

Anson Lyman's Life, Times & Tragic Death



**by
Jon Roe
for the
Friends Of Valley Falls**

Table of Contents

1	Preface - What We Thought We Knew	2
2	Early Valley Falls & Lyman Family History	3
3	Early Adulthood - Red House & Soldier	2
4	Marriage & Farming	3
5	The Valley Falls Neighborhood	3
6	Family Life	3
7	Business Ventures - Oil, Cotton & Saw Mills	3
8	Anson's Death	2
9	Probate	3
10	Anson's Legacy	1
	Appendix	1
A	Lyman Family Timeline	1
B	The Red House	3
C	Southwest School	2
D	Chapter Notes	2
E	References	2
		--
		36

1. Preface

Anson Lyman is known as the founder of Valley Falls Farm. He built the farm house on Valley Falls Road and purchased the core 170 acres that were passed from owner to owner to become today's Valley Falls Park.

Although recognized as the founder we knew very little about his life. Born in 1810 he lived at a time when Vernon was transforming from a parish of Bolton to a thriving manufacturing city. Anson's story at Valley Falls gives us a look at how the changes affected the life of rural farmers.

The information on display at the Heritage Center tells something of his success as a farmer and his involvement with the cotton mill, but little else about his life.

When I started researching I hoped to find a little about his family and perhaps a few details about his life. But with all that is now available online and with a dive into deeds there were quite a few surprises.

Although Anson seemed to adapt and flourish as a farmer, there was a restlessness and sadness in his life, and he died suddenly at age 45 leaving us with a mystery as to what happened.

This article on Anson Lyman is intended to be the first section of a book on the owners of Valley Falls Farm - Lyman, Bradley, Sharps, Gwynne, Hardy, Munchow, Beach and Darico.

For that reason I've included an Appendix with information that relates other farmers also as well as Chapter Notes and References.

I also hope to do a second book on owners of Valley Falls who did not own the farmhouse - Johns, Morison, Walker and others. Included will be the Oil and Cotton Mills, the Clubhouse and the Quarries at the Bolton/Vernon town line.

Most of the research is done for both books. I'll release as sections before assembling as books.

2. Early Valley Falls & Lyman Family History

What is now Valley Falls Park was one of the first farms in what is today's Vernon; but until 1808 was known as North Bolton.

Stephen Johns settled there in 1716 according to his daughter, a few years before Bolton was founded in 1720 and, according to her, he was the first to settle in future Vernon. His claim to the land was based on a Native American land grant he purchased.

The houses of he and his sons were likely on Bolton Road, the old Native American trail along the ridge. Johns also built a saw mill in the 1740's on Box Brook, which we now call Railroad Brook.

The Johns family sold much of their property in the 1740's to Dr. Norman Morrison, a prominent Hartford physician, but also a slave owner. He invested in property on both sides of the Connecticut River, but never lived here. There are differing opinions as to whether slaves worked his farm in Bolton, but it's possible.

When Morrison died of smallpox in 1761 his North Bolton property passed first to his daughter and on her death to her husband Thomas Walker. The Walker family and their descendants lived and farmed along Bolton Road for generations becoming an integral part of the community. Around 1800 they had a famous still at a spring just below Ravencroft. Over the next 60 years the property was divided and passed to family or sold to other farmers.

The Lyman Family

Anson Lyman came from a long line of Lymans in America. **Richard Lyman** (1580-1640) sailed in 1631 from England with his four children settling just outside Boston. Five years later he joined Thomas Hooker and others leaving the Massachusetts Bay Colony for Connecticut. Generations of Lymans helped build early Hartford spreading over New England, much as did the Talcott family.

The "Vital Records of Bolton and Vernon" list at least 50 members of the Lyman family living here, including Anson and his father Samuel.

James Lyman (1752-1843), Anson's grandfather and the fifth generation in America, was born in Lebanon, CT and moved to North Bolton about 1771 buying 16 acres at age 19. The Lymans had strong ties to the Lebanon area which will continue.

James acquired more land through 1795 including a 6 acre mill lot in 1791 from Nathaniel Walker. He was also granted Bolton's 11th and 12th divisions as the land was divided and populated.

James had at least six children his sons staying in Vernon. Some of the later Lyman families will have large farms along Route 83.

Samuel Lyman (1772-1854), James oldest son, was Anson's father. Samuel's father sold him 15 acres in North Bolton in 1798.

James first wife died and his second wife Welthy Hartshorn of Lebanon was the mother of all his children. They had eight children, including a set of triplets. Unfortunately, the triplets all died in 1808 shortly after their birth.

Our Anson, the youngest of Samuel's eight children, was born in 1810 in Lebanon. Welthy probably returned to her family in Lebanon for her children's birth.

Anson likely spent his youth working on his father's farm and attending school, but he seems to have been restless and in no hurry to settle down.

3. Early Adulthood

In November 1832 **Samuel Lyman**, Anson's father, bought from **Mary Johns** the red corner house on Bolton Road. This is long after the Johns family sold off most of their Box Brook valley property. Mary Johns appears to have been the unmarried granddaughter of **Stephen Johns** as the Johns family retained some property along Bolton Road. (See Appendix B for the full history of the Red House.)

One month later in December 1832 Samuel sold the same house and small lot to his 22 year old son Anson for \$60 with a mortgage. Perhaps Samuel was hoping that Anson would settle down and start farming.

Anson's first purchase was a year later when he bought a half interest in property on 'Mine Hill.' That is probably the property behind Billy Darico's house on Hatch Hill Road with the spring. Anson seemed to be ambitious and interested in doing more than farming as he will later invest in the VF Cotton Mill and the Bolton Lake Saw Mill.

Perhaps he spent the next year hoping to make money at the mine but it was probably played out. Anson didn't seem to be in a hurry to settle down and farm.

Anson Joins the Army

In 1833, at age 23, Anson enlisted in the United States Army.

This was a surprise but we found two records on Ancestry.com verifying it. A list of enlisted soldiers in 1833, describes Anson Lyman, a farmer born in Lebanon, CT, who enlisted May 15, 1833 in Dayton, Ohio for 3 years. He was 5' 9" with blue eyes and light hair and complexion. He was recruited into the Dragoons by Lt. Thomas Swords, a West Point graduate.

The main role of the army at this time was in the west in the American Indian Wars. It was during this period that Native Americans were being forcibly relocated, particularly to Oklahoma.

Anson likely served with the brand-new U.S. Regiment of Dragoons on the western frontier. They mustered at Jefferson Barracks (near St. Louis), moving to Fort Gibson in Indian Territory in 1833–34, and took part in that regiment's 1834 'First Dragoon Expedition' across today's Oklahoma & Texas. Later they did garrison duty split mainly between Fort Gibson and Fort Leavenworth.

4. Marriage & Farming

When Anson returned from his enlistment in 1836 he likely moved into the Red House, and now with some maturity it was time to settle down and become a serious farmer as his family and neighbors had done.

His timing was fortunate for much of the future Valley Falls Park was owned by Benjamin Tarbox, who died Dec. 1828 leaving 3 young children. Tarbox's estate was complicated and was very slow moving through probate. Thomas Kellogg, Rev. Ebenezer's Kellogg's son, was appointed the children's guardian and the probate court approved selling the property to Anson in 1836. It included 97 acres with a barn plus two other smaller pieces; one where he probably built his new house. Anson bought it for \$1,150, although he did need a mortgage.

The next year in 1837 Anson, at age 27, married Sarah Ingraham of Lebanon in the Vernon Congregational Church. The Lymans, with family still in Lebanon, had close relations with that town. He likely built the farm house before 1840 moving there from the Red House.

With no sons old enough to help farm over 100 acres Anson probably had tenant farmers in the Red House. Indeed on the 1869 town map this building is labeled a Tenant House.

Growing The Farm

Anson's farm reached far down the Box Brook valley, but a decade later he extended his property further south with three purchases:

- 1- In 1848 he bought 40 acres from Ahab Smith.
- 2- In 1849 he bought 11 acres on Bolton Road from Josiah Hammond.
- 3- And in 1850 he bought another 22 acres in the valley from August Kneeland .

These 4 purchases totaled 170 acres, the size of the farm at his death. This acreage does not include the house lot north of Valley Falls Road.

Anson's farm now extended from Bolton Road on the east to Box Mountain on the west, and from Valley Falls Road on the north halfway to the Bolton line.

What it did not include was the 7 acre mill property on Valley Falls Road, although Anson did own the pond. In the late 1840's the oil mill was replaced by a new cotton mill owned by the Valley Falls Company.

5. The Valley Falls Neighborhood

The 1853 Woodford map is the first map of Vernon showing the location and names of landowners. The map of Vernon's southeast corner is a snapshot of Anson Lyman's world shortly after the cotton mill and the railroad were built.

From the left are Box Mountain, the railroad, Box Brook and Bolton Road. To the right are the Tolland and Coventry town lines. Anson Lyman's house is right in the middle of the map. Further north Bolton Road heads northeast to Vernon Center and Reservoir Road continues north to Lafayette Square. Through the center is Valley Fall Road leading to Hatch Hill Road.

The farms and their owners are shown. There aren't many but they are prominent families that built the town including the Hammond, Thrall, Walker, Baker, Lathrop, Strong and Kneeland families.

Note the School located on Bolton Road. It's located at the center of the Southeast district and although on a hill about equal walking distance from each side. (See Appendix C for a history of the Southeast/Valley Falls school.)

Spanning the town line is part of the Bolton quarries, which are active at this time. Bolton Lake as we know it does not yet exist, but what is now the Upper Lake or Cedar Swamp has been dammed to create the Baker Saw Mill.

Anson's farm in 1853 stretches from Bolton Road to the Railroad and reaches far down the valley.

Above the school was 'mine hill.' On it was an excellent spring that in the Beaches time brought water to their house and to the farm. In the 1700's it was a source of bog ore for the iron works near Snipsit Lake, and around 1800 was a famous distillery owned by the Walker Family.

Years before 1853 there were other roads, now abandoned, but shown on old maps or referenced in deeds. One went from near the school north probably to the spring and connecting to Brandy Hill Road.

Mills & Railroad

The 1853 map is unique in that it shows every barn and out building. Thus you can see several buildings at Lyman's farm and several buildings, including housing, supporting the factory.

Box Brook was a source of mill power beginning with the Johns' saw mill in the 1740's.

In the late 1700's an oil mill was built by local farmers for processing flax seed. It was operating when Anson bought the Tarbox property. He did not own the oil mill, but in 1842 bought a 1/8 share in it.

In the late 1840's the oil mill was replaced by a cotton mill. Anson owned the pond that would provide the power. He bought shares in the mill and was paid to raise the dam several times.

For example in June 1852 the Valley Falls Manufacturing Co. leased for \$20 from Lyman the privilege of raising the water level of the pond 4 feet for the mill.

About the same time as the cotton mill was being constructed the railroad was also being built through the valley. Anson sold 9 acres of his property for the project as did his neighbors.

The farm, cotton mill, and school created a little village for a time in the mid 1800's.

6. Family Life

When Anson settled down and married Sarah Ingraham in 1837 he accepted the life expected of a New England farmer similar to his family and neighbors. Southeastern Vernon where he lived was a rural part of town and had been for over a century. The area was occupied by just a handful of families.

Anson's family seems to have been somewhat active in the Vernon Center Congregational Church as they married there in 1837 and in 1847 bought half a slip (seating) from the same Tarbox children from whom they purchased the family's farm. Also their son Edgar? was baptized there in 1849. We did not find other records.

Anson's Children

Anson and Sarah had their first child in 1839 two years after their marriage. They will have five children that we know of and this will be a source of great sadness as only one survived to adulthood.

William was born in 1839 and died two years later in 1841.

An infant died at birth in 1842.

Julia was born in 1843 and died at 6 in 1849.

Louisa Jane, born about 1846, was the only child to live to adulthood.

Edwin was born in 1849 and died in 1856, a year after his father.

In the 1840's Anson was involved with his growing neighborhood and the school. A report dated Sept. 1 from the Southeast School for the year 1848 lists the students for that year. There were 27 students between the age of 4 and 16. Anson was on the School District Committee and signed the report. Anson's children at school that year were Julia, Jane and Edwin.

Of interest in the report is that the school, and presumably others, was integrated well before the Civil War. Edward Freeman was a black laborer living on Bolton Road near Bread & Milk. He worked at the Tunnel Road mill and had 6 children at this time with 3 attending the Southeast school.

The Farm In 1850

The farm by the 1850's was probably at its peak. Anson was successfully farming much of the Valley Falls Valley and still without sons to help would have required several farm laborers.

The 1850 census lists the Knapp family before the Lyman's and after the farmers on Bolton Road. He was 50, born in Rhode Island and a laborer. He likely lived in the Red House and worked for Lyman or the mill.

The building after Lyman's in the census lists 11 people, the oldest, a farmer and his wife are 32 with two small children. The other seven each have a different last name and range in age from 12 to 24. Two are listed as mill operators. This is likely the mill tenant house and children were put to work young.

The farm inventory taken after Anson's death lists as livestock: 30 sheep, 1 yoke oxen, 1 cow with calf, 3 cows, several heifers and steers, 1 hog and 3 pigs. There was also several wagons and carts.

The farms products for the year included 10 cider barrels, 16 tons of hay, 150 tons of corn plus rye, oats, timber, 140 bushels of potatoes, 800 feet of boards, and cords of wood. The property would have included fields, gardens and orchards. Anson was a successful farmer.

7. The Mill Ventures

Anson, as were his farmer neighbors, was interested in additional sources of income to supplement farming. In his section of town there were three opportunities - the Valley Falls oil mill, the Valley Falls cotton mill and the Bolton saw mill.

When he bought the Tarbox farm in 1836 it was adjacent to the Valley Falls oil mill which was owned by a group of local farmers and investors. The mill was old at this time dating back to before 1800. Little is known about it and its exact location is uncertain. As Anson then owned the pond sourcing the mills water supply he had an immediate relationship with the mill. In 1843 he became an investor buying a 1/8 share for ?????

Only a few years later the old oil mill was replaced by a new moderate sized cotton mill. As the new mill required more power than the oil mill it was necessary for Anson to raise the dam several times. He owned shares in this mill too. The cotton mill required more workers leading to additional local housing.

A very successful saw mill, usually called the Baker Mill, was located at the causeway between what is now the Upper and Middle Bolton Lakes. This mill also dated back before 1800 and was probably modified over the years. In 1850 the Bolton Lakes did not exist.

There were three ponds where the future lake would be. At the lower end of the upper pond, sometimes known as Cedar Swamp, a dam created a body of water much larger than it is today and with enough of a drop to drive the mill. A survey map shows the area, owners and their deeds. It was located at the corner of Vernon, Tolland, Coventry and Bolton so drew business and investors from all four towns.

Like the Valley Falls Cotton mill the Baker Saw Mill was a community business with farmers buying and selling shares. Lumber was needed for homes and barns, but was also a source of additional income for the farmers.

In the 1850's Anson became very interested in the business and began to purchase wooded property near the saw mill.

- 1- In February 1854 he bought two pieces, partly in Coventry from Joel King and Eli Baker that may have included a share of the saw mill itself. Size???
- 2- In March 1854 he bought another 16 acres just south of the saw mill from Joel King.
- 3- In February 1855 he bought 10 acres on the Coventry line from Selden Ransom.

Anson was certainly aware that Patton Fitch was buying land in the area to construct a dam that would fill the whole valley creating a reservoir for the Willimantic mills. This would be the end of the saw mill and meant that some of Anson's land would be under water. It would take a few years to fill the reservoir so the property owners, including Anson, made arrangements with Fitch to cut and remove the lumber from their land.

On Oct. 3, 1855 Anson signed a document with Patten Fitch for \$64 allowing him to cut and carry wood out for the next two years. He was ensuring a source of additional income.

Anson died three days later on Oct. 6. He was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, probably with his children who died young.

The cause of his death was unknown until this year.

8. Investigating Anson's Death

Anson Lyman's death presented a mystery - where and how did he die?

Vernon did not have his death certificate or a record of his death. Initially it was thought it might have been an accident associated with farming or wood cutting. As his property near the saw mill was on or near the four towns of Vernon, Coventry, Bolton and Tolland the Town Clerks of the other three towns were checked also. Nothing there either.

In 1855 there was no local newspaper. The *Hartford Courant* covered Vernon and as it has been digitized and is online a search at newspaper.com for 'Anson Lyman' or just 'Lyman' around the time of his death found nothing. The Lyman research then went on the back burner for a time.

The Friends of Valley Falls had no biography for Anson and knowing so little about him it was decided to fill in as much of his background as could be found including information about his ancestors. A Lyman Family genealogy that was written soon after his death was located.

It had little on him except the notation that his death was by suicide - a surprise and shock.

Hartford Courant name searches were repeated with no success. A final try was made with just the word 'suicide' near the dates of his death. Success! For some reason the name 'Lyman' did not register when the newspaper was digitized. The Courant article was short, but spared no detail. It reads:

One question answered, another raised - Why? Anson had just secured a source of lumber for the next few years and was planning to harvest it. Probate Records show he was not in financial trouble.

Perhaps the loss of his children played a role?

Of the two children remaining at his death his son died a year later at age 7 ½. The cause of his son's death was inflammation of the brain and he may have had early symptoms. Could losing another child have been too much for Anson to bear?

The newspaper says he was 'deranged for some time.' That would suggest unusual behavior. Did this information come from his family or his neighbors? Might his military service have left him with some type of PTSD?

We'll probably never know.

9. Probate

Sometimes a tragedy like this also leaves us with valuable historical information.

Anson Lyman died intestate on October 3, 1955 at age 45. The Vernon Probate Court has his Probate Papers that include a detailed inventory of his property, debts owed and a detailed distribution of his property including boundaries.

Anson's wife Sarah at the time of his death would have been 41. They had two children Edwin about 6 and Louisa Jane about 9.

As part of the probate process every item he owned was enumerated and a value placed on it. And as he died suddenly all the tools used to operate the farm, his livestock, household goods and land were listed providing a good picture of Anson's farm at the time of his death.

The court appointed neighbors and freeholders to evaluate and distribute his property and Thomas Kellogg as guardian of his children, as he was for the Tarbox children. His widow, as was standard at the time, received one third of his estate during her natural life as her right of dowery. Everything else was divided between his two young children.

Anson's debts amounted to about \$500 and the personal property at about \$2,000 leaving \$1,500 for distribution. His land was valued at \$1,930. He also owned 15 shares of Valley Fall Company stock. His total worth was almost \$4,000. The inventory and appraisal was accepted and recorded in 1856.

How was property distributed in the 1800's when there was no will? The widow only had use of the property, not ownership so the court split everything equally between the children.

This is what 9 year old Louisa Jane received: The east half of the house and house lot as follows - the East room and bedroom and two east chambers and privilege of half of the kitchen and pantry and east half of the cellar. Also the East half of barn and privilege of using the barn floor for threshing and half of the land.

Thomas Kellogg in 1857, as guardian of Anson's children and heirs, sold all the Bolton Lake properties to John Walker for \$130, including the 16 acre King lot (9-153), the 10 acre Ransom lot (8-410) and rights to remove trees.

10. Anson's Legacy

Anson first bought the Red House on Bolton Road in 1832, then after military service added the 97 acre Tarbox farm and built the farmhouse around 1840. As opportunities arose he added 73 more acres to the south.

There was a barn on the Tarbox property when purchased so only the house and perhaps the woodshed are structures that can be attributed to Anson. There were changes to the house over the years and most of the existing structures, including the current barn and stable were built much later by Count Munchow in 1912.

Anson Lyman did pull the pieces together that we recognize today as Valley Falls Farm and Park. He also raised the dam for the cotton mill several times giving us the large pond that is the center piece of the park.

And he left us with a glimpse of farm life in the mid 1800's and a fascinating, although tragic, story to tell.

Appendix

This small book is intended to put into print and preserve stories that are interesting, but not previously available. They are printed in narrative form for easy reading.

Some stories do not nicely fit the narrative so are included in this Appendix for those who might want more. And some stories that would be of interest to an even smaller audience are only on the Tankerhoosen website.

In this Appendix you will find:

Timeline - Key dates of events referenced.

Discovering the Allis Mills - David Allis' mills appear in no Vernon history book. It was through a series of synchronicities that they were discovered. I like to think that David left clues for us to follow.

Where did David Allis live? - The location of David's Dwelling House and Homelot has been incorrect for many years. Through research on his mill we found the correct location.

Rev. Kellogg's 1800 Letter describing North Bolton - Too long for the narrative a readable version is included here. It's a description of our town as it begins to transition from an agricultural town to an industrial town.

Chapter Notes - The Notes include commentary on why chapters were included and the primary sources for each chapter. See the Reference section for more detail on sources.

References - Listing of books and manuscripts referenced and for further study.

A. Timeline

1636: Rev. Hooker follows CT Path to found Hartford.

1716: First settlers arrive in Rockville area from East Windsor

1720: Bolton incorporated including the current town of Vernon as North Bolton

1725: Grant trades 100 acre homelot for 500 acres, the future Rockville

1725: Grant builds the first grist mill on the Hockanum River

1740: Saw mill erected at Valley Falls

1745: Allis Saw and Grist mills erected on the Tankerhoosen River

1751: North Bolton Cemetery on Bamforth Road established

1760: North Bolton becomes a distinct Ecclesiastical Society

1762: Meeting house built on Old Meetinghouse Hill

1776: Declaration of Independence signed

1789: North Bolton given mile and a half of East Windsor

1789?: David Allis dies

1800: Rev. Kellogg writes description of North Bolton

1802: John Warburton operates first Cotton Mill

1808: Vernon separates from Bolton and incorporates

B. Valley Fall School

Education was important to our early settlers and after the meeting houses were built establishing schools was a priority. Initially school was held in private homes but when Vernon was established in 1808 the town was divided into 9 districts. The Southeast school was one of the earliest established. We know because schoolhouses were one of the few landmarks frequently referred to in deeds. An 1803 Walker family deed refers to this one.

The image is not of the SE school but from a composite of early Vernon schools.

Records indicate there was an elementary school at Valley Falls. Brookes in "Cascades and Courage" mentions Valley Falls as one of the earliest schoolhouses. We know little about this schoolhouse, long out of memory, but can make a few educated guesses.

Early in the town's history Vernon was divided into nine districts so that school would be available within walking distance for every child from 4 to 16. These were elementary schools teaching basic skills and knowledge to children. The Southeast District school was located on Bolton Road close to the exact center of the district. Another factor that might have determined the location of the schoolhouse was the water source, a spring at the top of the mountain that was used for a distillery around 1800 and later would provide water for the Beach Family and Valley Falls Farm.

We aren't certain when the school house was build but an 1803 deed transferring property within the Walker Family on the East side of Bolton Road uses 'the school house' as a reference point. Reverend Ebenezer Kellogg in his description of 1800 Vernon says there were six school houses at that time. Although he does not list the schools it would likely have included the Valley Falls school.

There was, however, a small population in this area. The first sawmill at Valley Falls was in operation in 1740 as was the Allis Mills. Over the years there were a succession of mills in this section of town producing grist, flaxseed oil and cotton until the last mill was destroyed by fire in 1877. Otherwise the population was made up of farm families.

On May 2, 1843 the Southeast School District purchased a small triangular piece of land on Bolton Road from Albert G. Dart for \$10. The school was already on the lot. See the property description under Sources. The 1853 and 1869 maps of Vernon show the nine school districts and the location of their schools. The Southeast District school is shown on both maps on the east side of Bolton Road a short distance south of the intersection with Valley Falls Road. These are the only maps that locate the school.

The maps indicate the school was at a slight bend in Bolton Road. The east side of Bolton Road is steep, part of the eastern wall of Railroad Brook, not a great location for a school near the road. There is a flat spot at the bend in the road at 534 Bolton Road. It appears gravel may have been removed from the hillside, perhaps to build or shore up Bolton Road. It left a level lot large enough for a small school. There are a number of stones on the lot, but nothing that would prove a school was there. The trees present today are secondary growth, none likely older than 1880. Possible schoolhouse design similar to other Vernon schools of the period.

For an indication of the children who attended the Southeast school we have a report from 1848 listing students and their parents, guardians or employers on September 1 of that year. Formal reports to the town were required of all schools to receive funding from the state. Supervision of schools was the responsibility of district parents with oversight by a town School Society.

The report lists 33 children between 4 and 16 living in the district at the time, but that only 27 attended school. The family names in the report compare well with the property owners on the 1853 map. Most live on today's Bolton Road extending from Clark Brook not far from I-84 to the Bolton town line. Familiar names include, from north to south along Bolton Road: Edgar Edgerton, Josiah Hammond, Ira Thrall, John Walker, Anson Lyman, Ariel Sparks, Augustus Kneeland, Julius Strong, and Martin Smith. Considering the hill involved many of the students had a challenging walk each day.

Brookes says that in January 1870 the number of students between ages 4 and 16 in the Southeast District was 26. In 1878 the number was 23. The 1902 Selectman report shows it has declined to 14 and the town is wondering whether to keep it open beyond the next year. This tells us that the number of students was probably never very large and that the school was still in use in 1902. Recall that the last mill

burned in 1877 so it was likely that mill workers were moving to Rockville to find work, further reducing the population.

There are no sketches or photos of the Southeast School, but a composite 1895 photo shows schools existing at that time. Several share a similar design so we might guess the small, likely one room, Southeast School would be similar. From the 1843 property description a fence ran along the road in front of the school.

Vernon sent a committee to visit and inspect each school annually. The 1902 report for the Southeast District says, "So far as the school is concerned here both in teacher and management we have no fault to find, the building is comfortable and in fair condition. The school was good but the attendance was very small. The joint board have thought best to appropriate the same amount of money for another year hoping that the attendance may be increased." The teacher that year was Gertrude Herskell.

An Era Ends

After the Valley Falls Factory closed in 1877 the school age population dwindled such that each year for almost twenty years the School Committee wondered whether it was time to close the school. There seemed to have been just enough students to justify the one teacher. Finally it was taken out of their hands and the end came suddenly in 1911.

Fire Destroys School Building in Southeast District
(From the February 2, 1911 Rockville Journal)

The Southeast district school building in Vernon, located on the Bolton Road, was totally destroyed by fire Saturday night (January 28). The fire started about 8 o'clock. There was a heavy wind, and although several people were promptly at the scene of the fire, the building was in ruins in a short time. The origin of the fires is unknown. The building, which was a frame one, was insured for \$300 through the agency of Arthur T. Bissell of this city.

There has been no school in the Southeast district schoolhouse for several years, the scholars in the district being conveyed to this city, where they attended the East District school.

Likely schoolhouse site. Road is to left.
Note flat lot with steep wall on right.

For the next few years the School Committee considered rebuilding the school in the Southeast District but in their 1913 report wrote, "Ever since the school house in this district was destroyed by fire several years ago, the plan of transporting the pupils to the East District has been followed. Results have been so satisfactory that there is no thought of rebuilding."

In 1914 the town voted to consolidate several of its school districts and to assume control from the School Committees. On December 20, 1916 the Southeast School District property on Bolton Road was transferred to the Town of Vernon. The Quit-Claim Deed describes the property as "bounded on the northerly, easterly and southerly sides by land of Allen R Lathrop, and on the westerly side by the highway leading from Vernon Center to Bolton."

The property likely became part of the Beach estate soon after and returned to woods. The Beaches began buying property in 1915 and in 1917 bought 103 acres on Bolton Road from James Bidwell. In 1958 Charles Beach sold the last 225 acres to Jones and Lyons, real estate developers from Old Lyme, CT.

In 1974 Lee & Lamont Realty subdivided the property and a series of homes were built on the hillside east of Bolton Road. After a hundred years there is little to show there was ever a school on Bolton Road. Perhaps one day archeology work will be done to see what remains.

One piece of the school remains. According to the Darico family, who lived in the Valley Falls Farmhouse, their front step was removed from the old schoolhouse after the fire and is now the farmhouse step.

The attendance was never large, with just one teacher for students from 4 to 16. Quite a challenge. By the end of the century the number of students was decreasing and students were moved to Rockville. In 1911 the abandoned school was destroyed by fire. Nothing remains today to show its location.

Of interest in the report is that the school, and presumably others, was integrated well before the Civil War. Edward Freeman was a black laborer living on Bolton Road near Bread & Milk. He worked at the Tunnel Road mill and had 6 children at this time with 3 attending the SE school.

In the days of the mill, the boarding house was kept by a Mr. Rady and **the school teacher of the little school at the top of the valley boarded there.**

C. The Corner Red House/The Alabama

The Red House on the corner of Bolton Road and Valley Falls Road has long been associated with Valley Falls Farm, but its origin and use has been controversial. Some felt it was built by Anson Lyman as a tenant house after he built the farm house, others that it predates the farm. A second controversy was whether it was Count Munchow's 'Alabama' converted for his wife in 1912.

Recent research on Lyman and Munchow shed new light on what we'll call the 'The Red House.'

The Johns Family

The first settler at Valley Falls and perhaps in today's Vernon was Stephen Johns in 1716, a few years before Bolton was incorporated. He emigrated from England, lived in Massachusetts for a time where his children were born, and then moved to Valley Falls when it was wilderness thinking it was part of the newly settled town of Tolland.

Basically a squatter In 17?? he obtained from ??? of Windsor

Over the years he and his sons obtained additional property along Bolton Road and Box Brook. Stephen had three sons - Hugh, Stephen, Jr and ??? who inherited his property when he died in ??? They sold some of their property for cash and bought other pieces as it became available.

Over the years some members of the family moved out of Vernon, but others stayed and continued farming. What we consider Valley Falls Farm and today's Valley Falls Park was owned and farmed by Stephen Jr. He had 10 children, included ??? boys. In ??? he passed the Valley Falls Farm property to his son Abijah who would be the last of the Johns men to own property and farm at Valley Falls.

Abijah had two sons that we are aware of - Abijah, Jr and Stephen. Both die before Abijah ending the line of Johns at Valley Falls. In 1818? Abijah gives Stephen's widow Mary Johns a small lot in his orchard at the corner of today's Bolton Road and Valley Falls Road. There she builds her 'dwelling house' with mortgages from other area farmers. This is all documented in deeds.

The Lyman Family

In November 1832 Samuel Lyman, Anson's father, bought from Mary Johns the Red House on Bolton Road. Very little property was involved in the sale to the Lymans, only 22 square rods.

Samuel Lyman bought the house for his son Anson to whom he sold it a month later in December 1832. Anson at the time wasn't ready to settle down but after a three year term in the U. S. Army returned home in 1836 and purchased the Tarbox farm, married and likely built his farmhouse by 1840 where they moved to raise their family. Without adolescent sons he needed help managing his large farm and the Red House became a tenant house.

After Anson Lyman died in 1855 his property, including the Red House, was sold to Samuel Bradley who owned the farm for about 20 years. He continued to use the Red House as a tenant house as shown on the 1869 town map.

In 1870 Christian Sharps bought the farm and property on Railroad Brook where he built his trout farm. He and his family lived near the depot on Birch Street not in the Valley Falls farmhouse. He had no interest in farming so either hired people or leased the land. Whoever the farmers were they probably used the farmhouse as well as the Red House.

When Sharps died unexpectedly in 1874 ownership returned to Samuel Bradley. The next years saw a number of owners and some speculators, but the Red House always stayed with the farm. The Gwynne's owned the farm from 1875-1897 and lived there at least part time. Then the Hardy's owned it from 1903 to 1907. Both families had other interests than farming so likely hired help who may have lived in the Red House. We don't know how the Red House was maintained or updated over those years.

Count Hans Munchow

In 1910 Count Hans Munchow bought the property with his new wife's money and converted the farm to a European design building the stable and rebuilding the barn. He was not a farmer as he worked in Hartford, but is known to have hired European immigrants to run the farm. He did live in the farmhouse and the hired farmers in the Red House.

Munchow's wife Henrietta came from a wealthy Southern family and would not live in the old buildings on the farm so stayed in Hartford. In 1912 he gave the Red House new life by updating it for Henrietta and called it 'The Alabama' after her home state.

In 1913, deep in debt, he fled the state with his secretary and lover leaving Henrietta to pay his debts and sell the property.

Two years later in 1915 Mary Batterson Beach and her husband Charles bought the property. The transformed Red House might have been part of the allure as the Beaches used it while their main house was being constructed. It was described in sales literature as a "6-room bungalow with bath, and a large veranda overlooking hillside and lake."

After they moved into their big house the Red House was used for guests and staff. A March 5, 1916 article says that "Erwin Reed and family are occupying the bungalow on the Dr. Beach place, at Valley Falls farm, the former having taken the place of superintendent of the place."

We also know from the Daricos and Beach grandchildren interviews that the house was used by the Beach's gardener and later his chauffeur. At some point the house was sold to Thomas and Anne Shea until her death in 2015.

Munchow hired a German family to manage the farm and probably help with barn construction. The 1910 Federal Census includes the Philip Michael's family with his wife and 3 children. Philip was the farm foreman and his wife Katherine was servant to Munchow. It is likely they lived in the corner house, although its possible they used the mill house.

On June 24, 1911 Hans Munchow and Henrietta Cassin were married in Kentucky. Six months later a short item in the January 17, 1912 Hartford Courant says that Munchow "has his barns completed and equipped with modern conveniences, running water and steam heat. In the Spring he plans to build a new house and lay out the grounds, including a new road to his buildings from the highway."

Henrietta was a fairly wealthy Southern woman used to living in luxury in Selma, Alabama and Louisville, Kentucky. Much of her two years in Connecticut she would live in Hartford. Hans loved the life of a wealthy European aristocrat and as Henrietta was financing the farm he was anxious to bring her to the farm in hopes she would enjoy and continue supporting him. She was 10 years older than Hans and had been wooed by him while traveling home on a liner from Europe. So it was important to create a house that she would be comfortable in at the farm. That house on Bolton Road he named 'The Alabama' for the state where Henrietta grew up.

Hans may have intended to build a new cottage for Henrietta, but probably renovated the existing Tenant House to save time and money. After almost a year of marriage there may have already been tension building as the picture Hans painted of country life didn't meet the realities. He added the veranda and a bathroom, updated the interior, and made other improvements. The cottage was probably quite nice, although we don't know if Henrietta learned to enjoy the country. She may have missed her friends and city activities. Henrietta, however, would have only a year to enjoy her new home.

Munchow's employees that lived in the Bolton Road Tenant House may have moved to the Valley Falls Cotton Mill boarding house. A June 19, 1914 Hartford Courant article notes that "the Cotton Mill boarding house is still standing and some of the workmen at Dr. Beach's place have been living there."

Hans had taken out several mortgages on the farm. In April 1912 he transferred all the property to Henrietta, perhaps to provide some protection of the property. Henrietta though was no helpless Southern belle. She had a great deal of experience with real estate in Selma and may have forced the transfer to protect her investment. Read Henrietta's biography.

Hans also had fallen in love with his young secretary. His affair plus his debts caught

up with him and he fled town in April 1913. Henrietta lived in Hartford until the property sold to Anna Werner in August and she could return to Kentucky. In the Hartford Courant article on his flight it says that "He made extensive improvements and put up two barns that were among the showplaces of the vicinity." That suggests he did not build a separate bungalow thus supporting the idea that he renovated the Tenant House.

Beach's Bungalow

An October 17, 1915 Hartford Courant article describes Dr. Charles Beach's purchase of the property and that the building of their new summer home is underway. It mentions that the new house is on the same side of the road as 'The Alabama,' the bungalow built by 'the Count.' No further mention is made in the article of the bungalow.

The Darico's in their 1978 taped interview tell us that until the Big House was ready the Beach's stayed at the 'Shea house' or the old Tenant House on the corner. That would have been in 1915 while the house was being built. It is unlikely that Mary Batterson Beach would have been comfortable in a house used for generations by farm tenants, but as 'The Alabama' designed for Henrietta Cassin she would have been quite comfortable.

The following photo was in the collection of Beach photos that Carol Burke passed on to Ann Letendre for the Heritage Center. It was not labeled, but shows guests visiting a bungalow. The clothing and automobiles are consistent with 1915. The house has a veranda and beyond the automobiles the land seems to drop away into a valley. This is consistent with the 1914 description of a "6-room bungalow, bath, large veranda overlooking hillside and lake."

Is this Hans Munchow's 'The Alabama' in 1915 being used by Mary Batterson Beach to entertain friends?

Compare the period photo with the corner house as it looks today. The veranda on the left has been enclosed, but the windows, front door and dormers are identical. On the rear is a structure that could have been a wrap around veranda overlooking the lake or enclosed as additional rooms. Click to enlarge images.

Mill Pond

Phoenix Park

A March 5, 1916 article says that "Erwin Reed and family are occupying the bungalow on the Dr. Beach place, at Valley Falls farm, the former having taken the place of superintendent of the place." Apparently after the Beach family moved into the big house they used the bungalow for staff and their families.

We also know from Darico and the Beach grandchildren interviews that the corner house was used by the Beach's gardener and later his chauffeur. At some point the house was sold to Thomas and Anne Shea until her death in 2015.

References

Vernon

A History of the First Congregational Church of Vernon - 240th Anniversary. 2002. 31 pages. Includes early history of Vernon and first Meetinghouse. 1974 pamphlet update.

Brookes, George. *Cascades and Courage.* Rockville, CT: T. F. Rady & Co., 1955. 529 pages. This is the classic Vernon/Rockville history.

Cole, J. R. *History of Tolland County, Connecticut.* New York: W. W. Preston & Co., 1888. 992 pages.

Commemorative Biographical Record of Tolland and Windham Counties, Connecticut. Chicago, IL: J. H. Beers & Co., 1903. Beers published books with paid biographies.

Kellogg, Allyn Stanley. *The Church of Christ In Vernon, Connecticut: An Historical Address.* 1888. 50 pages. History and memories of the First Congregational Church by Kellogg (1824-1893), grandson of the first minister. Although primarily a church history it also includes early town history.

Old Cemeteries of Vernon, Connecticut, U.S.A. Agawam, MA: Bridgeport National Bindery, 2014. 373 pages. An Eagle Scout project conducted by Zachary R. Kline and Michael J. Leonard supported by the Vernon Education Foundation. Photographs and GPS data on graves in the Bamforth Road and Dobson Road cemeteries.

Smith, Harry Conklin. *A Century Of Vernon, CT 1808-1908.* Rockville, CT: T. F. Rady & Co., 1908. 160 pages. Published for Vernon's Centennial. Good history of Vernon's first 100 years drawing on contemporary sources. Smith was the editor of the *Rockville Leader*.

Symonds, Jr., Richard N. *Water Powered Mill Sites in Vernon, Connecticut.* Willington, CT: Anything Printed, 2016. 44 pages.

Vernon, Our Town. Vernon, CT: Minuteman Press, 2018. 180 pages. Vernon Historical Society & Vernon Public Schools. 180 pages. Although written for school children this is a good overview of Vernon history.

Voices of the New Republic: Connecticut Towns 1800-1832, Volume I, New Haven, CT: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2003. 493 pages. Includes Rev. Ebenezer Kellogg's 1800 description of North Bolton (Vernon).

Willes, Mildred. *225th Anniversary Celebration of the First Congregational Church, Vernon, Connecticut 1762-1974, 1974*. 32 pages. Includes early history of Vernon and first Meetinghouse.

Other Towns Histories

Goodwin, Joseph. *East Hartford: Its History and Traditions*. Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1879. 249 pages.

Love, Rev. William Deloss. *The Colonial History of Hartford*. Hartford, CT: By the author, 1914. 369 pages. history of Hartford, including early East Hartford and Manchester.

Messier, Betty Brook & Aronson, Janet Sutherland. *The Roots of Coventry, Connecticut*. Willimantic, CT: Willimantic Instant Printing Inc., 1987. 206 pages. Detail on founding of the town a few years before Bolton. Process was likely similar.

Spiess, Mathias & Bidwell, Percy. *History of Manchester, Connecticut*. South Manchester, CT: W. H. Schieldge, 1924. 306 pages. The definitive history of Manchester.

Stiles, Henry. *The History of Ancient Windsor, Vol. I*. Somersworth, NH: New Hampshire Publishing Co., 1892. 950 pages. Detailed history of Windsor and its daughter towns.

Waldo, Loren Pinckney. *The Early History of Tolland*. Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood & Co., 1861. 148 pages. An address delivered before the Tolland County Historical Society.

Weigold, Harold. *Tolland: The History of an Old Connecticut Post Road Town*. Chester, CT: The Pequot Press, Inc., 1971. 246 pages. Combines and updates earlier histories.

Genealogies

Allis, Horatio. *Genealogy of William Allis of Hatfield, Mass and Descendants, 1630-1919, 3 Volumes*. Hartford, CT: Art Press, 1919.

Hopkins, Timothy. *The Kellogg's In The Old World and The New, Volumes 1-3*. San

Francisco, CA: Sunset Press & Photo Engraving Co., 1903.

Talcott, S. V. *Talcott Pedigree in England and America from 1665 to 1876*. Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1876.

Maps

1730 Proprietor's Map of Bolton/Vernon. Preliminary map created in 1920 to show the early division of land between the 50 proprietors. Never completed. Available at Bolton Town Clerk's office.

1811 Hudson & Goodwin Connecticut. Enough detail to locate Vernon mills. First map published after we separated from Bolton.

1934 Fairchild Aerial Photography Maps of Connecticut.