

Colebrook Roads – Moses Road

Jan. 11, 1875 At a special town meeting, the voters were asked to consider discontinuing the highway between the Beech Hill Schoolhouse and the dwelling house of James O'Neil. [*This house, now gone, was at the intersection of Beech Hill Road and Moses Road.*]
Town Meetings, vol. 2, p.16

The result of this town meeting was that the town was to retain possession of the road, but that it should no longer be maintained. The main purpose of the short (just under one mile) road was to join several houses along the eastern reaches of Beech Hill Road with the Beech Hill Schoolhouse, located at the intersection of what is now Simons Pond Road and the original road connecting Colebrook River with the rest of the town. This schoolhouse, built in 1788, was the third constructed within the borders of Colebrook after the Sandisfield Road District School and the South School.

With the exception of a short section of the Old North Road, no present-day road in Colebrook now bears the same name that it was known by in bygone years. Actually, many never were given "official" names, usually being called by the name of the most prominent resident at any given time. This situation came to an end when the emergency 911 call was implemented. Now, for the first time, all streets and roads had to have names and all dwellings on those highways had to have prominently displayed numbers; this to facilitate emergency crews, such as from an ambulance from another town, to easily locate persons in distress. Colebrook, as well as most, if not all towns, had to appoint an ad hoc committee to fulfill these federal requirements. In our case, the committee was chaired by one of our town assessors, Peggy Lee. [No, she was not famous for her singing abilities.] Peggy had not grown up in town; as a matter of fact, she hadn't lived here all that many years, but like many in the same situation, was eager to volunteer for a position to be on a town committee.

The naming process had been successfully completed in all but two or three roads or segments of roads as the deadline approached, and Peggy decided to put the finishing touches on the list of Colebrook roads. She apparently figured that the first selectman would be the fastest and most reliable person in town to supply the information, so she set out to find him.

At the time, Frederick Wilber was first selectman and George Gray was second selectman. They could be found working on the roads somewhere if they weren't down at town hall. Peggy went looking, and found them somewhere attending to a road. After identifying the topic, the ensuing conversation went something like this: "What is the name of the short section of road off Beech Hill Road opposite Chapin Road?" That particular road had never had a name; there had never been a house on it. It had been abandoned since 1875 (see above) and had filled in over the years with brush and forest. The only use that it had been put to was for my father's cows to pass over while going to pasture, and that was only the northernmost four or five hundred feet. Fred and George knew this, but couldn't resist stringing Peggy along to test just how gullible she might be. Fred scratched his head a moment, then announced: "That's Holy Moses Road." At this point George piped up and said: "Wan't so holy!" Fred never missed a beat, replying: "Guess you're right, it's just plain Moses."

Peggy never picked up on the game joke that she was the butt of, merely jotting down the information she had been given on her clipboard. That done, she said "Thank

you so much!” Then she turned, got in her car and drove off. If she had looked in her rearview mirror, she probably would have seen two grown men rolling around on the road, holding their sides to keep from splitting with laughter.

I suppose she might have gotten the last laugh, because she submitted that name, along with all the other “official” Colebrook road names to the Dept. of Transportation in Hartford, and now they are all “carved in stone” to remain forever unchanged.

When I first heard this story, I thought that I would check it out, because I knew both men had lively senses of humor, and the story seemed almost too pat. I also knew that there had once been a family by the name of Moses who had lived somewhat north of this road along Simons Pond Road, but they never owned land on the abandoned road. I had to find out if this might have influenced the choice of the name. I first bumped into Fred down on his farm, and while talking about this and that, I asked him about Peggy Lee and Moses Road. He laughed and admitted that she had had the wool pulled over her eyes on that one. Later on I was talking to George Gray (Sr.), and he told me virtually the exact story. To the best of my knowledge, Peggy never heard any of this. Shortly after, she left town and moved to another state. Both Fred and George were aware that no one by the name of Moses had ever lived on the road.

In 1980 a family bought a strip of land along Moses Road and built a home 400 feet back from its intersection with Beech Hill Road. Because the voters in Colebrook had never divested themselves of this long abandoned section of road, the Town was responsible for building and maintaining a road to their driveway. Today there are two dwellings on Moses Road, no doubt the road having the strangest name origin of any in Colebrook.

Historic Bytes

Bob Grigg