

Colebrook, Ohio

June Senack, when she was the president of the Winchester Historical Society, gave the Colebrook Society some old news clippings. As is so often the case, the very top item proved to be “the catch of the day”. This newspaper clipping is from *The Winsted Herald* of September 2 1881, and it is entitled; “Letter from Colebrook’s oldest living son.” The ending is missing, but the portions concerning Colebrook seem to be complete. Here are the entire contents:

“Dr. H.H. Drake, of this village, [*Winsted*] permits us to make extracts from a letter recently received from his uncle, Mr. Halsey Phillips, of Colebrook, Ohio, 91 years of age, the oldest living native of our neighboring town of Colebrook, and the oldest resident of the county in which he lives. (Ashtabula County, Ohio.) The town in which Mr. Phillips now lives was named by him, in honor of his native town. In his earlier years he was its justice, lawyer, doctor, schoolmaster, town clerk and from the fact that he inhaled such a moral atmosphere as Colebrook and Winsted in his younger days, it may be presumed that he indulged in religious exhortation when occasion offered.

Mr. Phillips married Sally Hungerford, aunt of Dr. Drake, (and of Robert P. Pendleton, of South Norfolk – editor), who died several years since at the age of 77. There are probably few men living at his age whose mental and physical faculties are so well preserved as his. Last year, when writing a letter to Dr. Drake, he remarked that he felt a little stiff that day – having fallen *eighteen feet* the day before from a cherry tree, so instead of hoeing corn, he proposed to recuperate from his fall by answering a batch of letters.

THE LETTER:

Colebrook, Ohio, Aug. 13, 1881

“Your letters of June 23, also of July 13th, are received; also the views of the residents of the Phelps and Bass places for which you have my sincere thanks.” [*The term ‘views’, was an early phrase for a photograph. The Phelps place he is referring to is number 61 Phelps Road, the home of Mr. & Mrs. Manuel Cords. The Bass place is today number 145 Bunnell Street, the home of James and Linda Bickford.*]

“The old hotel of Capt. Arah Phelps looks as natural as life, [*This building is today number 2 Prock Hill Road, built by Arah Phelps in 1787, and which remained in the family until 2007.*] although I have not seen them for the past 67 years. [*This means that he left Colebrook for Ohio in 1814.*] Capt. Phelps’ daughters attended the same school that I did, the old ‘Rock’ schoolhouse. Gabriela and Aurelia Phelps, his two eldest daughters, were two fine girls. The Phelps farm and father’s farm joined, but the Bass farm did not; it was half a mile from father’s east line to Henry Bass’ west line.” [*The Phillips farm was located on what is today Shantry Road, about opposite from Robert and Nancy Jasmin’s home at number 77. There were two Phillips families in town at that time, the other being in Colebrook River, near where the Spencer Bridge was located at the south end. Ammi Phillips, the portrait artist, lived at the Shantry Road address, and thus might have been the brother of the man writing this letter, but I’m not absolutely certain of my facts here.*] “The Bass buildings were all built since I left.” [*A very important statement here; Hezekiah Simons was the first to build and live at this site in the early 1770s; as a matter of fact, the surveyor’s notes when the infant town of*

Colebrook laid out what is known as Bunnell Street in 1780 measured so many rods 'to the northwest corner of Hezekiah's shop.' As there are small and large sections to the present house, (Bickford's) we couldn't be sure whether or not the smaller wasn't the original dwelling. This statement seems to indicate that the Bass home was built by Bass himself, and that the original Simons building did not survive.] "I was well acquainted with Nathan Bass, Henry's father. He had three sons and two daughters. The names of the sons were Jason, Samuel and Henry; the daughters were Laura and Maria. Jason went to New York; Henry purchased the Capt. Allcox farm one half mile west of the Rock schoolhouse." [I believe that this farm was approximately where Mary Baker now lives at 40 Shantry Road.]

"If you ever go past the Rock schoolhouse, if you will stop and go seven or eight rods east [115 to 130 feet downhill] of the big rock, you will find a beautiful spring of water where I have drank many a time.

Aunt Sally (Sally Hungerford, who afterward married Mr. Phillips - editor), taught school several seasons at this schoolhouse. I remember well how everything looked 84 years ago in that part of town where I was born and attended school, and I remember well the stone bruises on my feet from going to school barefoot.

I am thinking what changes have taken place for the last 75 years in that part of the country where I was born, especially in Winsted. I attended school at the Academy in Winsted one term 75 years ago and boarded - -" [Here the newspaper is torn, and the narrative ends, but I hope that you will agree that what we do have is worth sharing. When we were researching the final destination of Seth Hurd, who left Colebrook for northeastern Ohio in 1807, just eight years prior to Halsey Phillips, we were struck by the number of towns that can be found back in Connecticut. Seth Hurd relocated in Southington, Trumbull County (named for Connecticut's governor Jonathan Trumbull); Colebrook is located about 18 miles northeast from there, in adjacent Ashtabula County. Between the two are the towns of Bristolville, West Farmington, Vernon, North Bloomfield and Windsor.

Thank you, June, for your continued support of your neighboring historical society, it is greatly appreciated.