

## C. HISTORY

The land that eventually became Mount Holly lay unsettled between the towns of Ludlow and Wallingford until the end of the Revolutionary War, when the Vermont General Assembly decided to raise money by selling ungranted land. On February 23, 1781, Abraham Jackson, one of the first settlers in Wallingford, along with 29 others paid 270 English pounds for 9,700 acres between Wallingford and Ludlow which came to be known as Jackson's Gore. (Map II c 1).

**Bowlsville**, in the western half of Jackson Gore, was the site of the first grist mill in Mount Holly, built on the still un-named branch of the Mill River.

Log cabins were built in the vicinity of today's Mount Holly Post Office. Another group of settlers came from Ludlow Town to settle near today's railroad track crossing on Healdville Road. Though within three miles of one another, each group of settlers was totally unaware, until 1786, that the other settlement existed. On October 31, 1792, Vermont's General Assembly formally created Mount Holly from Jackson Gore and portions of land from Wallingford and Ludlow. Map II c 1

Abraham Jackson built the Town's first sawmill by damming the outlet of a pond (Jackson Pond). Additional dams increased the size of the Pond to become today's Star Lake. In 1863, A.P. Chase purchased the sawmill, the Pond, and water rights to construct a wooden toy factory. By 1885 the factory employed forty to fifty men in a village called Mechanicsville – today's **Belmont**.

In 1889, the toy factory moved from Mechanicsville taking most of its workers with it. Many of the workers were Methodists. They left behind their church, built in 1884, which, after serving for many years as the Town Hall, is today's Town library and community center.

The railroad opened Vermont to vacationers escaping the summer's heat in cities. During the 1890s, Green Mountain Cottage and Lake View Inn opened. In 1911, citizens petitioned to have the post office name changed from Mechanicsville to **Belmont** – which better fit the image of an idyllic summer retreat.

Today's hamlet of **Mount Holly** grew as the first commercial center of Mount Holly Town due to its position on the Green Mountain Turnpike at the junction with County Road, which went south to Mechanicsville and on to Weston and Chester. (See Map II c 7, "First Roads").

The Turnpike, a privately owned toll road, was part of the road linking west-central Vermont with Boston. Stage coaches carrying people and mail, freight wagons, and private carriages took 3 to 7 days to make the trip. The hamlet served human and animal traffic with Clark's Tavern, a store, post office, blacksmith shop, and holding pens for animals overnight. Other buildings included the school, Baptist Church, and Catholic Church. (*Both churches have been lost to fires. St Mary's Catholic Church burned in December 2007*).

Mount Holly hamlet lost its pre-eminence in the Town's transportation system with the arrival of the railroad in 1849 and the later building of Route 103 which was hard-topped in 1929. (See Map II c 8, "Railroad and Roads about 1890 "). As noted above, the railroad divided the Town in two. In 1851 a town hall was maintained on each side of the Town. The Mount Holly town hall was not used after 1922. A shining memorial to the hamlet remains in the 1846 resolution of the Mount Holly Baptists: "Resolved, that American slavery as a sin against God and productive of immense (sic) evil to man should be Discontinued by all Christians and by every friend of humanity."

In the meantime, **Bowlsville** was the site of a blacksmith's shop, a cheese factory, and a wooden ware factory that turned stock and made washboards. Spikes for the railroad were reported to be made in Bowlsville.

In the Second Great Awakening - the great religious revival of the 1830's and early 1840's - a group of Adventists, who believed the world would end in 1843, built a chapel in Bowlsville large enough for 300 persons. When the event did not occur, interest waned and the chapel was taken down.

The whole Town of Mount Holly had many assets. The soil was excellent for grazing and potatoes. The land was cleared and stone walls built for sheep from the 1820's. In 1840, Mount Holly led the county in dairy production and exported 65,930 bushels of potatoes. The cleared timber was processed in fourteen sawmills by 1869. Rich deposits of clay led to a brick kiln. Other industry included grist mills, blacksmiths, a tannery, and factories producing chairs, cheese boxes, rakes, and toys.

**Tarbellville** became a center of thriving economic activity in the second half of the nineteenth century, driven by the energy and enterprise of the amazing Marshall Tarbell. Born in 1829 into a family that settled in Mount Holly about the time the Town was formed in 1792, Marshall took over the small family sawmill on the Mill River and a leased potato starch factory. He changed the factory to make rakes and handles for tools. The business eventually produced almost 50,000 rakes a year. Marshall built, enlarged, and improved his ventures -- undeterred by flood and fire. Upon his death in 1900, the hamlet contained a rake factory, sawmills, two cheese factories, the best general store in the county, a dance hall, eleven tenements, ice house, tool house, repair shop, blacksmith shop, and fine homes.

Times changed: the demand for rakes fell and the factory changed to produce chair stock until 1929; steam replaced water power; fresh milk sent to market by train did not need to be preserved as cheese; the road from Weston to East Wallingford was moved up from periodic wash-outs on the edge of the Mill River and hard-topped after WWII. Residents could travel further to shop and go to school, and workmen no longer had to live in tenements to be close to their employment. Today, few of the commercial buildings that defined Tarbellville in the nineteenth century still stand, but the concentration of houses at the intersection of Route 155 and Tarbellville Road are reminders of the once-prosperous hamlet.

**Hortonville** is about midway on the Shunpike between Branch Brook and Cuttingsville. It was built by sensible, frugal local residents to avoid ("shun") the toll gates on the Green Mountain Turnpike -- near the town line with Ludlow to the east and near border with Wallingford to the west.

The hamlet was named for the Horton family. Aaron Horton arrived early in the history of Mount Holly and built the second frame house in Town. The hamlet cemetery was laid out on Andrew Horton's farm. The first grave was for his daughter Harriet, who died in 1825 aged 1 year, 4 months and 11 days.

Warren Horton (1818-1901), son of Andrew and grandson of Aaron, was a capable carpenter and shrewd businessman. He purchased a saw mill, enlarged it, replaced water power with steam engines in 1864, employed 20 to 30 men, produced up to 300,000 feet of spruce lumber per year, and sold chair stock all over New England. He lived on an 83-acre dairy farm, purchased over 1,000 acres of land in neighboring towns, and erected 4 tenement houses for his workers. The sawmill operated until 1918. A house deeded to Grange #370 in 1907 was purchased by Grange # 513 in 1933. Improvements have been made over the years (running water in 1983) and many residents recall square dancing on the second floor in the 1950's and 1960's.

Once the railroad was completed through Mount Holly in 1851 local land owners supplied firewood for the engines until they were converted to coal in the late 1800s. The uplands of the Town were cleared by the turn of the century because of the demand for firewood and to supply the forest products manufacturers.

**Healdville** began life in the narrow valley between Okemo Mountain and Sawyer Rocks on the Green Mountain Turnpike in 1784. The Revolutionary War soldier, Captain Joseph Green settled in 1786 and built the Green Stand inn to capture the business of Turnpike travelers on their 3-7 day trip to Boston.

The Branch Brook was the site of numerous sawmills, all of which periodically washed out in floods. Grist mills, butchers, blacksmiths, and cheese factories came and went; however, Crowley's Cheese Factory still operates -- see below.

The hamlet was named for Daniel A. Heald, a Ludlow lawyer, who in 1851 purchased 1,580 acres on the east side of what is now Healdville Road. He was deeded the right to cross the new railroad tracks with a sluice to an enormous sawmill (ruins remain) that was worth three times the value of the next largest sawmill in Town. He sold his interests to the Bank of Black River.

The Black River Lumber Company logged marketable timber on Okemo Mountain and sold the land to the Vermont State Forest in 1935.

When the new Town of Mount Holly was created in 1792, it left **East Wallingford** divided in two between the towns of Wallingford and Mount Holly. For a period of time, the Mount Holly side of the village was referred to as Goodellville, commemorating the activities of Job W. Goodell, who purchased land and the first sawmill (1838), acquired a chair factory, enlarged the mill, installed machinery, and did not pay his bills. He was sued and in 1870, when a number of courts ruled against him, his business came to an end.

The Goodellville school house, serving School District #6, was washed away when the Mill River changed its course in 1869 – which the rivers did frequently. The worst flood was in 1927. The degree of damage was attributed to runoff and erosion on the cleared hillsides of the state. To stabilize the land and reduce flood damage, the Green Mountain National Forest was established by the Federal Government, and the conservation movement to protect the land and its natural resources began.

## HISTORIC HERITAGE

The historic heritage of Mount Holly includes the Village of Belmont and the remaining structures in the **hamlets** of East Wallingford, Bowlsville, Healdville, Hortonville, Mount Holly, and Tarbellville. (Map II c 2)

The historic buildings of Mount Holly include the Crowley Cheese Factory built in 1882. It is the last survivor of several cheese factories in Town that processed milk for shipment to down-country markets. Today it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the Federal Government.

As a Bicentennial(1976) project the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation surveyed Mount Holly for its historic sites and structures and placed these in the **State Register of Historic Places**. Map II c 3 shows the site of the surveyed structures in the Town of Mount Holly and Map II c 4 indicates the sites within the Village of Belmont.

The boundaries of the historic **school districts** and the sites of twelve of the **school** houses are shown on Map II c 5.

The first settlement in Jackson Gore was in 1782. By 1803 the Town had been divided into eight school districts. In 1818, 392 students attended nine separate schools in Mount Holly. Additional districts were formed in 1809, 1834, 1843 (three districts), 1858, 1867. By 1859, there were 14 separate school districts. Existing districts were contracted or joined in 1843 and 1867.

In 1893, Mount Holly gave up the idea of separate school districts, elected three school directors, and began a town system of schooling. In the 1955-56 school year, there were three schools - Belmont, Mount Holly, and Healdville - for 63 students.

A central school was built in 1956. A kindergarten was formed in 1971, and Union #39 was voted in 1973. The first mention of a school tax was in 1821.

The school census – public schools only:

1818	Total	(probably Gd. 1 – 8)	<b>392</b>
1955	3 schools	63	
1962	Grade 1 – 6	78 ) Grades	
	Grade 7 – 8	31 ) 1 – 8	<b>109</b>
	Grade 9 – 12	36	
1982	Grades K – 8		<b>95</b>

Two of the **churches** that have been part of Mount Holly's history were still standing until December 2007 when Saint Mary's Mission Church was burned leaving the Village Baptist Church in Belmont. The Methodist Church is now the Community Library. The sites of other churches/religious structures are known even though the buildings have been lost or moved:

Mount Holly Baptist Church

Quaker meeting house in Belmont – end of Dodge Road at Samuel Cook's

Adventist Hall in Bowlsville

Other **historic buildings** are known: Oddfellows Hall – former Chase Toy Factory, the Blacksmith, now the Historical Museum, the railroad stations for East Wallingford, Mount Holly, and the Summit.

Other structures that have not been formally identified include: bridges, saunas, inns, and railroad sidings.

The current and old cemeteries have been identified - Map II c 6:

On USGS maps:

Carlton

Green

Hortonville

Martin-Wilder-Woodward

Mechanicsville

Mount Holly

Old Belmont

Tarbellville

On Vermont Old Cemeteries Association list:

Packer

Unmarked:

Crowley (not on above list or map)

There are small private burial grounds not included in the list

**Historic barns** (over fifty years of age) have been surveyed and mapped by the Mount Holly Barn Preservation Association – Map II c 6. Other agricultural buildings: silos, sugar houses, chicken houses, manure houses, and machinery are often noted at the same site as barns.

**Stone walls** are of particular interest to many people. There are no known maps of the "stone walls of Mount Holly". Aerial photographs may be one source, and the descriptions of property prepared for the Current Use program may be another

**Other sites and ruins** that are scattered across the Town, but not mapped, and usually known only to a few people include: foundations, cellar holes, wells, mills, dams, mill ponds (there were once 8), sawmills (there were once 14), cheese factories, other factories, workmen's housing, stores, inns, dance

hall, brick kiln, tanneries, flood washouts; and agricultural sites such as fields where particular crops grew and on which particular animals were raised.

About 1848 construction crews of the Rutland and Burlington Railroad found the remains of a **woolly mammoth** preserved in a peat bog. A portion of a tusk and a molar tooth formerly housed in the Department of Geology at the University of Vermont are on permanent loan to the Mount Holly Community Historical Museum and will be on display in its new building (2009). The site of the discovery is not marked, nor is the place where the two ends of the **Railroad were joined** in a ceremony of memorable carousing and celebration.