

A HISTORY OF SAM HILL

BY: Kathleen Burgess Baker
(grantee - Sam Hill Farm)

On a clear day one has only to stand on the land cleared by Samuel and Mary Follet to understand what lured them to Lot #151 of Plantation #3. Even today in its primitive state, the land that has come to be known as the Sam Hill Farm commands a view of the Middlefield and Peru Mountain Ranges and an evening sunset that would once again stir the transcendental imaginations of Emerson and Thoreau.

According to Rice's History (c.1854), Samuel Follet was born in Attleborough, Massachusetts, in 1757, and at the age of eighteen joined the Revolutionary Army at Bunker Hill under the command of General George Washington. Discrepancies exist, however, concerning his actual arrival in Worthington. While Elsie Bartlett pin points the Follets' arrival in 1783 and Rice in 1781, the deed to lot #151 recorded to Samuel Follet in the Hampshire County Hall of Records (Book 1) indicates that he purchased the land from the late Gardner and Anna Chandler of Worcester on November 30, 1787.

Historically, Gardner Chandler "obliged himself ... in the full and just sum of 334 Spanish Milled Dollars" to Samuel Follet on the first day of March A.D. 1781. The conditions of this agreement were that Gardner Chandler would "make and execute ... a good and lawful deed of one lot of land in the Town of Worthington containing one hundred acres more or less ..." and that Samuel Follet would pay "said Gardner Chandler the sum of 166 Spanish Milled Dollars on or before the first day of March A.D. 1785." Sometime between 1781 and 1785 Gardner Chandler expired without executing his condition of the original agreement, and in March of 1786, Anna Chandler, as wife and administratrix of the Estate of the late Gardner Chandler, petitioned the Justices of the Court of Common Pleas to empower her to make a Conveyance of the said lot of land to Samuel Follet.

In her deed to Samuel Follet, dated November 30, 1787 and contained in Book 1 at the Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Anna Chandler acknowledged that Samuel Follet had paid to her the sum of 166 Spanish Milled Dollars and 2/3 of a dollar, and that she, empowered by the court, had presented him with a lawful deed to Lot #151 in the Township of Worthington.

On the same day (November 30, 1787), due to the fact that Samuel Follet had only paid one half of the agreed upon sum, he mortgaged Lot 151 to Anna Chandler for 373 ounces of silver bullion sterling alloy, presumably the equivalent of 167 Spanish Milled Dollars. This rather lengthy, clearly written, three-page deed describes Lot #151 as "one of those that were drawn by Aaron Willard, Esquire (deceased), in the Division of the Township of Worthington among the original proprietors thereof reference being had to the Proprietors Book of Records ... Lot originally laid out by Captain Nathaniel Dwight, surveyor..." In addition Samuel Follet registered his deed in Worcester on December 6, 1787, and in Hampshire County on October 15, 1789.

It may be assumed that Gardner and Anna Chandler of Worcester originally purchased Lot #151 from Aaron Willard, Esquire, sometime after 1763. At the time that Samuel Follet purchased lot #151, some twenty-five years after its partitioning by Nathaniel Dwight, Anna Chandler was acting as the administratrix for the Estate of the late Gardner Chandler. In accordance with the conditions of the new deed (Book 3) Follet was to pay 186 ounces of silver bullion sterling alloy "with lawful interest"; the mortgage to be held as collateral security by Anna Chandler and her heirs until such time as the remaining balance, an additional 186 ounces of sterling bullion silver alloy was paid.

Ten years after mortgaging his land to Anna Chandler, Samuel Follet received a "Release of Mortgage" from Gard L. Chandler of Boston, County of Suffolk, gentleman and administrator of the Estate of Anna Chandler, late of Worcester. Although the discharge of this mortgage is dated on the 8th August 1797, it was not recorded in Hampshire County until January 7, 1929 (Book 851) when Samuel Hills, grandson of Samuel Follet, was preparing to sell his lands.

In all probability, since evidence exists that places Samuel Follet in Worcester as late as December, 1787, the journey to Worthington by Samuel and Mary (Brown) Follet most likely occurred in the Spring of 1788. Furthermore, Samuel, at that point in time, was thirty-one years old, too young to have a son enrolled at Harvard. Luke Brown, referred to in Elizabeth Payne's paper, "The Sams of Sam Hill," as the son of Samuel and Mary Follet, was perhaps Mary's son by a previous marriage. One might speculate as to whether or not Luke accompanied his parents to that rank wilderness known as Worthington or remained with relatives in Worcester or perhaps with Samuel's brother John in Winchester.

Samuel Follet, yeoman - as he soon became known, was industrious and hard-working. The one-hundred acres farmed by him in the 1800's look today much the same as they did two hundred years ago. To the South of where the present house stands are the remains of a cellar hole, the original log cabin homestead of Samuel and Mary.

Sometime after 1812, twenty-four years after first homesteading Lot #151, Samuel's granddaughter Elizabeth Brown (age 6) came to reside with her grandparents. At this time Samuel and Mary were approximately 55 years of age and farming one-hundred acres of land without the aid of sons must have become increasingly ~~more~~ difficult. Elizabeth Brown, soon to be known as Follet, would have come to Worthington as a welcomed relief to Samuel and Mary.

Shortly after Elizabeth's arrival, records indicate that Samuel Follet built the "new house" on the ledge overlooking the lower pasture. The new house looked very much like a traditional 18th Century cape whole-house with several later additions. Built on a stone foundation, the house originally had two main fireplaces (one on each end) and faced East. The remains of the foundation for the main fireplace, located on the south side, of the "new house" can still be viewed in the cellar. The "new house", in the beginning, had only one main room on the first floor and three bedrooms on the second.

Samuel Follet's "new house," now close to 175 years old, stands today as living testament to his ingenuity. Built with hand-hewed beams, handcut laths, hair plaster, and planked floors, the "new house" represented the successes of a profitable farmer. Of interest today to those who marvel at the creative genius of the 19th Century builder are the extremely large, hand shaped, cellar beams that support both the main house and the two original fire places.

Life on the Follets' farm is purely speculative; however, the land in and of itself tells its own story. It is evident that Samuel Follet spent a good many years clearing his land and sectioning it off with neatly-built stone walls. Today, the perimeters of his orchards, his pastures, his hay fields, and his wood lots are as precisely marked with stone walls as they were some two hundred years ago. One can only question why Robert Frost would have ~~have~~ so forcibly stated "something there is that doesn't love a wall."

Once he claimed the land, his concerns obviously shifted to productivity. Fields of grain and hay were planted and remain in the 1980's in their more primitive state. It is easy to imagine Samuel Follet making several trips by ox cart each year to Williamsburg (approximately twelve miles away) to have his grain milled.

Why not to Stevens' mill?

Judging from the remains of his barn (burned in the 1970's), which was situated below the main house, Samuel had sufficient room for a large number of livestock, not only those that provided him with food but also those that aided him in tilling the land and those that he sold for income. Scattered about the land and in the foundation of the house and barn are the remains of a variety of hand-made farm implements, such as scythe blades, sickles and grain cradles, that were probably forged by the town's blacksmiths.

In addition to his fields, sugar maples, another source of income, were numerous on his land; however, only a few aged maples remain today as testimony to an era long past. Documents in existence indicate that sugar maples lined both sides of the Old Middlefield Road (now known as the Sam Hill Road) and were in abundance in his orchards.

By the time Samuel Follet was in his seventies, evidence exists that he began selling off small portions of his land. Records on file with the Hampshire County Registry of Deeds (Book 62) indicate that on March 12, 1828, Samuel Follet sold to Royal Cushing of Worthington thirteen acres on the Northeasterly part of Lot #151 for \$130.00. According to the deed, this small parcel of land abutted the properties of Roger Benjamin ("on which his son Charles lives") and the other lands of Royal Cushing. This deed would further serve to support the fact that Samuel and Mary Follet indeed had neighbors within a half mile radius.

In November of 1829, Samuel Follet again sold another portion of his land (approximately nine acres) to John Tinker of Worthington for \$117.00 (Book 63). This land "beginning at a stake and stones being the Southeast corner of Royal Cushing's land." One would have to wonder if John Tinker could be the second or third generation of Elihu Tinker, one of the early settlers of Worthington, whose farm was located on West Street, and whose lands originally abutted the lands of Samuel Follett.

(The lands sold to Royal Cushing (13 acres) and to John Tinker (9 acres) eventually became the 22 acre tract of land later owned by Parley Hutchins and sold to Julius Hills, Samuel Follets' son-in-law, in 1864 (Book 221).)

In addition to the Cushings, the Benjamins, and the Tinkers, Map #B entitled "Early Settlers" identifies Samuel Tower as living approximately one-half mile from the Follet's Farm on the Old Middlefield Road.

In 1840, at the age of 34, Elizabeth Brown Follet married Julius Hills. By this time, Samuel and Mary were in their eighties. According to Elizaeth Payne's research, Elizabeth and Juluis remained with the Folllets until two years after Samuel's death (1854) when they purchased the John Tinker farm, the same place sold by Elizabeth's grandfather in 1829. Even though Samuel Follet willed the use of his farm to Elizabeth until such time as the ownership would pass to her sons, Samuel and Daniel, one might imagine that Elizabeth and Julius Hill desired to own their own land. (Samuel Follet was 96 years old the year that he died.)

(insert Will of Samuel Follet probated in Hampshire County in 1855)

On December 4, 1855, Julius Hills purchased 75 acres of land from Albro Miller for four hundred dollars and "subject to a mortgage to the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company for five hundred dollars." This parcel of land was "bounded as follows(viz) west on the Middle Branch of the Westfield River; on the North by the land belonging to the heirs of Luther Geer and William Holmes; east by Samuel Follet and south by the land of Asa Smith. If one were to look West towards the river from the main house, he would discover that the lands of Samuel Follet and Julius Hills now stretched from the top of the hill all the way down to the banks of the Westfield River.

Julius Hill further added to his farm in 1864 when he purchased an additional 22 acres of land (Known as the Hutchins Lot) from Parley Hutchins for one hundred dollars. This land, part of Samuel Follet's original Lot 151, was bounded as follows: "on the North by the land of Lyman Granger, on the East by the land of Lyman Mayhew, and on the South and West by the land of the grantee." He also purchased, later in the same year, 30 acres from Henry and Mary Brown that was bounded "on the North by the land of the grantee, on the East by the land of Lyman Mayhew, on the South by the land of Enos Parsons, and on the West by the land of Asa Smith." This land is later referred to as the Barnard Lot.

At the age of 26 in the year 1871, Samuel Follet Hill married Josephine Mayhew, the daughter of Lyman Mayhew whose lands abutted the lands of Julius Hill.

UNFINISHED; February 8, 1984

*Please notify
L. McLean if it
is convenient to
meet with you*

*Dear Mrs. Payne,
your work inspired me to
research the Sam Hill property.
Perhaps your group would be
interested in my findings. I'll
be in Worthington on 2/24/84 and
would like to talk with you.*

K. Baker

cc Lois Brown