

Etna History

1820-1995

Updated by Grace Pushor and Crawford Carter Jr.
With technical assistance from the Etna-Dixmont School

Acknowledgements

A special "Thank You" goes to the following for their help in compiling this past and present History of Etna:

Gordon Bowden -- Computer

Cheryl (Tibbetts) Quinn -- Advisor and Copying Materials

Evelyn Smith -- Advisor and Copying

Students of the Etna-Dixmont School:

Adam Crocker and Matt Tourgee -- Typing 1820-1920 History

Nichole Curry, Amy Fisher, Glen Holman, Amy Appleton and
Matt Tourgee -- Interviewing

Crawford and Jean Carter -- Update 1970-1995

Crystal Horr -- Typing Individual Family Histories

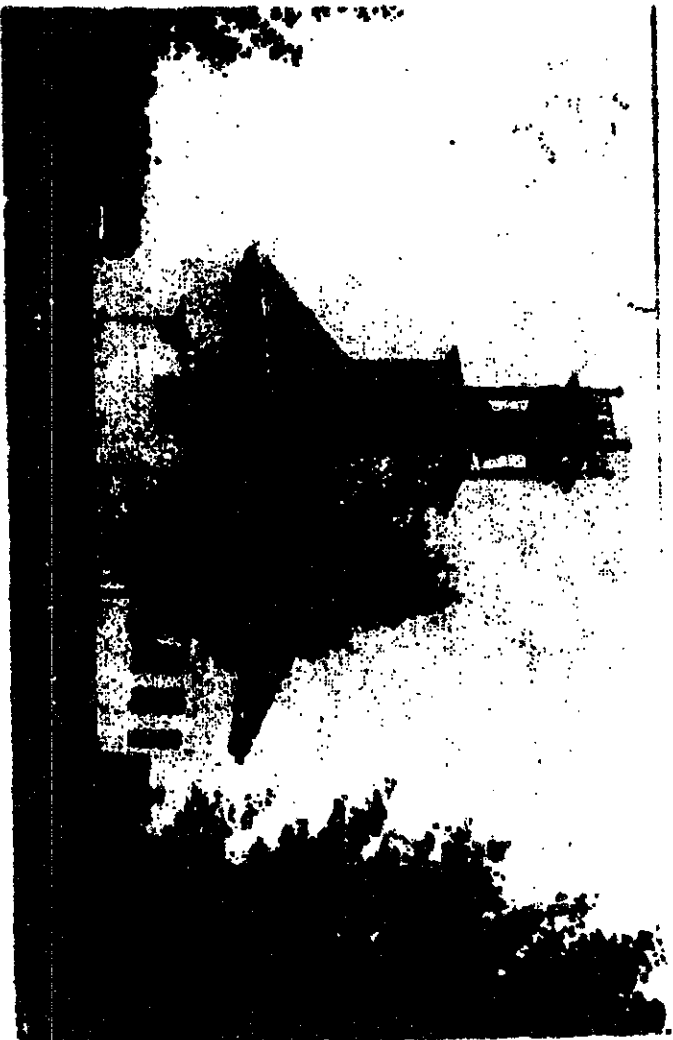
Tori Horr -- Typing Individual Histories

AND

To all the people of Etna who helped update the past to the present. I wish we could have involved more people.

Grace Pushor

History of Etna 1820-1920



**As written by
George Friend**

History of Etna 1820-1920

Written originally by George Friend

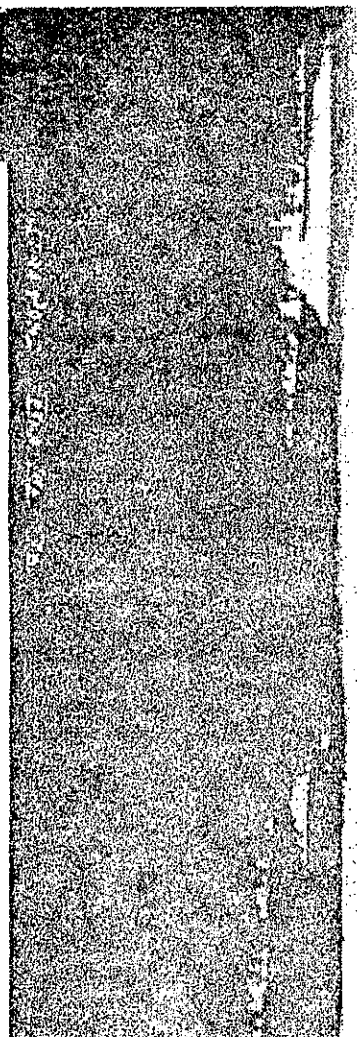
Recopied 1995 by Etna students of the Etna-Dixmont School

Matt Tourgee & Adam Crocker

Under the direction of Cheryl Quinn,

daughter of Charles Tibbets and grand-daughter of Harvey Tibbets

“ This township was granted by the Legislature of Massachusetts in 1794 to Bowdoin College with five other townships at the same time and was sold by the trustees of the collage soon after for ten cents per acre. The town then contained 23,040 acres; it now contains 14,880 acres more or less. It was lotted out in 1806 by Herrick & brother into eighty acre lots under the direction of John Crosby of Hampden. He had become owner of the township and afterward sold it to William Gray of Boston, Mass., reserving what he had sold to settlers and one sixth part which he had previously sold to Ruel William. One thousand two hundred acres were also reserved for schools, for the support of the gospel and for the first settled minister. But the first settled minister never got the land and no part of it ever went to support the gospel but in the end went to support schools. This land sold for about \$1.50 per acre but in the course of events it all went in to the town treasury and was used to pay running expenses. While it was in the hands of trustees it took quite a portion of the interest to pay the expenses of looking after it and other matters.”



The first settlement of Etna was made May 27, 1807 by Benjamin Friend and Phineas Friend who came from Sedgwick. They came by the way of Hampden to Emerson's Mills and from there by boat up the stream to Carmel. At Carmel they hired an ox team to take them to Etna. Both families occupied one log house, which they erected on the lower or northern part of what is now F. H. Wiggins orchard, which was then an unbroken wilderness, with just trees enough felled to make room to build the house upon. This property has never since been out of the possession of some one of the descendants of Benjamin Friend, the wife of the present owner being a great granddaughter. The house was built without boards, nails, or glass. The door was made of split cedar and hung with wooden hinges and a wooden latch, with a leather string on the outside to lift the latch; the rock chimney was topped off with split sticks laid in clay ; the roof was made of spruce bark laid upon poles with other poles on the top and held in place with strong withes. The splits forming the door were held together with pins. The house was sixteen by thirty feet, with fourteen occupants; eleven males and three females. The nearest neighbor was two miles off in an adjoining town. The only domestic animals that were brought with them, were one pig for each family and one dog. Immediately after the first house was erected, they built another on the same plan, near where Stillman H. Friend now lives. Into this house Phineas moved his family and this property has ever since been owned by his descendants.

Here on October 24, 1808, the first white child was born and in honor of the then proprietor of the town he was called John Crosby; to admit light into these houses, holes were cut into the logs, and in the course of the season, there were four squares of glass put into the houses, two lights in each house, set in a hole cut into the logs, furnishing each family with a very comfortable amount of light. The chamber floor was made of straight spruce poles, peeled, upon which the boys used to sleep of nights. Immediately after the two families were comfortably settled in their new homes, they began clearing the land. Each family felled about fifteen acres of trees and in the fall of that season the most of the land was cleared. In the spring of 1808 it was all sown to wheat and in the fall they harvested about three hundred bushels of the grain. The new settlers coming in that year made a quick market for all the surplus of crops.

The next arrival was in June, 1807, when Mr. Samuel Parker, who was by occupation a hunter, came. I am unable to state just where he located.

He commenced hunting that fall and after thinning out the game so as to make it unprofitable, in after years, he would take a back load of traps and a little salt and go up the Penobscot River to hunt for the same game in the wilds of the north, as he had been taking in Crosbytown, as this plantation was then called. Finally in the summer of 1819, after being here for 12 years, he moved with his family to the Passadumkeag River.

NOTE: The first female white child born in the town was Mary, daughter of Benjamin Friend [born 1809]

In the spring of 1808 Bela Sylvester came, cleared and built upon the farm now owned by H. M. Cole. On this place he lived and died; his wife also died here, after living to a good old age; also two daughters remained with their parents, Miss Lucy, who never married, and Nancy, who married Joseph Rundlett.

James Harden and Mr. John Jackson came this spring, also the three Dennetts [Reuben, Dennis, and John], two Sylvesters [Asa and Calvin], and David Hooper, all single men, but in the fall James Harden married him a wife in Sedgwick, then in Massachusetts, and now in Maine, and conveyed her on horseback, a distance of about fifty-five miles, to Crosbytown. This year Benjamin Friend erected the first framed barn just north of Mrs. Sadie Whitcomb's house, and Phineas Friend built him a log barn, about 25 ft by 35 ft and 14 feet high and covered it with bark. They were now ready to put in some stock; this they did by each importing a cow which they wintered on wheat straw which was said to be not half threshed. During the winter of 1808 and 1809 the inhabitants made a fence around a cow pasture, one mile square to keep their stock from straying too far. The spring of 1809 brought in quite a number of new settlers as they were then called. Among the new comers this year were John and Jesse Benjamin, both young men; Mrs. Emerson, a young widowed lady with three children; Solomon Harden, with a young wife. This year there were three children born. Reuben Dennett built the first frame house this year ever erected in the town, the same as is owned and occupied by Ben Wakefield, and into which he moved, during the summer, with a newly married wife. During this year Miss Behiah Friend taught the first school ever taught in town. She was the first girl courted on the plantation which resulted in her marriage to Mr. George Durham of No. 3, as it was then called, now Carmel. The school was taught in a log camp, 8 ft by 10 ft and made by Reuben Dennett.

Dennis Dennett built the second framed house. He lived in a log camp until he erected what is now the ell of the house and lived in this during the construction of the main house which was completed in 1813. In 1810 he built a barn , which was burned April 22,1881. This property has never been out of the possession of his direct descendants and is occupied by Roy Donaldson and wife and Fred Dennett.

In 1810 Phineas Friend built a barn forty-six by sixty-two feet. He hewed two sills sixty-two feet long both from one yellow ash tree. They were seven by eight inches. He took a large tree, sided the halves down to eight inches thick and split it in two and edged the halves up. They are good and sound now in the barn owned by Stillman H. Friend. This year Bela Sylvester and James Harden each built a barn. These two were later taken down to build larger barns. In the spring of 1811 the three Abbotts (Samuel, Peter and Moses) came with their families. During the year quite a number of sons and daughters were born increasing the population quite a good deal.

The Stuarts, Boyntons, and Moseleys also were among the early settlers. Of the latter, Deacon Elathan Moseley settled on what is now called the Bricket place and built the first blacksmiths shop there. Deacon Isaac Boynton located on what is now called the Kennard Place. The story is told that when about to erect a dwelling, he found four trees growing in such a position that by clearing away underbrush and trees, they would make corner posts, already set, for the contemplated shelter; this he did and boarded around them for the four walls of the house.

Edward Carter was among the early settlers. He settled on the farm now owned by Mrs. Louisa Downs at Etna Center. His family consisted of his wife Ruth and thirteen children.

Another one of the early settlers was Abram Tarr who lived on the hill west of Stillman Friend's house. This hill was called the Tarr Hill and is still known by that name, although I think Isaac Leathers was the first to live there.

In May 1811 the Rev. Paul Ruggles preached the first sermon ever delivered in the plantation in the log house of Benjamin Friend. In June following, he baptized Benjamin Friend and wife and they united with the Baptist Church in Carmel, of which Mr.Ruggles was pastor. Mr. Abel

Merrill from Blue Hill taught the first winter school, in the winter of 1810 and 1811.

In 1811 Mr. Benjamin Friend began the manufacturing of potash, continuing for a few years, then sold his kettles to Mr. Bela Sylvester, who continued the business for several years and made what was called pearlash, which took the place of the soda of the present day.

The first death in town was that of a young child of Mr. John Jackson. Mr. Calvin Sylvester died of consumption in October, 1813, which was the second death in town. Mr. Sylvester left a widow and four small children in a very destitute condition, but by the kindness and generosity of neighbors, she was made quite comfortable until she was married for the second time to a Mr. John Dunton of Hampden. This was the first marriage solemnized in Etna. Josiah Kidder, Esquire, rode horseback seventeen miles to perform the ceremony. Mr. Dunton had four children and Mrs. Sylvester had four which made quite a large family.

These pioneers never had any taxes to pay until 1814, or about that time, when they had to pay, or were called upon to pay a direct tax for the support of the War of 1812. No one knows how much was paid by all, but it is known that Phineas Friend's tax was \$1.35 which he paid.

From 1809 public schools were maintained both summer and winter, although schoolhouses were unknown. The schools were supported by free contributions of those who felt able to pay even a little and all the taxes they had to pay was a small State and county tax until the town was incorporated as Etna, February 15, 1820, by the general court of Massachusetts. The name was selected by Benjamin Friend and was taken from Webster's old spelling book.

From 1808 to 1814 crops of every kind were very bountiful, but 1815 and 1816 was the reverse, and 1816 was called the "cold season", and June 5, 1816 about six inches of snow fell, and corn and beans were a total failure, and a very light crop of wheat and rye was grown. Butter was worth at Hampden from ten to twelve cents per pound and was the only product the settlers had to sell and not much sale for it at that price, so that they were in a very destitute condition for the wherewithal to support life.

Until 1816 all the communication the inhabitants had with Newport, then called Great East Pond Plantation, was by the way of No. 4, Range 3, now Stetson, but about this time (1816) the Court appointed a committee to lay out a county road from Carmel to Newport through Etna ; but the men of Crosbytown were not suited with the location, so they took it into their own hands and laid it out in a different place, where it suited them a great deal better and where it now is. No one disputed their right to have the road where they wanted it. In 1821 this road was made so as to be passable, but in a poor condition. That year the town raised a large highway tax and after the inhabitants had worked out their tax, they voted to work it out again, which they did, thus making the road better passable. This was the first year these new residents were taxed and they had to pay more than two thirds of the tax, otherwise the road would not have been made at the time. One and one-half miles of the west end of the road was through an unbroken wilderness.

The first settlement in the western part of the town was made by Timothy Barden on what is now known as Barden Hill.

On Sept. 4, 1819, Benjamin Friend together with his sons were engaged in falling trees on the place now owned by Charles B. Friend when a bad accident took place. A drove of trees were started and but for a very unfortunate occurrence, all would have gone well. A limb from a large tree struck a sapling, bringing it to the ground and which in its descent struck the son, Thorndike, on the head, killing him instantly. This was the first sudden death that had occurred in town, but on Feb. 14, 1821, seventeen months later the father Benjamin Friend was returning from a professional visit in a neighboring town, toward the close of the day, and was turning into his yard when his horse became frightened and began to run, throwing Dr. Friend out of the sleigh and killing him instantly. Thus occurred two violent deaths, in one family, in less than one and one half years. August 11, 1822, another calamity happened, when Mr. Prince Ward was drowned in the Parker Pond by the upsetting of a boat, leaving a wife and three small children. He was the first one ever buried in Etna.

In 1822 the Rev. Daniel McMaster moved into town and began his duties as pastor of the Baptist church. He lived here until 1831 when he moved out of town, but still continued to preach here until the office was filled by the Rev. Jacob Hatch in 1834.

