

GLOVER HISTORY

*Providing for the Future, Remembering the Past
1783-1996*

Vol. 5, No. 1

Glover Historical Society, Inc.

Winter 1996

This special newsletter is devoted to the subject of Runaway Pond and some of the goals of the Glover Historical Society that pertain to that momentous event in Glover history. All items have been written by the society's president, Wayne H. Alexander.

President's Message

At a recent meeting of the Glover Historical Society (GHS) it was decided to issue this newsletter at the beginning of the new year for various reasons, among them: *membership dues are payable in January* for the calendar year 1996 and a reminder at this time might be more productive (and January is the perfect time to become a *new member*); also, featuring Runaway Pond and announcing our plans for a "park," to be started in 1996, would also be more timely.

For future newsletters we would appreciate input from people with Glover experiences who would like to share them. Send them to: Glover Historical Society, Municipal Building, Glover, VT 05839.

Some readers enjoyed the "Partridge Murder" story in the last issue. There are plenty of other Glover incidents that were hot news such as: how did Oscar Shute manage to accidentally shoot himself to death in the back of his head?

Runaway Pond Speaks

*The changing seasons always made me beautiful,
I used to be so quiet and peaceful.*

An act of Nature put me there

Surrounded by wildlife and birds of the air.

*The settlers came to conquer my power,
To turn their tiny grist mills by the hour.*

*Down the wooded valley they turned my tide
And brought destruction to their countryside.*

*I made history which will always be told
By the coming generations, both young and old.*

*Now I lie at rest with all the other dead
With a granite marker at my head.*

John R. Urie
West Glover

1995 Open House

On July 29th the GHS held its Open House day on the "beach" of Long Lake/Runaway Pond/Long Pond/Dry Pond, located on the east side of the highway (across from the monument). Forty-three people were present and enjoyed a picnic and time of socializing followed by a review of the situation before and after the "breaking away" of Long Pond, June 6, 1810.

A view of the quicksand on the ridge that was breached that eventful day was apparent and intriguing. The depth of the dry lake was impressive from the beach as was the size of the pond and hillside that broke away.

We also visited the cold spring and discussed plans to move the monument and create a "park." The group then viewed the original pond outlet to the south into Greensboro which became the headwater of the Lamoille River.

A stop was made at Westlook Cemetery to view the headstone of Spencer Chamberlain who, by most accounts, ran ahead of the water in 1810 to save the miller's attendant (wife, daughter, son-in-law?) Elijah Stone, who purportedly "took the last shovelful of earth at the letting of Runaway Pond," was buried nearby also. (Time did not permit us to visit the site of the Wilson gristmill.)

The annual meeting followed.



Forty-three people attended the 1995 Open House picnic & "lecture" at the Runaway Pond site.

Photo by Harold Vincent

RUNAWAY POND BIBLIOGRAPHY

compiled by W. H. Alexander

The late Dean Bailey, Glover selectman and first president of the GHS, had taken a keen interest in the subject of Runaway Pond and collected considerable of the bibliography listed below which his wife, Eleanor, generously donated to the GHS.

It is hoped the GHS will reprint and publish under one cover all of the Runaway Pond articles listed. This will enable those interested to make their own determinations since there are some contradictions, e.g., who ran ahead of the water? who was tending the mill?

The Glover Historical Society would appreciate any information others may have pertaining to Runaway Pond (or any other town history).

Numerous accounts have been written about the event. Those I am aware of and in chronological order are:

- 1) June 16, 1810. Danville *North Star*. (I have not seen this article—published only 10 days after the event—but surmise it's the same as that published a month later by the Concord (NH) *Gazette*.)
- 2) June 25, 1810. Joseph Owen's letter to his sister.
- 3) July 10, 1810. Concord (NH) *Gazette*.
- 4) 1823. Rev. S. Edwards Dwight, Letter to Editor of *American Journal of Science*, pub. 1826. (Joanna Perron "discovered" this account in the UVM library in 1993.)
- 5) 1842. *History of Vermont: Part III: Gazetteer of Vermont*, Zadock Thompson.
- 6) 1860. Rev. Pliny H. White, 50th Anniversary Address. (Published by the *Orleans County Monitor*, Feb. 1, 1911 & succeeding issues).
- 7) c. 1860s, poem by Jeanette Chamberlain Phillips composed shortly after semi-centennial.
- 8) Feb. 23, 1875. Judge Parker of Coventry for the *Express & Standard* of Newport, "Reminiscences of early times in Orleans County."
- 9) June 25, 1876. Letter to George Dorr. (Submitted to GHS recently by Mrs. John Hatcher of Leawood, Kansas. She is a great great granddaughter of Dorr?).
- 10) c. 1877. Abbey Maria Hemenway. *The Vermont Historical Gazette*.
- 11) c. 1883. *Child's Gazetteer of Orleans County*.
- 12) c. 1887. Article by Capt. Orson V. Percival.
- 13) 1887. Proceedings, Orleans County Historical Society.
- 14) 1890. E. T. Wilson, "The Story of Runaway Pond."
- 15) June 6, 1910. Frederick W. Baldwin. Address at the 100th anniversary celebration, "The Centennial Celebration of Runaway Pond."
- 16) 1910. *Pictorial Souvenir*, Monitor Press.
- 17) April 20, 1926. Alonzo Chamberlain Phillips letter.
- 18) June 15, 1929. Frank Samuel Phillips' notarized statement. (Indicates his son Harry had "narrated" the Pond story).
- 19) c. 1929. Harry Alonzo Phillips, *History of Glover and Runaway Pond* (a poem in two cantos). This was published c. 1949 by the Northeastern VT Development Assoc.
- 20) 1940. Willard C. Leonard. *History of Glover, 1781-1860*.
- 21) Spring 1991. Wilson Genealogy, *Branches & Twigs*. Genealogical Society of VT.

Other accounts (gleaned from those listed above) have been written in recent years: *Yankee Magazine*, June 1982; *The Chronicle*, numerous times; *Caladonian Record*, Dec. 9, 1949; *History of Glover, VT*, Bicentennial Committee, 1983; and many others no doubt.

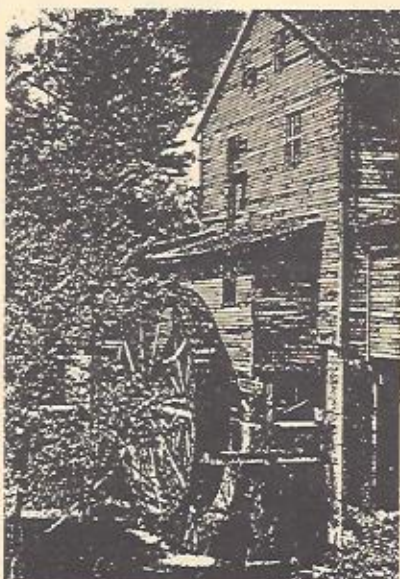
RUNAWAY POND, A SUMMARY

by Wayne H. Alexander (1995)

Aaron Wilson came to Glover about 1808 from Keene, NH. He built two mills on the Barton River in the vicinity of the Green Mountain Fence industry. A sawmill was north of and a gristmill south of the only bridge in Glover. This bridge was on a path/road that connected the two principal settlements in Glover at the time (pop. 385 in 1810).

Keene Corner was a settled area in east Glover (now called Dexter Mt.) where most were from Keene, NH. On the Hinman Road, east of Parker Pond was the Parker Settlement. Today's Glover Village area was at that time a cedar swamp; no one lived in the valley.

Wilson's gristmill was much needed to grind the settlers' grain and dry weather had reduced the river's flow to the point of desperation. Wilson thus conceived the idea (with help from others, no doubt) to divert the outlet of Long Pond/Lake (which flowed south into Greensboro and the Lamoille River) to the north and into the Glover/Barton river. He obviously felt the little extra flow he might gain



A typical gristmill of the 1800s

would help him over the dry spell. The year previous was also dry so this was not a "spur of the moment" undertaking. Wilson had had previous experience in Keene, NH digging canals, operating gristmills, etc.

On June 6, 1810, the few who knew where the pond was located carried horns to call the others to the site. About 60 men and boys, all in a merry mood, gathered with their crude tools and proceeded to dig a trench through the low bank.

By midday the trench was all dug and only a small barrier remained holding back the water. Probably at this point there was a lunch break and refreshment. About 1:00 pm they broke through the "hard pan" to let the water flow. (Elijah Stone, purportedly took the last shovelful of dirt at the letting of Runaway Pond.) But the water disappeared in the trench (quicksand), and there followed numerous "hair raising" escapes as the whole hillside, which was holding back a pond about 100 feet deep, crumbled away and all went downstream towards Wilson's Mill.

The pond emptied completely in about 1½ hours; many large fish were seen flopping in the mud and many

colored eggs of various sizes were also visible. A few hours later the water reached Lake Memphremagog at Newport's South Bay. The flood tore up everything in its path, uprooted trees and other debris, and formed great dams, then broke away only to repeat the process further downstream.

Most accounts credit Spencer Chamberlain, a half-breed Indian, as the one who ran ahead of the water to warn the mill attendant of the danger coming down the valley. Most accounts say he saved the miller's wife, but the mill was devoured and "no trace of the millstones was ever found."

The log that is presently showing above the water in the middle of Clark Pond is no doubt a remnant of the many trees that were left lodged upright in the mud that day. That pond, with no name at the time (later Mud Pond, Clark Pond, Tildy's Pond, and now officially Clark Pond) was scooped out by the rush and became the shallow pond it is today filled with mud.

The one bridge in Barton was on the Hinman Road below the Candlepin Restaurant (1995). A mill and Joseph Owen's homestead were in that area and all was "lost."

The threat of lawsuits prompted Aaron Wilson to "high tail it back to Keene, NH" with his family. Only one son, Ebenezer, remained and settled in Coventry. Joseph Owen ended up owning the Wilson property and his son, Phillander Owen, built another mill on the "same site." The remains of the dam for that mill can still be seen at "Owens Falls."

Some towns in Lamoille County brought lawsuits against the "diggers" because of their loss of water flow. Percy Don Clark (b. 1906) tells that his grandfather was the last surviving member of the party and that the case was never brought to trial and was dismissed on his death.

Willard C. Leonard wrote in 1940 that, in 1890, he met a Bickford man in New London, NH whose father was one of the "diggers" at the letting of Runaway Pond. He had fled with another boy for fear of reprisal.

However, it is generally accepted that the whole affair was a blessing. Even though the pond had been there since the last glacier 16,000 years ago, the water could have escaped later with much loss of life and property. The swamp was cleared and drained and became the site of Glover Village.

Upon reaching Barton the waters covered the wider valley with trees and mud. The leveling effect and the deposit of silt made this land a fertile valley once the trees were burned, cleared or rotted away.

Cedric Pierce, Jr. relates that while working for Clayton Elliot on the "Fairgrounds Farm" in the 1940s, a "flood"

(Continued on page A-3)

GLOVER HISTORY

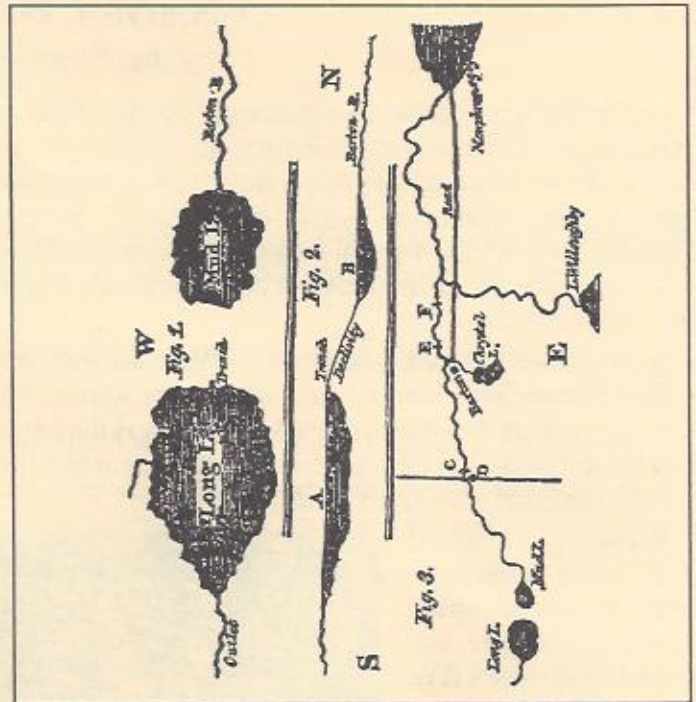
An occasional publication of the
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Municipal Building, Glover, VT 05839

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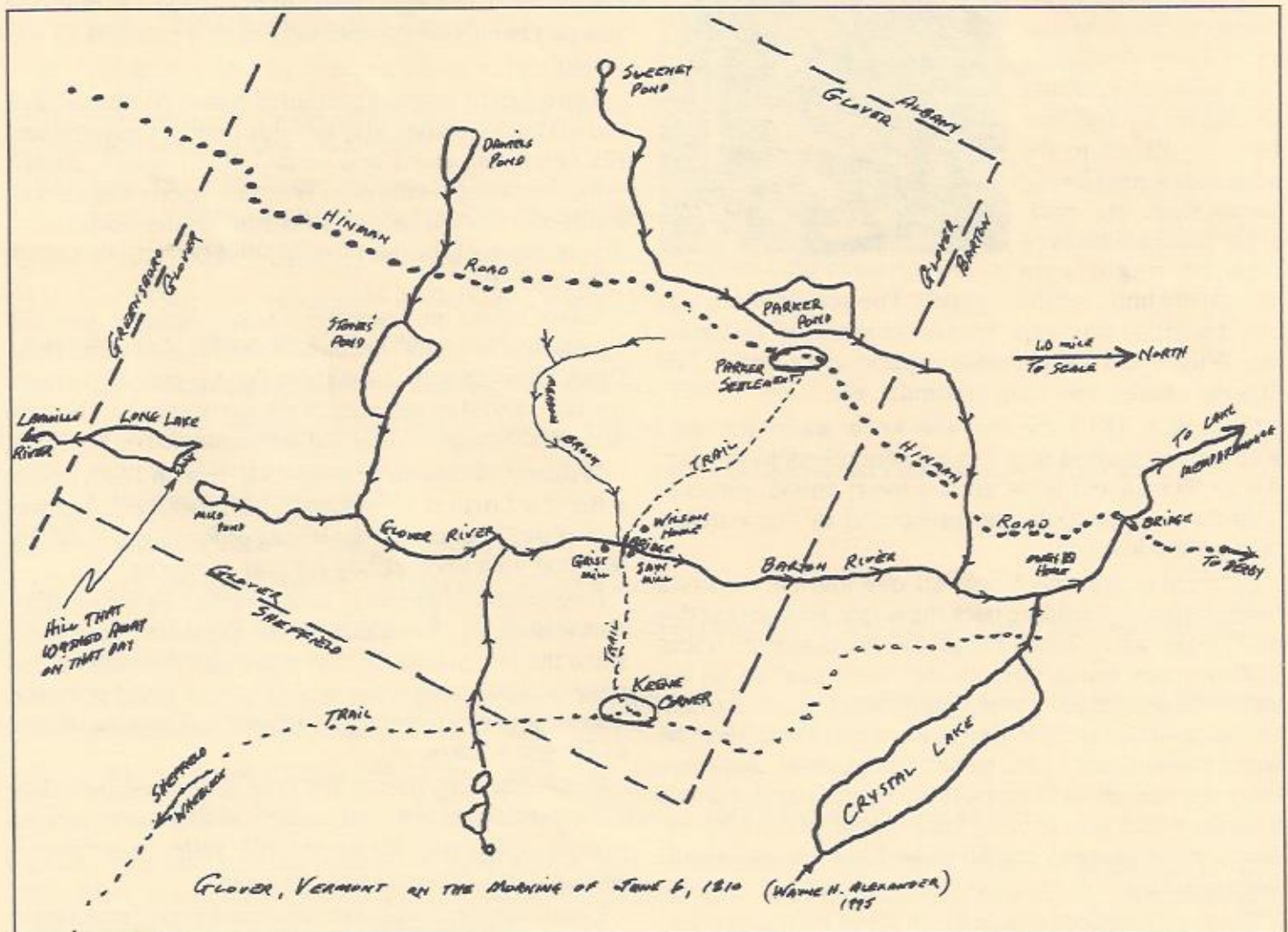
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Elaine Magalis
Carolyn Perron

Manager of Museum: Jean Borland

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A surface of Long Lake.—B surface of Mud Lake.—C Wilson's Mill.—D Keene Corner.—E Blodget's Mill.—F Enos's Mill.
From 1826 letter by Rev. S. Edwards Dwight



Wilson Mill Site—Where?

Aaron Wilson had a sawmill “a little northwardly of Phillander Owen’s home.” This was the Goss farm and later (until 1995) Howard and Beverly Conley’s home and Green Mountain Fence factory. “About 25 rods upstream was the Grist mill, a two story building with a single run of millstones above a blacksmith and joiners shop below.”

Harry Phillips wrote that the gristmill was located “near the Aldrich farm.” This writer [W.H.A.] was the 5th generation to live on this Aldrich farm and the family was quite specific that the location was near the entrance to Aldrich Lane. Some stone work is apparent, and it’s hard to believe it withstood the ravages of Runaway Pond. Of course the debris may have covered the mill site only to be exposed again by the 1927 Flood. The 100th Anniversary souvenir program pictures the remnant of the mill and sleuceway which fits the terrain generally.

Wilson’s Millstones?

“No trace of the millstones was ever found” was the usual comment in the historical documents regarding Runaway Pond. But, in the Old Stone House Museum (of the Orleans County Historical Society in Brownington, VT) in the Glover room is a single millstone identified as that of the Wilson Mill. Edward “Ted” Alexander, former president of that Society, recalled and located the Society’s minutes of 1956 when the millstone was presented to the Museum.

From the *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 21, 1956:

“...at the 104th Annual meeting of the Orleans County Historical Society...Wallace Gilpin introduced Mrs. Winifred Wilbur of New York who had come as the society’s guest, to give an account of her recent unique gift to the Old Stone House collection. She related how her mother, deeply interested in geology, was fascinated by the story of Runaway Pond on the memorable day of June 6, 1810. Her mother located one of the long-lost mill wheels being used as a support for a rain barrel on a Glover farm. Obtaining the granite wheel, she kept it as a family treasure through the years.”

John and Carolyn (Priest) Washburn presented the GHS a photocopy of the entire proceedings of that 104th meeting. No one we have asked today recalls Mrs. Winifred Wilbur. That millstone is only 15½ inches in diameter and about 4” thick. It appears to be the “running” or upper stone and the furrows are curved. W. C. Leonard wrote that “stones were 20 inches diameter.”

In 1834, Oliver Evans wrote in *Millers Guide* that the furrows at that time were straight but that “...earlier stones were curved...”

So this millstone at the Old Stone House could well have come from the 1810 Wilson Mill. It is of very



“Early millstone furrows with curved lines, the center one being the running or upper stone. The one at the right is a later type of straight line furrow grooving.” from *Grist Mills*, an Applied Arts publication. The millstone presented to the Old Stone House by Mrs. Winifred Wilbur of New York had curved furrows.

small diameter compared to those seen throughout New England.

The millstone at Runaway Pond today, with the water pipe, came from Hubert Humphrey’s millsite in West Glover. It is 60 inches in diameter. Its mate (?) in Irasburg is only 55 inches.

Aaron Wilson came from Keene, N.H. about 1808 (per W. C. Leonard) and he no doubt brought the millstone with him “through the woods” and small stones were all he could carry.

Small stones turned faster and required less power. For Wilson to have arrived, built a home and mill and be operating in that time period (1808-1810), things had to be simple. I speculate his millstones were turned by a “tub wheel” in the water generating the power: a very simple but very inefficient water wheel. Certainly if his site had the elevation (height of dam) to use an overshot wheel there would have been enough water to turn such small millstones. Furthermore, the little additional water flow from Long Pond would have been very small compared to the other watersheds feeding Barton River. Probably he planned a gate on the outlet so he could control the flow as required. But just a ditch would help with his immediate problems.

Little did he imagine the result. Poor Aaron Wilson and his family had worked so hard, invested so much, and then lost everything!

Aaron and Dorcas (Clark) Wilson had 11 children. Their second child, Elizabeth (b. 1782) married Solomon F. Dorr at Westmorland, NH. By many accounts, normally Dorr was the miller at the gristmill but left his wife (Wilson’s daughter) attending that day; thus the confusion.

Summary

(Continued from page A-1)

had cut into the river bank and a large tangle of trees was apparent many feet below the surface of the field. It has been reported that the contractor who put the recent sewer lines through Glover Village also found much buried timber.

Quicksand!

All accounts of Runaway Pond agree that the water that was expected to run along the newly dug channel disappeared into the ground beneath. That soil was quicksand.

There is plenty of evidence today (1995) of that sand on the remaining ridge of the mountainside that washed away.

"The soil sample taken from the Runaway Pond area has been examined by geologists and soil scientists in my office. Without actual analysis it has been agreed these are very fine sandy soils....," says Susan Alexander of Stone Environmental Inc., Montpelier, VT, July 1995. All the children and adults visiting the site this summer would agree. The "sand" is very much like the consistency of flour: extremely fine.

So how could a mountain of quicksand hold back the waters of a 100-foot deep pond? A wet sandy beach will support the weight of man, but sand is made "quick" by the infiltration of water from below when it becomes fluid. This would be similar to the mud hole we have all stepped in and pulled out of our boot in order to get free.

Susan adds, "The articles I read later [spoke] about 'frozen ground,' 'marl and shells,' 'crust layer,' which when breached allowed a huge volume of water to flow into the sand and lifting the sand (hence the water appeared to disappear?)."

Thus the sand became "quick" and the fluidity of the sand and water created a hydrostatic pressure within the hillside that caused the lower slope to rupture. As the quicksand flowed away, the hard pan which was holding back the water in the pond, then lost its support and the

whole mountainside gave way.

What a sight, and what an experience, to see an entire pond of a billion gallons of water rush off down the Glover valley! It is strange that none of the 60 participants at the dig ever wrote an eyewitness account.

This writer cannot comprehend the geological process that formed the pond and its barriers.

From Plateau to Gravel Pit

The plateau of land on the north side of the pond was only a very few feet above the water level and extended "about 5 or 6 rods" from the pond. The embankment then dropped off sharply to the level of "mud" pond which was only 200 rods to the north and 200 feet lower.

Few trees grew on this plateau, only brush and alders. The largest was a 4-inch cedar. The soil surface was normal but a foot or two deep was the layer of "hard pan" (highly compacted gravel).

The water was shallow in this area, only 14 inches deep, some 4 rods from shore.

Naturally this was the area chosen to dig the channel. The remaining plateau can still be seen extending for hundreds of feet to the north-northwest and probably contains the same materials even though the surface has been "farmed." Also, a significant amount of gravel was taken from this area by the State of Vermont when they rebuilt Route 122 about 40 years ago.

The site of the picnic area for the 1910 celebration was over what became this gravel pit. The veins of quicksand are apparent on both sides of the ridge that was breached that eventful day, June 6, 1810.



A crowd estimated at 2,000 gathered at the Runaway Pond site for the events of the centennial celebration on June 6th, 1910, as arranged by the Orleans County Historical Society. (This photo was reproduced from "The Centennial Celebration" pamphlet—the original photo is thought to be lost.)

MOVE THE MONUMENT?

The GHS has a plan to move the Runaway Pond monument to a new site. It would be relocated in a "park" to be created in the open space between the old road and the new road. The location is state property and is part of the pond bed. The state has a rest area there (where the spring water flows out the millstone moved there in the 1950s from West Glover by

Edward Pudvah). The monument was placed in its current spot for the June 6, 1910 Centennial Celebration of the "breaking away of Long Pond." The Glover selectmen's account book indicates:

June 10, 1910. Paid H. R. Mack, marker for Dry Pond, \$93.00.

June 25, 1910 Paid F. J. Corliss, work of Runaway Pond monument, \$3.00.

Apparently Dry Pond became Runaway Pond at that time; my father

and others always spoke of "Dry Pond" when I was a boy. Corliss probably made the footing (stone & concrete). Louise (Carey) LaBombard, of Swanton, wrote this year that her grandfather, Edward Carey, was a stone cutter in Hardwick and carved the Runaway Pond marker in 1910.

The monument is granite, 55" high, 42" wide and 22" deep (approx.) and weighs 4900 pounds. It needs to be moved for a number of reasons:

1) It's only a few feet from the highway pavement and is in danger of damage from snowplow wings, etc.

2) Safety is a concern to the viewer as the monument is so close to the road with no parking area. (The road was much narrower at the time of placement.)

3) Salt and other road dirt have necessitated a good cleaning.

4) The monument is leaning slightly toward the road.

5) "In commemoration of the breaking away of Long Pond..." gives no explanation to what caused the event.

6) About one foot of the stone is now under ground.

The GHS would like to move the marker to the site mentioned and also relocate the water and millstone, as well as add a tablet of explanation. The Glover selectmen and the State Highway Dept. have given their approval and encouragement.

Our next task is come up with a design and proposal after which we can finalize costs and solicit funds and help, and then finally proceed with the actual project.

Financial Statement: Jan. 1- Dec. 31, 1995

Starting Balance, Jan. 1	Checking	\$920.87	
	Savings	424.12	
			TOTAL \$1344.99
INCOME:			
Memberships		631.00	
Sale of History Books		497.00	
Donations		320.00	
Fund Raising		139.05	
Sale of Video Tapes		127.00	
Sale of Maps		84.00	
Interest		0.30	
TOTAL INCOME			\$1798.35
EXPENSES:			
Insurance		263.00	
Newsletter		185.00	
Pay Back Book Loan		100.00	
Glover Bicentennial Scholarship Fund: (Memory of Ruth Evans)		100.00	
Postage		96.00	
Phillips Taxidermist/Testimonial		70.00	
Town Reports of Glover 1928-1975, bound		35.35	
Photo Supplies		88.83	
Misc.		51.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES:			\$989.18
FINAL BALANCE - 12/31/95	CD	1424.42	
	Checking	\$ 729.74	
			TOTAL \$2154.16

Glover Historical Society, Inc.

Municipal Building

Glover, VT 05839

MEMBERSHIP FOR 1996

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Tel.# _____

___ Family Membership - \$8.00 (spouses, children under 18)

___ Single Membership - \$5.00

___ Additional Donation of \$ _____

Please check your address label for your membership expiration date.

Comments (connection with Glover, etc.)

I would like to purchase _____ copies of *The History of Glover* at \$18.00 (plus \$2.00 postpaid).

I would like to purchase _____ copies of the *Runaway Pond* poem, by Harry Alonzo Philips, reprinted 1995, at \$3.00 (plus \$.55 postpaid).

GLOVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
Municipal Building
Glover, VT 05839



MEMBERSHIP DUES PAYABLE NOW

Please join or renew your membership now using the form on page 3.

Proposed site for the Runaway Pond park which would include the granite monument, millstone, and a new tablet of explanation surrounded by granite markers. It would also make use of water that is already present at the site.

