

# A History of Tucker Mountain

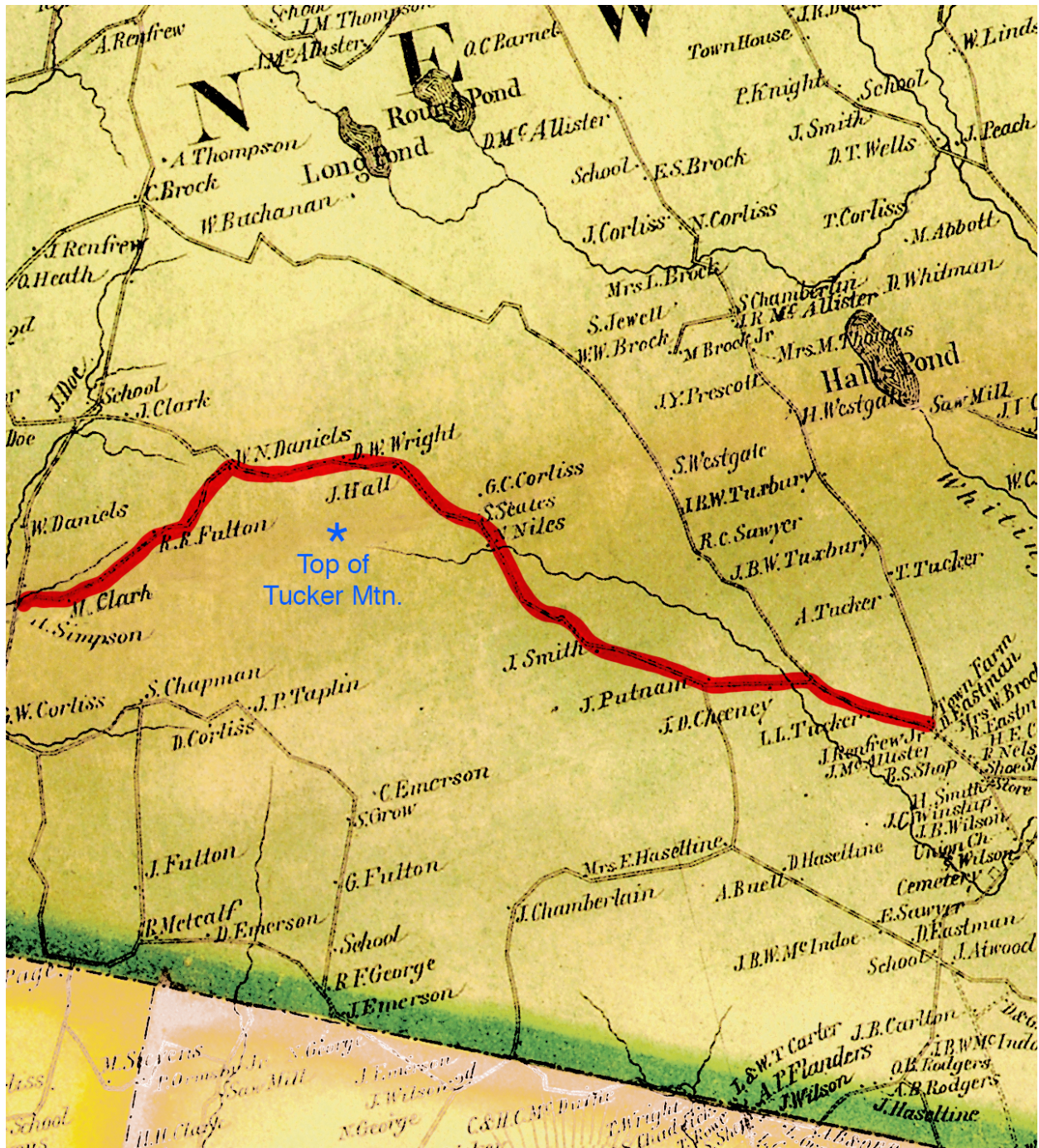
by Tom Kidder  
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*Drone shot of Tucker Mountain looking north. Photo by Hollis Munson.*

**Tucker Mountain Road and Environs 1858**

from Map of Orange County, Vermont by H. K. Walling



# **A History of Tucker Mountain**

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Roughly 420 to 380 million years ago, and from the late Silurian to early Devonian geologic time periods, Tucker Mountain was no mountain at all but part of a broad, underwater plain—the bed of the ancient sea geologists call the Iapetus Ocean. For nearly 100 million years clay and sediment washed down from ancient landscapes, and layers of prehistoric sea life built up to form a deep sediment on this seabed. While those deposits were thickening, beginning about 450 million years ago and over the span of 100 million years, the future North American, Eurasian and African continents drifted northward, and these tectonic plates began impacting with each other, compacting and reshuffling the layers of seabed in a series of slow-motion collisions, deforming them and pitching them vertically into high mountains as they came together to form the supercontinent Pangea.

With time, pressure, and heat, these sediments changed—metamorphosed—into the schist, phyllite, quartzite, and limestone that now form the bedrock of Tucker Mountain and its neighbors. Tucker Mountain was a foothill to the Green Mountains, which towered at the height of the Alps.

Over the past 2.6 million years, these high mountains were ground down by at least four glacial ice sheets, and eroded by wind and rain. Today the stratifications of the ancient Iapetus Ocean seabed are visible in the exposed bedrock of Tucker. The high mountains are no more, but Tucker Mountain retains foothill status; it is part of the band of hills east of the Green Mountains that stretches from Connecticut to Canada called the Piedmont, a French word that means foothills.

Glacial erratics—random boulders that rode the glaciers for miles from their origin—are scattered on Tucker and come in all sizes including many small boulders that were piled onto stone walls by early European settlers.

About fourteen thousand years ago the lower elevations of Newbury were under water, immersed by a 200-mile-long glacial lake geologists call Lake Hitchcock. Its surface elevation was approximately 600 feet above sea level. Tucker Mountain, at 1696 feet, towered above this

glacial lake, which extended from West Burke, Vermont into southern Connecticut and remained for 2-3,000 years.

The most recent glaciers receded from Vermont around 13,000 years ago. As the tundra warmed and trees took over, musk ox, woolly mammoth, bison, caribou, mastodons, saber tooth tigers and giant beaver moved in. Paleo-Indians migrated into Vermont around 11,000 years ago, many of them settling along the Connecticut River valley, with its deep new soil of glacial sediment left by Lake Hitchcock. Their likely descendants, the Abenaki, were living in this area when people of European origin arrived over 250 years ago. Some 6-8,000 Abenaki lived in villages in the Connecticut Valley in long houses 100 feet long and 30 feet wide. The Abenaki opened portions of forested land in the valley for planting crops, and burned patches of forests to improve hunting. In these times, the rivers and streams teemed with salmon and trout. These Native Americans would have visited the forests of Tucker Mountain and Woodchuck Mountain to hunt deer, moose and small game, gather berries and fish in the brook. Modern roads likely trace Indian trails, and Tucker Mountain Road is a logical route for these people to pass over into the Waits River Valley.

In the early 1700's what is now Vermont was contested by the French and English. Until dominance was decided, this great frontier was not a safe place for European settlers to live, and only a few hundred souls were brave enough to attempt Vermont.

However, in 1760, the British army took Montreal, ending the French and Indian War and the dispute over who controlled the territory that included the future state of Vermont. Settlers began pouring in. Historians call it the Swarming Period. In the short 28 years after the war, the non-native population of Vermont rose from 300 to 85,000.

In Newbury, land along the river was settled first and those who came later settled in the hills, including Tucker Mountain. These first settlers were felling trees that were up to 450 years old.

Little is known about many of the families who have lived on Tucker Mountain, but Frederic Wells' *History of Newbury Vermont* and the names on *H. F. Walling's 1858 Map of Orange County* provide a good starting point for any history that can be gleaned.

Settlement in West Newbury, the village near the base of Tucker Mountain, began in 1770 or 71. Shortly before the Revolutionary War broke out in 1776, Samuel Hadley and Samuel Eaton settled land at the foot of Tucker Mountain where Susan Hanewald lives. This was most likely the first farm on Tucker Mountain and one of the few homesteads on Tucker that is still inhabited.

In 1790, the farm was acquired by Colonel John Smith, and on the 1858 map it is still identified as the J. Smith homestead. He and his descendants owned it for more than a century. He kept a tavern there. One source says that Tucker Mountain Road was part of a main road from Boston to Montreal, which would have provided plenty of patrons to crowd a tavern. John Smith had earlier cleared some land and built a log cabin further up the mountain.



*The Col. John Smith House and Tavern*

The fields around the Smith house may be the location of a militia training field mentioned in *Well's History of Newbury*, which is likely because Colonel Smith was a military man, having fought in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and he was commissioned as an officer of the local militia.

John gave land for West Newbury church and the cemetery, where he and his family are buried. He built the present Kidder house in West Newbury as a retirement home. His descendents live on: John Smith and his sister Judy Smith Vaughn both call Newbury home.

An unfortunate and heartbreaking accident is associated with the John Smith farm. On May 9, 1915, two of Ray and Nina Tewksbury's children, six-year-old Margarete and her four-year-old brother Harold, lost their lives in a fire that started in the horse barn and spread to the house. The barn and house were both lost in the fire. The parents suspected the children had been playing with matches and caught the hay and their clothing on fire. At that time, the house was owned by Ray's father, Henry Tewksbury.

Mr. Tewksbury rebuilt the house which in turn burned in the early 1960's. It was then owned by Kenneth and Gladys Folansbee who had just installed a lightning rod system. Ironically the new technology caused the lightning to start a fire rather than prevent it. Kenneth had a one-man saw mill just across Tucker Mountain Road. He built a new house from boards he milled there.

Ray and Tina Clark purchased the property in early 1973. They remodeled the Folansbee's house and moved two barns to the homestead. The first came from a c.1830 post and beam barn in Fairfield, VT and the second was a c.1790 barn moved from Orford, NH that had previously been used as a dance hall. A day after Ray and Tina closed on the property, the original barn that was on the homestead blew down in a strong wind. The top of the silo sailed airborne for a quarter mile until it landed in the neighbor's yard, and the Farmall tractor Ray had purchased from Mr. Follensbee fell through the floor. The Clarks had moved their sheep into the barn the day before. Luckily, they all survived.

Tina is the daughter of Philip and Ginny Leach who owned and preserved much of the land that is now the Tucker Mountain Town Forest. Ray and Tina were married on top of the mountain in 1972. Their guests were driven up the road in a Newbury school bus. The family set up a bride's Indian tepee and Tina's father led her out to the ceremony from there.

Back to 1790, about the time Colonel John Smith acquired the farm where he kept the tavern, Tarrant Putnam, his wife Eunice, and their family settled further up the mountain where Colonel Smith had originally cleared land and built a cabin. Tarrant built a house and the cellar hole and foundation can still be seen. There is a barn foundation as well.

Before the West Newbury church was built in 1832, church services were held in homes. Wells' *History* says, "In 1801 the town voted that 'Rev. Mr. Lambert should preach at the house of Mr. Tarrant Putnam in the back part of the town on the fourth Sabbath of each month.'" The location of the Putnam house made it easier for those traveling from the other side of Tucker to attend church.

The farm was later owned for many years by Guy and Polly Corliss. Wells' *History* records that Guy and his wife "came to Newbury in 1839 and settled on the 'Tarrant Putnam place,' living in their house 53 years, spending but one night of all that time from under their own roof." The Corlisses are buried in the West Newbury Cemetery.

Robert Urquhart grazed cows on the fields around this property when the Corliss's deserted house and barn were still standing. Robert's son Alex and daughter Aroline Putnam remember tagging along when their father would go up to milk the cows. They played with an old organ that was stored in a corn barn. Later, Robert bought an electrical generator called a Delco and started milking with machines by their home. The children would be sent up to the same pastures to drive the cows home every evening, then drive them back up the hill the next morning. At that time, the old falling-down house belonged to Harold and Margaret Hayward. The buildings are now long gone. Alex bought those 75 acres in 1955 for \$375.

Tarrant Putnam's brother—or possibly cousin--Daniel Putnam came to West Newbury around 1796 from Danvers, MA. Daniel built a log home on the flat plateau at the top of the first long hill on Tucker Mountain Road, where Bruce Wheeler built the house that's now owned by Larry and Beth Minear. Daniel replaced the cabin with a two storey house and built a barn on the site, which both burned some years later. That little plateau was called Putnam Hill or Put Hill for years. The old Putnam Cemetery is a short walk from the home site. First used in 1802 it is the resting place for 16 Putnams and Tuckers.

The Tarrant and Eunice Putnam house was one in a neighborhood of three farmhouses, identified on the 1858 Walling Map as G. Corliss, N. Niles and S. Scales. Stone walls in this area still outline the old, overgrown pastures.

One of these houses is still standing, a faded cape on north side of Tucker Mountain Road, about half way up the mountain. It is now owned by Joel Fredericks and his sister Laura whose parents bought it in 1953. The Fredericks were good friends of Don and Margaret Johnston who had a part-time home on Urquhart Road. The Fredericks had followed them to West Newbury, purchasing the old house on Tucker Mountain Road as a summer home. Don Johnston was a Unitarian pastor to the Fredericks when they all lived in Bethesda, Maryland.

The house's post and beam construction, boards cut on an up and down saw, and the substantial central chimney with a Dutch oven suggests the age to be late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century, like Tarrant Putnam's house. There's a stone foundation where a barn once stood. Unfortunately the house has fallen into disrepair and the upstairs floorboards have been sold for salvage. Joel Fredericks explained that in the late '70's some hunters entered the house and left the doors open. Animals got in and things went from bad to worse quite rapidly.



*The old Scales house, probably built by Charles J. Smith.*

The old red cape was likely built by Charles J. Smith, son of Col. John Smith. The earliest transfer of the property was by Charles to Sarah Scales in 1850. S. Scales appears on the 1858 map, most likely Sarah or her husband Steven Palmer Scales who moved to West Newbury from Hanover, NH in 1849 with his wife and their three children.

One of the last families to live in the house, other than more recent squatters, was Ralph and Kate Emerson. Kate gave birth to twins in the house, a girl Marilyn and a boy Ira. Some 60 years later, Ira met Mr. Fredericks in the Newbury Town Office and told him he'd been born in the house on Tucker and had surprised his mother who didn't know she was delivering twins. When he made his appearance, he was quite weak so they sterilized a big roasting pan using whiskey, and laying the baby in the pan, placed him into the warming oven of a wood cook stove to keep him warm, just as you would now place a newborn in an incubator.



The third house in this neighborhood shown on the 1858 map was the residence of N. Niles on the south side of the road, across from the red house. Nathaniel Niles was born in Orford, NH, in 1793. He married Silence Sawyer of Newbury, came to West Newbury in 1823, and bought the farm on Tucker. Their first house burned and he built another on that same foundation, which burned more recently.

Nathaniel Niles “was a very industrious man, a soldier in the war of 1812, member of the Congregational Church for nearly 60 years, and long superintendent of the Sunday School at West Newbury. He sold the farm about 1863.” (Wells)

Nathaniel, Silence, and two of their sons—Edwin and George—are buried in the West Newbury cemetery. Wells says Edwin was a Civil War nurse who died in that war at age 24. George was a carpenter in Boston who died at 38 when he fell from a roof.



*The house Nathan Niles built after their first house burned.*

More recently, the house was owned by Daniel and Sarah Graton, great-grandparents to West Newbury carpenter Kevin Graton. Sarah Graton’s sister was grandmother to Aroline Putnam and Alex Urquhart. Daniel and Sarah left the place to their daughter Lola, who kept it as a summer home. Lola willed the house and property to her grandson Kevin. He was 18 at this time, living in Connecticut, and hadn’t known about the property.

The demise of the old cape is a sad tale. Lola had left the house in good condition when she last visited, well furnished and with dishes in the cupboards and linens in the drawers. But by the time Kevin inherited it a tree had fallen on the roof and someone had stolen all of the chestnut beams, having cut them out with a chainsaw. The insurance company had earlier warned Kevin’s father that they would drop the insurance if the tree was not removed, but the tree stayed.

Kevin was determined to rebuild the old cape. He lived in Connecticut and came up on weekends to work on the house. He began by fixing up the coach house to make it livable so he could stay there while working on the main house. When he and his wife divorced, he moved up permanently into a trailer set slightly back in the woods, and continued work on the coach house.

All of his dreams were shattered when both the house and coach house were burned in 1983. Kevin learned that someone set the house on fire to “get rid of the porcupines that had infested it,” not knowing anyone was involved in fixing it up.

Kevin tried building again. He'd gotten old windows from the remodeling of the Monroe, NH school and installed them in frames, along with a bay window on the upper floor. Vandals struck again, breaking all the windows and stealing the bay window. Kevin Graton still owns the two-and-a-half-acre property and still dreams of building a house on this beautiful plot on Tucker Mountain. The cellar hole is all that remains.

Moving up the mountain, the land on top of Tucker Mountain was cleared by 1808. Wells writes:

“The highest cultivated land in town, long called the ‘Mountain Carter place,’ from which is a prospect of vast extent and variety, lies a mile or two northwest of the hamlet of West Newbury.”

Mountain Carter, legally known as James Carter, and his wife, whose first name never appears, built a house just west of the high point on Tucker Mountain Road sometime around 1810.

Wells writes that Carter

“was a man of affairs, often being selectman, lister, etc. . . He was known as ‘Mountain Carter,’ and was a man of great size, and his wife, who was his cousin, was also very large, both weighing, it is said, 700 lbs.”

The mountain was called Carter Mountain but changed to Tucker Mountain when John Tucker and his son, also John, bought part of James Carter’s farm.

In 1858, the Walling Map of Orange County shows that the property belonged to D. W. Wright.

Ted and Deborah Leach bought the Mountain Carter Place and 92 acres of land in 1972 when Ted's father, Phillip Leach, began buying property on Tucker Mountain. Jim Halley of West Newbury was the realtor who managed the sale. He passed on what he knew of the history of the place, telling the Leaches that it had probably been a stagecoach stop at one time as the road that passed the house was one of the main routes to Montreal.

Ted and Deborah and their children loved the house and property and enthusiastically took on the project of restoring the old saltbox to its original stature. In their desire for authenticity, they sought advice from John Wilmerding, an art history professor at Dartmouth and Princeton who was later the curator of the National Gallery in Washington. Professor Wilmerding showed photos of the house to the curator at Vermont's Shelburne Museum who recommended recipes for mortar in rebuilding the

chimney, antique paint colors and paint mixes—including milk-based paints—and offered other advice on the restoration. In many cases, the trim still had original coats of paint which they cleaned and preserved. The Leaches plastered over old laths in keeping with the early nineteenth century



*The Mountain Carter house after the Leach family had restored it.*

construction. Ted's father, Phillip Leach, was an artist and he painted scenes of Tucker Mountain on the walls of the living room.

Bringing electricity to the house was a modern touch, starting with a generator in an out building that still stands, and they later connected to regular service.

The Leaches heard that Mountain Carters' son and daughter had moved to Enfield to join the Shakers, and in honoring that piece of history, they furnished the house with Shaker furniture they found in antique stores and auctions. [Wells mentions a connection between a Carter family of that time with the Shakers, but it is not the James Carter family.]

A small pond lay just east of the house and across the road when they bought the property, and in 1980, after clearing an overgrown pasture, they added a lower pond with an island right across from the house where their children loved to play.

Sadly, in June of 1990, the family and the Town of Newbury were dealt a tragic blow when the beloved house was robbed and burned to the ground. The thief or thieves cut the phone line, thus disabling the security system, loaded all of the antiques into a U-Haul truck, then set the house to blaze to destroy any evidence and drove away. No one saw it burn, but Tom Williams, a local carpenter, discovered the smoldering ashes the next morning when he drove over Tucker on his way to work at the Narowskis' house. Hannah Narowski notified Ted's brother-in-law, Ray Clark, who called Ted's office in Massachusetts.



*After the fire.*

The Gillman family who lived at the house down the hill west of the Leaches saw the truck go by several times. The children waved at the driver and even spoke to him. They remembered a distinctive swordfish advertising logo on the truck that later helped build the case against the accused thief. Buck Gillman would later identify the driver and the truck at the trial in New York State.

The man who had rented the truck asked the U-Haul rental office for directions to the Shaker Museum in Enfield, NH. A summer employee who ran the museum gift shop identified the man and said he had come by to ask the value of a large Shaker chest and had drawn a picture of it. She told him what it was worth. This chest was 7' x 6' x 2' and although the Leaches had paid \$1600 for it at an auction, a similar chest was purchased by Bill Cosby for \$200,000. The young

woman, a student at Oberlin College in Ohio, would later travel to the trial in Upstate New York to testify and the drawing was used as evidence.

The chest plays an important role in the robbery and arson. Ted and Debbie had rebuilt the stairs after the chest was moved into an upstairs bedroom. The chest was too large to fit back down the stairs, so it's thought that the thief or thieves used a chain saw to cut away stair rails and any other structure that was in the way, and quite likely burned the house to hide that evidence.

Ted Leach recalls that the Vermont State Police were reluctant to bring arson charges, even though the insurance inspector was certain that arson was involved. Police told Ted that because the Civil Liberties Union thought Vermont's mandated 40-year sentence for arson was too strict, they almost always took the cases to the state supreme court. The state police captain didn't want his officers to be spending a lot of time in court as he was understaffed. He also said the case would be too expensive to prosecute. The man accused was never charged with arson.

The thief was apprehended in New York State while burglarizing another house using the same method of operation. He ran from the scene but was caught. The police found a gun in his truck that had been stolen from Newbury, and that brought the FBI into the investigation.

Ted had placed advertisements with photographs in various antique magazines, offering a generous reward for anyone who would report information about the stolen goods. An antique dealer in New York called to say he'd purchased some of the furniture and knew where more of it was stored. Ted drove to a storage facility in New York to meet state police and identify furniture that belonged to the family.

The thief, John Mackiewicz Jr. of Winthrop, NY, was eventually given four years in a New York prison for transporting a stolen gun and for the robberies. Mackiewicz had been employed by Bonnie Oaks on Lake Morey, working as a cook for their weekly barbeques on Tucker Mountain. Bonnie Oaks owned Tucker Mountain at that time. It's quite likely he became familiar with the Leaches' home and hatched his plan. He never admitted to the crime and no one knows if he acted alone or had help. All that remains is the foundation, the woodshed and

the little shed that housed the generator. Neither Debbie nor the children have ever returned to the site.

In the land north of the Leach's place, old pastures are bordered by stone walls. Some of the healthiest trees of the new town property grow in this well managed forest, with stands of red oak, sugar maple and white pine.

The 1858 Map of Newbury shows a home site that's higher than the old Mountain Carter place and names J. Hall as the owner, recorded in the land records as Jesse Hall. I've found no other history of Jesse Hall except the likely foundation on that site. In the later Beers Atlas of 1877, the owner is listed as J. W. Tucker. This is located at the height of land of Tucker Mountain Road.

Sometime around 1815, the citizens of West Newbury built a schoolhouse at the base of Tucker Mountain where Henry and Karen Pawluck now live. Early on, over 40 students between the ages of four and 18 attended. The first schoolhouse burned in 1827 and was replaced by a



*This Second school building on this site was still called The Brick School.*

brick building. I found no record of that building's demise, but it was replaced with a wooden structure in 1871 and was still called the Brick Schoolhouse. The school closed when the local schools consolidated in 1894. The West Newbury School, built in 1894 in West Newbury Village, and now the Newbury Historical Society's headquarters, is still standing. Students from the Brick Schoolhouse and Rogers' Hill School on the south side of town moved to the new building (the consolidation was

contentious: citizens complained of losing local control, even though the schools were less than three miles apart). The Brick Schoolhouse was rented as a home and Ralph and Kate Emerson were the last to live there. It's gone now, but a granite foundation stone can still be found by the Pawlucks' garden.

On the west side of the mountain, down from the old Mountain Carter saltbox, there's an old cape now owned by Margie Clark Smith. Margie's father, Herb Clark of Connecticut, bought the property from a Smith family who had owned it for only two years. They had purchased it from the Oliver family who decided to sell when, in the middle of the night, part of the house shifted off the foundation and "scared the hell out of them." For many years this house was best known as the Stanly Oliver House. The Walling map shows that a W. N. Daniels owned that farm in 1858.

When Herb Clark bought the property in the early 1960's, a dilapidated barn stood near the cape. Marjie remembers her father tearing the barn down because it was dangerous. A milk house was across the road. The house had electricity but no bathroom—only the beginnings of one. A cistern in the basement was fed by a spring across the road with a hand pump in the kitchen.



*Marjie Clark Smith's cape, known as the Stanley Oliver house.*

The house sat idle until 1973 when Herb retired. Marjie helped him fix it up, jack it up, and rebuild the foundation. Porcupines had moved in and one of Marjie's jobs was to shovel out their droppings.

John and Maureen Nininger lived there in the 1980's and John did work on the place to cover rent and earn a little extra cash. Maureen kept horses and Pearly, their 2,000 pound Belgian, helped log the woods across from the Leaches' house before the pond was put in.

The Gilman family moved in after the Niningers and also did some work for reduced rent. It was the Gillman children who chatted with the driver of the U-Haul when he was robbing the Leaches' place.

Much of the land on the south side of Tucker Mountain is owned by the Blake family. Graham Blake, who owned a cattle company, bought the land in 1952. There are two camps on the property. The lower camp and pond were built in the 1950's. The camp became so popular with Graham Blake's 18-year-old son and his friends that Dad decided they needed more space, so he built an upper camp and pond in the '70's. The many stone walls on this side of the mountain are signs that this part of Tucker, like so much of the mountain, was used for agriculture—probably sheep farming. There's a cellar hole, too, the residence of C. Emerson on the old Walling map, probably Charles Emerson.

The old road known as the Boulevard runs through the Blake's property. It is an unmaintained town trail, but the Blakes themselves keep the south part of the road in good condition to access their land. Graham Blake's grandson, Courtney, and his wife Betsy live in West Newbury and frequently visit the camp. They named their son Tucker for the mountain.

The old stone walls, the Putnam cemetery, the cellar holes and foundations, rusting barbed wire—all tell of a time when Tucker Mountain was a bustling farming community. Robert Atwood of West Newbury has many memories of the agricultural activity he's seen there, and stories from his wife's family, the Tylers, go back much further.

In the early 1900's John Tyler kept a heard of 15-20 milk cows on Tucker. Just to the west of where the spur road up the mountain leaves Tucker Mountain Road, the old foundation to the milk house is still intact—the same foundation that marks the earlier residence of Jesse Hall. Two farm hands would go up in the afternoon to milk the cows. They would submerge the milk cans in a nearby spring to keep the milk cool overnight. The cement casing surrounding the spring is still there. The hands would spend the night in the milk house, do the morning milking, and then bring all of the milk down to the West Newbury creamery. That afternoon, two more farmhands would head up the mountain to take the next shift.

Robert Urquart and Raymond Appleton, who both once worked for John Tyler, talked of driving up Tucker in a Model T to milk the cows. On the steepest incline, the car would sputter and stall and one of the men would get out and push. All part of the day's work.

John Tyler's son, Russell, grazed sheep on the top meadow of Tucker into the 1970's. They were fenced in, but a farm worker would check on them once a week and bring them salt.



Every fall, someone would lead the sheep down the mountain to the Tylers' barn. The sheep were occasionally known to grow impatient and come down the mountain on their own, heading straight into the winter barn, even though they'd been sheltered in another barn the previous spring. These were especially intelligent sheep. When the self-reliant sheep walked past Kenneth Folansbee's house at the foot of Tucker, he'd call the Tylers to tell them their sheep were on their way.

In another agricultural venture, the Tylers raised potatoes on the top meadow to sell at their store in West Newbury. The deer surely appreciated the effort; they'd dig up the potatoes, take a dainty bite out of each one, and leave the rest of the potato for the store, nibbling away at the profits.

Alex Urquhart tells a story he's heard that many years ago a woodcutter was leading a team of horses pulling a cord of firewood down the mountain on a sleigh. He'd attached a log to drag behind and act as a brake, but it broke loose and the sleigh, with no brakes, began pushing the horses down the hill. They ran all the way down to West Newbury, trying to stay ahead of the heavy load. Somehow they escaped stumbling and getting rammed, but Alex says they were never good for pulling a sleigh after that.

There are others who have lived and still live on Tucker Mountain. They are some of the oldest families and the original inhabitants. Deer and moose live here. Bears build nests in the beech trees where they can lounge back and munch beech nuts all afternoon. Newts, wood frogs and salamanders mate and lay their eggs in at least one prominent vernal pool and fish breed in the branch of Halls Brook that flows down the mountain. Beavers have dammed ponds and built lodges.

The top of Tucker has always been a popular picnic spot and party location. Tina Clark remembers picnicking there in the '70's. Her mother Ginny would bring a rake along to clear away the sheep manure before spreading out their picnic blankets. Robert Atwood remembers other gatherings, Sunday picnics on Tucker with twelve or more cars parked at the height of the road when picnickers hiked the last quarter mile, carrying baskets of food.

For a number of years, Bonnie Oaks resort on Lake Morey owned the top of Tucker and they would bring groups of patrons up every week for a special picnic. They even had a permanent barbeque cooker on the mountain.

Families have skied, snow shoed, hiked, ridden horses, or driven to the top, quite likely from the time it was cleared in the early 1800's. School children hike up here every fall to enjoy the mountain top, learn about their natural environment and deepen their attachment to nature. Visitors are drawn by its wildflowers, grassy meadows, and magnificent views: the White Mountains to the east, the Waits River Valley and mountains to the west, south to Wright's Mountain, and north to Woodchuck Mountain, the highest point in Newbury.

In the early 1970s, Tucker Mountain was for sale, and word got out that a real estate development company was eyeing the property. Phil and Ginny Leach, who had homes in Massachusetts and Fairlee, VT, decided to purchase the land in order to protect it. It had always been a favorite place for Phil and Ginny and their family, and Phil had proposed to Ginny there in 1940. That's also when, in 1972, Ted and Debby Leach bought their 142 acres of property and the Mountain Carter house.

In 1992, the Leach family donated a conservation easement to the Vermont Land Trust that included all but Ted and Debbie's property. They wanted to be sure the land was protected and well managed for years to come.



*Selectboard chair Alma Royston signs the property map as the Vermont Land Trust transfers ownership of the Tucker Mountain property to the town. From left are Bob Linck, Vermont Land Trust regional director; Julie Curtin, VLT director of legal services; Town Clerk Nikki Tomlinson; Jim Barlow, the town's attorney; and Selectboard members Brian Emerson, Alma Royston, and Steve Cole. Board secretary Peggy Hewes is in the background.*

Most recently, in 2015, Phil and Ginny Leach's children and heirs, who collectively owned 636 acres of Tucker Mountain, began discussions with the Vermont Land Trust and the Town of Newbury with the goal of selling the land to the town at a reduced price while keeping it preserved and protected. The assessed value of the property was \$705,000 but the Leach's offered it for \$461,000. Of that, the town would

pay \$25,000, the remainder to be covered by grants and contributions. Following months of planning and negotiation, in September of 2017, the proposal was put to the Newbury residents for a vote and it passed. A second vote was petitioned and again, the decision to purchase passed handily. The land was transferred from the Leach family to the Vermont Land Trust in September of 2018, then from the Vermont Land Trust to the Town of Newbury on December 12, 2018.

The town will manage the town forest with the guidance of a management committee and help from the Newbury Conservation Commission. Other dedicated volunteers will pitch in to build trails, make signs, work on road improvements, and plan activities. The town forest will provide opportunities for recreation and education—involving local schools and other conservation minded groups—and bring some income from well-managed logging operations.

Unfortunately, over the years and despite many attempts to limit motor traffic, the mountain has been loved too much and the top is in need of repair. Vehicles of all kinds have worn out old roads and created a maze of new roads to the top, which are also heavily eroded. Visitors have cut healthy trees—stately old birch and maple—to feed their bonfires. The ownership of the mountain will mean improving management for erosion control, learning to love the mountain without destroying it and involving everyone who uses the mountain in finding solutions that will help keep Tucker Mountain healthy and green.

There's much to the history of Tucker Mountain that remains mystery. Little is really known about the families who settled and farmed this land and what life on Tucker Mountain was like. In that little neighborhood on the east side, did the Scales get together with the Niles and Corlisses to make music or play cards? Did they argue over whose cow jumped the fence or whether to vote for James Monroe or Rufus King? Did Polly Corliss bring her extra zucchini to Silence Niles every August?

And hidden near the top of Tucker Mountain there is a story carved in a granite stone that pulls at our hearts and piques our curiosity, a grave marker placed in a remote forest: "Those we have held in our arms for a little while, we hold in our hearts forever." Are there ashes buried or scattered here of a beloved pet or infant? Whoever placed it chose this place above all others: Tucker Mountain. It speaks of a reverence, a love, a deep respect for this mountain that was surely held by those who over all the years made their lives here, for those who have hunted

here, who have explored the mountain on foot, on horseback, by ATV and snowmobile, on skis and showshoes—for all of us who are now the keepers and protectors and stewards of Tucker Mountain.

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Gary D. Johnson, Professor of Earth Sciences Emeritus, Dartmouth College

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