

North, Enos – Footnotes to Ledger

[We are including these footnotes in the Colebrook website even though the actual ledger is not ready to be posted, because the descriptive terms should be of interest. Actually, you can get a pretty good feel for the content just by what is reproduced here.]

Enos North, who built, lived at and farmed the property now called the Hale Farm, located at the intersection of Connecticut Routes 183 and 182, kept a ledger that now resides at the Colebrook Historical Society. These explanatory notes were compiled in 1997 by Robert Grigg with the idea that it would make the ledger more reader friendly in modern times. The Colebrook Land Conservancy, which purchased the barn and much of the original acreage, restored the barn to reflect its 1797 origin. The ledger, which documents all of the business transactions for much of the first half of the nineteenth century that took place in and around this structure, should be kept with the barn in order that visitors and town residents can better appreciate its history.

Page 1

The term “hone”, or “stone” refers to a whetstone for sharpening scythes, axes, etc.

Frame work Enos North erected the frame of a new building.

Cowhouse In modern terms, this is a cow barn.

Shad This fish used to run up the West Branch of the Farmington River and possibly Sandy Brook.

The price of Rye grain Although slightly higher than normal, the price of this grain is of particular interest when you take into account the worldwide disruption of the food chain caused by the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815. The dust that was ejected and carried around the world was of such volume that world temperatures fell for the next few years, 1816 being the most affected. It became known as “The year without a summer”, because the northern hemisphere experienced abnormal bouts with frost throughout the spring, summer and fall. In many regions, crop prices took large jumps, but interestingly enough, not in Colebrook and the immediately adjacent towns. While it was a major inconvenience to American farmers, thousands of people in Europe starved to death as a result of the combination of the Napoleonic Wars (1796-1815) and this climatological disruption.

“Sledding wood” This term refers to the removal of logs cut in short sections (probably 4-8 foot lengths) by means of a flat wooden deck mounted on wooden runners (about 10-12 inches wide). Sleds were more reliable than wheeled wagons when used in woodlots, which often consisted of wet, or boggy areas. They were pulled by oxen, which, because of their cloven hooves, made them better adapted to unsteady footing than horses.

Page 2

Draging [Dragging] This misspelled term refers to cultivation using a heavy wooden triangular frame having long wooden teeth, or spikes. This broke up any chunks or clods of soil left by the plow. Hand hoeing put on the finishing touches.

Charcoal price Note the cost of an unspecified amount of charcoal delivered is \$1.50. The term “coal”, as used by Enos North is what we refer to as charcoal. Anthracite or

bituminous coal was unavailable here until the establishment of railroads. Winsted, the site of the nearest RR station, welcomed its first train in 1849.

Cider Note the large quantity consumed in town throughout this ledger. Reuben Rockwell, writing in the mid 1830s, stated that in the 1760s, apples did not do well in Colebrook. Something surely changed in 55 years (probably the development of more climate and soil friendly strains).

Value of charcoal this was .04¢ at the time; therefore he is making delivery of 100 bushels.

Delivery cost of \$1.00 for charcoal The difference on costs apparently is because Alderman's house is closer than Hubbel's.

"Drawing logs" and "sledding timber" was the same thing.

"Fanning" this term refers to winnowing, the process of removing chaff from the grain kernels. A scoop of grain was placed into a half-round wooden tray about two and a half feet in diameter with six-inch high sides. This was then held by side handles and flipped into the air in a motion not unlike the waving of a fan. This action tossed the grain into the air, where the chaff was carried off by the wind, leaving the heavier grains of wheat or rye to fall back into the tray in a usable condition.

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Sledding timber refers to the extraction of long logs, most likely destined for the sawmill to be cut into boards.

"Chopping large" refers to the size of the log. It took more time to cut a large log than a small log, so the pay was better.

"Dung" This term, used at the beginning of the nineteenth century, is better recognized today as "manure".

Sley [sleigh] shoes these are the iron runners on which the sleigh passed over the surface of the ground.

"Weaving" Most likely North's wife, or a neighbor's wife had a loom. This occupation is mentioned several times over the years. They probably did custom weaving.

Scythes The first scythes in Litchfield County were made by the Rockwells at their shop on Boyd Street in Winsted. New Hartford Machine Co. is currently located on this site. It is interesting to note that for another .08¢ he could have purchased it pre-sharpened.

Page 4

Flax was grown here in the early years. Flax seed, when processed, yields linseed oil.

Currency On this page we see one of the rare instances where you can make a comparison between the British monetary system and the American decimal system. There are 20 shillings in a pound (£).

Carting cider to the still is the only reference in this ledger to a still. They must have been making a form of brandy from the cider.

Page 5

Indian meal is corn meal, coarser ground than flour.

Page 6

Cutting rams means neutering.

Page 8

Carded refers to the process of cleaning and straightening wool after it has been shorn. On small farms such as this one, the process would have been done using a pair of wooden paddles with countless sharp nails protruding from one side. The wool was combed between these blades, after which it was ready to be spun into yarn.

Page 9

Wm Swift This refers to Capt. William Swift, a master builder and the man who built the Colebrook Store, the Historical Society building, the Winchester Historical Society's building in Winsted as well as others in town. He lived at what is today 38 Millbrook Road, where his house and shop can still be seen.

Blue dye Indigo was raised here and used to make a blue dye for fabrics. Elsewhere in Colebrook are sites of fulling mills. These mills processed newly woven cloth using fullers earth, a type of very fine clay, to prepare the material so that it would absorb the dyes in a uniform way. Without the fulling process the dyed material would be blotchy.

Page 10

Joseph Hurlbut In the past, land owners had to work off part of their taxes each year by working on the roads two or three days each spring and fall. As mud conditions in the spring made working more difficult, a higher rate of pay existed than in the fall. In this case, it appears that Enos North worked in the place of Joseph Hurlbut.

Bricks Rowley's brickyard was by the pond of the same name on Smith Hill just south of the Colebrook-Winchester town line.

Page 11

Shearing machine North used his wagons to transport goods, so that it can be said that among the many occupations the family possessed was that of teamster. The machine mentioned on this page probably refers to a hand-turned machine similar to the one in the Colebrook Historical Society for shearing sheep.

Roots North's employee, Shepard, carried two loads of roots. Because of the total cost of .34¢, they must have been quite light. Perhaps she was making medicinal elixirs.

George Jarvis is about to have a house built. Capt. William Swift, already mentioned, has been chosen as the builder, as the lumber is delivered to his shop, which is charged to Jarvis. Four months after the final entry, the doors that Swift made are hung. Two months later the walls are lathed and plastered, and one month after that his possessions are moved in (for the princely sum of \$1.00!). Today this is the northernmost house on Smith Hill Road, number 474.

Page 12

Arah Phelps' sawmill was located on the curve where Sandy Brook Road meets Sandy Brook just past the Colebrook Town Garage. The old roadbed can still be seen going up and over the shoulder of the hill at this spot. It was a particularly bothersome curve and even carried the name "Little Hogback".

Theron Rockwell's mill was located at the outflow from Brookside Pond on Deer Hill Road.

Page 13

Blue potatoes still exist in at least two forms in eastern North America. One variety has an olive-green skin with blue veins running through the flesh of the potato, which when boiled, causes the entire edible portion to turn blue. The other type, commonly grown in Prince Edward Island, Canada, has lumps that are blue, and locally referred to as “bluenoses”. By extension, the Islanders themselves came to be known as Bluenoses. Another application of the term is the name “Bluenose” for the famous sailing ship depicted on the Canadian .10¢ piece.

Paint from Hartford Judging from its weight, this was either white lead or red lead.

Page 14

Finding hay This term describes the process of asking around neighboring farms to find someone who had extra in their haymow (hayloft).

Page 15

A stone boat is an oblong wooden platform consisting of three or four two-inch thick planks, usually oak, attached at the front end to a metal plate, curved upward. They were about five or six feet in length and four feet wide. By definition it had to be flat on the ground so that stones could be rolled onto them to be transported elsewhere.

Page 16

Rowen hay is the term describing the second cutting of the season, quite often in late July or August.

Hitchcockville, named in 1821, remained so until 1866, when the name was changed to Riverton. This was a result of the US Postal Service having a problem with the similarity with Hotchkissville.

Page 17

Making rope to shew (shoe) cattle Oxen were shod on their outside hoof. As cattle can't stand on three legs as a horse can, they had to be led into a heavy wooden frame and then hoisted just off the ground by means of slings passed behind their front legs and in front of their hind legs. When Enos North speaks of making rope to shew cattle, he actually is making what we would call a sling.

On this page is the only reference made in 38 years to recreational activity.

Page 18

Getting shingles Several times mention is made to getting shingles from Sandisfield. Why Colebrook didn't produce them in sufficient numbers remains a mystery. We know that there always had been several shingle mills in town. The answer may lie in the fact that Chestnut was the most valuable wood for shingles due to their long life (they could last for upwards of one hundred years). We know from Colonial land records that there were relatively few Chestnut trees growing in Colebrook. Perhaps there were more in Sandisfield in the early years, if so, it could explain this.

Hooping Here North is performing the duties of a cooper. Hooping and placing the barrelhead required a high degree of skill.

Page 19

Tainter's sawmill The foundation and wheel pit for Tainter's sawmill can still be seen on Sandy Brook Road about ¼ mile upstream west of the first of the two bridges before you reach Connecticut Route 8.

Page 20

Dunghill fowl At the time of this writing, the origin of "dunghill fowl", which is used twice in this ledger, remains in doubt, although it is probably a descriptive term for Guinea fowl

Page 22

Calvin Sage had a leather tanning facility in Colebrook Center. Hemlock bark yields tannin, the chemical that cures, or tans leather. Reference to the tan house is on page 23.

Page 23

Tan house This facility was located on land just east of where Loon Brook passes under Conn. Route 183 in Colebrook Center and emerges on the other side as Center Brook.

Ox bows had to be steamed into a U-shape. They were 1½ - 2 inches thick and were most likely made of Ash, a very strong and supple wood.

Page 24

Mediation Fascinating – was there marital discord here and was Enos North, as a friend, called in to mediate? We'll never know for sure.

Fall butter In March he sells Fall butter. This reference is made to very light-colored butter produced when cows are deprived of green fodder. Carrots were sometimes fed to cows in the winter. The carriganon in the carrots gave the butter a yellow color, referred to as "June color". This color commanded a higher price per pound.

"Bailing," meant putting handles on pails. They might have been either wooden or iron. In this instance, my guess is wooden. Remembering the ox bows, he had the facilities to steam and shape wooden objects.

Red pigment The pigment used to produce the stain for inside closets, trim around mantle pieces, etc. It was derived from Polk weed berries and contained chemicals that made the wood immune from all types of beetles, ants, termites, etc. The inside trim at the Phelps Tavern in North Colebrook was prepared in this manner in 1787, and is today as solid as the day it was installed.

Page 25

A beetle is a large wooden, short-handled mallet with iron hoops near the ends to keep it from splitting. A mallet, or maul was similar, but had no iron hoops, as it was struck with the sides, not the ends.

Cutting bulls refers to the act of neutering a bull, thus converting him into an ox.

"Watered cider" I find this entry quite humorous, as North notes the entry is copied from Wm Swift's ledger book. Swift refers to "watered cider – ½ barrel valued at .34¢". A half-barrel of cider should have been .50¢. Was North caught trying to sell watered-down goods?