

The Knight Family

Presented by Jim Howard

I am going to talk about the Knight family. They were not the first settlers in Otisfield but there were more than a few of them and they were some of the craftsmen of Otisfield. Before I do, I would like to read a poem written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It was published in 1840 – 5 years after Stephen Knight passed away.

Jim then read The Village Blacksmith by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

*Under a spreading chestnut-tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands,
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.*

*His hair is crisp, and black, and long;
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.*

*Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.*

*And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.*

*He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice*

*Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.*

*It sounds to him like her mother's voice
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.*

*Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.*

*Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought.*

My name is Stephen Knight. I moved to Otisfield in 1882 following my brother, Zebulon, who's been here since 1778. You probably have heard of Zeb because he's a Potash maker. He lives over on the west side of Saturday Pond.

Back in 1788, I bought lot 112 from Mr. Hunt. I paid him 60 pounds for it. It's on this road (Otisfield Hill Road – later know as Bell Hill Road) about ½ mile from here. It's just down the hill a bit and is right next to the Town Pound. Given I'm so close to the Pound, I guess I've officially become the Pound Keeper. But that is not my profession. I am a blacksmith. I learned the trade from Mr. Pope down in Falmouth. I think I was the first Smith in Otisfield.

I married Anna (Huston) in 1790. We started out in a log cabin that I built but as the children came along, we built a stick house near the road. We have seven children – two boys and five girls. If I told you about each of them, we'd be here until dark and no work would get finished. I've time for just a few.

You well might know my oldest boy, Sam - most people call him Mason Sam as he did most of the mason work around for many years. You may have heard he took a real bad fall just the other day. He was working on the Monument at Stage Island at the mouth of the Saco River. The staging broke and Sam fell 54 feet onto the rock. John Lowell was killed but it looks like Sam is going to make it.

My other son, Stephen, is a good boy. It may be that he's a little foolish. He's as likely to shoot the bell on the Meeting House just to hear it ring but he never means any harm.

Then there's my daughter, Mary. She's really something – almost 14 years old now. It might be that I spoil her but I think she's going to do memorable things. I really do.

Jean Hankins then spoke about Mary Pride Knight.