

LISBON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MOMENTS IN HISTORY – JANUARY 2021

THE LANDAFF PROFILE OF 1940-1941

In 1940, six communities in the United States were chosen to be observed as samples of ranges of rural community stability. The work was done on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Landaff was one of the towns chosen. The other five towns profiled were El Cerrito, NM, Sublette, KS, Irwin, IA, The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County, PA, and Harmony, GA. Sublette, Kansas, a “Dust Bowl” community, and the Amish community, were at opposite ends of the range, and the others such as Landaff, fell in between.

Landaff was chosen, because it was an old community which had basically stayed the same for a long time. The author, Kenneth MacLeish, lived in Landaff for four months and got to know the community well. MacLeish, along with co-author Kimball Young, was able to interview the locals and write about the people and life in Landaff in detail for the USDA project. We each know our own town so well, and it is interesting to read MacLeish’s narrative about why the early settlers did what they did and how Landaff came to change over the years.

A camera report for each community profiled was put together as a companion to each of the more technical and lengthy publications. In January of 2018, MacLeish’s son, Archibald, sent his father’s original bound manuscript camera report of Landaff, which included 76, 8x10 glossy black and white images by Irving Rusinow, to the Town of Landaff asking that it be used in the best interest. For almost three years, the book circulated away from the town offices and around the area until recently finding its way to the Lisbon Area Historical Society, which serves the towns of Lisbon, Lyman, and Landaff, New Hampshire.



MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

The images in the McLeish and Rusinow camera report include Landaff landscapes, farms, houses, people, farm animals, house interiors, school interiors, barn interiors, and mill remnants. There are some photos of Lisbon, including outside and inside the New England Dairies Lisbon Unit building which was along the railroad tracks at the top of Whitcher Street in Lisbon. Landaff dairy farmers belonged to the dairy cooperative and brought their cans of milk to the dairy every day. Some farm children delivered their farm’s milk on their way to school in Lisbon.



MacLeish and Young's technical publication of the rural life study of Landaff is digitized and can be read for free at www.archive.org. Enter in the archive.org site's search box: *Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community, Landaff, New Hampshire* by Kenneth MacLeish and Kimball Young. An audio version of the book can also be played on the site if you click on the headphone icon once you see the book on your screen. The headphone icon is at the bottom right with the other prompts to go page by page, enlarge text, etc. The reprinted book can also be purchased online at Amazon. There is other great reading about Landaff on the archive.org site. Two publications in particular are *Persistence and Change in Rural Communities, a 50-Year Follow-Up*

to *Six Classic Studies*, edited by A. E. Luloff and R. S. Krannich, CABI Publishing, 2002, and *Making Good Communities Better*, by Irwin T. Sanders, University of Kentucky Press, 1950.

Landaff, like other small, rural hill communities started out being totally self-sufficient and self-sustaining with everyone living much the same way. Only when farm crops became specialized was there a class difference. For instance, as some farmers raised large flocks of sheep to supply the textile industry, those farmers became wealthier and hired those who had less. Seeing prosperity, many started specializing in dairy farming and logging, and many also left the hills to find riches elsewhere. The railroad offered easy transportation, especially after the Civil War.



Landaff was hit hard during the Hurricane of 1938. The United States Forest Service bought up fallen timber in Landaff and dammed up a brook to make Chandler Pond, where logs were submerged and preserved until a saw mill could be built. The Allbee farm in Landaff used to hay the fields around the brook before the hurricane and the pond was made.

MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

MacLeish states that, "Like other townships in this area, Landaff has its own particular characteristics, yet it is a fair sample of other localities, and for the most part the problems and values of the other hill towns are similar to those of Landaff." Lisbon, Lyman, and Landaff started seeing a decrease in population, then in dairy farming, logging, and finally with the arrival of the automobile and the inevitable demise of the railroad in Lisbon, there was more loss of population, small businesses, and trades in our immediate locale. Landaff turned out to be the lone hold-out for dairy farming and shipping milk, as the last farm to ship milk from Landaff was the Erbs' farm in 2020. The Brian Santy farm in Lyman stopped in 2007, and the Brooks's Rock Cliff Farm in Lisbon stopped in 1986. While Lisbon was once a booming mill town, it was predominately a farming community like Lyman and Landaff. Many in-town homes in Lisbon had chickens and a milk cow, and their barns that once housed their driving horses, carts, buggies, and animals were later converted to garages for their automobiles.



In 1941, there was only one flock of sheep left in Landaff, and that was at the Roscoe Oakes farm on Mill Brook Road, which later became Erbs' Springvale Farms.

MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

While each of the three towns, Lisbon, Lyman, and Landaff, has its own personality and identity, all three towns shared a vibrant business district in Lisbon in 1940, and they are still joined together today by sharing in Lisbon the same historical society, Lions Club, Friends in Council women's club, Boys and Girls Club, snowmobile club, arts council, farmers market, houses of worship (Landaff does have a federated church that has worship services at holidays and in summer), public school (Landaff still has its own K-3 one-room school), public library, downtown stores, restaurants, and services (police, bank, insurance, laundromat, hair salon, gas stations, post office), public swimming pool, and public transfer station. As MacLeish points out, in 1940 Lisbon was dependent on Landaff to patronize its stores and services.



MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

Interior shots of Landaff's c. 1858 one-room Blue School are included in the 1940 camera report. In 1940, only two of the seven Landaff one-room schools were still being used, Blue School and Scotland School, both educating grades 1 through 8, and then students went on to Lisbon Public School. In 1969, Lisbon Regional School was formed, and the Town of Lyman voted to join the regional. Landaff voted not to join, so Landaff tuitions its students.



MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

MacLeish and Young recognized that early on the Landaff natives prized individuality, independence, hard work, and thrift. Residents who built up a successful farm could proudly claim they were self-made as they did all the work themselves often building upon what their ancestors may have started, and they could take care of themselves and their family without any help. They didn't owe anyone or need anyone's help. Being self-sufficient was a virtue, but neighbor helping neighbor was a lifestyle then, and sometimes crucial, and it still continues in our small villages today. A good example of an ancestral farm in Landaff is the Noyes/Allbee farm pictured above. The eighth generation of the family now lives on the farm. The c. 1884 farmhouse and barn pictured replaced an earlier farmhouse and barn built near the same site by the Noyes family who settled in Landaff in the late 1700s. At one time the Noyes family owned all the land on Allbee Road down to Landaff Center. The farm was a huge sheep farm in the 1860s, and the barn still has the beautiful weather vane with a sheep on it.



MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

Amos Allbee is pictured in his barn stable in 1940. At that time, he milked 30 cows by hand twice a day with the help of his son, Arthur. There were no other hired hands.



MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

The attic of the Mattie Chandler farm on Gale Chandler Road shows an accumulation of items from generations that lived on the farm.

One of the factors in the town of Landaff that led to its solidarity was the Grange, a very active, family-based organization in 1941. Landaff's Mount Hope Grange sponsored the first annual Landaff Old Home Day in 1932, and it is still going strong, with one highlight being the Landaff Volunteer Fire Department Auction. Mount Hope Grange founded in 1876 is still active today, despite a dramatic decline in membership. Landaff's church, town meeting, schools, and organizations such as 4-H, Ladies Aid Society, and Home Dem were also important to a feeling of belonging and community pride in 1940. (Home Dem was a USDA Cooperative Extension program that taught farm wives better methods of getting their work done.) There is only one school building used in Landaff now, the church is not as active, and there is no longer a Ladies Aid Society and Home Dem, but residents find other ways to be active in the community, such as the nonprofit Friends of Landaff which was founded in 2007 to help raise funds for improvements to the town hall.



The c. 1927 Landaff Grand Drape is a combination Town and Grange painted stage curtain and has the Grange emblem for Patrons of Husbandry on the bottom center medallion. It hangs on the stage in the Landaff Town Hall/Mount Hope Grange Hall and was restored in 2007

According to MacLeish, Landaff's population of younger people decreased after WWI, not because the younger people couldn't make a living, but because they wanted to do something different. MacLeish mentions in his profile that by 1941 the farming way of life was disappearing in Landaff, and only about one-half of the population was farming. It was difficult to make money farming unless it was a commercial enterprise, and those farming were doing it because they loved that way of life.

MacLeish recorded that there were 35 non-farm families in Landaff in 1940. Tradesmen made the most money, and the highest paid tradesman was an electrician who made \$40 per week. There were 38 farm families in Landaff in 1940, and their income varied from \$8,000 to \$500 depending on what they raised to feed their own animals, how much help they paid for, and what they sold from their farm produce and animals. Herds ranged from 4 to 40 head of cattle. The average annual milk revenue for the farms that did ship milk was around \$1,500 plus. The two retail milk businesses in Landaff netted \$3,000 to \$5,000.



Ethel Bronson Clement
MacLeish/Rusinow camera report



Ethel McKean Titus
MacLeish/Rusinow camera report



Carrie Jesseman Allbee
MacLeish/Rusinow camera report

In 1940, MacLeish put the father as the head of the household and the family member who sees that income is spent as he sees fit. The wife is responsible for the home, he stated. Landaff wives responsible for their homes, such as Ethel Bronson Clement, Ethel McKean Titus, and Carrie Jesseman Allbee, not only took care of their home and children, cooking, preserving, etc., but also took a very active role in helping their husbands and in their community. Both Ethel Clement and Ethel Titus at one time held the office of Master of Mount Hope Grange, and Carrie Allbee served as Chaplain of Mount Hope Grange.

Sons were looked upon to take over the farm, but many didn't want to farm. Daughters often married non-farming men and moved away. These are some of the reasons MacLeish saw a decrease in family solidarity, especially on the farms. Things had started to change. MacLeish states that ever since money-farming began in Landaff, over 100 years before his profile of the town, residents have been leaving. "When the men who are running the farms in Landaff are gone,

there will be very few others to take their places,” MacLeish states in the book. His prediction certainly came true.

Community and farm life were entwined still in 1940. MacLeish mentions that those who were not involved in farming in Landaff did not take part in the community. Of course, today, that has all changed. The new people in Landaff are not dairy farmers, but many do take an active role in the community.

There is some lamenting by locals in MacLeish’s book that people didn’t visit each other as they used to, and they blamed the automobile, telephone, and other modern things. Non-farm people had more free time to take part in recreation, and commercialized recreation had taken over all others with the exception of hunting, fishing, or “motoring.” Residents claimed that people didn’t have the time for visiting like they used to, and the young kids wanted to go to the movies or dances.

So, the habit of old-fashioned visiting from home to home and partaking in community entertainment had already decreased in 1940 and wasn’t ended by browsing the Internet and email, Facebook, Facetime, Instagram, Twitter, and Zoom, after all! Although, in 2021 for those of us who are following CDC guidelines about social distancing, we are very grateful we can visit electronically or we wouldn’t be seeing each other at all.

We hope you appreciate receiving these Moments in History from our historical society. We welcome your comments as well as suggestions for possible topics for future Moments. Please feel free to share any of our Moments in History with relatives and friends, and have them email us if they would like to receive them in the future. Our email address is info@lisbonareahistory.org. To read past Moments in History and for more about us go to www.lisbonareahistory.org. We are also on Facebook. Thank you.