with a grand march and circle, usually led by Father and Mother. Dancing followed—the lancers, two-step, waltz, in rotation, with an occasional polka or caprice. There was no stag line, as the ladies' programs were filled out days in advance. Everyone was very gay. At twelve light refreshments were served, and then the ball continued into the small hours. After it was over, the staff had to re-set the dining room, and frequently the waitresses had time only for quick baths before serving breakfast . . .

An Upland Terrace mid-day menu of 1890 presents an incredible meal by contemporary standards and explains why Karl Abbott said, "In those days people ate their way through the menu"

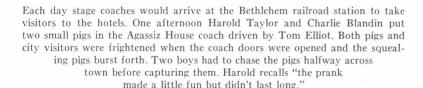
"Labor Day came and went, and the September crowd took on a new energy, as if in protest against summer's ending. Our guests huffed and puffed over mountain trails, chewed spruce gum, cut long mountain sticks. They took longer rides, and mailed bushels of post cards. They seemed to be crowding in the last of the joys that would not be theirs for another year. Then the harvest moon rose over the White Mountains. Trunks were hauled down from the attic. There were farewells and promises to write, to return, to exchange visits during the winter. The hotels were closing, the city folks were going home . . . Toward the last of September we'd hear the little train going down hill with its whistle wailing farewell to the season . . . Glad as we had been to see the city folks come, we were as glad to see them go."



A stage coach on Main Street in front of Ranlett's House and Cafe about 1890.

Note that fifteen people are riding on the coach.







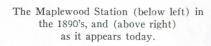
#### RAILROADS

While the coaches were the primary form of travel once the tourists got to Bethlehem, it was the railroad that made the summer tourist industry possible. In 1840 there were only six miles of railroad in all of New Hampshire, but 30 years later, in 1870, there were almost a thousand miles of track, including a section that went straight up into the clouds atop Mt. Washington.

In 1867 a branch of the train line that ran from Littleton northward toward Berlin was laid eastward along Wing Road through Bethlehem Junction to Fabyans. This branch, primarily developed for taking mail, freight and passengers from Fabyans and the Twin Mountain area to Littleton and then to the major cities, ran during the summer and winter. It was a fantastic help in getting Bethlehem's lumber to the major markets further south

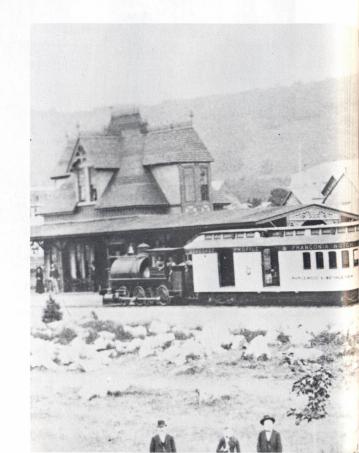
A 9½-mile narrow gauge track was laid in 1879 from Bethlehem Junction to the Profile House in Franconia Notch at a cost of \$100,000. Worried about the competition with that hotel, the town of Bethlehem decided to build a narrow gauge railroad from the Junction to Maplewood and the Village. Prior to this branch, visitors to Bethlehem had to be taken by stage coach from either Littleton, the Wing Road Station or the Bethlehem Junction Station.

In 1881 a narrow gauge track was laid from the Junction to the center of the village. The first engine to run over this line, #725, was nicknamed *The Echo* because its echoing whistle added a piercing shrill to the village's usual tranquility. Charging westward up the





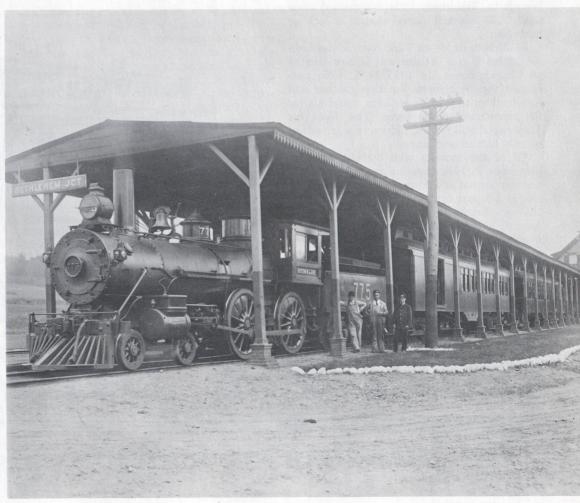




The Bethlehem Junction Station about 1900. Charles McKenna, the Junction station agent, is in the center of the group.

The Bethlehem train in the center of town prior to 1897 when the standard gauge was made.

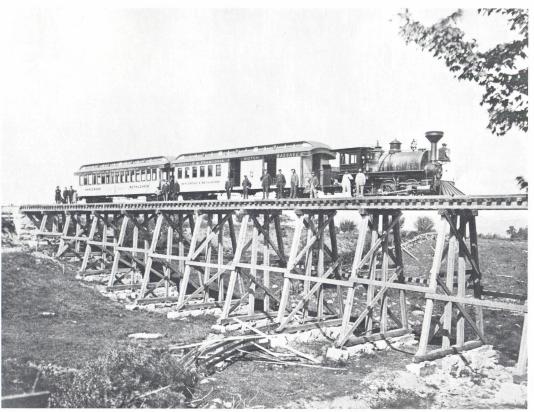




long hill from Bethlehem Junction, it paralleled Route 302 for a distance of three miles. A large wooden trestle was built over Elm Street and remained standing until 1897 when the track was converted to a standard gauge and the trestle converted to an embankment. The branch to Bethlehem Village remained open until 1924 when it closed due to a lack of business.

Bethlehem depot on Park Avenue has been remodeled into a cottage and is now located on Church Street. In 1935 E. L. Cole purchased the Bethlehem Junction Station and tore it down to provide building materials for the renovation of his home. The depot for Maplewood still stands, hidden in a growth of spindly birches and pines.

All of the tourists who came to Bethlehem prior to 1920 came by train. During the summer season seven trains a day would arrive and depart from our little village. During the very height of the season, the month of August, extra trains were put on, making as many as ten trains a day. Each day fresh meat, vegetables and other supplies would arrive with the tourists. The train lent an air of mystery and romance to both young and old natives and it was with sorrow that they saw the last train pull out at the end of summer. Throughout the winter the quiet snows fell, and the loudest noise was the laughter and stories heard around the pot-bellied stove in the General Store in the Cruft Block. When the whistles blew and echoed through the hills the following Spring, young and old alike would leave the pot-belly stove or drop their chores and watch engine #725 chug in the new season.



The Profile and Franconia Notch Railroad, about 1885, stands on the trestle built for the narrow gauge track at the end of Elm Street. In 1897 the narrow gauge track was changed to standard gauge, the trestle was replaced by filling up the hollow to bring the track on a level, and an underpass was constructed to make an entrance to a house on the other side.

#### THE WHITE MOUNTAIN ECHO

The *White Mountain Echo* was Bethlehem's own town paper which was printed each week in the Cruft Block during the twelve-week summer season. It sold for 10 cents a copy and was widely distributed through the White Mountain region.

Started in 1878 under the editorship of Markinfield Addey, the *Echo* reflected a spunky, sophisticated air that at times must have infuriated both the local natives and the big hotel operators. Addey, who lost his sight before coming to Bethlehem, was critical of hotels for inflating their guest lists which he published each week, and he constantly noted all the town's problems which the selectmen were not correcting.

During the era that lumber mills were cutting thousands of feet of lumber, providing profits for both lumber companies and Bethlehem men, the *Echo* made strong denunciations of the ravages that were stripping the virgin forests of the White Mountains. It became the first spokesman for the newly-formed Appalachian Mountain Club and supported progress and reform in civil life.

Its second editor was C. E. Blanchard who ran the paper from 1897 to 1928. Robert Jellison became the third editor but by 1910 it lost its spunk and it thus became rather dull and unimaginative reading.



AND TOURISTS' REGISTER.