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John Ball Experiences - Slavery Firsthand in Darien, Georgia 1822-1823

By Howard Oedel

John Ball, born on Tenney Hill, Hebron, New Hampshire in November 1794, became famous for his travels especially his experience on the third Wyeth transcontinental expedition to Portland, Oregon, and from there to San Francisco, Hawaii, French Polynesia, etc. etc.. John Ball was an inveterate traveler and his autobiography is aptly entitled Born to Wander. Eventually he arrived in Michigan as a land spectator and established a reputation as one of the founders of Grand Rapids. He never lost his urge to roam the world and continued to travel his whole life. Even as a little boy looking out from his home with a magnificent view of Newfound Lake he was excited by what might lay beyond. One of his first explorations as a child was to go north a mile or so to Tenney Mountain and to catch a view of the White Mountains to the north and east. What lies beyond, he wondered?

As a student at Dartmouth he led a group of boys to conquer Mt. Washington much against the advice of Abel Crawford. It was an exciting but nearly disastrous adventure. Continuing on, he explored The Lakes Region and even made a trip to Montreal in his senior year at Dartmouth, class of 1820.

After college he went to Lansingburgh, New York and studied law and taught school, boarding with his sister Deborah and brother-in-law, William Powers. A trip to New York in 1822 found him wandering the docks and wishing for a sea voyage.

Ball seized an opportunity to board a ship bound for Darien, Georgia, way south on the Altamaha River. It was November, 1822, and the ship left New York in a storm. More storms plagued the ship all down the coast and near Darien the ship was stranded on a sand bar. After a few days, the ship was pounded to pieces by the high seas. John Ball and all other passengers, save one, were rescued by the crew of another ship that happened to come by and appreciated their predicament.

John Ball found himself in Darien, Georgia, a strange place, with orange groves and rice plantations, a climate in December much like that of October in Hebron, so he wrote.

Of course the most fascinating discovery was the preponderance of blacks in the area. Here were very few free negroes and there only a fifth of the population was white. John was successful in founding a private school for white children and had ample time to observe the slave system at work, as well as, to continue to study law, his chosen profession.

His observations concerning negroes and their way of life in a slave society are especially poignant. It's true his reactions were personal and uncorroborated, but are nonetheless noteworthy.

He was amazed at one large plantation owned by a Mr. Butler who lived in Philadelphia, and operated by only one white overseer, in charge of some 400 negroes.

On a Sunday, a day off for blacks, several thousand negroes would come to town to socialize and buy and sell goods which they had grown or made on their own time. "A happier, jolly set

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of creatures I never saw” wrote Ball.

Curfew was at eight o'clock, sounded by the town bell. Every white resident was required to take his turn at patrolling the streets and apprehending blacks who might, conceivably, be up to “some mischief.” Punishments, as he recalled, might be a night in jail or going without supper..... He carefully noted there was never any physical abuse that he observed.

One time Ball witnessed a sheriff's sale of some 60 to 80 men, women, boys and girls from one plantation. “There was great grief among them that they would be bid off separately and thus parted.” But good news arrived; the problems faced by the owner had been solved. “When told they were all going home again together you never saw a happier set.”

“I noticed,” wrote Ball, “that when anything happened to them, like the loss of a child, their grief seemed deep.... But in a few days all was apparently forgotten and the afflicted mother as gay as ever.”

So Ball's appraisal of negro slavery in the deep south was one of approval? Not so, in fact. Oddly perhaps, Ball wrote.... “saw much that satisfied me that the African and Caucasian are constitutionally unlike, and cannot by any education be made, even to fully understand each other, anymore than the ox and the horse. Each may have good qualities, but each in his own way. The negro docile.... or he could not be enslaved, cheerful under all circumstances...”

This seemingly unusual appraisal of white and black coexistence is remarkably like that of Abraham Lincoln who felt without any universal support - that the best hope for blacks, after emancipation, was colonization, preferably back to Africa.

Ball also had a good chance to study law in Darien, particularly as it applied to the institution of slavery. “Some of the provisions”, he wrote, seemed strangely inhuman, such as making it penal to teach them to read, and others quite humane, making it lawful for anyone to take an old and decrepit slave who was neglected by his owner, and care for him and enforce the owner to meet the charge”.

Ball ended up his narrative of his winter and spring in Darien, Georgia with this significant statement:

“I saw nothing of the barbarous physical treatment of the slave that has been so much talked about at the north, nor do I believe it ever existed only as an exception to the general rule, with brutal men, whose natural cruelty is shown elsewhere towards domestic animals... Still I saw and felt its (slavery's) terrible blighting effect on the country and inhabitants and ever after viewed it as a national curse.”

Additional Thoughts

In looking over the Collins and Towle article on abolitionism in Hebron (January 2008 Gazette) and the role played by Nathaniel Rogers in the 1836 Grafton County Convention of abolitionists in Hebron, it occurred to me that Ball may well have known Rogers, both having been Dartmouth students at nearly the same time. Perhaps John Ball decided to make his trip to Darien to see slavery first hand so he could comment intelligently on the subject.

At any rate, in the winter of 1866, John Ball took an extended trip throughout the South to gauge the effects of the Civil War on both blacks and whites. But that is another story....

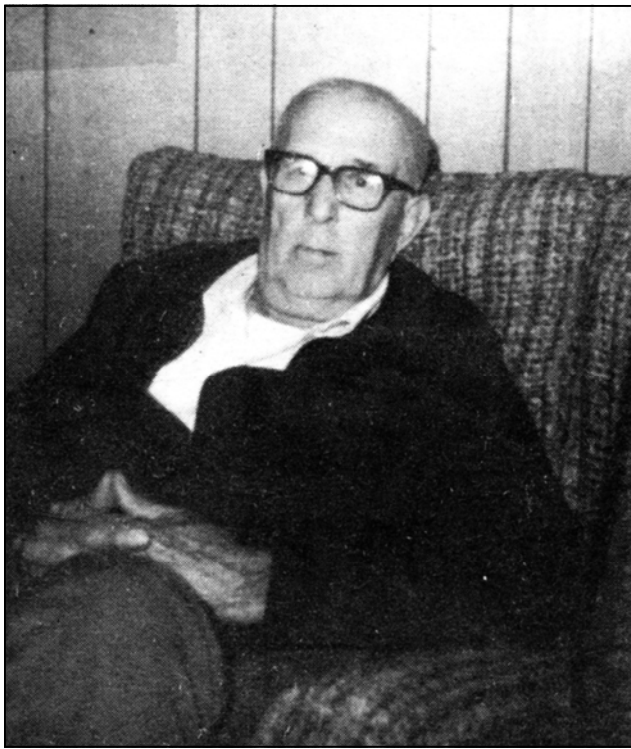
One last postscript: About twenty five years ago my wife and I stopped in Darien, Georgia and presented a copy of John Ball's journey to Darien to the local historical society. We never heard a word from those folks.....

The Murder of Rodney Adams By Ron Collins

At 3:30 in the morning on December 7, 1975, Chief of Police Richard Merrill was woke up by a phone call from the New Hampshire State Police. They wanted to know if he had a Rodney Adams and a Thomas Tully in Hebron. Chief Merrill, said that yes he did, but why were they asking? Because, the State Trooper explained, a Thomas Tully was stopped for erratic driving in Massachusetts and he was driving a truck registered to a Rodney Adams of Hebron. Upon ques-

(Continued from page 2)

tioning Thomas Tully said he got the truck from Rodney Adams. When asked why Mr. Adams gave him the truck, Tully answered, "I killed him, I murdered him. Up above Sculptured Rocks on a logging road in Hebron" With that confession the State Police were following up with Chief Merrill to see if Rodney was alive or dead, and hence the early morning phone call.



Rodney Stanley Adams in 1973

At that time, Thomas Tully had been living in Hebron with the daughter of Hebron resident Howard Johnson. He lived within five hundred feet of Rodney Adams. On December 6, the day Rodney Adams died, his across the street neighbors, Everett and Kathy Begor, saw Rodney in his truck with Tully and even tried to flag him down, but Tully probably was holding a gun on Mr. Adams, and he drove on by toward Groton without slowing. That was the last time anyone ever saw him alive.

Chief Merrill went to Mr. Adams' home on Groton Road in Hebron and looked through the windows but could see no sign of Mr. Adams. Chief Merrill, also a Policeman in the Town of Groton, started searching the roads "above" Sculptured Rocks which are, contra to Mr. Tully, in

Groton not Hebron. There were some six inches of snow on the ground and it was cold. He had no luck that day but did spot a State Trooper car up one logging road. Chief Merrill approached the troopers and explained who he was and that he would continue looking for Mr. Adams.

The next day, Chief Merrill, along with ex-Chief of Police Nelson Adams (a cousin of Rodney Adams) started searching again. They decided to check out all the logging operations near Sculptured Rocks. In the process they ran into Ed Smith of Groton, who told them about some logging behind the Pebbles property. This was the logging road that the troopers had been parked on the day before. Chiefs Merrill and Adams went back up the logging road some two hundred yards beyond where the troopers had been parked, and there Nelson Adams spotted the body of Rodney Adams up on a bank. Thomas Tully had made Mr. Adams sit on a rock and there he shot him in the head.

There were no radio frequencies shared by state and local police then, so Chief Merrill came back to Hebron and called the State Troopers. He was informed that the troopers were on route with Thomas Tully because they were going to ask him to show them where he killed Rodney Adams. Now that the body had been found they did not want Tully near the crime scene, so as to not contaminate it.

Two weeks later Thomas Tully was arraigned for the first degree murder of Rodney Adams. It turned out he had a police record some three pages long of assaults and other crimes.

The case never went to court. Instead in a letter written by the New Hampshire Attorney General David Souter (now US Supreme Court Justice, David Souter), it was explained that Mr. Tully pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity and was sentenced to life in a maximum security wing of the Forensics Unit of Concord State Hospital. Two years later, Mr. Tully was transferred to the general population of the state prison, where in October 1978, he was released as a free man. So he served less than three years for the murder of Rodney Adams.

In Memorium

On Sunday, November 30, 2008, Richard Braley, the oldest member of our society passed away. Richard was born on October 25, 1913. Richard and his wife Flora (Remick) Braley lived most of their life in Hebron where they had their two daughters Myrna and Carol.



Richard Nelson Braley taken Nov. 11, 2008
by Howard Oedel

Fishing in Newfound Lake

Salmon were introduced to the lake in 1866 when 134 salmon were brought in from Lake Ontario. Commercial fishing never panned out but many fisherman began coming to the lake and this was the start of the tourist phase of Newfound's history. The lake produced enough salmon and trout that it became an official place for the state to collect spawning fish to help stock other lakes and rivers. In 1889 the state erected a fish hatchery (the first of three that were built on the lake) near the dam at the end of the lake. The first stocking of the hatchery was with 525,000 eggs at a cost of \$78.90.

How about other species? Smelt were introduced into the lake in 1870, blue-backed trout in 1879, saibling in 1881, white fish in 1883, lake trout from Lake Superior in 1885 and Chinook salmon in 1908. A quote from Charles E. Green-

wood's, *Newfound Lake*, page 42, gives an idea as to the quantity and size of fish caught in the lake in the 1880's. "Trout in Newfound goes back to the first settler and probably to the Indians when they were about the shores of the lake. A very strongly worded letter in the 'Enterprise' in 1883 refers to the continuing abuse being heaped upon the trout at the 'old spawning grounds' between Mayhew Island and Pike's Point where literally thousands of these fish covered several acres, each fish weighing between three and 15 pounds and some as much as 20 pounds. It was felt by the writer that the slaughtering of the fish through spearing was unwarranted, especially during the spawning season and that it would eventually cause the gradual disappearance of this fish."

The largest lake trout ever caught in New Hampshire was caught in Newfound Lake in April 1958, when Albert Staples of Attleboro, MA landed a 28 ½ pound lake trout that measured 38 ½ inches long and was 24 ½ inches in circumference.

Many, mostly fishermen and hunters at first, and leisure seekers later, started searching for accommodations during their visits to the lake area. What were they hunting and fishing for? The 1895 Fish and Game Laws of the State of New Hampshire lists the following fauna as available in the Newfound Lake area: moose, caribou, deer, beaver, sable, otter, fisher, raccoon, hares, rabbits, muskrat, woodcock, grouse, partridge, ducks, trout, salmon, bass, pike, and smelts. Today all of the fish are still with us but of the birds only turkeys, which were introduced after 1920, are still hunted. Of the animals only the moose, deer and raccoon are to be seen routinely today, while the fisher cat and otter are becoming rare.

In the fall of 1887 the Society for Protection of Fish was formed with George Fowler elected as chairman. The objective of the club was to go after those still illegally spearing fish on spawning beds and catching salmon illegally in the Cockermouth River, and to aid in the continuous restocking of the lake.

In the fall of 1892 the State Fish Commissioners took some of the larger trout from Newfound Lake for exhibit at the World's Fair in Chicago. In 1901 trout from Newfound were on display at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo.

The Lifetime Members of the Hebron Historical Society are:

Benefactor

Ronald Collins

Life

Nelson Adams
Yvonne Affronti
Lee Alexander
Alan Barnard
Bruce Barnard
Everett Begor
Kathy Begor
Patricia Biron
Flora Braley
Vincent Broderick
Barbara Brooks
Robert R. Brooks
Anne Bryan
Janice Collins
Mark Connor
Alan Esty
Anne Esty
Rita Finn
Shirley Fortesque
Priscilla Gemmill
Mary Lenssen
Audrey Lindgren
Gordon MacDougall
Kenneth MacLeod
Caryl "Ralph" McQuilkin
Douglas McQuilkin
Marcia Morris
Barbara Nicholson
John Nunes
Howard Oedel
Elaine Pagliaro
Kirk Phelps
Carol Phillips
Jane Ramsay
Nancy Sycamore

Life Couple

Dick & Joyce Cowern
John & Patricia Dunklee
Lin & William Everett
Richard & Gail Howell

Dick & Kathi Keller
Carol & Roger LaFontaine
Patrick & Jo Anne Moriarty
Martha and Mark Twombly-Coulson
Phil & Betsy Twombly

**HEBRON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HAPPENINGS
by Barbara Brooks**

The HHS board and some of its members have had a busy year and we thought you might like to know what they have been up to.

In July, a booth at the Fair allowed visitors to purchase our publications, become HHS members and to learn about our future plans.

September is our annual meeting month. After a bountiful pot luck supper, we were entertained by Prof. Robert Goodby from Franklin Pierce Univ. speaking on "Digging into the Native History of NH." HHS board members attended a program in Campton sponsored by their HS. The presentation being "Women Tavern Keepers."

The Bristol Library sponsored a slide show program on the Stella Marion which we hope to have as one of our future events.

In November three members travelled to Campton for the fall meeting of the Baker Valley Historical Society Commission, of which we have been a member for some time. This is an opportunity to hear from other societies and learn much about programs, memberships, maintaining the collection etc. etc. November also saw the HHS hosting the annual Veterans' Day program on the common. It was gratifying to have over 40 attendees with many coming together after the ceremony in the church basement for hot coffee and refreshments.

Hebron Tid-Bit

Eliza Nelson Blair, author of *Lisbeth Wilson: A Daughter of New Hampshire Hills* was married in the front room of "Six Chimneys and a Dream" and lived in the large house at the intersection of Hunt Road and Wade Road. *Lisbeth Wilson* is the story of a young woman here in Hebron around 1820 when the Methodist Church and the Puritans did not see eye to eye. Lisbeth, from a Puritan family, wanted to marry a Methodist.



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Hebron Historical Society Program Events Calendar for 2009.

February 14 - 6:30PM - "The Face of Lincoln," celebrating Lincoln's 200th Birthday. **Desserts and beverages will be served**

May 30 - 5: 30PM - Pot Luck Supper with program to follow at 6:30: "Women and Tavern Keeping" by Dr. Marcia Blaine, PSC.

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Membership Update
DUES DUE JANUARY 2009

A membership gift to a family member or friend is a wonderful way to help preserve our history and archives.
 Membership forms are included on the back page of this newsletter for your use.

Thank you for your support,
Barbara Brooks, Membership Chair.

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from the Hebron
Historical Society

Hebron Videos on DVD: including **Merrill's Campground 1930's, Historical Hebron** and **The Beauty of Hebron**, \$25.

Sergeant John Ordway, A History with his Genealogy. Price \$10.00 for non-members, \$12.00.

The Genealogies of The Early Settlers of Hebron, NH 1761-1800
 The book of 185 pages and is completely indexed. Price \$20.00 for non-members, \$15.00 for members.

The "Genealogies of The 19th Century Residents of Hebron, NH
 The book of 178 pages and is completely indexed. Price \$20.00 for non-members, \$15.00 for members.

Names Included: Adams, Ball, Barnard, Bartlett, Beede, Berry, Blood, Bowers, Braley, Browne, Butterfield, Case, Cheney, Cilley, Clement, Colburn, Colby, Crawford, Crosby, Cummings, Davis, Dustin, Esty, Farley, Farren, Fowler, Fox, George, Gilman, Goodhue, Gould, Greenleaf, Hardy, Hazelton, Heath, Hobart, Hoyt, Huckins, Jesseman, Jewell, Jewett, Johnson, Kelley, Kendall, Keyes, Kidder, Lovejoy, McClure, Melvin, Merrill, Moore, Morgan, Morse, Moses, Murch, Muzzey, Nelson, Nevens, Nevens, Norris, Noyes, Nutting, Ordway, Page, Parker, Perkins, Phelps, Pierce, Pike, Powers, Putney, Rawlins (Rollins), Remick, Roby, Rogers, Sanborn, Sealy (Cilley), Shuttuck, Smith, Vickery, Walker, Ward, Whipple, Whitmore, Wise, and Wright.

These books and DVD may be purchased directly from the Hebron Historical Society
PO Box 89
Hebron, NH 03241

