

Wilmot's Early Industries

From a conversation with Guy Alexander* July 31, 2013

Mr. Alexander and Priscilla Sargent** came into the WCA looking for the Garnet Mine in North Wilmot.

“Max Campbell gave an excellent talk on local Wilmot industries (no date given). Most of the industries were located near Wilmot Center. Because of the drop and series of waterfalls along Kimpton Brook, there were many seasonal mills. Tanneries were also prevalent in the 1920's and 30's. There were local mines on the hilltops in the area. A garnet mine whose product was used for sandpaper and polishing powder for window glass made \$100,000 a year with Henry Ford as its best customer. There were also open pit mines for feldspar and mica along Route 4A. Many of these industries had a trickle down effect employing farmers and their families from the community. For example, Johnson's Stocking Factory was quite mechanized employing only 12 people at the plant. But finishing of the heels, toes and top edges was done by women in the community. Many families had a 10 by 10 cabin at the back of their property that was used seasonally for such outsourced projects.

Henry Ford once came to Wilmot in a Lincoln. Got stuck in the mud. Local farmer with a “Model T” truck pulled him out. “Only thing to run in mud season is a Model T,” according to the farmer.

Later on a “Model T” truck arrived at Potter Place by rail for the farmer.

Lightweight rails left in the mine around 1948/50.

George E. Alexander and Son, Est. in 1852 by E.M. Alexander in Leominster, NH.

Guy's grandfather, George, and his son, Ralph W., manufactured wooden hay rakes and lawn rakes, drag rakes or loafer. Then started making wooden crutches.

In 1946 Guy came back after serving in the Marines, and went into the rake and crutch business.

Guy needed a better way of handling wood for the rakes that normally rolled off the truck, so he built a railroad track with the rails from the old mine. He bought the rails and with 3 men in his 1926 Ford “Model T” truck went up to the mine, tied a rope to one end of the rail with a cross stick so that two men at a tie could drag the rails down to the truck. They had a two-rail trailer. Rails were probably about 20” long. Now the boards could go from the delivery truck right on to the trucks that would take them to the shop.”

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**Priscilla Sargent from Sunapee (now New London). Husband was Babe Sargent. She writes for the Sunapee paper and writes memoirs.

March 20, 2016 – Guy Alexander died on March 8, 2016. Obituary in the March 15, 2016 InterTown Record. Chadwick Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.