



# Johnson Historical Society Newsletter

May 2024

Welcome to the latest newsletter from the Historical Society.

We are pleased to report that we have completed some renovations to the upstairs of the Holcomb House. Wall and ceiling repairs, fresh paint and sanded and finished floors in three rooms, the stairway and halls have really improved the look. Thanks to Alan at Johnson Farm, Garden and Hardware for his very generous donation of paint and materials to help make this happen.

Thank you to all our donors. Your generosity helps.

We look forward to seeing you this summer at Tuesday Night Live for pie.

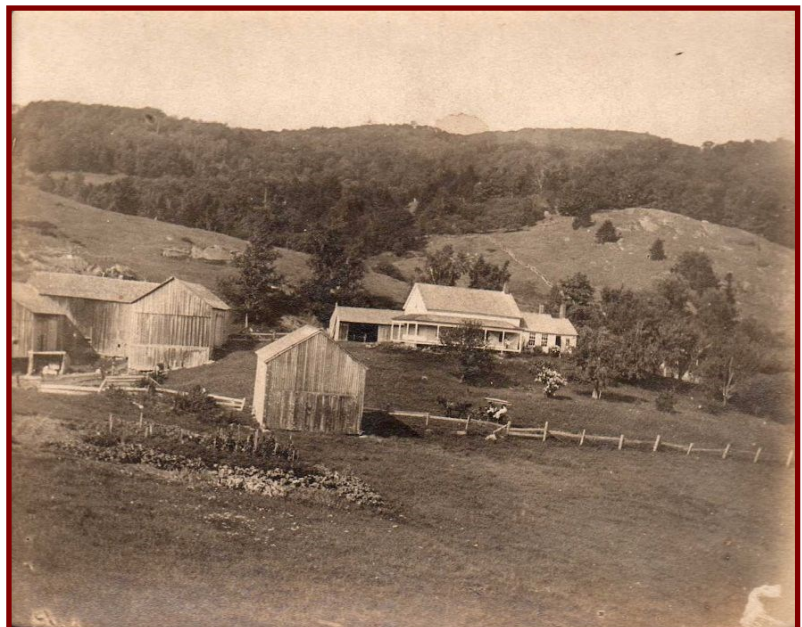
Dick Simays, President

## FIRST EUROPEAN SETTLERS OF JOHNSON: THE SAMUEL EATON FAMILY

### Researched and written by Duncan Hastings, Feb 2024

Mattie Baker states, in the Oread Club's, "History of Johnson, 1784 to 1904", Samuel Eaton settled in Johnson along the banks of the Lamoille River in a "meadow on what had been known for many years as the Holmes Farm on the Waterville Road".

Alan Manchester now owns the "Holmes Farm." Alan told me there was a barn foundation in the meadow below his house, which he removed. He said the barn that had been on that foundation had been moved to its current location next to the road and opposite the house. He thinks it was most likely Eaton's.



Holmes Farm

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Alan also thinks the Eaton house is part of the house he currently owns. He describes a 16' x 16' section of the house that was added to several times. He believes it was the original house. Alan's information derives from relatives and older residents. He believes Samuel Eaton did settle and live on this farm. He was also told that Samuel moved to "French Hill" (which was in the Town of Sterling) at some point.

I am not certain of Samuel's birth date, but one source (Eaton Family History) lists it as 9/29/1729, in Haverhill, MA. He is listed as the son of Samuel and Mehitabel (Harriman) Eaton.

Samuel married first Ednah Hunkins in Hampstead, NH, 3/26/1761. To my surprise I found Ednah Hunkins was my 2nd cousin, 7 generations removed. There were three (and probably at least five) children. The three certain children were Samuel Jr (b. 1766), Henry (b. 1769) and Azuba (b. 1775). Polly Eaton (1772?) and Lucy Eaton (b. 1782) were probably other daughters, but I don't have birth certificates for either. A death certificate for Polly lists Samuel as her father. After the death of Ednah, Samuel married Lucy (last name and date of marriage unknown).

Samuel Jr. married Sally Horner. It appears in Johnson and Cambridge records. He bought land from Samuel Burton in St. Albans in 1808. He probably died before 1810 as Sally Eaton is in the 1810 St. Albans census as "head of household". They had 7 children. Henry C. married 1st Abigail Ferry and 2nd Margaret Whitney. By 1810 the Sterling census lists Henry. He had 4 children (3 with Abigail and 1 with Margaret). He was a prominent figure in Sterling. He died 1/10/1863.

Azuba Eaton married Eliakim Alexander and settled in Morristown. They had a large family of 9 children. She died 3/6/1852.

Lucy Eaton married Jonathan Blaisdell and settled in Cambridge. Lucy died young (32) on 1/19/1814. Lucy had 2 children, one who died at 5 years old. Jonathan remarried. Polly Eaton married Jonathan Atwell. Jonathan appears in the 1800 census for Johnson. He died in 1813 and is buried in Whiting-Hill Cemetery. Polly died in Westfield, VT, on May 7, 1861. They had at least 4 children.

Samuel appears in the first US Census (Johnson) in 1790 and subsequent censuses in 1800, 1810, and 1820.

Samuel Eaton was a soldier in the Revolutionary War as well as the "French and Indian War" (1754-1763). The story goes that he travelled the Lamoille River corridor and remembered a spot where he eventually settled.

His service in the French and Indian War is not well documented, but I believe he served with Captain Moses Hazen's company, (then) Lt. Timothy Bedel, his (to be) brother in-law Robert Hunkins at the battle of Fort William Henry and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, fought in 1759. Robert Hunkins, who was only 17 at the time, had a brother, John who died there.

According to his pension application records, Samuel served in the Vermont Militia and the New Hampshire Regiment. He served under Colonels Olcott and Bedel in several "companies" (Frye Bayley, John Bayley, Simeon Stevens, his brother-in-law Capt. Robert Hunkins). He marched on Quebec as part of an ill-fated mission to oust the British from Canada. Following that attempt, he was stationed at Mt. Independence and then marched to Newbury, VT, on the Connecticut River. In 1777, he marched with Bedel's regiment to Saratoga, NY, and was present for the surrender of General Burgoyne.

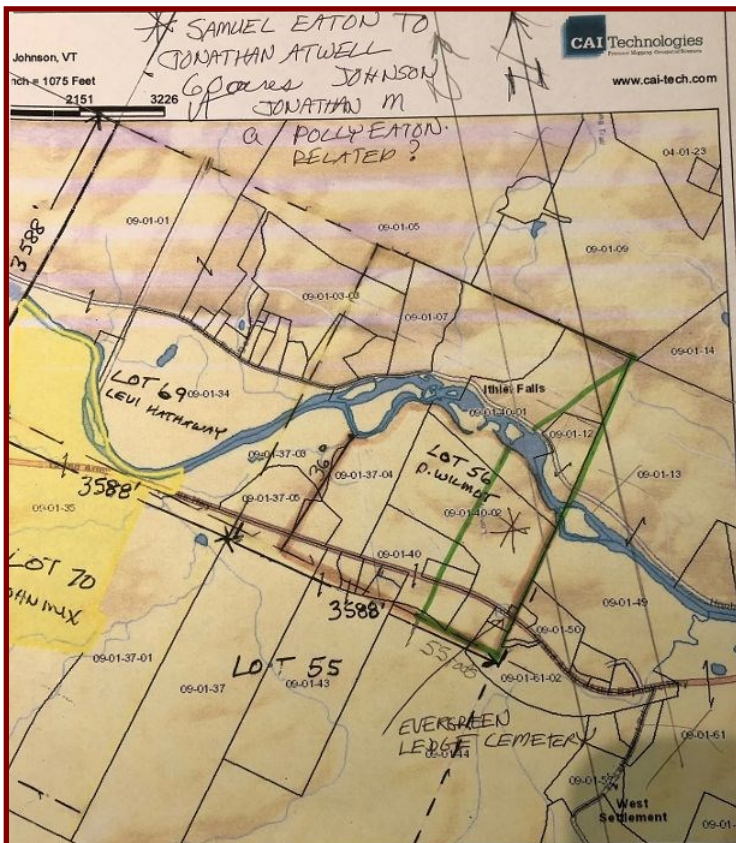
Since he marched with Bedel's regiment to Saratoga, I suspect he may also have been at the Battle of Bennington, as Bedel was there and served under General John Stark. Following the Saratoga campaign, he marched back to Peacham, VT, where there was a "blockhouse" and the Bayley Hazen Road. He was stationed there in Capt. Robert Hunkins' detachment on guard duty until the end of the war in 1782.

He was referred to in Johnson History as "Ensign" Samuel Eaton, which at the time was a military term for 2nd Lieutenant. Enlistments at the time could be of short duration and soldiers often had time to go back to their farms and families.

I found a deed from Samuel Eaton to Jonathan Atwell (married to Polly Eaton) dated 1802 for approximately 60 acres on both sides of the Lamoille River in the vicinity of Ithiel Falls and Evergreen Ledge Cemetery. Early Town Meeting records indicate a vote to "lay

out" cemeteries, one of which being on the "south side of the River Lamoille as near Sam G. Eaton's as best convene the inhabitants of said town". Evergreen Ledge is likely the result.

I found a deed from Zerah Willoughby to John Holmes for approximately 175 acres in Johnson and Cambridge, dated 1818. The land conveyed by Willoughby to Holmes references land bought from Samuel Eaton Jr. (a son) and John Hunkins (a nephew). I did not find a deed from Samuel Sr. to Samuel Jr. and John Hunkins, but it may be the same land originally owned (settled) by Samuel Eaton Sr. given that Samuel Jr. died before 1810. I assume any transfer of ownership pre-dates Samuel Jr's death.



Map of Land



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I found several deeds for property owned by sons Samuel Jr. and Henry Eaton in the vicinity of Willow Crossing near and across the Cambridge town line, and on the north and south sides of the Lamoille River. These lots were near other Hastings' ancestors of mine, as well as John Hunkins. The lots would all have been close to Samuel Sr's land. According to a member of the Holmes family, the farm was in their family from approximately 1816 to approximately 1907, so this generally fits with the above deed references.

Samuel served on the Johnson Selectboard in the years of 1789-1790 and also 1790-1791, according to historical records. It is possible that he may have served other years as well. His name appears in many Johnson land records and meeting minutes as a Selectman and witness to deeds. He was quite active in the growing town. Samuel Jr. was a Justice of the Peace and appears also to have been active. He owned a fair amount of land, which he sold in advance of his death.

Samuel's first pension application (1815) was denied. In that record he stated he was 75 years old. In a later application (1818 which was approved), he stated he was 92. Neither age corresponds to the birth date given above. I do not know which is correct. He listed his occupation as shoemaker, stated he was in debt, and had no living relatives other than his wife Lucy who was aged 70 and unable to work.

Samuel died November 16, 1823 (according to probate records). In 1904 the Town of Johnson erected a stone marker in Grow Cemetery (formerly Sterling) which describes Samuel as a Revolutionary War Soldier and first settler in Johnson. The stone incorrectly lists his death date as 1826. I have not been able to find a death date or burial location for his first wife, Ednah Hunkins.

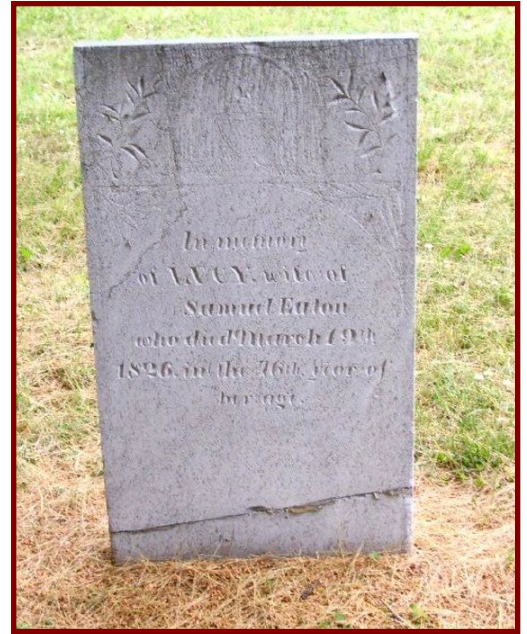
It remains a puzzle why he is buried in Grow Cemetery and his 2nd wife Lucy is buried in Whiting-Hill Cemetery in Johnson Village. Son Henry lived in Sterling (close to Grow Cemetery), was his only living son and may have made the arrangements. It is surprising not more is known about Samuel and Ednah Eaton. The little information I have discovered has been hard to come by. Having done a lot of ancestry research it is not unusual for there to be discrepancies in information (such as Samuel's birth date and parentage).



*Samuel's Gravestone*

One finds a lot of "connections" when doing genealogy research. Many of these connections are due to the fact there was simply a small population in the early days. For example, in 1790 U.S. (Johnson) census lists just 93 persons, 255 in 1800 and 494 in 1810.

Interesting "connections" that I discovered are Ednah's brother Capt. Robert Hunkins bought land in Johnson in 1797 (though he is buried in Bradford). Robert's son, John, also bought land and appears in census records (his second wife was Polly Heath). John's son, Samuel bought land in the southwest end of town and married Sally Heath. Robert's daughter, Betsey, married Samuel Rogers Miller (yes, S.R. Miller Insurance). Another daughter, Lydia, married Nathan Atwell (the beautiful old brick house on Plot Rd).



*Lucy's Gravestone*



*Atwell House*

Nathan Atwell and Jonathan Atwell (married to Polly Eaton) were brothers. S.R. Miller's mother was Mary Rogers, who was the sister of Robert and James Rogers (of Rogers Rangers fame). Benjamin Barnet (another Revolutionary War vet from the Bradford area) bought land in Johnson and married S.R. Miller's sister, Mary. Another ancestor of mine, Theophilus Hastings, married S.R. Miller's sister,

Hannah. All these people were originally living in the Bradford Vermont area and came to Johnson. Coincidence? I do not think so.

Another interesting connection comes full circle to the Johnson Historical Society. Lydia Hunkins and Nathan Atwell had a son, William C. Atwell, who married (2nd wife) Selena Austin. Their daughter, Anna Weltha Atwell married James Crocker (his 2nd wife). They had a daughter, Helen B. Crocker.



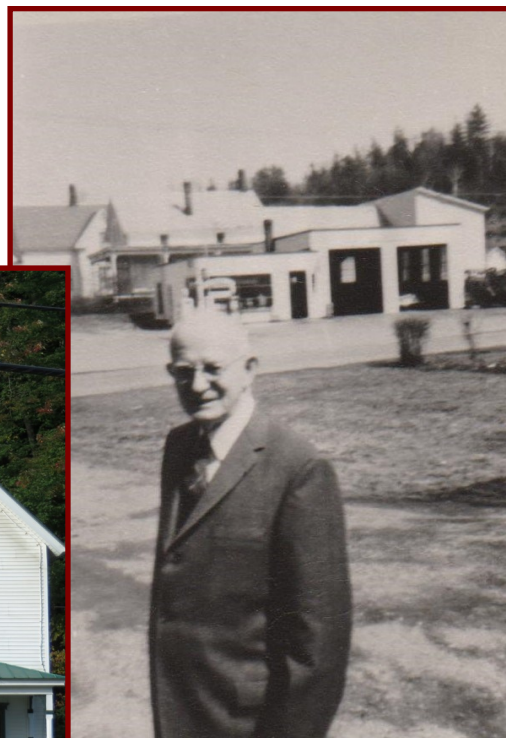
*Helen Crocker, 10 years old, 1930*



Helen married Dr. Lyndhurst P Holcomb (his 2nd wife).



*Helen Crocker Holcomb*



*Dr. Lyndhurst Holcomb*



*Johnson Historical Society*

"Holcomb House", the current location of the Johnson Historical Society, was originally the home and office of Dr. and Mrs. Helen Holcomb.

A group of these early settlers later moved to Richford, VT, where Hugh and Mary Miller (S.R.'s parents) went. After that, another group moved across the border to Sutton, Quebec, so there must have been a connection to Sutton also.

If there are any living relatives of Samuel, Ednah, or any of the others above it would be great to get your stories or connections!

***Board of Trustees:***

- Dick Simays, President
- Mary Jean Smith, Vice President
- Kelly Vandorn, Treasurer
- Lois Frey, Secretary (interim)
- Alice Whiting, Membership Chair
- Mike Dunham
- Linda Jones

***Holcomb House Open Hours***

*During the months of May and June:*

- ◆ *Second Friday from 9am to noon*
- ◆ *Fourth Sunday from 1-3pm*

*Open by appointment only during the months of July and August - contact any board member.*

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