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Gilmanton Woman Chronicles Town's Past

Book Combines Treasured Family Memories, History of Community

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GILMANTON — A walk around Gilmanton and back in history is provided armchair travelers in "Gilmanton Summers," a book that is part history and part reminiscence.

Written by Jane Scriven Cumming, who spent her first summer here at a tender age in 1908, the liberally illustrated book began as a family project, chronicling five generations of memories of "A New Hampshire Village in the Early 1900s."

However, Cumming's daughter Barbara Donahue motivated the author to expand the project and create an historical text as well.

Thus, reading Cumming's book, one learns that there were 4,596 neat cattle, 7,635 sheep, and 1,751 poultry in Gilmanton in 1840; that the first "auto car" appeared in Gilmanton in 1914; and that soon after, "The Corner Store" succumbed to the need of these horseless buggies and installed gasoline pumps.

Cumming began spending her summer vacations in Gilmanton when the town was primarily as a summer resort.

Families would hop the Boston & Maine Railroad, Cumming recalls, and head north to an area bristling with nature and peace.

Summertime in Gilmanton for Cumming was a time of fun and relaxation, she relates, where she'd sleep late (8 a.m.) and go for walks with her mother.

A strong imagination and ingenuity were important for entertainment, she says. Ballets, operettas, singing, and joking could be enjoyed at the Academy.

Summer fun ranged from the likes of watching the 1905 operetta "Mademoiselle Modiste" to the author dressing up as Little Bo Peep for entertainment at the Academy.

"Gilmanton Summers" also tells a story about the town; its houses, families, and roads.

"Gilmanton Summers takes you on a walk around the town," Cumming says, from Loon Pond Road

to the Concord Road to the Five Corners so that one does not need to be from the town to enjoy it.

Gilmanton the farming town, the "Academy Village," and the resort are all portrayed in "Gilmanton Summers."

"It doesn't have to be localized. People (out of town) who've seen it have enjoyed it, too," Cumming says.

"It's a personal book with memories of a childhood era — a place which everyone has," Cumming adds. "And children love it, looking at pictures of people wearing crazy clothes."

"Gilmanton Summers" was writ-

ten over the past year, Cumming relates, adding that anyone who has the energy can write a similar book. And, she says, "it doesn't have to be costly."

The 81-page book sells for \$15, of which \$7 goes to the historical society or whatever other group sells it, Cumming explains.

Cumming's daughter helped with the book design, layout and collection of old black and white photographs depicting the town as it once was, Cumming says.

The mother-daughter collaboration is fitting because the book is a family album in a family town.