

**Wilmot Historical Society
Memories of Wilmot**

This transcript is from a tape recorded in 1992 and edited in 2020 by Annie's children, Elizabeth and Charles Thompson.

Annie Thompson was interviewed by Lynn Bacon 1992.

Lynn: This is Your Life—Annie Rose Whittemore Thompson.

My name is Mrs. Lynn Bacon. I am a member of the Wilmot Historical Society and Chairman of the Oral History Committee. I am visiting with Annie on this snowy March morning in the year 1992 at the Thompson Homestead on Cross Hill Road in Wilmot, NH. Her husband, Arthur Elkins Thompson was born in this house. His father and grandparents also lived here. His great-grandparents built the house in the year 1806. As we look outside, we find the barns are gone and Annie has a lovely new breezeway and two-car garage. The pastureland is all grown over and resembles a forest.

Annie taught in North Wilmot's Langley or White Pond one-room schoolhouse from 1930 to 1931, teaching grades 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 to nine pupils. From 1931 to 1935, she taught in Wilmot's North Road country school, teaching all eight grades and introduced French to the pupils.

Annie, when and where were you born?

Annie: I was born on January 26, 1910 in West Andover.

And where was the homestead located?

It was the last house in Andover before the Wilmot town line on Route 4.

Now, did your father build the house?

No.

Can you describe it a little?

The house was the first house built in that part of town by John Dudley in 1789. There was a large barn not attached to the house. It had a cellar, the main floor and space for hay storage above. There was a silo enclosed in this barn where ensilage was stored for winter food for the cows. The ensilage was made from field corn—that's not sweet corn, but field corn. It was cut in the fall and chopped into small pieces and stored in the silo to be used in the winter.

The house was a long house. It had seven rooms. There were three bedrooms, a dining room, living room and kitchen. The kitchen had two large pantries—one at either end of the kitchen. One was used for storage and the other was where my mother did the cooking. The only hardwood floor was in the kitchen. My mother cooked on a wood stove, and there were other stoves in the other rooms that we used to keep warm.

That sounds ideal, especially the two large pantries. Is the house still located there?

No, it burned on December 4th, 1952. My mother wasn't living there then because she sold it several years after my father died. The man who bought it, his name was George Waugh.

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes, I have two brothers and two sisters: David Tyler, James Albert, Ruby Alice Keegan—Mrs. John F. Keegan of Franklin; and Elizabeth Belle Fitzgerald—Mrs. Maurice T. Fitzgerald of Arlington, Massachusetts. Two sisters older than I—Alice Pearl, born August 1907, died in August, 1908; and Emma Elizabeth born 1908 and

died in March 1909. They are buried in Bunker Hill Cemetery. My mother and father, my grandmother Stevens, my grandmother, Roseanne Amanda Upton, and my grandfather, Tyler Silas Whittemore, are buried in the same cemetery.

Where did you go to school?

I attended West Andover School 1916 to 1920 and Cilleyville Country School from 1920 to 1924.

Now where was the West Andover schoolhouse?

The West Andover schoolhouse was located on Route 4, about a mile above Potter Place.

And is it still there?

No. It's still there, but it's very much in disrepair—practically tumbled down.

Now, where was the Cilleyville School?

That was near R.P. Johnson & Sons in Cilleyville. The school building now is a home, but I don't know who lives there.

Do you recall the names of any of your teachers?

Yes. My first teacher was Mrs. Lizzie Elkins. And then also, Mrs. Theresa Davis Hayes taught there in West Andover. When I went to Cilleyville to school, Miss Ruby Carlton Peasely was my teacher and also Mrs. Nettie P. Sanborn. There were 15 or so pupils in West Andover.

How were you transported to school in those days?

When I started school, my father used to carry me in a horse and wagon or a sleigh in the wintertime; and then when we had to go to Cilleyville to school, we rode in a two-seater, horse-drawn wagon driven by George Weed. My brother, David, said that the trip was so slow, he counted the telephone poles to see if we were moving.

I guess that could be called the very first school bus.

That's right.

I believe you attended Proctor Academy.

Yes, I entered Proctor Academy in 1924, and graduated in 1928. My brothers, David and James, also graduated from Proctor.

Now, where did the Wilmot students attend High School?

The Wilmot students could attend wherever they wanted because there was no high school in the Town. The Town of Wilmot paid their tuition. My husband and his brothers attended the Kearsarge School of Practice. This was a two-year high school. It was accredited. And the pupils could, more or less, advance on their own. There were certain courses that they gave there that prepared them to enter any other high school to finish four years of High School.

What was your course selection at Proctor?

Well, it was called the classical course. It was also a college preparatory course.

And you took the train to school, boarding at the West Andover station which was named Gale.

Yes, the railroad named the stations after a family in that area. West Andover was named "Gale." East Andover was named "Halcyon" and South Danbury was "Converse."

Oh, that's enlightening. So now I will cease searching the town maps for the town of Gale. Do you remember anything special about Graduation Day?

Yes, I was very surprised and very pleased that I received the Theodore Edson Parker Foundation Prize for Excellence in Translating Latin. The award was a five-dollar gold piece.

And do you still have it?

Yes. I didn't turn it in when the gold was called in.

And I believe you were married in September 1936?

Yes. I married Arthur Elkins Thompson, who was a farmer, on September 5, 1936.

And, did you have any children?

Yes, we had a daughter, Elizabeth Shirley born July 4, 1940; and a son, Charles William born June 14, 1943.

Sounds like you were the patriotic family of Wilmot.

Yes, people referred to us in that way several times. They were the first grandchildren in the Whittemore family.

Well, let's talk a little about your early life in West Andover. Your father's name . . . ?

Was Charles Amos Whittemore. He was born in Wilmot, April 10, 1876. He died July 28, 1944. The area of Wilmot where he was born became a part of Danbury because the people in that area said it was too far to go to Wilmot Center to Town Meeting. He farmed 150 acres. He had dairy cows and pigs and chickens. He sold milk to H.P. Hood in Boston. This was shipped in 40-quart jugs to that company by train. We had fruit trees, a big vegetable garden, and he grew the best potatoes that I could ever remember.

Now, did you have any pets?

Yes, I had a cow. I named her Bessie.

Did you ever ride her because I heard tell that they did do that?

No. My father wouldn't let us do anything like that. I never even rode a horse.

Do you have a couple of fond memories you'd like to share with us about your father?

Sunday afternoon after everyone had had dinner and dishes were done, and we were resting. We often sang songs. My mother played the organ, and I remember my father singing us children to sleep when we were pretty little. He liked to sing; he liked all kinds of music. My mother did, too. When I was old enough to vote, he took me to Andover, and he showed me a ballot; and he told me, "You see the circle up there? All you do is put a cross in that circle. That's all there is to it."

That sounds like the old-timers. They didn't fool around. They got right to the point. Well, let's talk a little about your mother.

My mother's maiden name was Sarah Alice Stevens. She was born January 6, 1881, and she died June 12, 1972. She was born in Enfield. She attended an Enfield school and she graduated from Canaan High School.

Now, was she a working gal after high school?

Well, she taught school before she graduated from high school. That was allowed in those days. She taught in several towns: Enfield, Grafton, and in Danbury. And one time, she taught a few weeks in Wilmot in the Eagle Pond School. The New Canada School was in Danbury on the New Canada Road and there she had all eight grades.

Now how did she meet your father?

She boarded with his parents.

What else do you especially remember about your mother?

My mother loved to read. She taught me phonics. Her ambition was for all of her children to teach. David went to the University of New Hampshire. Ruby and Belle and James and I went to Keene Normal School in Keene, New Hampshire. This later was named Keene Teacher's College. And we all taught in New Hampshire at one time or another. She was interested in all affairs and was well read. My sister Belle taught in Massachusetts after she was married. Ruby taught high school, and Jim taught just a few years before he went into the service. My mother had Sunday School class for us at home when we were young; and later, we went to church at South Danbury. It was interesting because we rode to church in a two-seated wagon often referred to as a 'surrey with a fringe on top'.

Oh, what fun!

I joined the church in South Danbury in 1926. I transferred my membership to the Wilmot Baptist Church in 1942.

Now, I believe you learned to sew at an early age?

My Grandmother Stevens taught me to sew. I remember especially making a doll's quilt, and I always had to thread her needles because it was hard for her to see to thread them.

Now, I suppose you were kept busy summers helping your mom canning vegetables?

Yes, my father had a big garden every year, and we canned everything we could have for use during the winter. We canned peas, string beans, shell beans and corn and then lots of fruit. The fruit was usually grown near home. We had strawberries—these were the wild strawberries—they weren't the cultivated strawberries; and blackberries and raspberries; and some blueberries.

Now, were the blueberries picked on Ragged Mountain?

Yes, they were.

And did she put up pickles?

Yes. We always had lots of pickle kinds on hand. Her favorite was piccalilli and it was awfully good. I can't make it taste the way she used to. I've tried, but I can't.

Now, what did you do for fun?

Well, we had sliding parties and swimming parties. The sliding parties—we slid down a hill in the road not very far from home; and these were usually at night. We had big double-runner sleds that were called Traverse sleds; and of course, we had to haul the sleds up to the top of the hill. Then we had fun riding down. It was quite a long slide. In the summer, we had swimming parties. We had branches of Blackwater River that flowed through our property and my brothers decided they wanted a swimming hole so they found the deepest part of the river where they could dive. And a little further down was a place in the river where it was more shallow, but it was a good place to swim. My father would let us go down there as long as we didn't get the place all messed up. We had lots of fun because we invited other children in the area, or young people in the area to come

and have swimming parties with us. In the summertime when the corn was ripe, my father used to let us have some corn and we'd have a corn roast down there by the river. The boys usually had the fire started and we would swim as long as we could see, and then we'd have roast corn, and we usually brought along marshmallows, too.

Well, that's about like it is today. Well, let's reminisce a little about holidays and Old Home Days. I believe Armistice Day, November 11, 1918 was quite special.

Yes, David and I were coming home from school in West Andover, and we could hear the church bell in Wilmot Center and bells in Potter Place. We were very excited, and when we got home, we talked with our parents about it, and that night or a night or two afterwards, they had a torchlight parade in Andover. This was the first and only kind of a parade I ever went to.

Did you look forward to Old Home Days?

Yes. Old Home Day was a chance for us to meet with other young people. The men folks always had a ball game, and the women sat around and talked about housekeeping and different things. We took our lunch and it was always a big lunch—very, very special. And one summer my father's aunt, Aunt Ida, came up to visit over Old Home Day, and she made a sponge lemon pie, and that was the first time I had anything like that, and it was always a treat. So, I learned how to make sponge lemon pie.

What was special about Thanksgiving Day?

On Thanksgiving Day my brothers and sisters and I climbed Ragged Mountain. This was done after the housework was finished and everything was in order for dinner. Practically everything we had for Thanksgiving was grown on the farm except when we had turkey. For many years we had roast chicken pie. My mother made the best chicken pie and mince pie. She used to make doughnuts for breakfast on Thanksgiving Day, and when we came back from the hike up Ragged Mountain, the house was full of aromas, and we were ready for a bountiful dinner provided by Father's garden and my mother's good cooking.

Oh, how delightful. And Christmas Day?

Our Christmases were fun, also. We had our own Christmas Tree grown on the farm, and another bountiful dinner. We took part in Christmas activities at the church in South Danbury, and the year when so many people were ill with influenza, my father was very ill with pneumonia. My uncles did a lot to make it happier that year. We did not have lots of gifts, but my mother always tried to give us the clothes she had made for us, along with an orange and other goodies, in the toe of our socks.

Note: Thus, ends the interview, but another was planned to continue with the rest of her story. Unfortunately, Annie died soon after on April 16, 1992, before that could be done.