



# The SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society  
Volume 20, Number 3      Autumn 2017

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## Joseph Henry Bodwell



Joseph Henry Bodwell  
(1891 - 1974)

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(We still love a good story! Our last issue included the first part of this story. Here is the conclusion. We've had lots of glowing comments on this story. We hope you like it).

## Joseph Henry Bodwell, Part II

By Mary Annis

*Member Patricia Leland Mereen sent this article written by Joseph Bodwell as part of an autobiography written for his grandchildren. He is known as "Gramps" for this reason. This is the second of three parts of these wonderful reminiscences.*

In part I of our story, "Gramps" was doing a demonstration of chickens before a group of skeptical farmers.

"Gramps" was getting the birds ready to place on the table where they would expect to see it fly away, thereby having another laugh on him. But "Gramps" casually layed the bird on the table and, turning to Brownie, seemed to forget the bird completely.

"Gramps" said "Let's have your hen now and you get another one out of the crate for more comparison." You could hear a pin drop.

Brownie, who had never seen this done before, pointed to the hen that "Gramps" had put one the table and then turned his back on. "Aren't you going to tie down that bird so that it won't be flying all around the Hall?" Brownie asked.

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### The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

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From the *Piscataquis Observer*

### NEVER GROW OLD

—1877—

I looked in the tell-tale mirror,  
 And saw the marks of care,  
 The crows feet and the wrinkles,  
 And the gray in the dark brown hair.  
 My wife looked o'er my shoulder –  
 Most beautiful was she;  
 "Thou wilt never grow old, my love," she said  
 "Never grow old to me

For age is the chilling of heart,  
 And thine as mine can tell,  
 Is as young and warm as when first we heard  
 The sound of our bridal bell!"  
 I turned and kissed her ripe red lips:  
 "Let time do its worst on me,  
 If in my soul, my love, my faith,  
 I never seem old to thee!"

### WHAT DO I LOVE?

—1852—

I love the smallest leaf that grows,  
 The streamlet's brink beside;  
 I love the frailest shell that's washed  
 By Ocean's foaming tide.

I love to watch the faintest star  
 That beams in yon blue sky;  
 I'd bless each ray the night-queen speeds,  
 From her pure throne on high.

I fain would catch each warbled note,  
 The freest wild bird sings,  
 And kiss each little flower that sends  
 Its breath on zephyr's wings.

The sparkling dew drops on the grass,  
 The pearly clouds at even,  
 And every trace on nature's page,  
 Are emblems blest of heaven.

**The well known Stallion**  
**"BROWN HARRY,"**

Will make the present Season as follows : Commencing  
 May 22d ;  
 Mondays and Tuesdays at the PISCATAQUIS CENTRAL PARK ; the balance of the time at the NICHOLS PLACE, DEXTER. Terms of service, Thirty Five Dollars for single service—Fifty Dollars for warrant. All accidents at the risk of the owners of Mares. Mares from a distance will be kept at reasonable terms,  
 May 18, 1871. 27

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**A BULL**

**W**ILL be kept at the Farm of Geo. W. Plummer, the present season, for the use of Cows, on the Bear Hill road, 2 miles from Dover Village. Terms, 75 cents by the season.  
 G. W. PLUMMER.  
 Dover, May 11, 1871. 27

1871

(Joseph Henry Bodwell, continued from page 1)

“Oh, no need to do that. The hen will stay right there. Now birdie, you be sure to stay right where you are.” Then “Gramps” took a few minutes to describe other birds before returning to the bird on the table. Then he said “Guess we don’t need you any more birdie. We’ll put you back in the crate while we put another bird on the table.” This was repeated with each bird in the crate and his audience was quiet as a mouse during the total demonstration. They had not paid much attention to “Gramps” lecture but they certainly were entranced by the birds remaining motionless on the table.



Finally they could contain themselves no longer. “How do you do that?” they asked “Gramps” in unison.

“Do what?” “Gramps” replied.

“Why, putting a hen on a table and making it stay like that.”

“Don’t you men all raise hens?” “Gramps” asked them. They replied in the affirmative.

“Then you’ve got to be kidding me. Any poultryman can make them do that.” But he never told them how he did it. Instead he just laughed good-naturedly and said “You guys are all a great bunch of kidders. Trying to make me believe you don’t know how to do it.” From then on “Gramps” never had anything but real fine cooperation from this young group of men.

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“Gramps” recalls how “Uncle Frank” Merrill received an urgent letter from a businessman in Boston one day. The matter was so urgent that Mr. Merrill either had to get the man on the phone at once or else he would have to take a train from Dover and go to Boston. In those days a trip to Boston meant an eight mile drive by horse and buggy to the station in Dover, putting the horse up at the livery stable and taking the train to Boston which meant an overnight stay before returning via the same route the next day to get home.

The telephone lines in those days had many parties on them and it was very difficult to reach Central at times. “Uncle Frank” was a great man to swear when he got upset and after trying many times to get Central by cranking continuously, he was most upset when they still did not answer. He soon was swearing at everyone on the line but he still had not reached Central to place his urgent call to Boston. It was at this moment, when he was swearing the most, that the operator finally answered. She began to berate him for his strong language.

“Now young lady, you just keep your shirt on. I must get this toll call through to Boston at once. We will talk about the other later.”

She finally got the call through and it turned out he did not have to make a trip to Boston after all. But the young lady was not satisfied, but went to the manager and demanded that Frank Merrill apologize to her.

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The manager went to see Frank Merrill and he said that he would be glad to apologize. He went down to the telephone office the next day where three operators were busily at work. He asked in a booming voice “Where is that young lady I told to keep her shirt on?” She was pointed out to him.

He looked her straight in the eye, and in an equally loud voice, said “Young lady, I have changed my mind. You can take it off now. Goodbye.” Frank Merrill turned and left the stunned room.

If we go back to 1917, we find traveling conditions very different from today, especially during the winter months. All travel was done by train or horse and sleigh. Sometimes it took many hours to go a few miles because of dirt roads or snow drifts. There were two counties that joined each other but their county seats were hours apart because of these travel conditions. They were Somerset and Piscataquis counties. Two friends, both University of Maine College of Agriculture graduates, were County Agents in these two counties, Bob Stiles in Somerset and “Gramps” in Piscataquis. They were very similar in their desire to be of service to the farmers of Maine though neither had any great desire to become rich or to do anything spectacular. They just liked to do the work necessary to be successful in their jobs and to give everything they had to make the life of farming more profitable for the farmers in their counties.

Bob had no bad habits unless it was smoking, which at that time many people frowned on although it was not considered too sinful. It was during this time the Extension Service had inaugurated what is known as “three days and nights” agricultural schools for adults. One type of school was the dairy school which was held in different towns throughout the state. The instructors of the school were the various County Agents, generally three for each school. When dairy schools were held, County Agents better versed in dairy were selected and would go from one county to another as there were few, if any, specialists in the beginning. As both Bob and “Gramps” had studied animal husbandry, when dairy schools were held they were usually sent out together with a third man who would be the County Agent in the county where the school was being held.

To show how tedious traveling was in those days, “Gramps” uses this for an example. One time a school was being held in Wellington, a town in Piscataquis County. “Gramps” lived in Dover, about 25 miles away, but to get there by train he had to go to Newport Junction 30 miles away, wait for several hours before taking the train to St. Albans where he changed trains to Cambridge. There got a mail stage to Wellington, altogether a distance of 70 miles which took a full day to travel. Or he could hire a horse and sleigh or wagon to go over the dirt roads. At that time there were only eight miles of improved roads in either county.

Whenever these schools were held, the instructors would stay overnight at some farm home or at a boarding house. There was no electricity in the rural territory at that time nor were there any central heating systems. Homes were heated by stoves or fireplaces so it was a constant operation to keep fires going in the winter when the temperature got down as low as 40 degrees below zero. Light was supplied by kerosene lamps and if one did not watch carefully, the chimney would get smoked up or the lamp would run out of kerosene or the wick would become too short.

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(Joseph Henry Bodwell, continued from page 4)

One occasion that comes to “Gramps” mind took place in the town of Harmony at a three-day dairy school. The three instructors were “Gramps”, Bob and another County Agent named Paul Monohan. It was decided the three would stay at a boarding house run by an old maid who usually did not take in men boarders. But Bob Stiles, who could always make friends with anyone, got in to her good graces and she allowed them to stay. She was an unusual cook and that meant a lot to the young instructors. Bob had told her that the other two instructors were just as gentlemanly as he was, so it was arranged that the three would stay at her home during the three days of the school. However, she agreed only with the warning “The least sign of roughhouse and out you all go and you, Bob, will never be able to stay here again.”

The three ate dinner and supper at her house the first day without incident, but when it came time to retire to their room they found a double bed and a single bed in it. At once the problem arose, which of the three would get the single bed. The three drew lots to decide and it came out that Bob won the single bed while Paul and “Gramps” had to sleep in the double bed.

Now if by lot Paul had won the single bed, this story would not need to be told. He was only 5 feet, 2 inches tall but weighed about 250 pounds. He really needed a bed by himself.



In those days men wore nightshirts instead of pajamas. Beds were cold and rooms were colder. Outside that night it was below zero and soon another problem developed, who was going to blow out the lamp and then get into bed. You see, the large room was cold and as no one had slippers, nobody wanted the task of blowing out the lamp and then crossing the cold floor in his bare feet.

But the lot fell to Paul, so “Gramps” and Bob got into bed. Paul said “Get those comforters ready so I won’t catch cold.” Then he quickly blew out the light and dove for the bed, shouting “Balliver Boot Feet, here I come.”

He hit the bed and there was a mighty crash as the bed spring and supports went right to the floor. Immediately there was a knock on the door and a very wrathful landlady shouted “You boys open this door at once.”

Three very chagrined young men lighted the lamp and stood in their nightshirts with heads bowed while the landlady lambasted them for their deviltry. She said ‘You are not the gentlemen that I was led to believe you were. I told you if there was any roughhouse here, you would have to get out. I’ll give you just 30 minutes to leave”,

The three had to find another place for the night which was not easy at that late hour. It was also the last time that Bob could stay at her home even though money was sent to pay for the damage.

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(Joseph Henry Bodwell, Continued from Page 5)

Before the first year of his work was completed, “Gramps” was having more to do than he could handle alone. He asked the farmers to organize a Farm Bureau to assist in the work with a president, vice president, secretary-treasurer and a committee with a chairman for each type of work to be handled by the group.

The first club agent chairman was Mrs. Daisy Smith of Dover (1877-1968). Last year “Gramps” wrote a story about her activities because she was a state-wide promoter of Extension Service as well as other state projects. The following letter was printed in the Piscataquis Observer, the county news organ, and is written from the standpoint of “Gramps” title when he worked in the county.

Piscataquis Observer  
Dover-Foxcroft, Maine

118 Main Street  
Farmington, Maine 04938

Dear Sir,

I am enclosing a short article in tribute to Daisy Smith, which if you can find space in paper to print, I would appreciate very much. You may use as much, or as little, of it as you wish.

Sincerely,  
Joseph H. Bodwell  
First County Agent  
Piscataquis County

Follows the story as it was printed:

Daisy Smith, who writes for your paper, was a tireless worker for the Extension Service from the time I went to Piscataquis County as its first County Agricultural Agent in 1915 until I left in 1920 to take a similar position in Hampden County, Springfield, Mass. Daisy, as everyone called her, was connected with a majority of community activities. Now over 90 years old, she is still active as residents of your county fully know. Most people know of her contributions in her later life, but I thought that some would like to know of the things she did when I knew her then.

From the beginning she was intensely interested in 4-H club work with which I was also connected. She started the Jolly Worker Girls Club in 1915 and was leader of this group until very recently when she turned the leadership over to Mrs. Elizabeth Drake. This was the first 4-H club organized in Piscataquis County and only the second one in the State of Maine. I believe it to be the only club that has continued to be active from an inception date of that era to the present time.

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An incident that stands out in my mind after all these years concerns the time that she asked me to show her the new method of “dry” killing and dressing chickens. Daisy kept a large flock of hens and delivered many dressed poultry to her customers. As I recall, she used to sell from 30 to 50 each month, doing all the work herself, including the killing.

In the operation of killing chickens by the “dry” method, it is necessary to penetrate the brain of the bird with a sharp instrument. This loosens the feathers for easier dressing.

I recall showing Daisy the procedure but she was too gentle the first time she tried it. I told her to press harder with the blade. The next time she pressed too hard and badly cut her own hand. She passed the accident off with a sage remark that she had learned her lesson well, though the hard way, and would not likely forget it. So saying, she washed her cut hand and went on to kill five more birds that day just to prove it to one and all. This is an isolated incident out of her past but it exemplifies the sterling qualities of this fine woman.

All her life Daisy has been active in Women’s Extension Club work. When I was County Agent there, there were no Home Demonstration Agents at the beginning, so an agent from Orono came up periodically. Daisy was always there to meet her and to go about the County organizing new clubs. She was truly the outstanding leader of her day.

But perhaps she contributed her most humane self in the rearing of foster children in her home. More than 30 children knew her as a foster parent, and while some were with her only a short time, others remained for much of their young lives. One girl, who came to her at the age of five, was adopted by Daisy when she turned 18 so as to enable her to attend college.

In her later life Daisy was interested and active in many community, county and state projects, the most recent being the organizing of campaigns to clean up unsightly auto junkyards. She became State Chairman and with a former governor of the state worked unceasingly in cleaning up these junkyards. Their accomplishments were many and the results gratifying to the beautification of the state.

These are just a few of the pleasant thoughts and memories that come to mind when I think of this grand lady and of the years I spent in your area. I hope she will have many years more to enjoy the fruits of her many diversified works.



Daisy Smith

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In answer to the above story that appeared in the Observer, Daisy Smith wrote the following letter to “Gramps”:

Dear Friend Joe - - What a surprise you gave me when I read the article in the Observer. I thought I was all done receiving bouquets, but that was one of the nicest. Yes the Jolly Worker 4-H Club is still in existence. Now the oldest in the state, I gave up being leader of it when I was asked to be the County leader. There have been quite a few leaders during those many years. Mrs. Elizabeth Drake, who was to be the leader this year of the beginners, passed away suddenly week before last. Her mother-in-law will take over the older group.

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(Joseph Henry Bodwell– Continued from Page 7)

Yes, I did keep on sticking hens. Eugene (1871-1953) would help me get the feathers off. One month I dressed, with Eugene's help, 100 broilers for the Blethen House.

Katheryn had asked me to write up all of my activities. They are legion. I remember about the time a building was being moved from Sebec Road to the outskirts of East Dover. It took two days, three pair of oxen and plenty of drink to get it moved. Of course, quite a crowd gathered to watch proceedings.

Then there was the time three East Dover men went to Montana and brought home a carload of horses. They had an auction and the Grange furnished dinner for 10 cents a person. Also there was that big Agricultural Fair here. We got quite a stipend from the State on that. If I do write them up, I can find enough to last quite a while. But I have to keep busy at something as long as my eyes hold out. I am quite blind, hardening of the arteries and slow growing cataracts. No cure for them.

I can't see to write very well so you will have to guess at much of it. Thank you for the nice article. Regards to the Mrs. from an old has been.

Daisy

Note: We are sorry to report that since this section was written, Daisy Smith has passed away. Her death was noted in the Waterville Sentinel of November 19, 1968. Her age was given as 91.

“Gramps”



The secretary of the Farm Bureau was F. W. Leland and to show some of the accomplishments of the Extension Service, the following summary was printed in the Observer in 1916 –

“Our County is one of the fortunate ones in having an active county farm demonstrator. He is Joseph H. Bodwell. In conjunction with the demonstration work Mr. Bodwell has stimulated much interest in girls' and boys' clubs. He has also held three extension schools. Last year it took considerable work by Mr. Bodwell, assisted by a good committee, to get these classes for extension schools, while without any soliciting from anyone. Eight schools have already been asked for for the coming winter.

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(Joseph Henry Bodwell – Continued from Page 8)

Demonstrations given during the year have been of two classes, economic production demonstrations and comparative demonstrations. Swine raising was not receiving any great attention before our county agent took up the work. Pigs were raised but as a side issue only, and not one farmer, I venture to say, knew the exact profit or loss from this branch of farming. As Mr. Bodwell was sure that there were great possibilities for profit in raising swine, he put a large amount of time and effort into this branch. As a result, five registered boars and 12 registered sows have been purchased in the county. In following the county agents instructions, Ralph Gray of Dover reports a net profit of \$135 on 15 pigs sold at an average age of five months. E. W. Livermore of Sebec reports a growth on 85-pound Berkshire pigs of 1.9 pounds per pig per day in ten days, which is extra good for pigs at that age. The lowest profit reported is \$4.50 per pig. These profits have been made on purchased feeds only. Next year Mr. Bodwell hopes to have demonstrations on pasturing and home-grown feeds.

Among those adopting the self-feeder are N. D. Noyes, Ralph Gray, Frank Merrill, Herbert Merrill, F. M. Crommet, V. L. Gould, Perley Sawyer, S. D. Weymouth, all of Dover; M. B. McKusick, of Guilford; F. Watson of Parkman; R. E. Dudley of Abbot; C. W. Livermore of Sebec; Gilman Brothers of Foxcroft; and Vernon Bridges and J. W. Leland of Sangerville.”

The one thing that the dairy committee chairman asked “Gramps” to do was to organize a cow test association. Mr. Ernest Livermore of Sebec came to “Gramps” office one day in February and asked if “Gramps” would come to his farm the next day and interview farmers in the neighborhood in an attempt to secure members for the County Cow Test Association.

The funny thing about it was that he reiterated the request three times. Each time he also added “Now, if it should snow, you will come just the same won’t you, because I can go better with you if it does snow”.

Well snow it did and it continued to snow and blow all night and also the next morning. “Gramps” went to see Mr. Annis who owned a livery stable and asked him to hitch up a horse and sleigh with which to go to Sebec.

Mr. Annis said, “No sir. I would not let a horse out today. You might not make it because of the drifts”. “Gramps” told him, “O.K., but if you will look at your books you will find that I have paid you enough money in rentals to own two of your horses already. If you won’t rent an outfit to me, I will have to buy a horse and sleigh myself and you will be out of a steady customer”.

**(Continued in the Next Issue of the Conserver)**

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## Annual Dues

Many thanks to all those who have sent in their Historical Society dues for 2017. We really appreciate having you as a member. If you haven't sent in your dues yet, please do so now so you can continue to enjoy all of the benefits of membership in the Historical Society, including receiving copies of the *Conserver*.

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### The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society – Membership Application Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues are \$10 per person and \$7.00 for senior memberships. Please make checks payable to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover January to December. If you are giving a gift membership, please include the name and address and we'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift.

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## The Central Hall Project

An update

In the last three months, we've made a lot of progress on the building. We now have running water in the building. With bathrooms are installed, the portable outhouse is now gone. A kitchen sink and cabinets are installed in the senior room. The elevator is installed, inspected (passed on the first inspection! – that never happens; thank you Elwood!).

Our wonderful carpenters, Keith Doore and John Libera are almost done with all of the woodwork in the hall and the senior center. Most noticeable is the work on the front of the building. The front walks are going in as we write these lines. If the good weather holds, by the end of September we hope to have all of the memorial bricks installed, the flag pole installed and grass seed put down so that we will have a good lawn next summer. Next spring the garden ladies will lay out the gardens.

We have just received a wonderful USDA grant which will enable us to install the sprinkler system. With this in hand (six to eight weeks?), we hope to get the certificate of occupancy to enable us to officially open the building (by the end of the year?).

Financially, we have the funds to complete all of the work to get the building open, drawing traffic and beginning to bring in some revenue. We still need funds to get lights for the stage and for the hall, a sound system for the stage and furnishings for the kitchen and the hall.

With this, two of the three parts to the entire project will be complete. The third part, the Adult Day Service Center will be next.





Elwood supervising concrete pouring

### **Our Corporate Sponsors**

A grateful thank you to the following businesses whose funds support the Society and its efforts to preserve our history. When you shop or see these folks, please tell them 'thank you' for their support!

Ellen Anderson, D.P.M.  
 Family Eyecare  
 Green Door Gallery  
 Lary Funeral Home  
 Maine Highlands Federal C/U  
 Mallett Real Estate  
 Steinke and Caruso  
 Mark Stitham, M. D  
 Sean Stitham, M.D.

**Thank you all!**

### **Items Available**

We thank Calico Corner Gift Shop on West Main Street for stocking our ornaments and DVD's. Please stop by their store and support this local business.

Glass Christmas ornaments: \$6.00 each (add \$4.00 for shipping)

- 2008 – Blacksmith Shop
- 2009 – Observer Building
- 2010 – Central Hall
- 2011 – Thompson Free Library
- 2012 – Foxcroft Academy
- 2013 – The Blethen House
- 2014 – Pleasant Street School
- 2015 – Mayo's Mill
- 2016 – Piscataquis County Court House
- 2017 – Brown Mills

DVD's : Glimpses of Dover and Foxcroft - \$10.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Memories of Central Hall/Lou Stevens - \$15.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Dover-Foxcroft throws: \$40.00 (add \$8.00 for shipping)

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Mary, Karen, Elwood, Barbara, Brian and Cindy  
planning the layout of the memorial bricks