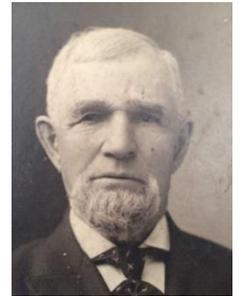


BOLTON HISTORY GROUP

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If you are like me, you often drive by a place in town and wonder about its history. Bolton has changed over the years since its inhabitation of early settlers. One location, those driving on I-89 northbound may wonder about the old dairy barn located amongst numerous homes on Mountain View Drive just beyond the Notch Road tunnel. Speaking to some local townspeople past and present, I have come to understand that the barn was used for dairy cows from 1965 to 1982 by Diane Champagne's family who owned the property and raised their family on the farm. The new owners that lived there after sold several acres to a family member who developed and built all the homes located within the development. But, who lived there in prior years?

The 1869 Beers map for this location shows a C. Whalen living on this property. Cornelius Whalen born in 1826, immigrated from Ireland with his father Bartholomew. He, along with wife Margaret (O'Neil), also from Ireland, became naturalized citizens in 1846. It is unknown if they were together prior to coming from Ireland or met in America. The couple married in 1853 and made their life in Bolton and had six sons. The Whalen family had a beautiful farm of 400+ acres, one of the biggest in town at the time. The family was very prominent in town as well as in state affairs; their two oldest boys would go on to be Railroad Station Agents at Bolton. The oldest son Thomas was also a Democratic representative for the town, the postmaster, druggist, and sold watches and clocks. A newspaper clipping from 1874 tells of their cows getting on the adjacent railroad tracks and eight head of the family's cattle were killed by a passing freight train, surely a huge loss at the time.



In 1889 however, Cornelius and his wife Margaret leased their beautiful farm to a Mr. Smith from Williston and moved to Richmond. In 1890 at age 63, Cornelius sold the farm to John O'Brien of Hinesburg. John worked the land as a prosperous farmer and a prominent figure in town affairs until his death in 1917 at age 73. John and his wife Mary had 10 children (8 boys and 2 girls). One son died the following year in the 1918 flu pandemic.

The O'Brien family continued to own the property after John's death, but they eventually leased the property to Everest Pouliot. The Pouliot family immigrated from Quebec, and they must have seen value in the beautiful valley farm. During their lease, in 1926, John O'Brien's son Francis and his wife Alice sold the farm to Moses Whitcomb who honored the lease agreement between the O'Brien's and Pouliot's. The Pouliot family leased much of the land between Jonesville and East Bolton village which contained two homes and numerous acres of land including the Phillips farmland to the east of the so-called O'Brien property. The Pouliot's lived through one of the scariest times in Bolton history, the flood of 1927. Gardner Lane's 'History of Bolton', written in 1989, details the scary evening for Pouliot and others.

'One of the heaviest losers of this much devastated section was Everest Pouliot. At his two farms eighty-seven head of stock perished. His big barn was wrecked and his meadows covered with an unknown depth of sand, silt, and stones. In the Pouliot home there were thirty trapped upstairs until the following Saturday morning. Not thinking of water, all members of this family had retired for the night. In recounting the events of the night Pouliot said, "First I hear boy yell, "Water in house." Then I light lamp and see glistening lake in my house. Jumping out of bed I landed in water up to my knees." The family resorted immediately to the upper floors of their home. At their lower house Ernest Gregware of Barre, a steam shovel operator at Bolton, who, with his wife and 4-month-old baby, had quarters

on the ground floor of the lower Pouliot house, He was first awakened by something tipping over in the room. Other members of the household, numbering ten, hurriedly got together a few things from upper drawers and went upstairs and dressed. Wading in water to his neck he secured a hammer. With this he tore off boards to build a raft. His material was not sufficiently strong, however, to make a raft stable, so using a pole, he picked and sorted from the wreckage floating by the house until he had what he wanted and built a raft which later ferried the whole household to shore and safety, 200 feet away. Using a rope made of torn bedding Gregware first swam to shore and made one end fast to a tree. Even the dog was saved, Gregware making a special trip to take him off. The rest of the night, Friday and Friday night was passed in a camp.'



Moses Whitcomb of Richmond owned the property until his death in 1932. I have no evidence that Moses ever lived on the property with his family. It is possible he purchased it for the land value. Moses's estate, under the Executor of Estate James Kennedy, was sold to the Waterbury Savings Bank who then sold the property to Thomas and Nora Ryan of Richmond in March 1933. Pole line rights were conveyed to Green Mountain Power in 1939. After the death of Thomas, Nora sold the property in February 1947 to Ernest and Bessie Gokey of Bolton. Ernest Gokey sold 387 acres east of Notch Road, which included the house and barn to L. John Cain, John J. Deachenes, and Norman A. Burnett, possibly out-of-town developers, as the land was being sought as a clear shot for the Interstate-89 build. The Gokey's retained the remainder of the land to the west of Notch Road. VELCO (Vermont Electric Power Company) was given rights to the acreage that the pole lines occupied.



The three men sold most of the property to Henry and Irene Champagne of Colchester in 1965. The Champagnes moved to the Bolton farm and raised their family until 1982. When they moved to Bolton, the Interstate had just about been completed. The property line was now the Interstate boundary. Diane Champagne (daughter of Henry and Irene) recalls they did not have a driveway to the house because of the Interstate build. Her father Henry trucked gravel from the opposite side of the train tracks and built the driveway in a weekend from the Notch Road entrance. Telephone service did not come to the home until 1966. Part of the property was sold to Leon Wagner by the Champagne's in 1979.

After Henry Champagnes death, Irene sold the property to Julie Bain and Mark Winslow in 1982. Jamie Batchelder tells the story that his Aunt Julie and Uncle Mark sold several acres to his father who developed the land and built many of the houses currently on Mountain View Drive. He tells of a lot of fun times at his aunt and uncles house exploring and playing with his cousins. The Winslow's sold to house, barn, and the remaining nine and a half acres of the original farm to Donald and Ann Whitman in 1988, who continue to own the home.

This is the view that many see driving north on the Interstate. Our town history is surrounding us just waiting to rediscover! If you have a story, photo, or a lead please get in touch. Let us discover our town together!



(Pictures above are of Cornelius Whalen, his son Thomas. Photos of the Pouliot home after the flood of 1927 show the destruction of the 2nd floor siding and boards missing which were used to raft to safety as detailed above. Also shown are photos of the barn, home (destroyed in flood) and field during the same time. These photos were given to Ann Whitman by Jeanne (Pouliot) Yadow. Jeanne was the daughter of Everest Pouliot. Final group of three photos are taken around the 189 build in the 1960s and early 1970s).