

# ~ Denmark Historical Society ~

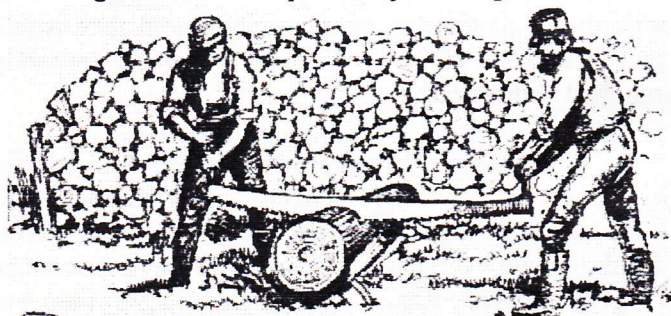
## ~ Newsletter ~

Vol. 3 No. 1

January - February 1996

### IF YOU LIKE WEATHER, YOU'LL LOVE MAINE

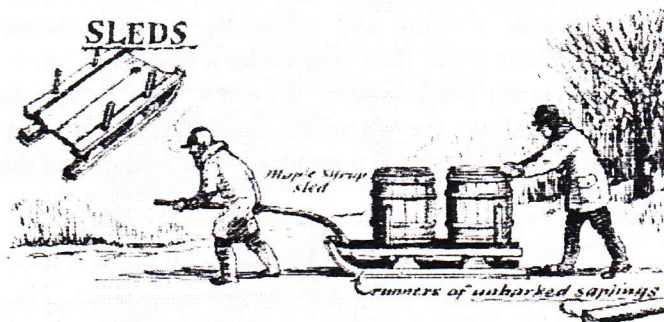
We hear a lot about the weather this time of year. Everyone has an opinion or an observation about how cold, how wet, how icy it is or how deep the snow is at their place. As the thermometer drops, conversation heats up just like when we hit the wall of summer's hottest days. In this age of instant potatoes, take-out dinners, the availability of out of season foods in the grocery store and central heating we tend to forget that man has always lived in accordance with the changing of the seasons. If one was born and/or raised a New Englander, living in other parts of the country where the seasons are less defined seems to be missing something necessary to one's well-being and one longs for the brilliant blue sky, the snap in the air and the vitality that being closer to Mother Nature brings. Those who live here in Maine and enjoy it understand and entertain a fuller enthusiasm for life and a reverence for the cycles of the seasons that was so much a part of the past. When too much is done for us, when our work and our pleasures are limited and designed by others it is possible to have a loss of appreciation for the things we can do for ourselves, to be deprived of the satisfaction of knowing what we are capable of producing on our own.



*The fuel that heats you twice.*

"Everyone complains about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." Many people, like hibernating animals, seem to hole up for the winter, only venturing out when they have to go somewhere but seldom just to enjoy a winter's day. Our forebears lived by the weather and their almanacs. When the colder winds began to blow the first thing they did was to make sure the foundation of the house was well banked with leaves, hay or evergreen boughs to help prevent the cold winds of winter from finding too easy a way into the house. By the end of November the shed would have been well stocked with firewood, split and dried, enough

to last well into Spring. Before snow flew the sleds would be made ready for the day when the wagon would no longer be the practical mode of transportation. The runners would be checked and the bells would be shined, the harnesses all in order. Winter was a season of bells, not so much to be festive but for everyone's safety on the road. Steel-shod runners over packed snow were relatively silent and a sleigh or sled was a very swift vehicle. Bells let others know that someone was coming down the road and to watch out. Not only were sleds swift, they took longer to stop than a wagon or carriage on a dirt road. Because the winter landscape was bright with reflected light it was not uncommon for people to travel after dark. Lights were seldom used so this made the bells a necessity. It was often possible to recognize who was approaching by the sound of their bells. Since winter chores were dictated by the hours of daylight winter was a time when many people gathered at each others homes for social occasions.



Snow was looked upon as an asset rather than a hindrance or threat to transportation. Men looked forward to being able to move heavy loads more easily over the snow than in wagons and carts over dirt roads with their holes, ruts and stones. For every wagon a farmer had, he had about three sleds, each outfitted for a special purpose. Ever heard of a "pung"? It was a general purpose farm sled that could be easily adapted to move wood, or to carry people or ice. Sleighs were used for transportation and pleasure. Sleds were the working vehicles. It was possible to carry more on a sled than on a wagon because the sled was closer to the ground and moved easily over smooth, packed snow or ice and the farmer rarely had to worry about his horse coming up lame because of a stone lodging in his shoe. Some

enterprising farmers improvised detachable runners to put beneath their wagon wheels. They were manufactured and sold by mail order as well.

### SNOW-ROLLER



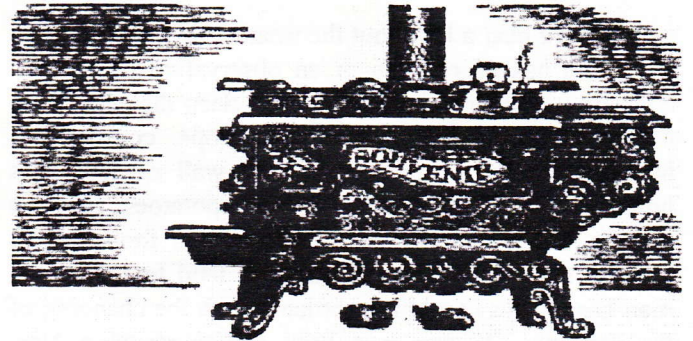
One of the most important members of the community in winter was the road commissioner or "snow warden". It was his responsibility to see that the crews kept the roads snow-filled and packed down and, when necessary, pave bridges and fill bare spots to assure even passage on the roads. The work horse of this operation was the "snow-roller" and it consisted of massive wooden planked rollers with a platform on top for rock ballast and a place for the driver and was drawn by horses or oxen. Today it is one of the scarcest pieces of yesteryear's equipment to find. Packing the snow this way made it last longer to provide the necessary surface to handle transportation of goods and people into the Spring and the onset of Mud Season.

Many of the older houses were situated to take advantage of the path of the sun, facing the sun directly in the colder months and obliquely in the warmer months. Barns are at their best under a blanket of snow, but there is no place colder, it seems, than a barn in winter unless you are where the animals eat and sleep imbuing the area with the warmth of their bodies and the sweet smell of hay.

We associate many different smells with winter, and when a particular scent reaches our nostrils it has the ability to send us instantly back into our past to a particular time or place. Who cannot identify woolen mittens steaming on the radiator or hanging near the wood stove? Or hot soup and homemade bread, hot chocolate or steaming coffee? And the scent of wood smoke that lingers in the hallway where the jackets are hung?

In most homes one room seemed to be the gathering place, a stronghold against winter. Sometimes it was the kitchen with its big cook stove and proximity to good things to eat, the center of family activity. Sometimes it was the front parlor with stuffed furniture around a roaring fireplace or fancy box stove. Either

way, families usually finished chores as soon as possible and spent the evening together in a circle of warmth. Reading, singing and parlor games were common entertainment but bedtime often came early for all. As bedrooms were seldom heated children often slept together in one big bed rather than in individual beds and each bed was furnished with a wrapped, heated soapstone or hot water bottle.

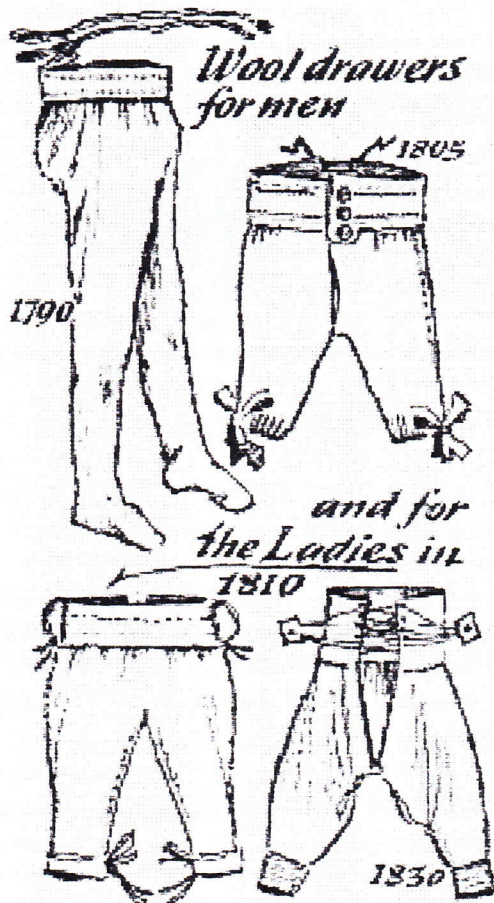


The first person up in the morning usually was responsible for starting the morning fires. Men on their way out to the barn or off for a day of logging in the woods often rose at four or five o'clock. Children grabbed their clothes and dressed by the stove as quickly as they could manage as it was not uncommon for the temperature inside the house to be quite frosty. Indoor plumbing often meant that the privy was attached to the barn instead of being a separate out-building. Either way, it was not a place most people chose to linger. Students walked to neighborhood schools bundled in snow pants, jackets and galoshes carrying their lunches with them. If the day was especially cold they would pull their desks closer to the stove and keep it steadily supplied with wood.

Today's children dress in a rainbow of colorful nylon, dacron, thinsulate and Goretex with shoes and boots of many types and materials. Long underwear is for skiing, not everyday wear, but there was a time when long underwear was a necessity and it was not uncommon to have one suit for the whole week. Mostly it was made of a waffle weave cotton and by Saturday it had stretched out enough so that it had to be folded over before the long woolen stockings were pulled up and over them. These were pinned to the underwear or to a "waist", a kind of garter belt. Small children wore long legged and long sleeved underwear but older children wore the short sleeved and knee length varieties sometimes known as "snuggies". Girls did not wear pants to school or even at home. They wore dresses, jumpers or skirts and it was common to have only two outfits for the week and a best dress for church on

Sunday. Boys and girls alike had one pair of shoes, usually a pair of sturdy Oxfords. These were to last until they were outgrown and then handed down to the next child if there was wear still left in them. Coats and jackets were usually made of heavy wool. It was a lucky child who had a mother or grandmother who was a skilled knitter and warm, wooly sweaters and mittens were common Christmas gifts.

Adults were no strangers to long underwear. It was worn under their regular year 'round clothing with additional layers of sweaters and jackets.



Heavy fleece or blanket lined denim jackets known as "frocks" were worn by working men whereas town men or those in business would be more apt to wear a more formal fitted coat. Thick shawls, capes or fitted coats were what women wore. Dainty slippers were not seen on the feet of these ladies. They wore heavy woolen socks and leather boots to keep warm. Floors were apt to be drafty and they were often in and out of the house doing household chores or shopping.

Cold weather and snow covered ground were beneficial elements for certain activities reserved for winter. Men went into the woods to cut timber for the logging mills and for firewood. Packed roads enabled them to bring the heavy loads out with teams of horses and oxen pulling the log-laden sleds. It was often dangerous work and required a great deal of skill to fell and move the trees. They did this in winter as it was easier to slide the logs over the snow than to drag them through the mud or to work in the woods when the leaves were out and the mosquitoes and black flies were in attendance. Ice cutting was another winter activity. Men



gathered on the ponds to clear the ice and cut large blocks for storage in their icehouses. A cold, dry, windy day was ideal. If cut on a warm or wet day, the ice blocks could stick together and be most unwieldy. The blocks were stacked on sleds and taken to the icehouses where they were packed in sawdust and would keep this way through the year. Ice fishing, on the other hand, was more of a sport. Time has changed some things. Men still work in the woods, some with horses even, but large, heavy equipment has taken the finesse out of logging and the sounds have changed. Now we hear snowmobiles and chain saws. Gone are the teams of men and animals. Rhythms have changed.

Eric Sloane in American Yesterday wrote "We may live more easily or casually nowadays, but there is a graciousness in hard work and chores that is beyond present-day comprehension. The building of a log fire and the task of watching and poking it is a pleasure which no steam radiator can replace." This was not meant to romanticize the past but to point out that in our relative comfort we take much for granted. Our forebears, living by sun and moon, were more intimately involved with providing for themselves. Successful living depended upon their ability to adapt and to make do within the dictates of the seasons, and from their success they could take a great deal of satisfaction.

Despite the inconveniences, there is much to enjoy about Winter: the deep blue of an early morning giving way to the first rays of the sun, painting the white landscape with pastel iridescent shades, edging the trees with gold - a moment so brief, yet so spectacular, it is worth being up early, stamping away the brittle cold in front of the barn while the animals munch their breakfasts in the comparative warmth of their fur coats and hay; the stillness of the morning air before sun-up, the rose-color of the mountain, the mauve of the sky, the silver at the horizon. And there are mysteries in the snowfall, the laciness of the smaller branches, the beauty of the drifts, the curves that delineate lifts and swells, that soften the edges of the world, the contrasts of the dark green pines capped with snow against the bluest sky ever, brilliant light, and blue shadows.

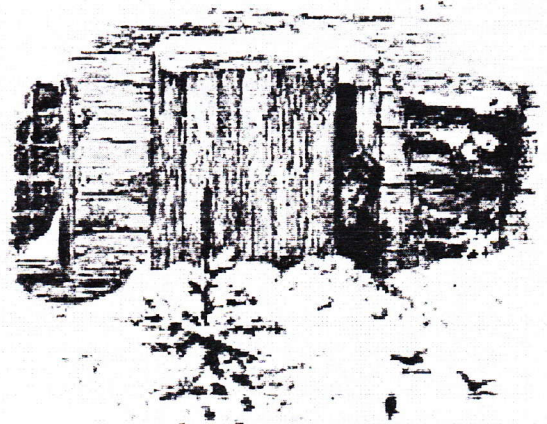
We are drawn outside on those crystal clear days almost against our will to stay where it is cozy and warm, to become a part of the almost shining air, coming as close to purity as Mother Nature will allow. Taking the trail behind the barn on snowshoes we make a good, wide "float", one that will pack down so hard we can even go "barefoot", without skis or snowshoes. It is out in the woods that we see the chiseled hoof marks of deer,



the deep hole trail of a moose, the spread-out soft-pad print of a rabbit or the evenly distanced line of fox

tracks. Coming from behind a tree there is a tiny tracery where a wood mouse has ventured out upon the new snow and further along, the feathery touch of bird wings.

It is so cold that the snow squeaks under foot and our nostrils stick together. We have been following fox tracks across the field and into the woods. Up ahead there is a clearing. There are four big shells of ice as neat as made beds where four moose have spent the night. Returning we are surprised to find ourselves standing at the top level of the barnyard fence. There are chores to do. Some of them are not fun but are necessary. Others like refilling the bird feeders are easy and give much more to the soul than to the birds I think.



The day before the blizzard there was already a lot of snow up on the roof, especially on the back side that doesn't get the sun. We climbed up with our snowshoes on and started to shovel it off, from the top so we still had a good place to stand. The dog thought the roof a great place to be and seemed disappointed when he couldn't climb up on the barn roof, too. It snowed and blew all night and into the morning. First thing, when the dog wanted to go out, we had to heave him up and out a space just big enough for him to squeeze through where we had pushed the snow back with the storm door. We were snowed in, and could only get out by sliding the barn door back and shoveling a path to the front door!

That snow is almost gone now. Warmer temperatures and heavy rain took it away. Some we had to shovel, the stuff that fell in the doorway and in the driveway next to the barn. It is really something to get used to, the thunderous WHIIMP! when that heavy snow begins to slide and then hits the ground!

Winter in the country has an eloquence never to be found on a city street. Country living is its own

experience linked, as it were, to the past. Now, as then, we wait for Groundhog Day, maple sugaring, the return of the birds and Mud Season. We wait for Spring.

### Christmas Past

December 12<sup>th</sup> we held our annual Christmas gathering at Netherfield Farm. It was a frosty evening but the blazing fires and good cheer brought warmth to all. Reports of various program committee heads brought us up to date on the Doll Show and the Arts Center. We discussed the possibility of having an Ice Cutting or at least presenting a display of tools. Winnie Moore gave a spirited reading of "The Genealogist's Christmas" which we all enjoyed. Then we had refreshments and held a Silent Auction with some very interesting items for bid.

### January Readers Theater

To liven up the long winter days Penny Morris and Company, also known as The Denmark Readers Theater, gave us two delightful matinee performances of stories for children of all ages, **Kaleidoscope**, on Saturday and Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. There were tales by James Thurber, Lewis Carroll, Saki, Norton Juster, Shel Silverstein and Aesop to name a few. All the characters came to life through the voices and motions of the five reader-actors and kept even the smallest children enthralled. An exhibit of children's toys, books and games from long past and not-so-distant past brought a rainbow of color to the Arts Center and delight to the eyes of both children and adults.

### Denmark Genealogy Notes

Over the last few years people from many places around the United States have made requests to the Denmark Historical Society for information about their ancestors. We have started a card file on early Denmark settlers and their families to help people with their genealogical search. If you have any written histories, information or pictures dealing with Denmark's early families we would like to make a copy for our records and, perhaps, share it through this column in future newsletters.

If members would like to make an inquiry, send it along with your name and address to the Denmark Historical Society, PO Box 803, Denmark, Me. 04022.

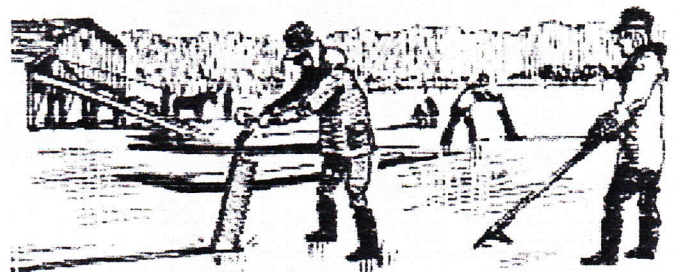
and we will print your question. We may not have answers to all your questions, but someone reading this newsletter may have information that they will be willing to share.

The following is a list of pioneers who settled in Denmark in the late 1700's:

Isaac Berry of Middletown Mass.  
Ezra Stiles of Brownfield, Maine  
Nathaniel Symonds  
George Thomes of Gorham, Maine  
Elias Berry, son of Isaac Berry  
Tyler Porter of Boxford, Massachusetts  
Cyrus Ingalls of Andover, Massachusetts  
Samuel Spofford of Andover, Mass.  
Jedediah Long of Berwick, Maine  
Ichabod Warren  
Joshua Ames of Wilmington, Mass.  
Samuel Richardson of Billerica, Mass.  
Joseph Walker of Fryeburg, Maine  
Daniel Boston  
Timothy Cutler of Scarboro, Maine

Submitted by Sue MacDonald,  
Denmark Historical Society Genealogist

### Ice Cutting Exhibit



The Bridgton Historical Society has graciously permitted us to borrow some ice groovers, saws and other ice cutting equipment from their collection. We will be setting up an exhibit of the tools along with pictures, a video, and vintage clothing. It will be a weekend show held at the Denmark Arts Center on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Due to liability concerns, we will not be cutting ice from a pond, but will be making blocks of ice which will be stored in a small temporary ice house for use at a later and warmer date. Plans for a social event using the ice will be discussed at a future meeting.

## Tiddley I Update

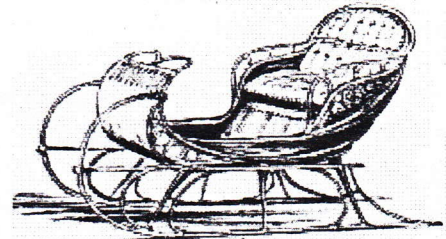
As many of you may know, we have in our archives the diaries of Theodore Ingalls Lowell. The first five of these provided the basis for a report by Adam Aja for a program at Norlands Living History Center. The report has been added to the collection of T. I. Lowell diaries and the notebooks containing excerpts from the diaries.



We will be using the diaries in this and future newsletters to illustrate points made in our lead articles. In this way we can give first hand information from Denmark's past and familiarize more people with the wealth of information in the diaries. You may find that some of the phrases are out of fashion and strange, that he uses different words than we use today, but you will also find a clear view of what it was like to live in Denmark in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The notations in this newsletter are from the first two diaries covering the years 1854 through 1863 and are only highlights of the winter months and winter weather. Although many references were made to the weather, they were not often specific. A severe storm during a period of relatively "pleasant" weather could have been rain or snow, he does not say. Temperatures were not recorded other than "very cold" and in this small space it is not possible to recount each winter storm by storm, so notations giving the dates of first sleighing and first wheeled carriages to pass will have to suffice to indicate the winters duration.

- 1855 Jan. 18-19 A very severe snowstorm  
Feb. 5-7 Cold days  
Nov. 18, 21 - A snowstorm  
Dec. 4 Good wheeling, a very little snow in the woods
- 1856 Jan. 13 A severe snowstorm  
Jan. 25 Avery cold day  
Feb. 12-13 Very cold days  
Nov. 14 First snowstorm - about 1 inch fell  
Nov. 25 Snowstorm - about 3 inches fell  
Nov. 26 First sleigh passed by here  
Dec. 16 Grandfather Ingalls has been here and I took his horse and sleigh up to Jonathan Hilton's



- 1857 Jan. (snow and very cold days most of the month, the 24<sup>th</sup> the coldest morning for many years)  
Jan. 31 Storms most all day and most all night, about a foot fell  
Feb. 6-7 Warm and foggy. 8<sup>th</sup> A rainy day  
Feb. 10-12 Cold nights and cold days. 13<sup>th</sup> A snowstorm  
Mar. 16 First carriage on wheels  
Nov. 7 Quite pleasant. 8-9<sup>th</sup> Stormy. 16<sup>th</sup> First snow about 1 inch  
Dec. 7 3 inches of snow on the ground. The first sleigh passed today.  
Dec. 14-15 Pleasant weather...not much snow...A wagon passed here today and I saw the cattle out in the field.  
Dec. 18 It is a rainy day, two wagons passed today, last year at this time sleighing  
Dec. 22 A snowstorm. 23<sup>rd</sup> A pleasant morning and sleighing again.
- 1858 Jan. 6 Snowstorm (then a stretch of pleasant weather)  
Feb. 9 (8 inches of snow fell then there were days of very cold weather)  
Mar. 21 A rainy day, first carriage on wheels passed here but the wheeling is not very good.  
Apr. 20 Commenced snowing. (9 more inches in the next week)  
Nov. 6-7 About 7 inches of snow  
Nov. 23 (More snow) the first sleigh passed here

Nov. 27 I took a sleigh ride up to Mr. Evans. Uncle Asahel brought me a buffalo coat.

Dec. 21,31 Snowstorms

1859 Jan. 4, Feb. 3, Apr.3 Severe snowstorms.

Apr. 5 The first carriage on wheels passed here.

Nov. 12 Commenced snowing.

Nov. 13 Rainy, rather rough wheeling.

Nov. 22 A snowstorm, about 12 inches.

Nov. 23 The first sleigh passed here today. It is quite good sleighing. It looks like winter to see the sleighs pass and hear the jingle of the bells. There have been five past today.

Dec. 2 A rainy day which takes most of the snow. (more snow, stormy and cold)

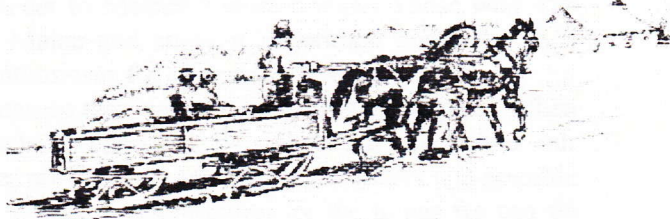
1860 Jan. 7 Snowing. (8-11 warm and thawing weather)

Mar. 20 First carriage on wheels passed here

Nov. (Mixed weather - warm, snowy, rainy)

Nov. 28 First sleigh passed here. Oscar went to the corner with a pung

Nov. 29 Thanksgiving day. It froze hard last night so the sleighing is quite good this morning.



Dec. (TIL recorded 19 inches of snow in three storms)

1861 Jan. (More snow and cold temperatures most of the month)

Jan. 25 I rode over to G. E. Smith's on the sled as they broke the road.

Feb.-Mar. (Often warm and rainy)

Mar. 23 A pleasant day. Went up as far as Moxey's this forenoon to break out the road, quite a quantity of snow, about as hard breaking as there has been this winter. Last year this time was wheeling...the mail did not get in tonight I presume it was in consequence of bad roads.

Apr. (Walked on the crust - weather very spring-like, first carriage on the 10<sup>th</sup> and then more snow)

Nov. 25 ...About 8 inches fell...first sleigh...good sleighing.

Dec. (Early days warm, little snow, cattle out grazing)

Dec. 22 Pleasant day...wheeling yet. We seldom have wheeling as late as this. It does not seem much like winter to see the cattle in the

pastures grazing & see the wagons pass & repass & not hear the jingle of the bells as we usually do at this season of the year.

Dec. 23 A northeast snowstorm - now it begins to look like winter.

1862 Jan 1 Snow...A very windy night. I don't recollect ever hearing the wind blow so hard for so long a time...It unroofed a part of the old barn.

Jan. 18 Oscar & myself left home this morning for Waterford...via Harrison Flat. Soon after leaving North Bridgton it commenced snowing & we were obliged to face it the remainder of the journey. Arrived at Aunt Sarah Wilkins' about 1 o'clock 30 minutes PM pretty well imbedded in snow. I have not been out in such a storm for quite a number of years...Was quite glad to get undercover & throw off my outside garments so that I could turn my head without having my ears filled up with snow.

Jan. 19-20 (Still stormy and unsettled)

Jan. 21 Fair. Left Aunt Sarah's this morning...Our journey home was not marked by any incidents worthy of note. We met quite a number of teams breaking roads & I must say that the people of Waterford deserve praise for their enterprise for the roads...were well broken out.

Jan. 25 A northeast snowstorm.

Feb. 6, 12-14, 18, 20,24 Snowy and stormy

Mar. (Often snowy then rainy)

Apr. 13 ...Sleighing very good. 23<sup>rd</sup> First carriage passed here.

Dec. (Snowy, rainy, thawy - poor sleighing...people out in wagons.

1863 Jan. 11 Warm this morning. ...about 2 inches of snow which will improve the sleighing as it was very poor before. We have had a very warm winter thus far & very little snow, such a winter has not been known for many years. (More snowstorms later in the month)

Feb. (Very cold and good sleighing. Father took a load a day of wood and bark to Bridgton).

Mar. (Snowy and stormy)

Apr. 18 First carriage on wheels passed here this afternoon.

May 15 A stormy day - rain and snow.

### Gentle Reminder

There are a number of members who have not yet paid their dues for the August '95 - August '96 year. This is the only reminder that will be sent. If you wish to remain a member and receive future issues of this newsletter please let us know and send your check today to the Denmark Historical Society, PO Box 803, Denmark, Maine 04022. We appreciate your continued support and enjoy putting this newsletter together for you.



Denmark Historical Society  
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