

◆ I have attended many services at the Elder Grey Meeting House over the years. It was a summer highlight for my parents, Firp and Edie Hutchinson. They are both gone now, but I am thankful they have made this a part of my life as well. My memories as a child are very clear. I loved listening to the cows mooing in Willy's fields, chickens running all over the farm, ducks in the pond across the street and then the occasional dog wandering in and out of the service. I remember a few really good thunder storms rolling in and out of the afternoon service. It never seemed to ruin the goodies and lemonade on the tables out front. A very exciting service was when Governor Angus King spoke. As I get older, my memories are of wallpaper peeling, jacking up this and that, and worrying about the cemetery walls falling apart. Thank you to all the Waterboro folks who work hard to make this happen every year.

**Becky Hutchinson Joyce**  
Yarmouth, Maine

◆ I remember my Dad, Rev. Chandler Holmes, having a dedication there for my granddaughter, Kalle Joanna Brady, now in high school. I remember during a short service there when my Mom died that we had to stop and call 911 for a person in the congregation that had a medical emergency. I also remember coming up the hill to my father's burial and seeing the Waterboro Fire Department truck sitting there as a show of respect because he had belonged to the Fire Department. Gotta love the small towns. They stand for what is right about our country.

**Susan Holmes Brady**  
West Yarmouth, Massachusetts

◆ I have attended Elder Grey services on and off since I was a child – inevitably in those days – as my father never missed a service. In the beginning, as a child, I was more interested in running around outside on a summer day than sitting in a (very hard) pew and was guilty on occasion of trying to get one of my siblings to giggle during the service. I think it was the death of my grandmother Ethel, who lived nearby, when I was in my late 20's that turned the Elder Grey pilgrimage into an important time for remembrance of family and for quiet reflection on life and the passing of time. I remember "Grammy Ethel" picking and arranging the flowers for the service, a tradition my cousins Marge and Debby have beautifully continued. Our family was very fortunate that my cousin Debby and her husband Jon bought our grandmother's house when she passed away, and so Waterboro continues to be a place of homecoming for the extended Downs family.

Now when I think of Elder Grey weekend it is with a mixture of happy family reunions and the somber occasions of many family memorial services. There are many Downs relatives buried in the cemetery across the road, and I think of them all when I walk through the grounds on Elder Grey weekend, especially my father and my sister Barbara. What started as an occasional visit has become an annual tradition for me, my brother Peter, and my husband, who has felt embraced by the Waterboro community. The sight of the iconic 200-year-old building always lifts my spirits, and I look forward each year to hearing the bell ring, calling us all back home.

**Margaret Downs**, New York City

## *Remembrances & Reflections*



## **Elder Grey Meeting House**

**August, 2016**

◆ It is an honor knowing that the Holmes family played an important part in the history of the Elder Grey Meeting House. My grandfather, Rev. Lester C. Holmes, was the first pastor to preach [at a Pilgrimage Service] in 1926. I am sure he preached there many times over the years as well as my Dad, Rev. Chandler Holmes. My fondest memory was the [U.S.] Bicentennial celebration in 1976 when attendees dressed in clothing appropriate for that era. I was also a participant in bringing special music to the annual service on several occasions. My Mom and Dad, Marian and Chandler, are buried in the Elder Grey Cemetery, as we will be someday, and I know that they were pleased to know that their final resting place is under the large oak tree. It is also noteworthy that my husband, Stan Gawron, was asked to paint the lettering on the front of the church. My prayer is that services will continue for at least the next 90 years.

**Carolyn Holmes Gawron**  
Scarborough, Maine

◆ I have enjoyed attending some of the annual church services at the Elder Grey Meeting House. It has been meaningful to sit in the old pews and listen to the music and speakers, especially as I could think of family members who must have attended this church in years past. My great, great grandmother Sarah Lovinia Chadbourne grew up around the corner from the church. I am sure that she, her father Ivory Chadbourne, and her mother (Ivory's second wife) attended the church as well, as did others in her family. Later Sarah married Sherburne Nathaniel Clifford and moved to Newfield.

**Ruth Bridges Ayers**, Gorham, Maine

◆ I lived at the Connors home, at their request, to help out. Nellie, Henry and I [on our way to the Pilgrimage Service] would stop at the Hanscom farm, less than a mile from the meeting house. I always was impressed by the simple beauty of the place. If we happened to arrive a little early, it was a nice moment to catch up with old friends. The old pump organ was in the back, and, boy, did beautiful music come out of that antique instrument. Rev. Lewis Jones was there one time, and we were so taken with his sermon that we went to other places to hear him more than once. Jessie Mae Woodsome, his daughter, had a delightful voice. Collections were taken in a long-handled collection plate. I was enamored with that deep red velvet contraption, and I wondered if they would tickle our nose if we didn't pay attention. The seats kept us sitting up straight and gave our backs a workout. Nellie had a stroke in 1969, and we continued to take her to the Elder Grey Meeting House until she died. It meant the world to her, and her enthusiasm certainly rubbed off on me. I still appreciate attending every August and hope to continue for many years to come.

**Edna Day**, Sanford, Maine

◆ As a boy I remember an occasion when my Dad was the speaker in 1962. My Dad [Judge Sterry Waterman] was a lot of wonderful things, but he was not a comic or a kidder. Aunt Ethel Downs was always a pleasure and always there. I remember most the soft summer air and the smell of new-mown hay and the peace of the cemetery, to say nothing of the classic Downeast older men who tended the church and grounds. It may not seem like much, but it is, particularly when compared to Los Angeles. I'm not sure when I decided the Elder Grey Cemetery was the spot for my remains. I know my mother loved it there but felt a loyalty to and wanted to be buried next to her husband in Vermont. I have no recollection of my

grandmother, Alice Chadbourne Knight, but my grandfather Frank lived with us in St. Johnsbury, and he had a profound effect on my life. I wanted our stone to be near his and the stone of the rather remarkable James Mills Chadbourne.

**Tom Waterman**, San Marino, California

◆ My mother literally dragged me to the first service when I was six years old and made sure that I attended every service until I was about ten. Every year since, for reasons I am not quite sure about, I have happily attended every service and am the only person who has never missed one. I have a favorite seat at the front of the church. As the doors are always open, the restful tree-shaded cemetery across the way is in my view. Many thoughts have tumbled through my mind on these occasions – some inspiring, some dull. Not surprisingly, questions about life and death have begun to predominate in recent years.

This year [ca. 1995] I was moved to stroll through the cemetery after the service. The mix of old and young from different backgrounds, over such a long period, has given me a feeling of timelessness and enhanced my awareness of the cycles of life and death that have gone on as long as life has existed. This hallowed church and cemetery have made it easier for me to accept with equanimity the fact that life will go on without interruption long after I have joined my ancestors. So there is no better place than this rural hilltop, with this church, cemetery and view, for me to try to synchronize my life with eternity.

**John H. Downs** (1919-2011)

St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

Submitted by Margaret Downs

◆ I do not remember how old I was when I first attended a service at Elder Grey. I know I was very young and thought the minister would never stop talking. I was fascinated, though, by the organist and day dreamed about becoming a church

organist when I grew up. Then I realized I would have to sit through the sermons! My mother Bernice Shepard, as a child, lived around the corner from the Elder Grey Meeting House with her aunt, Nellie (Carpenter) Chadbourne. Nellie now lies buried in the Elder Grey Cemetery beside her husband, J. Lauriston Chadbourne. I attended many services as an adult with my mother until she passed away 20 years ago and then with my father-in-law Sidney Emery. Sid and I liked the atmosphere of the annual meetings but dreaded having to sit through a meeting on the wooden pews. They were built, he said, by someone determined to punish us for our sins.

**Harland Eastman**, Springvale, Maine

◆ My grandmother Marjorie Chadbourne Ahlquist died in November, 1978. She was born in 1905 in the Bradeen/Davis farmhouse near Elder Grey. For years we attended the graves on her land off the Bradeen Road, but it wasn't until her death that my father Earle Ahlquist started researching the stories he had heard from his mother. He could recollect her stories of attending Elder Grey as a child and how precious it was for her. Dad worked on compiling *The Paul<sup>6</sup> Chadbourne Family of Waterboro, Maine 1634-1990* as he continued to research his mother's heritage. And for Dad and me, his mother's stories started to fall into place about her childhood, the closeness she felt at Elder Grey, and magically we felt that, too.

**Kitty Ahlquist Chadbourne**,

Cumberland, Maine

◆ Lee's Mom was pretty adamant that we attend the services whenever possible. The history of family ties was extremely important to her. As we've attempted to uphold her wishes, we, too, agree that the historical thread of family connections in some instances has become so fragile that it's important to us as well to make the effort to pass along the family heritage, connections

and ties to Chadbourne Ridge. Attending the Elder Grey services provides a living connection to our ancestors who were an integral part of the community that centered around the Meeting House. I wonder, as I sit in a pew, where did our ancestors sit and what was life like for them?

**MaryAnn Robator**, Keene,  
New Hampshire, and Acton, Maine

◆ My mother Blenda Johnson often brought my parents' beautiful dahlias to decorate the meeting house. She was choir director at the Community Baptist Church in North Waterboro and for a few years in the 1960s brought her choir to sing at the Elder Grey services. One year she wanted to record the music but her tape recorder needed electricity; she accomplished that by running a 200-foot extension cord across the road and over to Willis Lord's house.

During one of Rev. Lewis Jones's sermons, Willis's dog wandered into the meeting house and up the aisle. They escorted the dog back out the door, and Rev. Jones said that reminded him of a dog story which he spontaneously added to his sermon. My father Wes Johnson turned to me and said, "Leave it to him – he has a joke for every occasion."

**Doris Johnson Tingley**,  
Advent Christian Village, Dowling Park,  
Florida, and North Waterboro, Maine.

◆ It wouldn't be the same meeting [at the Elder Grey Meeting House] without a hot August day, a vase of wildflowers and cows in the pasture across the street. "Do you remember the Holsteins that used to interrupt our meeting?" Chandler Holmes asked the assembly. And then he continued: "Today we have an Angus."

**Martha LaRiviere**,  
Journal Tribune Correspondent,  
covering the 1997 Pilgrimage Service  
with guest speaker, Gov. Angus King.