

# Kendall Road History Walk

A Story of the Kendalls, Cottles, Perkins & Ransoms

A two mile walk through time along one of South Woodstock's most beautiful and historic early roads

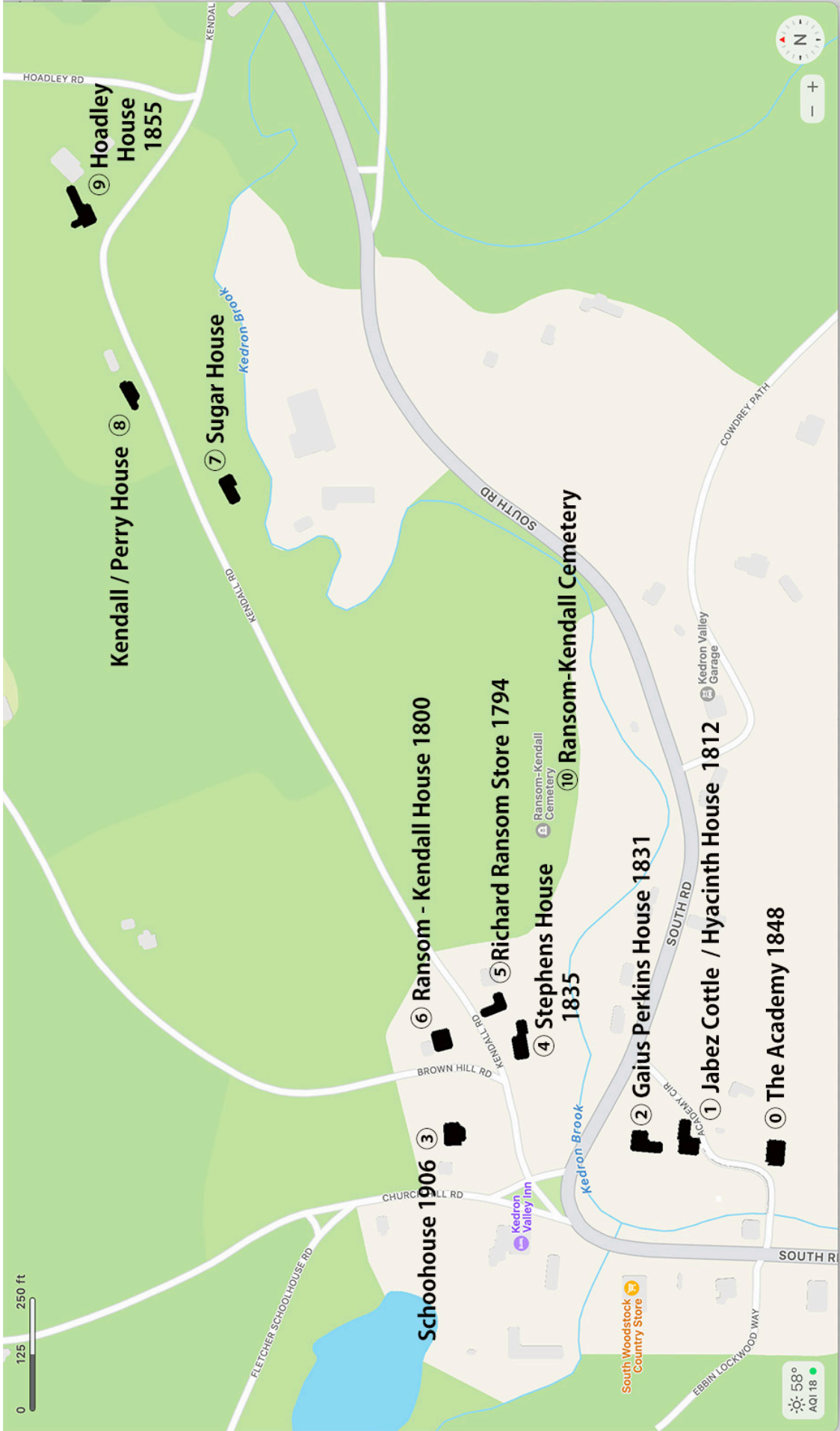


Scale of 280 Rods to an Inch,  
0 60 120 240 360

Woodstock was Incorporated July 10, 1781.  
It contains 26017 Acres.  
Population in 1830, 3044.

**WOODSTOCK IN 1832**

Drawn by a Committee from the Woodstock Institute, 1832.



# 1 Jabez Cottle House / Hyacinth House- 1812



Two houses and the Academy sit atop Cottle Ridge, the rise of land that overlooks the Kedron Brook. The Cottles were among the earliest settlers of South Woodstock and the first to locate themselves in the village proper.

Their first home was a wooden cape built on the Ridge in 1785 surrounded by a large farm. A successful gristmill was built on the dammed brook below by Jabez Cottle and with its success he was able to raise this brick home in 1812. There was a brickyard at the foot of Dunham Hill as shown on the 1832 map, and Chip Kendall reports there

was also one in the vicinity of Kendall Road. Another spectacular brick building was built by Jabez's brother Warren half a mile south on the road to Reading, it's commonly called the Giles House, built in 1796. Warren opened the first store and prospered as well.

Many of the large Cottle family settled in the Fletcher Hill area, so many in fact that it was known as Cottle Town. The first road, known as the Great Road, connected Windsor to Woodstock and farms were created by the early pioneers as early as 1776. Many of the 'first' families of South Woodstock are still in town. Their descendants are on this hike. But not the Cottles. An apparently restless lot, they had pulled up stakes from Martha's Vineyard and other locations in Massachusetts to try their luck in the Green Mountains, though they prospered early, their luck didn't hold and some of their businesses failed. Illness affected them as well. Hearing that the fresh air of the prairies of Missouri could cure tuberculosis, they were on the move again.

South Woodstock has long been associated with education. Witness the three schools within 200 yards still standing. And the Cottles were part of it. They donated the land for the Academy when it was erected in 1848. When it was in operation some of the students boarded in the Cottle house.

Current board member Jane Soule is most associated with the building now known as the Hyacinth House. Named after a poem by E. B. White, better known as the author of Charlotte's Web, it was run as an Inn and short-term rental. It has been in Jane's family since 1925 when Will Merrill and Jane (Jaquith) purchased the property. This Jane grew up in South Woodstock and attended the Academy. She always loved the area but life and marriage took her to other places, including Fisher's Island, Florida and Kansas. Their daughter Mildred continued to run the business until handing it down to her niece, our Jane Soule. It was sold to a Texas couple in 2018,

## 2 Gaius Perkins House - 1831

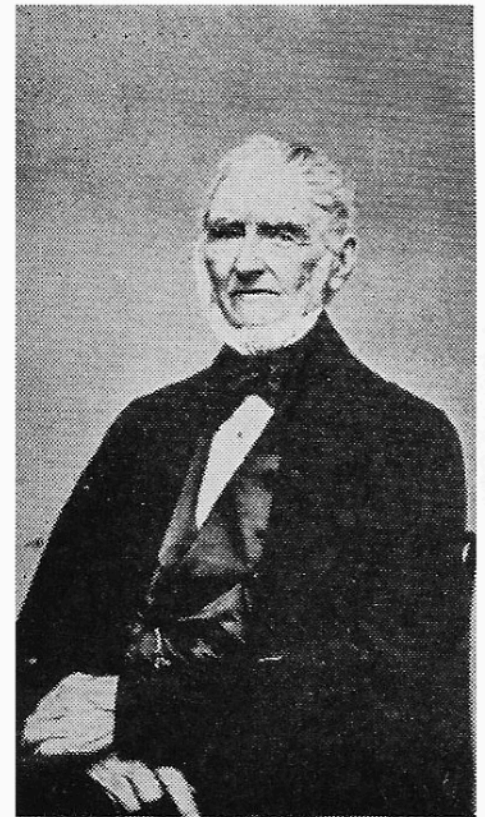


Gaius Perkins was a successful tanner and shoemaker. His tannery was located along the Kedron just below the bridge. Mary Grace Canfield, author of *The Valley of the Kedron*, noted she “had access to one of his daybooks, dating from 1820 to 1829. He made for Nathan Hall, a thick pair of shoes, price \$2.00, a pair of boy's shoes, price \$1.17, woman's shoes, 75 cents. He tanned calf skin, horse hide, goat skin, cow skin, dog skin, deer skin. “ Through such work he became one of the most successful businessmen in town.

He, too, was integrally involved in education. In 1869 he donated \$1000 to the Green Mountain Institute. In gratitude the board changed the name of the school on the hill to The Green Mountain Perkins Academy. His great-grand-daughter Alice Fletcher, (1860-1940) an attendee of the Academy, lived in the Perkins house for many years.

From the *Valley of the Kedron*: “The Perkins family on coming to America settled in Ipswich, Mass. William, a descendant, married Lydia Sterling in Lyme, Conn., February 20, 1766. Their six children were all born in Lyme. Captain William moved to Hartland in 1793, and in 1801 to South Woodstock with three sons, Elisha, Gaius and Benjamin, and his second wife who was Irene Ransom, the widow of Stephen Smith. Captain Perkins was a tanner and shoemaker. His sons continued the business.”

Gaius was born during the Revolution in 1778 in Lyme, Connecticut on the shores of Long Island Sound. At age 15 he was in Hartland, and finally at 23 he made it to South Woodstock. A constable, a selectman, a Justice of the Peace, on the committee to build the South Chapel, Gaius Perkins lived a long and meaningful life. Born in 1778, he lived for 91 years until his death in 1870. A man of great value to the South Parish.



Gaius Perkins

### 3 The Schoolhouse - 1906

The first schoolhouse in the Village was constructed sometime during the 1780's. Built of logs, it was replaced around 1789 by a frame structure which, in turn, was succeeded by the two-story brick building, later known as the Orion Grange. This building, at the foot of the Academy Road, was built in 1825. Classes were held here until the 1870's. When it closed, the bell was moved to the Academy where it can be rung to this day.



It is unclear exactly where the children were schooled between 1870 and 1906 when the Schoolhouse off Church Hill Road was erected. This vernacular Queen Anne-style building served as a graded school until 1955. In 1788 Seth Sterling had a blacksmith shop here. On page 205 of the *Valley of the Kedron* Mary Grace Canfield mentions a Congregational church on the site. In fact she comments that timbers from this church were used in the construction of the South Chapel in 1839. By the late 1800s there was a large dormitory-like building that housed workers, it can be seen on the cover of this guide just below the Ransom/Kendall house.

Though hard to believe, at one time there were more than 18 school districts in the Town of Woodstock, each with its own school. One interesting example is the small brick building on the north side of Dunham Hill Road, now a private residence. We can assume it was built with bricks made at the brickyard within view of the school. Up Fletcher Schoolhouse Road, on the left side just before Benedict Road is a marker that shows the location of that district's early school.

Karl Wood (pictured) is the source of many an interesting story about his time at the 1906 or "Superior School" as it was known then. He tells us that grades one through 4 were in one room, five through eight in the other. There was a large stairwell with two doors, and a mouse-proof cupboard for lunches and a water fountain that seldom worked. The basement which contained a trench with three stalls per gender on each side with a partition between. There was a large hot air furnace and a woodpile. He says, "when I was in 5th grade, there were no boys in the sixth grade" (Grades 7 & 8 had left for the new junior high school). Since the firewood was in two foot chunks, ((split just enough to fit through the furnace door), as one of the smaller "big boys". I sometimes had trouts finding a stick of wood that I could lift up into the furnace". There are many other great tales about the school and the rest of South Woodstock in his book, *Made in South Woodstock, Vermont*. For example the bell that got hung up repeatedly and was unstuck by the janitor Mr. Hoadley. The hot lunch program of sorts if you count an occasional mom bringing in a huge casserole, or the teachers with their canned soup. "All too frequently, we had canned vegetable soup. I learned to dislike, passionately, vegetable soup".



South Woodstock School circa 1943

## 4 Rockwell Stephens House - ca. 1835

The first house on Kendall Road is the Rockwell Stevens House named after the man who purchased it in 1953. Rockwell was an early member of the National Ski Patrol joining in 1938, he taught at the Woodstock Country School from 1953 to 1962. His wife Isabel taught at WCS as well, and was on the board of the Green Mountain Perkins Academy, she was instrumental in creating the Village's Historic District. The current owners are Charlie Humpstone and his wife Beverly. It was handed down to them through the Stephens family. It is a one and half story Cape Cod house built circa 1835, we know this because it doesn't appear on the 1832 map of South Woodstock (see below). The south elevation was enlarged to two stories in 1924.



Kendall Road, the main road to Woodstock, was surveyed in 1787. It avoided the hilly terrain that the Brown Hill Road entailed, though it had to deal with streams and river crossings, thus a higher cost in the construction of bridges.

It once featured a wrap-around porch on its north side. This was removed when the Stephens renovated it in the '50s. Charlie reports that originally the rooms were very small, but they have since been joined. It has wonderful gardens in the rear and a fantastic southerly view over the Kedron. Like many homes of the era it has a partial dirt-floored basement. Originally it shared a well with the Ransom Store next door.



## 5 Richard Ransom Store - 1794

Warren Cottle was the first trader in the South Parish. When he began his business, he kept a few goods in a sort of closet, not much bigger than a peddler's pack. By degrees he enlarged his business and his premises, and took Amasa Ransom into partnership. It was located on the land where the Kendall/Ransom house is located. When Richard Ransom, Jr. came to own this store, in due time he moved it across the road and placed it in the back corner of his new store, and used it for a back building. This old store was reportedly still standing in the late 1930s. Could it be the building known as the 'bungalow' which appears directly below?



'The Bungalow' circa 1912  
Paul C. Kendall & Katherine Cobb Kendall at left

The Richard Ransom store is the oldest building in the Historic District, built in 1794. It was curiously not aligned to the road. There are entrances front and back. It's most interesting feature is the unusual broad, plain, coved frieze which measures approximately 3-1/2 feet wide and is plastered. As of 1940 Mary Grace Canfield remarked on the overhang saying that, at that time, it had lasted for 136 years with no repair. South Woodstock's first post office was located in the store from its very beginning.

“A large stone standing at the front end of the building was used as a mounting stone. In some sections of the country, they are called upping stones; one stepped onto this stone and then onto the horse. After the third Ransom store was built in 1822, this building was painted green and made into a vestry. It went by the name of the Green Vestry.” A vestry is an auxiliary building to a church. The meetinghouse at that time was located next to the cemetery on the flat land below the current red barn. The Green Vestry held religious services and other public meetings for some years, then it was made into a dwelling house and here lived Mr. and Mrs. Simeon Clark. They wove rag carpets. She was most expert in making good designs and people came from long distances to get their rags made up into carpets. Mrs. Clark knew all the family histories in the South Parish but she was kindly and discreet and her knowledge led to no difficulties”.

The third Ransom Store (1822) was the annex building that faces east next to the Kedron Valley Inn. It was quite a substantial upgrade from the 1794 store and Warren Cottle's closet.

Richard Ransom, Jr. was born in 1766 at Lyme, Connecticut, so we can likely assume they knew the Perkins who moved up from the same town. Both Richard Jr, and his father Lieutenant Ransom (1740-1811) are buried in the Kendal/Ransom cemetery.

## 6 Ransom / Kendall House - 1800

Built in 1800 by Richard Ransom, Jr. (1766-1836) for \$800, the impressive home is a large, 2-1/2 story, Federal style clapboard structure with two impressive entrances. George Lake was the master builder. The house rests on a massive granite foundation which has a cellar 14 feet deep that can be reached by a walk-in entrance on the east side. It is said that it was built so well no stone has ever needed to be replaced. It took several years to complete the construction of the house itself, perhaps because of its large size.



According to an 1834 ad in the American Whig, Miss Gardner's School Finishing School for Young Ladies was located in the house. Once again, education! But it appears that it was short-lived and there were no subsequent advertisements.



Shortly after his Richard Ransom's death in 1836, the house passed from the Ransoms to the Kendalls. The buyer was Oliver Kendall who took ownership in 1841. Kendalls have lived there ever since. Seven generations! Chip Kendall, the current owner of this impressive Georgian home on a hill, tells us that family lore has it that his great-great grandfather Oliver purchased it for a small amount of cash and a large barrel of rum.

Chip's great-grandfather and grandfather ran a dairy farm. Cows were housed in a barn across the street close to the road and the old Ransom Store. He also ran a sawmill, which is mentioned on the Sugar House page. This was Paul C. Kendall (1868-1935). He married Katherine Cobb.



Paul E Kendall Sr  
1927 Beatrix Kendall

Paul E. Kendall Sr. (1901 - 1968) married Beatrix Perry in 1927, the same year as the memorable flood, Their picture is at left. Bea lived in the Kendall house until her death in 1990. The dairy farm operation ceased in 1960 and the barn property was sold off. Paul E. Kendall Jr (1930-2010) who grew up in the main house, worked at the Kedron Valley Inn, and eventually bought it, successfully running and improving it over the years.

Chip moved in into the main house 1980, under the condition that a well would be dug, prior to that the water source was a spring issuing from the hill behind the house. The house had little insulation, and like many in the area, the walls were found to be abounding in butternut shells. The first floor is available for short-term rental, see Kedron.com

Abraham Kendall (1756-1828) was the original patriarch of the family, and he came early to South Woodstock, having purchased a lot in the Aphorpt tract in 1779. It was located north of the Slayton's land on Morgan Hill and near the Hartland line. The farm was reached via what is now the Cowdrey Path. He was listed as serving as Town Moderator in 1810. He is buried in the Walker Cemetery in Hartland, a town he lived in prior to moving

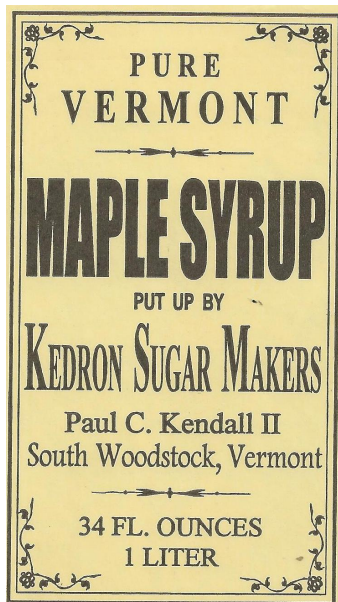
to the South Parish.



## 7 Sugar House

Mrs. Canfield tells us that going east down Kendall Road you'll pass the 'invisible' site of the first Ransom store which she says was a mere twelve feet square. Hardly room for a game of checkers on an apple barrel. It would be interesting to know if any sign of it can still be found. There is also mention of the "log cabin of the Ransom tribe built upon the hillside out of sight of the brook". It's unclear if the cabin and the first store were one and the same.

What you can see is the sugar house. It was built around 1980 and stands in the spot of the old sawmill that was washed away in the 1927 flood. An earlier sugar house was located across the street. There may be an old pan still there marking the spot.



Maple sugaring has been a South Woodstock tradition for many years. Surprisingly enough Windsor County was the top-producing county for several years, it may still be today. Kedron Sugar makers once had 6500 taps in operation, their reach includes an extensive bush on Noah Wood Road.

Some historians once claimed that the colonists taught the Native Americans the art of sugaring, but in fact the opposite is true, proven by much archaeological, historic and folklore research. It would be interesting to know when the tapping of trees by the Europeans in our area began. You never hear about maple syrup at the First Thanksgiving, but by the 1850s the industry was in full swing, especially as sugarers moved from kettles to large pans.



## 8 Kendall / Perry House

The house where Ernest Towne lived in 1940 was the property for many years of Edward Perry. It was probably built between 1835 and 1855, more historical research on this property is surely needed. Located between two existing Ransom houses, and close to their original cabin, a connection to the Ransoms might be assumed. On the other hand, a review of the burials in the Kendall/Ransom cemetery indicates that few Ransom's were buried there after the 1830s. (One exception was the interestingly named Pluma McKinstry Ransom who was buried in the yard in 1873. There must be a story there.)

But, like the Cottles, and not the Kendalls and the Fullertons, the Ransom clan seems to be a part of the large migration of Vermonters that left the state during the middle years of the Nineteenth Century.

Mary McCuaig, the GMPA President, relates the tale of a visit by a party that returned from the West to reacquaint themselves with their ancestral homeland. Ten years ago or so, three generations of Ransoms came to town from Chicago. They were descendants of the Ransoms who emigrated in the mid-1800s. But ties were strong and they were sending some of their offspring back to Vermont to be educated. E.g. Lake Ransom from Illinois was a Green Mountain Perkins Academy graduate!



## 9 Ransom / Hoadley House - 1855

We have uncovered little information about the beautiful stone home and farm that is located on this flat piece of land above the Kedron. Daniel Ransom built it in 1855, somewhat after the heydays of the Ransoms. It is 'ashlar' style, which simply means finely dressed stone. There are several examples of such construction, several over the hill on Brown Hill / Randall Road and a notable example on Route 106 west of the golf course as you start to enter Woodstock proper. It is theorized that the same mason built all these houses. Another theory is that with the advent of stonecutting saws and reliable power, this type of stone-construction was preferred over brick, a more modern look? Or perhaps the clay for brick just played out.



William Bailey lived there in the early 1900s, and by 1940 it was the home of Bert Hoadley. Then we come to Mona. She was a first generation American, her parents having immigrated from England and Sweden, respectively. She helped her mother do domestic work in various homes in the area and the evenings were spent hand sewing cuffs on sweaters by kerosene light for The Kedron Knitting Mill in South Woodstock. At one of the many dances she attended at the Orion Grange Hall in South Woodstock, Mona met Darwin Hoadley. They were married on Sept. 27, 1941, living in So. Woodstock for 62 years before moving to Pomfret. Darwin died in 2011 after nearly 70 years of marriage. They enjoyed working together and had many adventures. Mona worked at the Kedron Knitting Mill, then in 1952 started as a part-time clerk in the So. Woodstock Post Office, taking over as full-time Postmaster in 1972, retiring in 1982. During this time she also did domestic work for various summer She was a member of St. James



Episcopal Church, the Sugar House Swingers, the Long Hill Snow-mobile Club, the South Woodstock Community Club, the South Woodstock Homemakers, the Vermont Old Cemetery Assn, Secretary of the South Woodstock Methodist Burying Ground Assn. and Treasurer for 17 years of the Green Mountain Perkins Academy. Another fixture of the community! She lived 97 years only passing away in 2020.

After the Hoadleys moved to the small house that's on Church Hill Road between the 1906 School and the Kedron Pond, the old stone home on Kendall Road changed hands several times usually as a vacation home, one owner naming it the Merilly Farm, a sign that still marks the property today.

## 10 Kendall / Ransom Cemetery

"The Ransom yard of course has many a Ransom. Once there was an iron fence about their lot but it has utterly disappeared." The yard contains 136 memorials, there are 22 Kendalls, 19 Ransoms, and many other families whose names will be familiar to South Woodstock residents: Colstons, Cowdreys, Bryants, Fletchers Morgans, Powers, Washburn and Shoves. Captain Henry French, (1822-1904) a brother of Mrs. Larned Kendall is buried here. "He rolled when he walked as though still onboard his ship". His grave, seemingly out of place in Vermont, features a large anchor and the inscription, "Home is the Sailor, Home from the Sea."

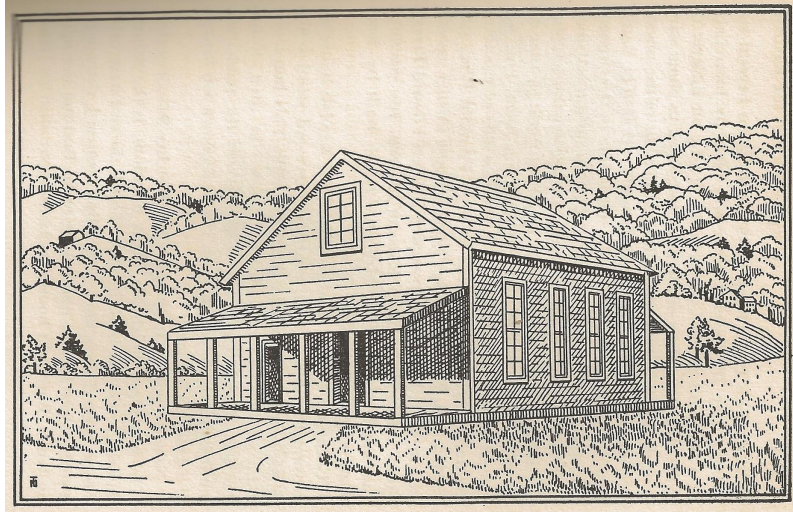


In New England in the 1700s, the descendants of the Pilgrims and Puritans were almost unanimously of what today is called the Congregational faith. Thus the first church was so oriented. But it's location or locations are unclear. There was a meetinghouse near the Randall/Kendall cemetery according to Chip Kendall and that seems to make sense. On the other hand there is repeated mention of a church where the 1906 Schoolhouse stands. And although there is no graveyard, we do have the ancient tomb where bodies were stored in the winter when the ground was frozen. It is located a little way up Church Hill Road about where it intersects with Fletcher Schoolhouse Road. *The Valley of the Kedron* tells us it used to contain explosives: "At a town meeting in 1793, Plyman Church was ordered to build a pound near the South Meeting house. It was built just above the ancient tomb whose restored walls still remain, and in which is now kept the dynamite for road construction".

So there was a church somewhere and though they don't exist today perhaps it would be of interest to again quote Mrs Canfield to get a glimpse of what was occurring religiously in the early years of the South Parish:

"The Memoirs written by Daniel Ransom, son of Richard Ransom, Jr. gives the following valuable information: "In 1792 the inhabitants of the South Parish built a meeting house after quite a wrangle, as father said, as to the place of ground where it should be located. Some wanted it up west of the village, a mile or so near a settlement of some of the families of Cottles. (This is the Fletcher neighborhood.) That region was then called Cottle Town, but it was finally built in the village near where father afterwards built his white house (the present Paul Kendall house). It was 48 by 62 feet, with a porch on each end for an entry, and for stairs to go into the gallery. It was two stories high and had a high steep roof, and at first it had no windows. It looked like a barn and the boys often called it God's Barn. It had a gallery on three sides and a very high pulpit

on the fourth side with a sounding board over it and a Deacons' Seat at its base. I remember that Deacon Charles McKenzie used to sit there while his family were in his pew. I never saw a tything man there with his long pole but he had been at an earlier time. The pews were large, square, arranged on the sides of the house from the pulpit, around each way to the front door and separated from twelve pews of the same side in the body of the house by an aisle and these twelve pews were again separated in the middle by the Broad Aisle running from the double front door to the Deacons' Seat and pulpit. The pulpit had a very steep crooked stairs to get up into it.



1792 Congregational church from *The Valley of the Kedron*

The front of the gallery had two rows of bench seats around it, with some large pews higher up next to the outside walls so that one could look over those in the Singers Seats and see the preacher in his high pulpit. The seats in all of the pews were on three sides and one third of the people in the body of the house sat with their backs to the preacher. There were no chimneys, so there could be no fires, but some of the women carried tin foot stoves with a dish of live coals of fire in them to keep their feet warm.

I have heard it said that the preachers usually made their sermons hot enough to warm the members, but on one extremely cold day, Uncle Joseph Sterling, after a long sermon, requested the preacher to make his prayer shorter than usual for the people were freezing. In the year 1824 my brother Richard got up a subscription and purchased a stove and pipes and ran the pipes along the aisles and out of the back windows which warmed the Church a little but when the wind blew from the north the smoke came back into the house. The roof of this old meeting house leaked badly and in 1839 the people got tired of it and took it down." This exceedingly interesting document from which the above is quoted, was loaned to me by Prof. Wm. Ransom of Tufts College, a grandson of the writer.

In 1807 a group of Methodists built a Church in the South Parish and laid out a graveyard which is still called the Methodist Graveyard and burials take place there, but the Church disappeared long ago. It was simply constructed and resembled a school house rather than a Church. The men who bought the land on which the Church and graveyard were located, were John Ransom, Jonathan Crooker, Benjamin Mack, Elisha Lord and Seth Sterling. A dozen Congregationalists jumped their fold and joined the Methodists when the Church was started. After many trials and tribulations, the Society dissolved and the building finally burned and that ended the South Parish Methodist Church”.