

A RICH TRADITIONAL HERITAGE OF COTTON MOUNTAIN

Written in 1937 by Abbie Cotton Lang  
for

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Mr. Parker M. Merrow

EAST WOLFEBORO CHURCH

Cotton Mountain

1801 - First Meeting House Built

1852 - Present Church Constructed



Clark Loring of Parker  
With Permission of the Pastor  
Herron  
Church Doorway





## A Rich Traditional Heritage of Cotton Mountain

While other portions of the town are fully as important as Cottonboro, their traditions seem not to have been perpetuated so thoroughly, by constant repetition among the people, and handing down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Among Cotton Mountain and Cotton Valley families, true incidents and family traditions have been the children's "fairy stories" and "bedtime stories" until they have actually become an ingredient of the Cotton blood stream. And because the editor of the Granite State NEWS believes Cottonboro to be especially fortunate in its heritage of tradition, and its pioneer history an epitome of all New Hampshire's pioneer history, he has asked me to assemble all the facts and memories of all the people now living, whose family roots are deep in the soil of Cottonboro and its environs.

At the original drawing of lots in <sup>1766</sup>1776, Lot No. 6, which included Cotton Mountain and Cotton Valley, was drawn by Dr. Ammi Ruhamah Cutter, and the Mountain was first called Cutter's Mountain. It is <sup>1250</sup>1150 feet high, and at one time Portland Harbor could be seen from its top.

Robert Calder, the Scotch gardener on the Gov. John Wentworth farm, must have been one of the earliest settlers. His home was near the present home of Harry Cotton of Massachusetts, and his hearthstone may still be found. Governor Wentworth's park was supposed to be in that neighborhood, stocked with deer and moose, and fenced in the following manner: --by ditch, 12 feet wide and a high embankment, where large trees grew, with branches interwoven.



Col. William Cotton, the progenitor of all the Cottons of Cottonboro, came to Wolfeboro from Portsmouth in 1781, with his wife and eight children.

It was said that Mrs. Cotton carried a baby in her arms, all the way, on horseback. The family settled on the place now occupied by Everett Cotton of Massachusetts, as a summer home. He opened a tavern, and also a small store, which is now a part of the Everett Cotton kitchen. It is related that Mrs. Cotton heard a noise in her scullery one day, and found a bear had come in through the window and eaten the lard from a kettle in which she had been frying doughnuts.

Col. Cotton purchased a large tract of land, and settled six of his seven sons in the immediate neighborhood on the side of the mountain and in the valley, where it is said they all could hear their mother's dinner horn.

There are some minor discrepancies between Parker's "History of Wolfeborough" and "The Cotton Family in Portsmouth, N.H.," by Frank Elbridge Cotton. Since the former book is easily obtainable at small cost, and already enjoys a wide circulation among NEWS readers, this narrative will follow the less well known book, and the traditions of the pioneer families, for the purpose of comparison.

John Pickering Cotton, second son of Col. William, and the first of three men to bear the same name, took the lot of land nearest the Brookfield line. His son, Eliot Cotton, who inherited the farm, said to be the best farm in the township, sold it to Alpheus Weeks, husband of his niece, Laura Ann Page.



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Home of Colonel William Cotton  
His Great Grandson, Albert W, Cotton Later Lived Here

JAN 61



Stone Posts To Barn Foundations  
Col. William Cotton Farm

JAN 61



View of Cotton Mountain  
From Col. William Cotton Farm



Home of James and Betsey (Robinson) Cotton  
Later Owned by James and Abigail (Knowles) Cotton, Jr.  
Later Owned by James Ira, Cordelia, and the Rev. Dana Cotton

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JAN 61



Gravestone of James Cotton, Jr. in Cemetery  
of the  
James Cotton Family and the Dudley Page Cotton Family



Eliot Cotton, father of six children - Cordelia, Leonard, Dudley, Elizabeth, James, Ira, and Dana - none of whom ever married, moved his family to Dublin, N. H., more than 60 years ago, where he carried on the business of making boot trees for long legged boots, and lasts for shoes. In 1901 Cordelia, James, Ira and the Rev. Dana Cotton, returned to Wolfeboro and bought what is now known as the Paul Bissell place, on the southern slope of Cotton Mountain, for the Rev. Dana Cotton had been assigned as pastor of the Cottonboro church. The rest of the family died in Dublin, and their bodies were brought to the cemetery in the Weeks field. The late Daniel J. Cotton bought the Weeks place about 1890, and sold it back to A. P. Weeks, son of Alpheus and Laura Ann (Page) Weeks, in 1906.

half way up  
Cotton Mt. Road  
on East side

Mr. Weeks intended to move the Jeremiah Cotton house to his father's old lot, where now is but a vacant cellar, where the original dwelling, a beautiful two story house, had burned, some 40 or 50 years ago. But the work was very difficult, and the house was settled instead in its present location, repairs began in 1908, and soon the family began to spend their summers there.

The Jeremiah Cotton house had been located a few rods to the southwest, and belonged to a grandson of the first John Pickering Cotton, son of John Pickering Jr. He had three sisters - Asenath, Deborah, and Mary Abbie. There is a flag in the East Wolfeboro church, carried there by its last possessor, the late Mrs. Daniel J. Cotton, that was made all by hand, by Deborah Cotton and her girl friend.

The field is of blue homespun cotton, with 48 stars in the shape of one large star. How little could Deborah Cotton have realized, that in 80 years from her time, there would be 48



states in the union, which then consisted of 32. Her only reason for using 48 stars, was to complete the design she had chosen. The red and white stripes are of homespun, and one side is bound by a flax rope. The flag, which measures 162 by 90 inches, was carried in the James Buchanan Campaign, in 1856, and was raised on the highest point of Cotton Mountain, near the Brackett Cotton place, for the July 4 celebration that year.

The liberty pole - as flagstuffs were called at that time -- that held this flag, was given by Enoch Neal, and cut on his farm, later owned by Daniel Fogg of Stoneham, and now by Walter Peterson, of Milton, Mass. The 96 foot tree was not tall enough to satisfy the desires of the community people, who wished to outdo the Republican party, which was holding its celebration on Whiteface Mountain, in Ossipee. So 29 feet was spliced on, making the pole 125 feet tall. It remained on the mountain until after the Civil War.

Tradition has it, that Capt. Goldsmith of Ossipee, after one of his muster practices, suggested that he and his men go to the mountain and bore holes in the flag pole, so it would not stand so long; this was done, hastening its decay, for his party could still see it from Whiteface. A cap and shoulder epaulet, belonging to Capt. Goldsmith, are on exhibition in the Wakefield Library.

A full description of the mountain celebration was printed in the NEWS of August 29, 1930.

Another flag handed down to Daniel Cotton's heirs, and now in the East Wolfeboro church, has 30 stars, and is very much larger than the one made by Deborah Cotton. It was used for the Democratic rally held at Cotton Valley in 1856, and was stretched



across the road, suspended by two flag poles, just high enough for teams and people to pass under it. The gathering of several hundred people was illuminated in the evening by pine pitch knot torchlights, and music for the procession was furnished by Obed Cotton, George Harrison Gage, and Samuel Plummer, fife players Brackett Cotton, tenor drum, and Joshua Cottle, bass drum.

Near the Jeremiah Cotton house in the field, where now is the cupola from the barn that once sat on the opposite side of the road and long ago fell down, was a cooper shop where Pickering Cotton Jr., used to make sap buckets, butter firkins and barrels. He made them not only for the neighbors, but carried some to Portsmouth to exchange for things they could not raise on the farm, such as spices, salt, sugar, molasses, and tobacco.

The first mistress of the first farm allotted to a son of Col. William Cotton was Betsey Allen, of Tamworth, and made her bridal journey as the new Mrs. John Pickering Cotton, on horseback, over a blazed trail. *end of 1<sup>st</sup> instalment -*

Thomas Cotton, next younger brother of John Pickering Cotton, settled on land adjoining John P's farm, whose history was covered in detail in last week's issue of the NEWS. It is situated at the junction of two roads, one connecting Cotton Valley with North Wakefield, and the other running from North Wolfeboro to Brookfield, and still remains in his family, although it was owned for seven years by George Collinge of New York. It has been Cotton land for 150 years. *1950's Mrs. Vorburg, now renamed + bus cly merchant - 1960 -*

About 1780, Thomas Cotton cleared the land and erected a log cabin, which for 69 years was the home of his family. He had three sons, Thomas, John and Daniel. The Cottons were large men

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averaging six feet in height, and 200 pounds or more, in weight.

In 1819, these three brothers removed the log cabin and built a large house. The present building was erected in 1883. The ell, now used as a kitchen, was added to the old house, built in 1819, and was not removed when the present house was built, so became the ell of the dwelling built in 1874 by Dana Whitehouse of Water Village for Daniel J. Cotton, grandson of Thomas, when he was married.

In 1871 the barn was built. Perhaps some of my readers will be interested to know that a "barn raising" was the custom at that time. The frame was built on the ground, in sections of quarters, and it was necessary to have many helpers on the job. A hundred men gathered for this occasion. One man supervised the work, and here it was Isaac Fellows, father of Mrs. Jay Runnels, now living in Sanbornville. Mr. Fellows would say not a word must be spoken during the raising, and he must be the only one to give orders. At that time they called him a "framer".

No fee was required by those who came to assist with the raising, but dinner was served everyone on the job. The neighbors helped the lady of the house with the work, as well as donating some of the food. This was made a day of celebration in many ways and plenty of cider was always in readiness after the raising, but no one was allowed to take more than one or two glasses until after the raising. This was an all day's job.

A framer seldom did other carpentering, and it was necessary to make an appointment with the desired framer, for they were few; though ordinary carpenters were plentiful.



Daniel Cotton sold hundreds of cords of wood to the railroad, and it was loaded on flat cars to Wolfeborough Junction, now Sanbornville, to be sawed into two foot lengths with a steam power sawing machine, the first of its kind anywhere around here.

A six ox team was used for its transportation up past Brackett Cotton's and down the north side of Cotton Mountain, to the North Wakefield Station, now Mathews. Four trips would be made to North Wakefield and one to Cotton Valley, making a long day. The price was from \$3.00 to \$3.50 a cord, loaded on the cars, and this was considered a good price. Tilton's  
in 1950's

After the railroad was put through in 1872, it gave the Cotton Mountain folk a chance to do a good business along many lines. Daniel Cotton sold many cords of shoe blocks, piling and one fine mast, the only perfect one in length and straitness that could be found on the Mountain. A man from Boston came to oversee the cutting and shipping of this very unusual mast, a Norway pine tree from the field to the right of the summer home of Mrs. Florence Anderson, daughter of the late Mrs. Rose Laubham, who bought part of Daniel Cotton's farm.

Mr. Cotton did a large cattle subiness, and for many years piloted droves of cattle to East Kingston, making three or four trips each fall. While very young, before beginning to drive cattle himself, Mr. Cotton bought cows for Mark Stevens and John Ames, of Parsonsfield, Me. Every Friday while his children were growing up he sent calves to East Kingston, and always clipped a letter "D" for Daniel, on the hip of each calf, to keep his animals separate from those of other men whose stock was included.



It may be interesting to know some of the work done by Mrs. Daniel Cotton, 50 or more years ago, in preparing yarn and cloth. She steeped white oak bark in a boiler, to get a handsome reddish brown dye to color quilt linings and rug rags. Many a handsome braided or hooked rug has been produced by every family in Cottonboro.

Other outdoor natural materials that were used by dyeing, were gray moss found on many rocks in the fields and pasture, making a light brown. Smartweed was steeped, to make a yellow dye; witch hazel bark made a dark pink; hemlock made dark brown; gold thread made a very bright and unusual red, and was used in special decorations. Copperas was used in many of the dyes, to set the colors. Alder bark made a shade of brown. Two most common colors were red, made from cochineal, bought at the drug store, and produced from a wood-louse or bug; and indigo, a blue much used for coverlets.

To make black and white yarn, black and white wool were rolled together. Strong strips of cloth were bound tight around white wool yarn to keep it from taking the dye.

The writer has seen Mrs. Jefferson Tibbetts spin yarn, from rolls of wool the size of a finger which had been carded and rolled at the Center Ossipee and Water Village carding mills. There is still in the possession of the daughter of the late Daniel J. Cotton, a flax break that was used by her grandmother. It was necessary to leave the flax out in the sun and rain for several weeks, so that it would rot, and get the flax in condition to "break it" ready to weave it into linen cloth. The seeds from the flax were saved and used for medical purposes. Some were ground in a flaxseed grinder.





Property of Dea. Thomas and Martha (Furber) Cotton  
Location of the Home of Daniel and Eliza (Lang) Cotton  
Present House Built by Daniel J. and Harriett (Hurd) Cotton  
Present Barn Built by Daniel J. Cotton in 1871.



Dea. Thomas Cotton Cemetery

Daniel Cotton, Daniel J. Cotton,  
Timothy Y. Cotton, John F. Cotton,  
Mercy (Cotton) Wiggin Families  
Buried Here



Entrance Gate To Cemetery

Monument for Henry D. & Abbie M. Cotton



Home of John Furber Cotton

Later, the Home of Timothy Y. Cotton

Later, Owned by Isiah and Mercy A. (Cotton) Wiggin

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Original Home of Samuel and Sally (Fernald) Cotton  
Later, Owned by Brackett F. and Susan (Stanton) Cotton  
Later, Owned by Clarence and Minnie Cotton



Cough syrup was made from the flax seed, steeped, and boiled in honey made on the farm. Hard rock candy, in strips about three inches, were crushed and put in;

Samuel Cotton went further up the hill, above Thomas, toward North Wakefield, and established himself where Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hayden now live. It is said that the oldest houses are on the highest hills, for thus hostile invaders could be seen, and neighbors' widely separated could still keep a friendly watch for danger or distress signals and go to one another's aid. These signals consisted of cloth hung out the windows -- red for sickness, black for other emergencies.

Samuel's son, Brackett Cotton, lived there, and later his grandson and grand daughter, Clarence and Minnie Cotton, who bought it after the death of her mother, in 1907. Only within the past year, has this farm passed out of the ownership of Cotton descendants, now being owned by a Mr. Tilton of Connecticut.

Another grandson of Samuel is Jacob Cotton, who managed the Cotton Valley store early in the 1900's. He sold out to Clarence Evans and went to Gorham, Maine., where he is a carpenter. He is a fine workman, and was employed on the Town Hall at Sanbornville, when it was built in 1895.

We remember Mrs. Brackett Cotton as a semi-invalid, but a very bright able woman, who could accomplish more than some who enjoyed better health. She was Susan Stanton, of Brookfield, and her parents, very well educated and well read people. Their home is now owned by the Rev. William Drew. Her brother, Pike Stanton, though of a peculiar temperament, living by himself, was also well read, and one of the first to write for the Boston Journal more than 60 years ago.

← 1960  
Robert Thurrell

1950's  
Tilton - on  
No. side of Cotton Mt.  
on old road to  
No. Wakefield.



The writer remembers from very early childhood, a gander that used to go with Brackett Cotton after the cows in the pasture, next to the Weeks spring. The gander was very ugly to all persons except his master, of whom he was very fond.

The men of his family were good farmers, and fine citizens. Brackett Cotton was always ready to play his tenor drum for any occasion, and did play it at many important functions.

The third eldest son, James, had the farm lying south of Thomas, toward Cotton Valley, later occupied by his nephews, James, Ira and Rev. Dana Cotton, and their sister, Miss Cordelia Cotton; and now, by the family of Paul A. Bissell, of Wellesley, Massachusetts.

The house between the Bissell house and the Daniel Cotton homestead, was built by Dana Whitehouse of Water Village, about 30 years ago, for Mrs. Alma Austin.

The first inheritor of the James Cotton homestead was James, Jr. whose sister, Jennie Cotton Gage, was the mother of John Gage, attorney of Sanbornville.

The next owner was John Wentworth, of whom a little story is told. The hens were in his garden, all had been "shoed" out except the rooster, a stubborn, disobedient bird, which slid under the fence a bare hair's breadth ahead of Mr. Wentworth's boot. The momentum of his headlong pursuit was not overcome in time, and the angry man suffered a broken toe.

James Ira Cotton was one of the best trappers in the vicinity. He bought fox skins from others, to ship with his own to Boston. The writer has seen at one time, two bunches of fox skins, all dried and ready for shipment, with 25 in each bunch, and it was a handsome sight; just one great bunch of yellow fur.

which house  
is this?

(daughter)



Austin Fogg's house, just below the Bissell place, was built only about 30 years ago, for the Ronald sisters, and the next owner was Alfred Donovan, who sold to Mr. Fogg.

The summer home of Mrs. Henry D. Cotton was built by William Cotton, Jr., eldest son of Col. William Cotton, and it was later occupied by his grandson, Dudley P. Cotton, a merchant in Boston and the Barbadoes. He acquired great wealth by the transportation of ice and other produce to the West Indies. He died in Barbadoes, and was brought here to be buried, although the voyage was very rough, and it was feared he would have to be buried at sea. The stone that marks his final resting place is made of one great granite boulder, carved in a floral design.

The next owner of this place was the late Henry D. Cotton, one of the early post masters and store keepers in the Valley. He also sold cord wood to the railroad and went with droves of cattle to Kingston, and later bought carloads of cattle in Vermont and sold them in this and other communities. In 1905 he bought the Bank building, in Wolfeboro, was instrumental in organizing the Wolfeboro National Bank and at the death of Mr. Lewando, was made one of the directors.

Probably the most widely known woman of the Cotton blood was Mary Abbie, sister of Dudley P. Cotton, who was the originator of Memorial Day. Prior to and during the Civil War she was a militant Abolitionist, and had an intimate acquaintance with Beecher, Sumner, Douglas and others. Her home in Malden, Mass., where she lived with her second husband, James Redpath, a lecturer, was a station of the "underground railroad," for fleeing slaves on their way to Canada.



Mr. Redpath was on the staff of Gen. Sherman, and was war correspondent for the New York Tribune. She went to Charleston, South Carolina, to meet him when that memorable march from Atlanta to the sea terminated. The couple were shocked by the condition of the so called "graves," on the Race Course, in the outskirts of that city. This place had been set aside as a prison corral during the war, and the men had been buried as they had died from exposure and disease, in the very troughs they had burrowed for themselves in the ground, as protection from the weather. The majority of the graves were unmarked, and the field was not enclosed.

This was a heartbreaking sight to the Redpaths, who formed a committee to better the condition. In May, 1865, a great memorial service was held in Zion Church. After the service Mary Cotton Redpath and others rode in carriages from which the horses had been taken, and which were drawn by enthusiastic colored people, to the burial ground, where each grave was decorated with myrtle and the small yellow rose called "cloth of gold," and other southern blossoms.

Mary Cotton Redpath's own grave in the little cemetery at Cotton Valley is among the first to be decorated every May now, with impressive ceremonies by citizens and the pupils of the nearby schools, while all over the country wherever there are veterans of the Union Army of 1861 to '65, her spirit marches on in Memorial Day processions large and small.

We will now go to the Jesse Cotton place, on the first left-

Russell  
Burwell's

hand road from the East Wolfeboro church, toward Brookfield, and get the beautiful view of Mt. Washington on the way. A few rods beyond the point where the view is obtained, sits the house, on

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Home of William Cotton, Jr.  
and Mary (Fernald) Cotton  
  
Later Owned by His Grandson,  
Dudley Page Cotton and  
Rebecca Jane (Roach) Cotton  
  
Later Owned by Henry D. and  
Abbie (Mason) Cotton

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Burying Ground  
of the  
James Cotton Family  
and the  
William Cotton and Dudley  
Page Cotton Families

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Stone at the Left  
Is That of  
Mrs. Mary (Cotton) Redpath

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Monument Erected by  
Dudley Page Cotton in Memory  
of His Parents  
William and Mary (Page) Cotton



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Home of  
John Woodbury and Betsy (Blake) Cotton  
Later Owned by Their Sons  
John B. Cotton and  
Jesse Woodbury Cotton

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Home of  
James and Elizabeth Ann (Cotton)  
Canney  
Lewis B. and Mary A. (Cotton) Canney

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Ganney -- Cotton Burying Ground  
Lewis B. and Mary A. (Cotton) Canney  
James and Betsy (Cotton) Canney  
John Woodbury and Betsy M. (Blake) Cotton  
Jesse Woodbury and Hattie M. (Varney) Cotton  
John B. Cotton



the line between Wolfeboro and Brookfield -- and thereby hangs an unusual tale. But first, let us review a little of the history of the family.

Jesse Cotton's father, Woodbury Cotton was born and reared in a house long since fallen down and only a cellar remains to mark its site, in what was known at that time as "The City of No Hope". This cellar is about a quarter of a mile back in a pasture now, but at time on a 'main traveled road", between the Paul Bissell and the Austin Fogg houses. Some will remember this lane being used by Henry Cotton's cows.

The Jesse Cotton house was built by John Newell, son of Robert Newell, "the settler", who died about 1840. The farm was one of several bought by Robert Newell in 1800. John Newell died about 1850, and Woodbury Cotton bought it. He married Betsy Blake, and lived there until his death.

About 1873, this place became the center of a political strife between Wolfeboro and Brookfield, and Mrs. Cotton, loyal to her home town, Brookfield, was not willing to become a Wolfeboro citizen. Mr. Cotton had his ideas also. So the Town Fathers, who were Samuel Plummer, John B. Lord and Orrin J. Eaton, and the selectmen of Brookfield, said it was to be settled once and for all, which town they were to represent. The lines were drawn, and it was found that half of the dining room and half the bedroom was in each town. A granite stone was placed between the two windows in the front of the house, to mark the dividing line. Mr. Cotton kept to his side of the table and his side of the bed, which were in Wolfeboro, and Mrs. Cotton ate and slept in her home town, Brookfield. Mr. Cotton always voted