

The Weld Observer

April 2024 – 1st Edition



Ellis Farm

by Martha Vining

The “Ellis Farm” stands today as it did in the early 1800s, three quarters of a mile from Weld Village at 168 School Street! Today it has more weather efficient windows and doors, but it looks the same from the street as it always has. This impressive set of buildings was built by Abel Houghton around 1820---204 years ago. A 1910 photo can be found in the *I Remember When...* publication, if you are fortunate enough to have one! It is now the home of Ethan and Lisa

Miller. After MANY years, once again there are cattle in their fenced-in hillside field!

It had been the home of Luke Chandler and was first recorded at the Franklin County Registry of Deeds in 1880, the year that Franklin County had a Registry to record land purchases. At that time, it was recorded as the land and “buildings” thereon. The line of succession of owners are as follows: Wilbur Parlin when it became known as the “Simon Parlin Farm”, M.T. Judkins in 1909, Daniel Storer, Calvin Kneeland, Lettie Kneeland (Calvin’s wife after his passing),

Sylvanus Houlton, Ephraim Houlton, Julia and Loring Swain, Helen Carroll, Vernin & Phyllis Moulton, Edward Correia, and William and Jean Kay, before its current owners.

Many old New England farms had buildings that joined the house to the barn because of the deep winter snow of the era, making it possible to get from the house-to the woodshed-to the barn to feed the animals, clean the stalls, tend to the chickens and milk the cow! This home is a fine example of this connected arrangement. Thank you, Lisa and Ethan, for maintaining this beauty.

Tom Wheeler

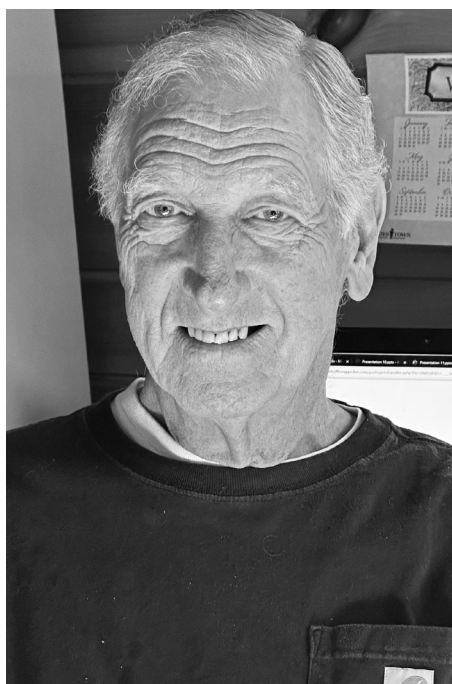
by Liz Boyle

Tom Wheeler donated the sketch for our Weld Observer logo. If you don't know Tom, he's a tall fellow in a white truck, an all-year-round resident of Weld who moved here from Rumford with his wife Sheila 17 years ago. Along with Preston Stowell, they were the first people in our era to live on Swett Brook Lane in the winter. Sheila has passed, but Tom actively keeps up with all of his many friends and interests.

Like Andy Warhol, Tom began his drawing practice as a kid in bed. Whenever he was ill, Tom's mom would supply pads, pencils, and charcoal to keep him occupied. Two very creative aunts also inspired his interest in arts and crafts. Tom was born just before World War II ended. Throughout his life, he has loved working with his hands, and has always been a significant presence in the communities where he's lived. Tom says it's not as easy to draw these days--the fingers don't work the way they once did, but he still takes art classes in Weld and is determined to continue his creative practices.

Tom has undergraduate and graduate degrees in Industrial Education from The University of Southern Maine. He spent his entire career making things and working as an Industrial Arts Educator. His junior high school students were exposed to many useful skills and learned to work in a variety of mediums. Tom has set up shops from the ground up and taught woodworking, metalsmithing, automotive, electronics, and graphic arts classes. At one time Tom also directed a vocational school in Rumford. Oh, yeah, he knows how to work in stained glass, too.

If all of that isn't enough, Tom is also a skilled outdoorsman and has re-built all of the houses he's owned including one from 1878. He built his current house from scratch using wood cut and milled from a property he owned in Alabama. We are fortunate to have him in our community. He's a great neighbor and friend. Thank you, Tom Wheeler.



Youth

by Barbara Hardenbrook

Youth, when did you leave me?

I did not notice.

There was no farewell kiss,

No lingering goodbyes.

One day you vanished.

I would have loved a coffee,

A chat, a happy parting
of the ways.

But no, you were gone.

I looked for you in all
the familiar places

You were not to be found.

Yet there are fond memories
Of the good times we shared.

Youth, you will always
be with me.

What's Up Outside, March 2024

by Lise Bofinger

This brief feature will examine what is happening in our natural environment during the current season. March and April mark the beginning of the spring season, though both months still have an “R” in them, so we know they can still deliver chilly temperatures.

Humans mark the beginning of spring by gathering sap and complaining about muddy roads, whereas for the natural world, it is a time of awakening. Although many of us learned about all the hibernating mammals, Maine has only three true hibernators: little brown bats, groundhogs, and meadow jumping mice. These three species cool their body temperature and slow their heartbeats and breathing rates. In addition to these three true hibernators, we have some part-time hibernators, skunks, raccoons, and bears that do not eat or drink in the winter but give birth and nurse their young!

As I walk through the woods on March 22nd, the snow is firm, almost concrete; tracking will have to wait another day. There are, however, several birds making themselves known to me. First, our resident Bald Eagle is continuing its almost daily mission of breaking off large pine branches and flying them back to its nest on the shore of Webb Lake. This pair has been using this same nest for at least ten years; how much work goes into shoring it up each spring amazes me. The ravens also seem louder than usual; their characteristic croaking makes me wonder if they



are also preparing for the breeding season. Finally, I watch a sizeable piliated woodpecker busily working away on a large dead spruce. Is he

looking for a tasty beetle grub, or is he too drumming in preparation for the breeding season? Spring is a time of rebirth, and nature is preparing.

Weld's Youngest Licensed Trapper

by Liz Boyle

MAX Pratt is ten years old and has lived in Weld all his life. He is a true outdoorsman and a conscientious trapper. In January, Max obtained a Junior Trapping License from the State of Maine. This license is granted to kids ages 10-15. He's now certified to trap all species that are legal to trap in the State other than black bears. A Resident Junior Big Game Hunting License would be required to legally trap a bear. That may come in the future. In class, bear traps particularly fascinated Max.

Max studied educational trapping materials for months and then took a 7-hour class held at Wilton Fish and Game. Trapping in Maine goes back hundreds of years and is growing in popularity in the State, so the class Max took filled up quickly. He was the youngest of 21 students. There were only two other kids in the class. According to the course description, Max was taught "trapping ethics, proper trapping equipment, responsible trap setting, and the importance of sound wildlife management practices."

Scott Pratt, Max's grandfather, got him interested in trapping and track identification. This winter they saw deer, coyote, mink, weasel, rabbit, and bobcat tracks, among others. Max could already recognize 15 track patterns before taking the course, and he has a Junior Ranger Badge from Mt. Blue State Park. When he was young, Max's grandfather trapped



animals as a source of income and sold them to fur buyers. At that time, a license was not required in the State.

Max's mom Julie and his grandma Nancy encouraged Max get to get his license. Even before that, Max was learning about Scott's extensive collection of traps. Max will continue his education with Scott. It's a shared love that allows them to remain close with each other and with nature. If the going gets tough, Max will also be able to help provide food for his family.

Of all of the animals Max traps, Max would only eat rabbits. Mostly he's interested in this activity because

he likes to see animals up close. He doesn't mind releasing them back into the wild. That said, he would really like to have a racoon hat. When he's older, Max hopes to be a game warden. Hopefully he'll stay close to Weld. We need people like Max.

If you'd like more information about Maine trapping licenses and permits, contact the Recreational Safety Division at (207) 287-5220. You can also find info on the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife section of Maine.gov. Look under the Programs & Resources tab for details. The phone number for Wilton Fish and Game is (207) 779-7721.

Flour Power

by Liz Boyle

LILY Miller, age nine, and Julie Jarvis, age 40, share a love of baking and knitting. They met in Weld Rec art classes. Now they're good buddies. That's one of the great things about Weld, we have people of all ages intermingling.

One day, Lily wanted to bake something, and her father Craig suggested she try a cornbread recipe by Alton Brown. Lily admires Alton Brown and enjoys watching cooking shows, but she also makes up her own recipes. Lily loved baking cornbread so much she started making it over and over. Now she stores her preferred recipe in her head. Lily jokes that she may have to start paying

for her own flour because she bakes most days. Lily's Dad spent a few years trying to find the perfect milk-dunking cookie recipe, so this tendency seems to run in the Miller family.

Julie also bakes repetitively (she might say obsessively). Julie recently volunteered to teach a Weld Rec cupcake decorating class as well as a sourdough class to Weld residents. She has been tending to her own sourdough starter since moving to Weld in 2023.

Julie sees herself in Lily. Like Lily, Julie started baking as a small child. Her parents didn't bake, so Julie learned on her own by following recipes. At one point her mom told Julie, "That's it! No more baking. You're baking too much and you're making a mess!" That didn't stop Julie.

Julie and her husband Dave (another dedicated Weld Rec volunteer) moved to town last year. They didn't know a soul, so Julie started looking for a new hobby. She obtained sourdough starter in Farmington by connecting with a woman on the Maine "Buy Nothing" Facebook group. She now bakes round rustic loaves, cinnamon raisin bread, bagels, tortillas, crackers, and pie crusts, all using sourdough starter.

Both bakers believe that weighing ingredients is essential to good baking. Since most published recipes don't have weights, Julie has Googled and made a chart for herself to convert between cups, grams, and ounces. Also, Julie and Lily suggest fluffing up your flour with a fork so you don't overflour.

Lily's Cornbread Recipe

(Lily uses muffin tins)

- 1½ cups of cornmeal soaked with 1¼ of milk for ten minutes.
- 1 cup of sifted flour (sifting is optional)
- 1 teaspoon of Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon of baking powder
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup corn oil
- 1 teaspoon of honey
- Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients.
- Stir together. Bake at 425 degrees, 25 minutes.

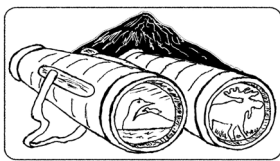
Lily's Tips

For variety, incorporate canned corn kernels; add extra honey or extra salt. (You may have tried Lily's delicious Jalapeno pepper corn muffins at the Weld Rec Easter party.) Soak your cornmeal in milk for ten minutes. Do not thoroughly mix the honey into the batter. The taste will be more surprising and pronounced if you stir the honey briefly.

Julie's Tips

Be patient with yourself. Baking, and especially sourdough baking, is a journey. There are so many factors that go into a good loaf. Take a long-term view.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN



The Weld Observer

We invite you to contribute content: articles, letters, drawings, cartoons, photographs, and other materials of interest.

We publish in black and white. Captions and descriptive information are helpful.

Please provide your contact information with your submission.

Via e-mail: weldrecnews@weld-maine.org

or drop your submission in the Weld business box

in front of the **Weld Town Office** located at **23 Mill Street in Weld.**

Attention: **Weld Recreation Department**