

## Frederic Phelps Bissell and His Daily Journal 1847 – 1869

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Frederic Phelps Bissell, or F.P. as he may have been known, was my great-great grandfather related to me through my maternal grandmother Helen Mansfield Bissell Carroll. She was the daughter of F.P.'s only son Frederic Clarence Bissell and his wife Sarah Gertrude Storrs. F.P. descends six generations from Captain John Bissell who emigrated from England to Massachusetts and from there to Windsor in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Frederic Bissell's ancestors migrated to the northeast section of Hebron, Connecticut in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In April 1839 when FP was nearly seventeen, the family sold its 116-acre farm for \$1500 to Albert Crouch and later that year purchased 144.5 acres of rich farm and woodland from Zechariah Cone for \$3870. The new farmstead was north of their old farm and ½ mile below Hebron center on Church Street adjacent to relatives. There the family operated a prosperous farm, mills and other businesses into the next century. Today, one can see the original house and walk the fields at the "Raymond Brook Preserve". Access can be found at Church Street, Kinney Road and Millstream Road!

My great-great grandfather F.P. documented his daily life in four journals written from December 1847 when he was 25, until his death in 1905 at age 83. This write-up is about his first journal covering the period 1847 through 1869.



As one can see above, F.P.'s entries were usually brief, mostly about the weather, a chore or a planting he accomplished that day. His first entries in November 1847 were scant. They aren't very enlightening to us, but to farmer Bissell weather and crops were central to his livelihood! Later entries would describe much more: friends and family visits, social occasions, local and even national events of the day, the passing and sicknesses of people in the community, town duties and church events. In their totality, the entries give one a real insight into mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farm life in a rural Connecticut town.



This is the F.P. Bissell house at 185 Church Street. In Hebron, CT. The addition pictured on the right was added by F.P. in 1881 to accommodate his son's family. The Greek revival-style structure on the left dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and is a design common to houses of that era.

As a farmer, Frederic Bissell was accustomed to a hard life and long days. His entries suggest that he arose before 6 am and went to sleep after 9 pm most days. When farming, he spread dung in the early spring in preparation for the plowing and planting of the fields, tended to the growing crops in the summer, harvested crops from fields and orchards in the late summer, and cut and sawed wood and preserved and butchered in the cold months. Throughout, he tended cattle, pigs, sheep and horses. He worked the same farm his father had bought in 1839 and where other relatives would settle or had settled nearby. Indeed, the 1868 map attached shows many Bissells living in proximity to each other near St. Peter's Church in School District IV. Judging from the output he recorded, he operated a large sawmill in the northeast corner of the property and would build a small shingle mill in 1851 at the same location.

He "drew" plentiful wood from his woodlots near the sawmill and from neighbors' farms. He devoted part of his acreage to orchards and kept bees to both pollinate them and provide honey. He built stonewalls, roads and bridges to improve the land and repaired and fashioned tools in his shop. He experimented with crops like

sorghum; a cane plant imported from Sub-Saharan Africa, and tobacco an indigenous American plant. He sold his produce such as tobacco, apples and lumber to neighbors and retailers in towns nearby picking up supplies on the return trips.

In 1856, he sold the sawmill to his uncle David Bissell Strong to devote more time to the farm and his ambitions. David was related most directly to the Bissell family through his marriage to Clarissa Bissell who was F.P.'s aunt! David was also the son of David Sr. and Leah Bissell, who was the sister of F.P.'s grandfather Levi. The Bissell-Strong association continued for another generation in town and beyond as F.P.'s later journal entries showed.

F.P. became an insurance agent insuring several structures in the town and saw to their claims when a barn or factory burned. In one entry he tells of entertaining a Traveler's Insurance Company agent at his home one evening, probably making him the first Travelers employee in the family! He extended mortgages to neighbors as town records show. He also turned his hobby as a taxidermist of birds and small animals into a business!

He devoted more time to St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Church Street becoming its treasurer, a warden and a caretaker. Being a warden was equivalent to heading the church lay vestry. As a lay representative of the church he traveled throughout the Diocese to attend conventions and church dedications at St. James Churches in New London and Glastonbury, Christ Church Cathedral and St. John's Church in Hartford, Christ Church or Trinity parish in Norwich, and Calvary Church Colchester to which St. Peter's was yoked in 1857. (The Calvary congregation was dissolved in the early 1900's.)

Rising in prominence in the community he joined the town council and became a school "visitor" to monitor the instruction in one-room schoolhouses around the town (He may have been a school teacher in his early years.), a surveyor, property assessor, process server, a probate judge, and a state assemblyman and senator. Our Renaissance man!

We know little from his writings about his personality only brief glimpses. We also know little of his family life and affections. He would write about their sicknesses and comings and goings in a matter-of-factual way. He would record social events such as going to a church event or to see a relative in the same tone as having a toothache. The few words he wrote about himself were to say that he had had a "fine time" at a social gathering or military muster, or to report an illness - "not well today". His greatest exclamations were remarks about a passing storm - "greatest freshet\* I have ever seen!" or a national or regional calamity, to which I devote a section below. We only know for sure that he was a probate judge, state legislator and church leader from public records apart from his journal. He said little of his "official" activities in this regard, reflecting a certain modesty I think. Interestingly, someone would pencil occasionally in his journals about his activities (probably his wife Almira). So we can surmise he was a humble man, judicious with words, a bit

of an introvert, a stoic if you like – traits that seem to carry forward to some of us today!

It's unclear from his journals where the Bissell families lived in relation to each other at times. He describes too few family comings and goings in his first journal to make it clear. The 1868 map at the end of this narrative shows F.P. living next door to his parents possibly on the Curtis A. Phelps property, which he purchased and renovated in 1860. An earlier 1857 map does not list a Frederic P. Bissell property so it's likely they were living with Ira and Lavinia at the time. After Almira's father Joseph Carver died in 1854, mother Dicey came to live with the Bissells until she died in 1860. Whether they lived together or close by, we can assume that they interacted daily as to barely rate a mention in his first journal.

### Hebron

The family lived in the expansive town of Hebron settled first early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by immigrants from Windsor, Saybrook, other towns in Connecticut and Massachusetts: the Phelps, Strong, and Porter families from Windsor; the Buell, Hutchinson (M.A. Foote's ancestors!) Mann, and Gillett families from Lebanon; Jones and Post families from Saybrook; and the Sawyer and Tarbox families from different parts of Massachusetts. The Bissells were from Windsor where the John Bissell family operated a Connecticut River ferry near the present day Bissell Bridge north of Hartford. The Hebron Historical Society has a wonderful website that details the history of the town. <https://hebronthistoricalociety.org>

Villages grew up within Hebron as the population increased throughout town. Settlers petitioned the Connecticut legislature to become formally recognized or incorporated to form ecclesiastical societies or Congregational churches in Marlborough, Andover and Gilead. With additional land to Marlborough from Colchester and Glastonbury, and land to Andover from Coventry and Bolton, those towns were incorporated. The Bissells lived near the center of Hebron north of a section that would later be called Turnerville after the mill owner, P.W. Turner. For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hebron's population hovered around 2000 until late in the century when people drifted away from the farm life to surrounding larger towns and cities. Only when immigrant population began to spill from the cities did its population stabilize. Authors of two speeches included in F.C. Bissell's 1908 compilation of Hebron's Bicentennial Celebration complain about "foreigners" altering the tenor of the community. Familiar?

Surrounding Hebron were the towns of Colchester, Bolton, Columbia, Westchester, Glastonbury, Manchester, Rockville, Tolland, and Stafford all mentioned in F.P.'s first journal. Tolland was the county seat for Hebron. F.P. refers to relatives in or traveling to nearby Moodus, East Haddam, and the Millington section of that town. The main commercial centers were Norwich, New London, New Haven and Hartford to which F.P. traveled for provisions and government functions. Lesser ones were Manchester where mills turned out clothing and paper and Colchester where there

was a stage stop. F.P. went often to the section of Turnerville where there was a blacksmith shop, a gristmill, an iron furnace, Turner silk mills and where a railroad station was eventually built. It was later to be renamed Amston when industrialist Charles Ams purchased P.W. Turner's mills and North Pond, and built his Ams-Sterling automobile factory that briefly operated.

Today, Hebron sits astride state highways 85 and 66 very near Route 2 mid way between Manchester and Colchester (N-S), Willimantic and East Haddam (E-W). Gilead and Gay City State Park are further north on 85 as is the Gilead Church and Gilead Cemetery. The Godfrey Hill Cemetery, also on 85, is before the intersection with East Street. In F.P.'s time, the highways would have been dirt roads lined with stonewalls to keep the livestock from wandering and to designate property boundaries. Some roads extant today are mentioned in F.P.'s journals such as West Street and Wells Woods Road. East Street was known as the "road to Bolton", and Wall Street as the "road to Andover". The Old Colchester-Hebron Road, on which he traveled frequently, diverts from 85 south of the town center and winds down past old farms to Old Hartford Road near 85's intersection in Colchester.



Frederic's St. Peter's Episcopal Church and cemetery are found on the west side of Church Street (Route 85) south of the intersection of 85 and Route 66. The older Andover Road Cemetery or Old Hebron Cemetery is found along Wall Street past RHAM High School off 66 just east of the intersection. The two cemeteries contain most of our ancestors' remains going back eight generations to Benjamin and Elizabeth Sawyer Bissell and nine generations to Edward and Elizabeth Mack Sawyer born in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century in Worcester and Concord Massachusetts. Other relatives such as the Manns are buried in the Godfrey Hill Cemetery near East Street and the Phelps family members in the Gilead Cemetery and the Old Hebron Cemetery.



From St. Peters a little further along 85-south, is the Church of the Holy Family on the left, built on the property of the old Bissell farm that F.P.'s father Ira Bissell purchased in 1839. The house and out buildings are now the church's parish office. The farmstead had barns, stable, possibly a work or blacksmith shop, a sorghum mill, sawmills, a hen house, a corncrib, a pondrett (dung pile) and gardens. The fields surrounding were planted with buckwheat, hay, oats, barley, rye, clover and potatoes. The orchards produced apples, plums and peaches. The gardens yielded strawberries, tomatoes, rutabagas, sweet corn, onions and beans – probably much else. During the Civil War, F.P. planted sorghum for sweetener and fodder, and tobacco – perhaps as some of his Bissell relatives did in Windsor. Sugar had become scarce during the war since the Confederacy was not sharing it with the North. Colonists and Indians had already grown tobacco and sorghum for decades, so for F.P. it may have been a profit motive to start growing them. The streams and ponds some of which are still visible on the property provided the power for the mills.

Presently the town is still rural, although barely agricultural with quite a few housing developments and few substantial commercial shopping centers, manufacturers or enterprises. Riding on the back roads around town is like stepping back into the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

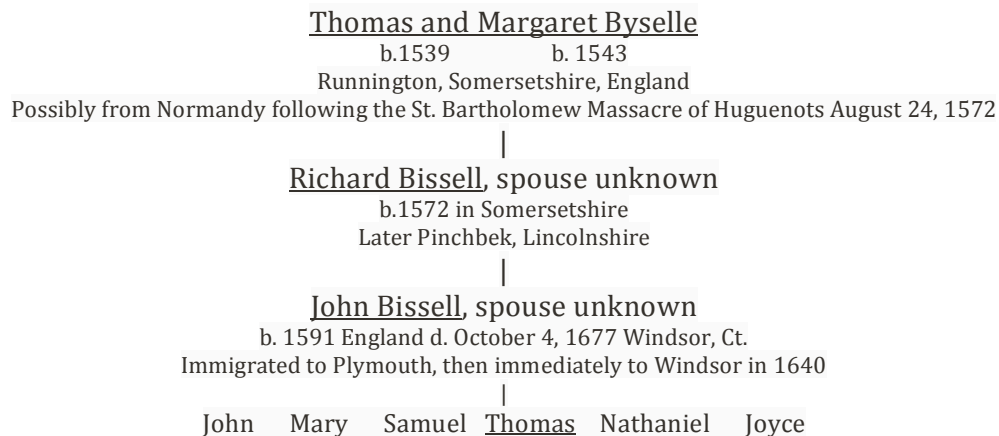


1744 Map from the Hebron Historical Society. Expand the map to see the Bissell (I) and Gaylord names in the northeast quadrant, homes to Hezekiah Gaylord and “cousins” Benjamin and Elizabeth Sawyer Bissell.

### Family History

Frederic Phelps Bissell was born in 1822 in Hebron to Lavinia Phelps and Ira Bissell both descending from founding families coming from Windsor early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Lavinia's mother was Mary Jones, who married F.P.'s namesake Frederic Phelps.

The Bissells are all descended from Captain John Bissell who was one of the founders of Windsor who emigrated from Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1640 and prior to that from Somersetshire England. The Bissells are said to have been French Huguenots who fled to England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Captain John was the one that operated the ferry across the Connecticut River for which the Bissell Bridge is named. John is prominently interred in the Palisado "Old Burying Ground" Cemetery in Windsor, where a monument memorializes the founding families.



Unfortunately, we don't have a reliable record of John's wife, our 8<sup>th</sup> great-grandmother. She is thought to have been Mary Drake by one account and the Drake's were a prominent immigrant family in Windsor from England. John Bissell had six children most of whom were born in England. Son Nathaniel continued to operate the ferry and live in the house in East Windsor that we can view today.



This is the John Bissell house in East Windsor off Route 5, now part of South Windsor.



An American Bicentennial marker located at the site of the ferry crossing on Palisado Avenue in Windsor.

One of John Bissell's sons Thomas from whom we are descended was born in England in 1636. After immigrating with his father and mother he married Abigail Moore Sanders of Dorchester, Massachusetts who was the widow of George Sanders. They had thirteen children, three of whom died young\*. Our ancestor Ephraim was born in Windsor in 1680.

According to *The Woodworkers of Windsor*, by Joshua Lane and Donald White, published by Historic Deerfield, Inc., in Deerfield, Massachusetts in 2003, Thomas was apprenticed to a woodworker and deacon John Moore and later married his daughter in 1655. After Thomas finished his apprenticeship and had established his own shop, he took on his own apprentice in the late 1660's, Nathaniel Gaylord. In 1678 upon finishing his apprenticeship, Nathaniel Gaylord married Thomas Bissell's oldest daughter Abigail.

Thomas and Abigail Moore Bissell m. October 11, 1655 (widow of George Sanders)  
 Thomas (b. July 31, 1636 d. July 31, 1689) in Windsor. Abigail (b.1639 d.1725)

Thomas, Abigail, John, Joseph, Luke, Ebenezer\* 1<sup>st</sup> Ephraim\* Isaac, Elizabeth, Benjamin, Sarah Esther\*  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Ephraim

Ephraim and Joanne Taylor Bissell m. Windsor December 24, 1703  
 b. September 4, 1680 in Windsor d. January 5, 1717-18 in Tolland, Ct.

Ephraim Benjamin Stephen Abel



Thomas died in 1689 and Abigail Moore Bissell in 1725. Both may be buried in the Palisado without a marker as was common in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Ephraim married Joanna Taylor at Windsor in 1703 and subsequently moved to the east side of the Connecticut River to Tolland, considered part of Windsor at the time. They had four children Ephraim, Abel, Benjamin and Stephen. Stephen died at age 6 and tragically his parents shortly thereafter, in 1717. The children were all under the age of 14 and had to be placed with relatives or friends. Presently we have no information about young Ephraim and Abel. But we know about ancestor Benjamin from Volume I, Page 337 of J.R. Cole's *History of Tolland County*. There are two pages about the Bissell family in Hebron: " Benjamin was born February 23, 1711-12, came to Hebron at three or four-years old and was brought up in the Gaylord family following the death of his parents." (The account's age reference is probably incorrect.)

Nathaniel and Abigail Bissell Gaylord were Benjamin's aunt and uncle. Nathaniel had apprenticed with woodworker Thomas Bissell in Windsor and married his oldest daughter Abigail. They were probably the closest living relatives and had the wherewithal to take in Benjamin, but their age and health may have precluded them from boarding Benjamin. Another possibility was Nathaniel and Abigail's son Hezekiah. In 1717 he was in his late thirties and established probably as a deacon according to the inscription on his gravestone in the Andover Road Cemetery.

His new family nurtured young Benjamin, but again a father figure was taken from him when uncle Nathaniel died in 1720 at age 63 and was buried in the Palisado in Windsor. Abigail died three years later in 1723 when Benjamin would have been 12 or 13.

Town land records show that Deacon Hezekiah deeded Hebron land to Benjamin in 1737, who was then in his mid-20's: taken from, "Vol. 3 Page 68, Signed & Recorded 9/15/1737 Hezekiah Gaylord (sold) to his "cousin" Benjamin Bissell 2 tracts: 105 acres, and 66 acres." Benjamin immediately sold the 105-acre parcel to Joshua Tilletson. It's likely that the "Andover Road" location was the first Bissell residence in Hebron close to what became "Andover" after it split-off into a separate ecclesiastical society in 1747.

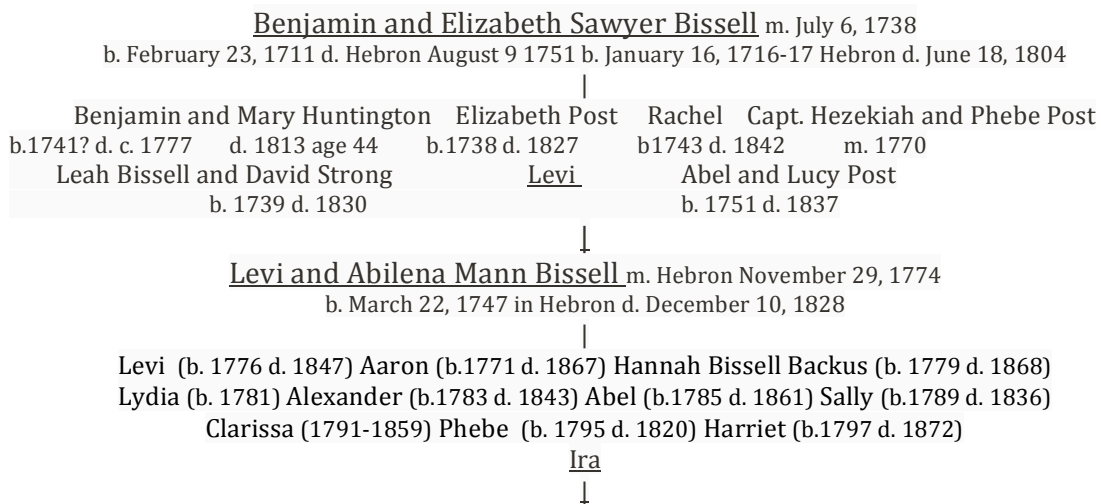
Judging from the 1744, 1857 and 1868 maps above and below, the location of the Benjamin Bissell homestead was probably at the junction of Wall Street and Skinner Lane or further along at Burnt Hill Road. I need to do further research of the town records!

A relative living in Hebron at the time was Hannah Bissell Phelps, wife of Captain Nathaniel Phelps one of the original settlers of Hebron from Windsor. Hannah was the daughter of Samuel Bissell brother of Thomas and aunt to Benjamin. Interestingly, the 1744 map shows them living on the west side of what today we

call Church Street between Kinney Road and Hope Valley Road across from the old Bissell farm!

In 1735 Benjamin Bissell married Rachel Post when she was age 21. She was the daughter of Deacon Stephen and Hannah Post originally from Saybrook, CT. Rachel died in 1736, nine days after their daughter Rachel was born. Sadly, young Rachel died six-years later. Both Rachels and parents Stephen and Hannah Post are buried in the Andover Road Cemetery in Hebron.

Benjamin then married Elizabeth Sawyer in 1738 shortly after acquiring the Gaylord property, and had seven children including our ancestor Levi Bissell born in 1747. Elizabeth's father was Edward Sawyer, the constable in town according to *The History of Tolland County*. Elizabeth's family has a rich heritage, which I have been able to trace back to the Massachusetts Colbys and English Pickworths. (See the chart at the end.) One of Ben and Elizabeth's children was daughter Rachel (2) who subsequently married Jazaniah Post. He was the son of Gideon Post, who was a brother of Ben's first wife Rachel who had died! Ben died in 1751 age 40 when F.P.'s grandfather Levi was only four-years old and his siblings were all 12-years old or younger - more Bissell ancestors growing up without a father! No doubt this was a hardship on his wife Elizabeth Sawyer. The Hebron Barbour Index of marriages, births and deaths says Elizabeth married Azariah Post in 1760 and lived in town until 1804 dying at age 87. Both Ben and Elizabeth are buried in the Andover Road Cemetery otherwise known as the "Old Hebron Cemetery."



In 1774 Levi would marry Abilena Mann daughter of Joseph Mann and Hannah Gilbert, and have 11 children including F.P.'s father Ira born to them in 1788. Abilena was from other old Hebron families who had homesteads close-by the Bissells. Some of Ira's siblings would remain in Hebron but most eventually moved to Genesee County in western New York in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – more about these Western Bissells in the *Journal Postscripts* narrative.

From F.P.'s journals we learn about some of Ira's siblings Abel, Hannah, Clarissa and Phoebe, and nephews Aaron, John, Calvin, and Jeremiah visiting them. Sisters Sally and Harriet are not mentioned in his journals, but later family research showed that they moved to upstate, western New York and Ohio. A Lydia is mentioned in his journals but it is not clear that it is Ira's sister. One reference to two siblings is found in the land records when Levi sold and mortgaged a piece of land on Andover Road now Wall St. to his sons Alexander and Abel. Levi had inherited the 66-acre tract from his father Benjamin and older brother Benjamin when they died. He subsequently bought more land on the Andover and Bolton Roads now East Street according to the town records. Benjamin, Elizabeth, Abilena, Clarissa and Levi Sr. are buried in the Andover Road or Old Hebron Cemetery in Hebron. Alexander and Levi (2<sup>nd</sup>) moved to Bergen, New York and are buried there. Abel also moved to Bergen at a later date. I have written more about the adventurous Western Bissells in a narrative titled *F. P. Bissell Journal Post Scripts*.

On June 27, 1821 Ira married into another old Hebron family the Phelps, Lavinia Phelps. Frederic Phelps Bissell was born April 23, 1822 ten months later (!), named after Lavinia's father Frederic Phelps. In 1839, Ira bought the 144.5-acre farm and present day house on Church Street from Zechariah Cone for \$3870. It included fields, barns, sawmills and out buildings. See maps and deed below.

Ira is the subject of some of his son 's first journal entries particularly when he helps with farm chores or goes shad fishing. Lavinia gets little mention. Ira and Lavinia are interred with markers in St. Peter's Cemetery. Lavinia passed November 13, 1853 at age 65 as noted in F.P.'s journal – "mother died". November 4<sup>th</sup>, he writes "Mother taken sick yesterday". From that date until 10 days after her death, he did not make a single journal entry. Ira was not to pass until April 13, 1870 at 82 probably from the mumps that infected the family and for which the entire family was quarantined, according to his second journal.

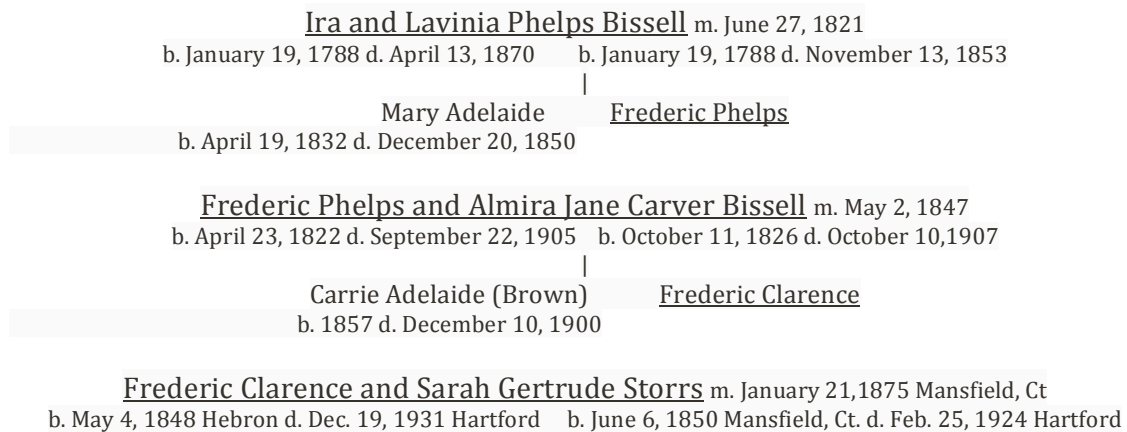
Frederic Phelps Bissell married great-great grandmother Almira Jane Carver May 2, 1847 in Hebron. At their first anniversary he writes, "I was married 1 year this day which day it rained hard and so it does today." Almira was born to the Carver family, which was prominent in and around what was to become the Turnerville part of Hebron. "Esq." Joseph Carver was her father and Dicey her mother. Esq. or "Father" Carver is mentioned frequently in the early years of the journal as someone for whom he did work frequently and visited. They lived just up Church Street on the west side of the road and went to the same church. It may have been the 1744 Captain Phelps property noted above. The proximity of the Carvers and Bissells may have had something to do with how Almira and F.P. met!

Almira's father died after a short illness in November 1854 as noted in the journal, "funeral of Esq. Carver" and was subsequently buried in St. Peter's Cemetery. Throughout 1855, F.P. notes attending his mother-in-law's needs - "Mrs. Carver's" corn and potatoes and drawing wood for her. Then, in February of 1856 Dicey

Carver came to live with them for what would be four years. This may be after the estate was settled and property sold.

A journal entry February 2, 1860 sighs, "Mother Carver very low." Relatives gathered and February 6, "Mother Carver died."

Joseph Carver's father was revolutionary soldier Aldric Carver (1761-1828). Aldric or sometimes variations of "Alderick" in the town records, married Asseneth Tarbox (b. 1798) and had 12 children who no doubt "dispersed to the wind" but some of whom returned often enough to appear in F.P.'s journals. Aldric's parents were David and Amy Carver.



Almost one year to the day after Almira and F.P. were married, Frederic Clarence was born May 4, 1848. On that day F.P. notes strangely, "Almira confined" writing nothing further. On June 11, his sister Mary Adelaide Bissell, then 18-years old and living with them, "named our baby Frederic Clarence." Sadly Adelaide died suddenly of an unknown cause, two-years later, five days before Christmas 1850. Little is said about Clarence until he starts taking on chores and farming in the 60's. One dramatic entry April 3, 1860 announces "Clarence cut off his fingers with hay culler"! Apparently, that didn't stop him from continuing to work the farm with his father and grandfather or later to become an accomplished organist!

No further children were to be born to F. P. and Almira. Almira was 21 at Clarence's birth. By 1861 when Almira was almost 35, Carrie Brown came into their lives. On February 5, 1861 F.P. underlines, "Carry Brown Come Here". At two-years old, Carrie Adelaide Bissell would become their adopted daughter and be baptized August 3, 1862. Several Browns are mentioned in the first journal but nothing definitive about Carrie Adelaide's origin. Recent evidence found in the Hebron land records suggests she was a local orphan. F.P. notes in an entry February 10, 1865 - "deeded Brown place to Sarah Thompson". According to the deed, Carrie and Everett Brown both minors, sold their property to Sarah Thompson. Frederic P. Bissell was noted as their guardian representing them in the sale. Their parents were not noted in the deed or in prior land records. Local cemetery grave markers don't reveal

their identity either. A Ruel and Lois Brown had lived on property adjacent to that deeded and may have been related, but would have been too old to be parents.

My later research laid out in another journal narrative identified Carrie's father as Watson Brown, a probable widower, who does appear in some of F.P.'s journal entries. Carrie's older brother Everett was helped by F.P. From his journals we know he found him schooling, probably a boarding school and later jobs with F.P.'s friends and acquaintances. We don't know what became of Everett in later life as he disappears from the journals and public records.

### Farm Life

Farmers and farm laborers were far and away the predominant professions in the 1850 and 1860 Connecticut censuses. F.P. was such a man. He worked very hard throughout the year often six days a week. Sunday was reserved for a day of worship, rest and social occasions, although usual chores such as feeding of animals and milking of cows had to be done.

During the late fall and winter months, F.P. did chores or "chored" around the house. He would make equipment repairs, shoe horses, and fashion axletrees\* for his wagons. He constructed additions to the house, mills and porches, plastered and papered walls and whitewashed fences and houses. He butchered and salted pigs, cattle and chickens, made sausages, cleaned and bagged oats, stripped and crated tobacco and made syrup from sorghum cane. He sawed hundreds of feet of board.



This stock photo depicts a typical mill of the era.





This photo shows the breached dam and foundation ruins of F.P. Bissell's sawmill aside Raymond Brook on the northeast portion of the Bissell property. Photo is courtesy of mill researcher and historian Richard N. Symonds, Jr.

Occasionally, he would write about going pond fishing or ice fishing, "went to the Pond. Caught a pickerel that weighed 3 lbs. 5 oz." More often than not he hunted with friends Urbane Carver and Elihu Buell. Skating on the pond, sleighing and sledding were favorite winter pastimes. A favorite off-season hobby was "putting-up birds". He stuffed birds for friends and family and made glass cases for them. He preserved many types: loons, hawks, jays, joy birds, canaries, pigeons, wood ducks and grebes. (Growing up, I recall two stuffed-bird display cases in the attic said to be F.P.'s.)

There were trips to Norwich for provisions like flour, fish, salt and molasses and cement. There he made deposits in the Norwich Savings bank, money probably from his cash crops and salary from his political offices. He went to South Windham to get plaster; to Hartford to get delain\*, pigs, "13,000 shingle @\$5.45, 4 gal. of linseed oil 2.98 c, 25 lbs. Zinc paint, 200 lbs. Ohio paint"; and to Manchester for "stockings for (neighbor) Joel Jones". To the surrounding towns he delivered loads of sawed wood and shingles from the mill and apples from the orchards. He "carried (Ira's half-brother!) Levi to Hartford for west."

F.P. makes several entries about himself and his family going "west" for a week or more. It may be that at times they visited Bissells living in Litchfield County, western Connecticut at least one of which was from the same Bissell line. More likely it would have been much further west in upstate New York where there were more closely connected relatives living in Genesee County. I have much more to say about these Western Bissells in my *Journal Postscripts* narrative.

These were also the months when he made improvements to St. Peter's Church where he was devoted warden. He planted evergreens, made repairs, tended to graves, saw to the installation of a new organ, and put in new smokestacks and heaters. Over a period of several months, he knocked down the rotting church steeple and constructed a new one. That one may well be the one that sits atop the church today. During 1866 he "raised (the new) parsonage" all year and moved Mr.

Bryant into it on December 31. (It stands today just south of St. Peter's on Church Street set back from the road.)

Often, he went to other churches in the area: St. James in New London and Calvary Church in Colchester, the "third service" where the St. Peter's reverend also preached. He went to the consecration of St. James Episcopal in Glastonbury.

On Sunday, December 4, 1864 he wrote that he went to church. A penciled note in the margin in a different hand (probably Almira's) says, "Clarence played organ for the first time." On December 31, she wrote, "Went to Hartford with Clarence – music lessons." I know from St. Peter's history and my mother's telling that Clarence would become the church organist.

In Frederic and Almira Bissell's time, winters could be brutally cold and stormy. Reportedly the period around 1850 was a "mini-Ice Age". F.P. frequently mentions days of below or near zero temperatures such as February 6, 1855 – "Coldest day ever known most." But also there were spring-like thaws when sledding and sleighing would become more difficult or "sploshy". \* There were "Nor'easters" just as frequent as today and snowfalls ranging from a few inches to more than a foot noted; and hurricanes: "October 4, 1869 greatest freshet I ever knew", known as the Saxby Gale that made landfall in Nova Scotia at 109 mph.

F.P. marked the ebbing winter with the sighting of geese and "White Snow Birds" (buntings). He celebrated the coming spring seeing and hearing "Robbins", "Blue Birds", "Cliff Swallows", "Stripped Squirrels" and "Peeping Frogs". When visiting Mansfield Cemetery in February 2020 I spotted a bluebird for the first time.

As the weather warmed, family and friends helped him prepare the fields by spreading animal dung and the ground up leftovers from sorghum cane processing called "bugass"\*. Plowing, furrowing, and sowing soon followed. The March-April early planting included oats, barley, grass, potatoes, onions and sorghum. Sheep were shorn of their wool. In May and June he put out corn, buckwheat, sorghum, rye, wheat, tobacco, and garden vegetables like tomatoes, rutabagas, cabbages and berry bushes. Typical spring notes were:

"Planted tomatoes in hotbed", "commenced ploughing for oats", "bushed in grass seed", "furrowed out sorghum ground", "butchered three pigs (Suffolk)", planting of potatoes, onions, "currant bushes and apple trees set out", fishing, "going for trout".

"Set out elms where missing", "commenced ploughing for corn", "furrowing corn ground", "dunging out for corn" working in the garden, planting corn and plowing for buckwheat, planting sorghum, plowing and sowing rye, hoeing corn and potatoes, "lodged clover", "put out tobacco", "harrowed wheat grain", "sowed buckwheat", "set out cabbages", "made a beehive", "planting rutabagas", "fixed" asparagus and strawberries (canning).

Hay was harvested in July and August and was a big deal, very labor intensive. It was cut with a scythe, dried, raked, loaded into wagons and put up in the barn. It provided bedding and fodder for the animals. Nearly every day during "haying" season he would declare either "a good hay day", or "a poor hay day". I believe this had to do with how well the hay would dry that day. He would get several cuts of the same crop during the season. He would also hoe and hill corn, cut rye, and oats, harvest green beans and green corn and "go (went) after whortleberries"\* in the woods.

In September through November typical activities would be:

"Ploughing (sic) and sowing for rye", "cut, ground and boiled sorghum", harvested peaches, plums and apples ("Golden Sweets" and "Pippins"), dug potatoes, "threshed buckwheat", "finished getting in corn", harvested pumpkins, turnips and walnuts, harvested and hung tobacco for drying, threshed barley, harvested sugar cane, stripping it, boiling it to make syrup

"Got corn into granary", finished digging potatoes, "ploughed and spread dung", threshing rye, making cider, butchering beef, trapping minks, martens and muskrats, hunted partridge and black duck,

Also during these months Frederic logged wood from nearby "Wells Woods" (north of the property and east of Millstream Road), milled boards and shingles, and cut firewood "by the front door" to keep the ovens and fireplaces going. The "History of Tolland County" mentions that Bissell families were known for operating sawmills and a gristmill, but I have not been able to track the gristmill.

### Civic and Political Life

Frederic was a Hebron town and Tolland County official for much of his life beginning in the late 1840's. The Bissell, Phelps, Carver, Jones and Sawyer families were long-time Hebronites and all were significant landowners in town. As noted above, F.P. was church official in one of the four churches in town. These factors gave F.P. and subsequently his son Clarence a certain prominence in town and county affairs. He served one term in the Connecticut House in 1862 and another in the Senate of 1871. In those days it was not unusual to serve in the assembly because most incorporated towns sent one or two representatives for one-year terms. The Senate post was probably a little more prestigious in that there were about 20 seats representing districts that included several towns.

Starting in the 1840's, F.P. mentions attending "Freemen" meetings, which were later called "Electors" meetings in town held every April and in November during presidential election years. I believe these were the town meetings to which he was entitled to attend because of his land ownership and standing in the community. The town meetings were to take up the business of the community, enact and enforce laws and deal with disputes. In presidential years, F.P. would record the vote of the Electors for president and recording the party majority. It's unclear what

other business was conducted, but it may have been the forum for deciding delegates to conventions and legislatures.

From the late 40's through the mid-50's he regularly "visited" the several one-room schoolhouses in town, suggesting he had some responsibility for supervising the school system. By 1852 he was serving legal notices and assessing property: "served foreign attachment on Wm. H. Porter", "prepared and served writs on E.B. & H. Strong", "went to Gilead to assess", "served action of trover\* vs. Robert G. Rodman."

In a 1914 publication about Connecticut men of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, F.P. is reported to have been a lieutenant in the militia. Several journal entries note F.P. going to the "regimental" in Tolland. ("Builders of Our Nation, Men of 1914", Chicago) The publication also says he was a teacher though there are no journal entries about that occupation; perhaps before he was 25 when he started his first journal.

That same publication says Frederic was a Probate Judge. In the 1859-60 period, F.P. writes often about going to court to hear property disputes and settle wills.

F.P. notes on May 1, 1861 he "went to Hartford to Election". It is not clear in what capacity because he would not become an Assemblyman until the 1862 session according to the Connecticut State Archives. May 1 coincides with the re-election of Republican Governor Wm. Buckingham. During May and June of 1862 he went to the Assembly session in New Haven for eight weeks and again in December. In the intervening months he would go to Hartford perhaps for committee work. New Haven and Hartford were competing state capitals until 1875 when it was settled that Hartford would be the capitol.



F.P. Bissell circa 1862 from a family collection, age 40.

In 1871 Frederic P. was a State Senator. My research of legislative records shows that many people mentioned in F.P. Bissell's journals also served in the legislature: good friend and relation Urbane Carver 1860, brother-in-law Henry O. Carver 1868,

relation Lucien B. Carver of East Haddam 1871-72, distant cousin Joel Jones 1882, neighbor Elihu P. Buell whose barn he insured, was a Whig state legislator in 1848. F.P.'s son F. Clarence Bissell would become a House member in 1881.

Other snippets of his business and civic life worth noting:

- July 28, 1860 – “Hon. Dwight Loomis gave a political address in the eve.” He was the U.S. Republican congressman from Columbia for the district.
- July 15, 1862 “insured E.P. Buell’s barn”
- March 29 and April 6, 1858 “perambulated line between Columbia and Hebron; Hebron and Andover, surveying to fix town boundaries.
- August 23, 1865 – “pick-nick at pond about 120 present”, another September 7 (I believe these were political events.)
- April 2, 1866 “Joint Stock Factory Burned” – April 3 “went to see about insurance on Joint Stock”
- May 30, 1866 – “ Mr. Smith Agt. Travelers Ins. Co. Hartford took dinner here.
- February 14, 1867 went to convention in Hartford
- January 11, 1868 – Board of Relief (F.P. mentions helping “paupers” in the late 60’s, perhaps a period of rising social consciousness.)
- August 25, 1868 – “Reverend C.C. Townsend’s orphans gave a concert.” (Townsend was from Tolland. He operated an orphanage in Iowa City to which he took orphans from NYC and found homes for them. Tragically, six months after the concert Townsend was “brought to Hebron and buried” behind St. Peter’s.)
- November 21, 1868 “went with Mr. Ferry on the Airline R.R. property” The Air Line Railroad operated a line that slashed through Hebron behind F.P.’s property. It was actually the New York, New Haven and Hartford predecessor. Air Line is a generic term referring to short -haul flat systems around the country that were being built according to Wikipedia. Later in March of 1869 there was a Town council meeting “to aid Air Line R.R.” Why? Because Hebron would become a commercial and passenger transit juncture for trains coming from New York and Boston. The rail line would be completed in the mid-70s with a station in “Turnerville” part of Hebron, later to become Amston. The railroad bed exists as a hiking trail today.

### Social Life

My impression from reading F.P.’s sparse entries about his non-work life is that socializing didn’t figure much into his favorite activities. As noted, fishing and hunting with friends did. Noted too were the frequent visits of family and friends most of whom were Almira’s. (See section on Friends and Relatives below.) Almira must have run the social calendar: “sewing circles”, “church socials” and social calls. A favorite Bissell family activity was going to the pond with friends and relatives for picnics. Here is a sampling of social entries:

- Circus in Colchester July 1852, fireworks regularly in July!



- Shad fishing April and May 1852 – Ira loved it. “Father and Clarence went after shad.” June 10, 1863 (Shad migrate by the hundreds of thousands from the Atlantic Ocean up the Connecticut River each spring. Shad once ran in several rivers, including the Thames, Housatonic, and Naugatuck, but industry, dams, and a lack of streams in which to spawn stopped them. Today they are found in the Connecticut, Pawcatuck, Farmington, and Shetucket rivers.) For Ira Bissell the Shetucket River near Willimantic and the Connecticut River near Haddam seem the likely spots. (Marjorie and I camped, fished and swam for a couple days in the Shetucket in the summer of 2019.)
- July 1857 – goes fishing with Dr. Craig, L.W. Ford, R.S. Bissell and catches two bushels of bull heads
- February 17, 1859 - went fishing with 4 friends, count 109 “Pickerell” (sic) (There is a lake in the Westchester section of Colchester called Pickerel Lake.
- September 1859 - Norwich Bicentennial - “had Sabbath Schools Festival and a fine time of it.”
- August 12, 1861 – “H.O. Carver and family, U. Carver and family, Wm. Champlin and wife, myself and family went to the pond and had a picnic and chowder
- September 3, 1862 – “fish fry at pond” with the Carvers, Crouches, Peters, Willcoxes, Gillets, Clarence, Carrie and “wife”. Though there was a small pond on the Bissell property for the animals, this was probably the large and popular North Pond in Turnerville. (See the 1868 map below.)
- September 8, 1864 – “party at pond! HOC wife and 2 children, U. Carver & Eliza Crouch, L. B. Carver, C. Olmstead and Albert Minor. F.P, wife and two children
- February 1865 – fishes often at Williams Pond with friends – Probably the one in Lebanon out route 207.
- July 4, 1867 – “picnic in Gilberts’ woods back of church”
- January 22, 1868 – “concert in the evening”
- February 5, 1868 – “Church Social Oyster – supper 110 persons”
- January 5, 1869 “went to Columbia Reservoir fishing, had good luck”

### Life, Death, Disease and Tragedies

Frederic Bissell mentions the death of family and friends as often as he does the weather. Many times the death was sudden but sometimes it was a lingering death. Family and friends would assemble at the house and “watch” until the person died. On February 2, 1860, F.P. writes, “Mother (Dicey) Carver very low.” The next day, he says, “Urbane Carver and wife (was) here all night. Salmon Phelps and Eliza Crouch come. Emily Carver, Mrs. Maj. Post, Mrs. Cooley and Mrs. Willcox watched.” February 6 “Mother Carver died.” “Mr. and Mrs. (W.) Henry Bissell walked corpse north”; the funeral was two days later, F.P. records. If it was a warm weather day the burial would be the next day, if a cold weather day usually three days later.

Sadly, the death of children was a common occurrence because medicine, vaccinations and doctoring were not well developed. In St. Peter’s Cemetery lie Ralph and Caroline Bissell and their three daughters and one son. The children died

in their early years: Ralph Randall Bissell died March 30, 1852 age 9, Mary Bissell funeral October 29, 1855 age 14, Eliza Bissell died August 9, 1866 age 5 of "Scarlet Fever" and later Abbie S. Bissell died March 1877 age 25. January 29, 1863 "Noble Lord's child died with Scarlet Fever." March 22, 1865 "Clarence sick with Measels"(sic). One F.P. entry mentions a friend being "bled" by the doctor and dying several days later. Another entry mentions a vaccination given to a friend's child. Smallpox inoculation had been practiced at least since Revolutionary War days and a vaccine in 1796.

Frederic Phelps was sick often it seems from his entries. Headaches, toothaches and just not feeling well sometimes for days at a time – and sometimes not well enough to go to church! "Sun rainy. (I) Staid (sic) from Church. Sick headache." It's tough to know whether he had a poor constitution or his hard work put him under the weather. In his second journal, he was sick from Thanksgiving to the end of February probably with pneumonia or tuberculosis.

Because of his work he was injured on occasion: February 1862 F.P. "slipped and hurt back – not able to walk and lame for the rest of the month; May 11, 1863 – F.P. injures his leg with a "chain hook" such that he can't get around without crutches or a cane for the rest of the month, goes to Colchester to see Dr. Luther; then on April 27, 1864 he says, "sawed my thumb and two fingers with a burr saw." This is not surprising given the nature of the work.

Four poignant entries relating to danger and tragedy: April 30, 1863 – "John Bascom's house burned last night"; December 9, 1856 "the boy E. Crouch lost in Wells Woods", it seems found later after a search; December 8, 1859 "S.S. Lewis found dead in the road"; and May 30, 1868, friend and neighbor "E.P. Buell committed suicide by cutting his throat this morning." Gruesome!

### The Civil War in Hebron

The lead up to the Civil War saw great change. From 1846 to 1848, U.S. expeditionary forces battled troops in Mexico. In defeat Mexico would cede more territory north of the Rio Grande to Texas, California and the adjoining territories of Utah and New Mexico, dramatically reshaping the size of the U.S. and its politics. As a result the simmering debate over slavery boiled over. Would the new territories be free or slave owning? The Compromise of 1850 brokered by anti-slavery Whig Senator Henry Clay supported initially by President Zachary Taylor and pro slavery Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas (yes that Douglas). California was admitted free and any new state in the territories would self-determine the question for themselves. It was widely credited for postponing the Civil War.

Zachary Taylor died before signing the bill. That honor would go to his vice president Millard Fillmore. Frederic Phelps notes the election of Zachary in 1848 and then Taylor's death July 10, 1850 by saying soberly, "President of the United States died yesterday."

F.P. says nothing further about national politics until October 23, 1856 when he notes the “Great (John) Fremont Meeting” in Colchester preceded by a caravan of 82 wagons and a band”, presumably a rally for him as he ran on the Republican ticket. “It was a great time.” On November 4, 1856 following an Electors Meeting, F.P wrote that Hebron went a 34-vote majority for Republican Fremont. But, Democrat James Buchanan won the election in 1856 when the “No-Nothing” American Party of Millard Fillmore split the vote. The party was a xenophobic, anti-Catholic party reacting to the Irish and German immigration overtaking cities at the time. The 1914 publication that I read said F.P. was one of the founding members of the “No-Nothings” but I saw no evidence of it in his first journal. He may have been. He traveled to New London, New Haven, Norwich and Hartford, which had growing populations of immigrants and would have observed it first hand. The legislative archives show Hebron legislators in 1858-59 were from Fillmore’s American Party. The Connecticut Governor Minor represented the party for two terms 1855-56.

On July 18, 1860 F.P. exclaims “an eclipse of the sun”. It was quite an event perhaps portending events on the horizon. (It was a partial eclipse in the northeast) On November 6, 1860 he wrote, “**Presidential Election** Hebron gave 71 majority for Abraham Lincoln. {Republican}” He would not be sworn until March as was the practice then after the Electoral College had met. One would think with the Civil War following there would be entries about its start and impact on the community but there were few.

On January 4, 1861 F.P. underlines “National Fast Day”, the first of several during the war. Still in office, it was President James Buchanan who declared it a day to be “set apart for fasting, humiliation and prayer throughout the nation.” With civil war in the air, this event was meant to foster unity and introspection about slavery. (Later as urged by Congress, Lincoln formally declared a Fast Day on March 30, 1863.)

Even before Lincoln was inaugurated the Southern states began seceding from the union. Jefferson Davis was sworn-in as the Confederate President: two weeks later on March 4 Lincoln. Commenting on the impending conflict in his first inaugural address Lincoln famously said,

“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

On April 12, Fort Sumter was bombarded and the War was on. F.P. reports that on April 30, 1861 “recruits had a drill at Town Hall.” On May 1 he went to Hartford (to observe the reelection of Governor Buckingham) and attended “a regimental” muster. The First Battle of Bull Run July 17 ended with Lee routing Union forces

outside Washington alarming the North. It was now apparent it would be a long war. On September 26, 1861 there was another National Fast Day. In October, F.P. writes Hebron "Volunteers go to Andover."

After regrouping, training and re-supplying, there were tentative advances by McClellan's forces into Virginia in 1862. The war hit home in Hebron August 6, "Nathan Gillett brought home from the war a corpse and buried today", notes F.P. An alarmed Frederic reported on Independence Day, 1862, "but news from the Army is bad, still not as bad as yesterday. McClellan is badly repulsed if not cut up entirely." This was the Virginia Peninsula Campaign. On August 27 he went to Hartford to see the 16th CT Regiment off, probably with many Hebron volunteers. This regiment was attached to McClellan's Army of the Potomac and involved in the Battle of Antietam 1862, Fredericksburg, thereafter in Virginia and North Carolina in "Getty's" Division. It lost 325 men in the war.

As casualties mounted during bloody 1862 Congress began to contemplate a draft. On March 3, 1863 Congress passed the Civil War Draft Act. Every Congressional District had a quota to fill with men age 20-45. This led to the draft riots in NYC. (F.P. was 42 and Clarence 15.) On August 3, 1863, "Town meeting voted to pay every drafted man \$300." Those drafted men could pay a substitute! Perhaps F.P. did!

June 10, 1863 - "Powder Mill blew up in Manchester" - probably at Laurel Park near what is now Wickham Park.

F.P. had little to say the rest of the war. He wrote about Lincoln's re-election, November 7, 1864 "Lincoln meeting with speech by E. S. Cleveland and Ezra Hall." Edward Spicer Cleveland from Hampton was a Connecticut state senator and then postmaster who switched from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party so that he could stump for anti-slavery Lincoln. Hall was probably a farmer from Grassy Hill, Lyme, son of prominent Whig and later Republican by the same name. Lincoln was re-elected November 8, 1864 followed by a "Lincoln Supper" in Hebron on the 16th "with a great mass present."

Frederic Bissell exults "Lee and his Army surrenders April 9, 1865." Then sadly reports the "Funeral Services of President Lincoln observed throughout the Country" on April 19. Unusually there are no entries about his assassination on the 15<sup>th</sup> or in the days thereafter.

F.P. had nothing to say about Democrat Andrew Johnson's presidency but perked up November 4, 1868 with "Great rejoicing at the prospect of Grant's election."

One other entry during the Civil War period was his mention of "a great comet in sight", on July 1, 1861. This was one of the greatest comets ever seen C/1861 J1 with an orbital period of 409 years! By one account it cast a shadow on the Athens Observatory. The comet's tail particles brushed Earth. It came that close.

One of the last of F.P.'s entries in the first journal was this: July 17, 1869 "Ground Hog Day". If anyone can figure out that one, please tell me!

### Personal Thoughts About Frederic Phelps Bissell

I made a few comments about his personality earlier joking about his stoicism and modesty. But the core of the man was that he was very hardworking, ambitious and entrepreneurial. He labored six days a week around the farm and sawmills doing what was necessary to make a living. He tried cash crops such as tobacco and sorghum cane. He turned a hobby of stuffing birds and small animals into a business and cultivated a part time political career. He never mentioned explicitly that he was a State legislator only that he went off to New Haven every week for the better part of two months in 1862 – blank pages for the days he was away! Neither does he mention that he was a Probate Judge, Church Warden, Elector or insurance agent, only casually noting associated activities.

He was not particularly social because of the few descriptions of such events. I get the impression that left to his own devices he would "chore" around the house or "put up birds" in his down time. Almira was probably the one who ran their social calendar. Most of the visitors were her relatives, the Carvers though Bissell's would also drop in frequently, or they would go visit. But he did like picnics, concerts, fireworks, political speeches and circuses that would pass through town.

He made very few entries about Almira, Carrie or Clarence or for that matter Father Ira or Mother Lavinia who lived with them. Comments were cryptic and never proud or effusive in the way we are today on social media! In a couple cases someone else, probably Almira penciled entries to elaborate about an event involving their children hinting at a bit of pride. Perhaps this was part of his modesty.

While he recounted his numerous illnesses and injuries, it was never in such a way as to complain. In that way he was a stoic. The same is true about events of the day or the death of a friend or relative, rarely showing any emotion in his writing. One notable exception was his annoyance at how General "McClellan's troops are trapped if not cut up entirely" in the 1862 Peninsula Campaign. His lack of emotion in his journals may only reflect that his audience was himself, a way of keeping track, aiding memory for some future reference and not a vanity project.

He was a generous man with his time and talents frequently helping neighbors with projects such as building walls or raising houses or barns. He often took the Champlin's to Colchester so they could travel by stage to New London. He lugged stone slabs, wood or lumber to neighbors. He was most generous with the work he did at St. Peter's with help no doubt, erecting the parsonage, rebuilding the bell tower and trimming the church each Christmastime.



All in all I liked the Frederic Phelps Bissell of his mid-twenties through mid-forties in what was probably the prime of his life. More to follow!



Frederic Phelps Bissell's gravestone in St. Peter's Church Cemetery In Hebron, CT

### Friends and Relatives Appearing in the Journals

I thought I would catalog the friends and relatives in F.P.'s first journal for further research. I have only been able to identify the relation of a few as aforementioned.

#### Bissell

- John Bissell, a frequent visitor, lived in town, son of uncle Abel Bissell. He eventually moved to Bergen, New York to be with F.P.'s uncles and cousins.
- Death of I.A. (Isaiah) Bissell late 40's - unknown
- John and Jerymiah Bissell visit January 1852 – sons of Abel.
- Calvin Bissell visits May 1852 and again with wife March 1856 – Abel's son
- Adoniram Bissell visits September 1852 son of Hezekiah and "Phebe" Post Bissell Hezekiah is a brother of my (4) great grandfather Levi.
- December 1852, Uncle Abel Bissell (brother of Ira) here for funeral of Sarah Porter Bissell (1776-1852) wife of Adoniram. He later dies in 1855 as F.P. notes.
- September 1853 Levi and Aaron Bissell (cousins) and wives visit with sister, Rachel Bissell, who was Abel's daughter. Levi and Aaron lived in Bergen, New York, sons of settler Aaron, Sr. and Levi, Ira's half brother. More on Levi in the *Journal Postscripts* narrative.
- March 20, 1855 "helped Francis Bissell draw wagon house" – unknown relation with a tombstone in St. Peter's Cemetery
- Frank Bissell wife and child here August 14, 1858. Another of Abel's sons.
- September 9, 1863 – S.L. Bissell tuning organ at church." – unknown relation
- January 26, 1864 "Cut three trees on F. L. Bissell's lot for shingles", neighbor on Church Street – unknown relation
- February 28, 1865 "Sold some hay to Capt. Bissell at Forbes barn." – unknown relation
- July 29, 1865 – "Alice Bissell here." – unknown relation
- October 12, 1865 "visited at Phebe Bissell's with Levi" – Abel's daughter
- James A. Bissell started for home, as did Levi two days before, March 13, 1869. James was James Austen Bissell of Bergen, New York, grandson of Aaron, son of Aaron Mann Bissell.

- Ralph and Caroline Bissell – buried in St. Peter’s Cemetery, neighbor on Church Street – unknown relation
- (W.) Henry Bissell – Buried in St. Peter’s, a Civil War Veteran and neighbor unknown relation

Carver – See more about the Carvers in the *Journal Postscripts* narrative.

- “Esq.” Joseph Carver – father-in-law
- L. B. and Urbane Carvers (wife Juri sp.?) frequent visitors. L. B. from East Haddam was Almira’s cousin. Urbane from the East Street road to Bolton was a cousin of Almira.
- Electa Carver died May 7, 1853. Almira’s aunt, first wife of H.O. Carver
- A.E. Carver visited March 15, 1862, visited again June 2, 1857 Ann E. Carver when all the Carvers went to Millington together – unknown relation
- Daniel Carver of Saratoga, NY visits October 1856.
- H.O. Carver buys R.D. Brown’s farm and by April 1858 “arrives” from Massachusetts, brother of Almira
- April 14, 1860 – “visited with Ralph Carver from west.” Possibly from Cincinnati, his father Ralph was from Windsor and mother from New Haven
- June 1860 cousin Lucien B. Carver
- July 1860 Geo. Carver of Granby, Mass. Visited. Cousin of Almira from the Massachusetts side where father Joseph’s family migrated from.

Phelps

- December 1851 Aunt Polly Phelps dies, sister of Lavinia
- Aaron Phelps visits September 1852, probably brother of Almira
- Visited Jasper Fitch and Victoria Phelps March 15, 1862
- C.A. Phelps visits September 1857
- “Salmon Phelps here” August 10, 1858 and again August 10, 1859
- Mrs. Geo Phelps of Sweden, CT. here September 10, 1858
- November 4, 1859 – “went to Wm. Phelps in Marlborough to see if he had shoats
- February 3, 1865 – “visited with Uncle Solomon Phelps and wife” – Lavinia’s brother
- “Maj. Phelps dies”

Strong, Champlin, Buell, Jones, Post, Backus, Bliss

- C. G. Buell and Wm. Champlin – hunted and fished with October 1854
- Often, F.P. would take the Champlins to and from Colchester to catch the stage to go to New London as I learned from his second journal.
- “Sold mill to David Strong.” David Bissell Strong married Clarissa Bissell, Ira’s sister. He got his Bissell middle name from his mother Leah who was Levi Bissell’s sister, daughter of Benjamin.
- Helped Judson Strong fill the icehouse
- “Elihu Post died” April 12, 1863 and wife four days later

- August 4, 1859 “Aunt Clarissa Strong died last night to be buried afternoon”  
Father Ira Bissell’s sister
- January 17, 1857 – “funeral for Aunt Bettie Jones age 94” – probably a sister of my (3) great grandmother Mary Jones Phelps
- February 1858 – Joel Jones and Bell and Delia Jones visit
- Does a lot of handyman work for E.L. Backus
- October 30, 1868 – Uncle Bliss visiting
- January 11, 1869 “funeral of Uncle Eustus Jones [who would be a brother of my (3) great grandmother and (3) great grandfather Mary Jones Phelps and Frederic Phelps]

\*Words in Use

- **Axletree** – the main beam to which the wheels attached
- **Bugass** – by-product of sugar production (sorghum) used as fertilizer and animal fodder
- **Delain** – a velour, F.P. went to Hartford one day to get “8 yds. of delain” for Almira
- **Forenoon** – used instead of morning, “rainy in fore noon”
- **Freshet** – flood, rising water after a storm - “greatest freshet I ever knew” (known as the 1869 Saxby Gale that passed south near Long Island and made landfall in Nova Scotia at 109 mph.)
- **Gig wheel** – two wheeled, one horse carriage much like the modern race track trotters
- **Glebe** – pastor’s field
- **Shoats** – weaned pigs
- **Sposhy** – wet, cold, snowy, muddy weather
- **Trover** - common-law action to recover the value of personal property that has been wrongfully disposed of by another person
- **Wheeling** – referring to a good ride in a carriage or wagon, January 16, 1864 “Went to Willimantic with Apples, the best of wheeling”
- **Whortleberries** – a kind of blueberries

Thomas and Margaret Byselle

b.1539                      b. 1543

Runnington, Somersetshire, England

Possibly from Normandy following the St. Bartholomew Massacre of Huguenots August 24, 1572

|

Richard Bissell, spouse unknown

b.1572 in Somersetshire

Later Pinchbek, Lincolnshire

|

John Bissell, spouse unknown

b. 1591 England d. October 4, 1677 Windsor, Ct.

Immigrated to Plymouth in 1628, then to Windsor in 1640

|

John      Mary      Samuel      Thomas      Nathaniel      Joyce

|



b. April 23, 1822 d. September 22, 1905 | b. October 11, 1826 d. October 10, 1907

|  
Carrie Adelaide (Brown)<sup>9</sup> b. 1857 d. December 10, 1900 married Geo F. Talbot

Frederic Clarence and Sarah Gertrude Storrs m. January 21, 1875 Mansfield, Ct  
b. May 4, 1848 Hebron d. Dec. 19, 1931 Hartford | b. June 6, 1850 Mansfield, Ct. d. Feb. 25, 1924 Hartford

|  
Alice Gertrude Bissell b. Oct. 22, 1877 Hebron, d. Sept. 4, 1923 Hartford

Helen Mansfield Bissell and William James Carroll m. June 24, 1915  
b. May 20, 1881 d. Oct. 5, 1961 Hartford | b. Whitehaven, England Nov. 18, 1873 d. May 9, 1952 Hartford

|  
John (Jack) Bissell<sup>10</sup>  
b. June 5, 1916  
d. July 1, 2003 Fairbanks  
m. Mary E. Searle Sept. 6, 1941  
c. Melissa Carroll Chapin  
Continued below

|  
Helen Margaret<sup>11</sup>  
b. Aug. 31, 1918.  
d. Dec. 13, 2013 Manchester Ct  
m. Louis F. Heard Jan. 5, 1946  
c. Gary Louis Heard  
Laurie Carroll H. Berg  
Peter Alan Heard  
Continued below

|  
Alice Storrs  
b. July 16, 1920  
d. Circa 2015 Medford, Or  
m. Rodney E. Stambaugh Mar. 18, 1944  
c. Helen Anne S. Williams  
Rodney Elliot Stambaugh  
Elizabeth Alice S. Moore  
Continued below

Melissa born May 15, 1945 Hartford married Terry Chapin, had two children Mark and Keith  
Gary born Oct. 5, 1948 Hartford married Sharon Sabol; had one child Beth Sabol Heard Provo;  
Beth Provo married Kahlil Provo; had two children Rosalia and Mateo  
Gary also married Sara Dzikiewicz; had one child Marjorie Grace  
Laurie born August 24, 1951 married Robert Berg; had two children Jocelyn Stella and Robert Louis  
Laurie died March 27, 2019; Jocelyn married Marissa Ferguson and had one child Rose Helen Ferguson-Berg  
Peter born May 16, 1956 married Beth Harrison; had one child Matthew Harrison  
Helen Anne married Claude Williams; had two children Jennifer and Jessica  
Rodney (Bud) married Margaret Holst; had two children Sarah Cole, Andrew Elliot  
Elizabeth (Betsy) Alice married Bernard Moore; had two children Margaret Elizabeth and Samuel Storrs

### Genealogy of Benjamin Bissell's Second Wife Elizabeth Sawyer Daughter of Edward and Elizabeth Mack Sawyer one of the First Families of Hebron.

Elizabeth Sawyer Bissell m. Benjamin  
(5G) Great-great-great-great grandmother and father

|  
(6G) Edward Sawyer and Elizabeth Mack  
b. 1687 Worcester, Ma d. 1766 Hebron | b. 1686 Concord d. 1751 Hebron (both Andover Road Cemetery)

|  
(7G) John Mack and Sarah Bagley

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<sup>8</sup> Great-great-great grandfather Joseph Carver was known as Esq. Carver in F.P.s entries and wife Dicey as "Mother Carver". Her maiden name was Phelps. She was born in 1787 and died in 1860; he November 5, 1782 and died November 23, 1854. Joseph's parents were Aldric and Asseneth Tarbox Carver and grand parents David and Amy.

<sup>9</sup> As noted earlier, Carrie was an orphan adopted by the Bissell's. But her surname Brown is one of others in the vicinity about whom F.P. writes.

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Bissell\\_Carroll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bissell_Carroll)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/helen-heard-wetherbee-obituary?pid=168650911>

b. 1653 Inverness Scotland d. 1721      b. 1663 Boston d. 1721 (both Old Lyme Ct Cemetery)  
 |  
(8G) Orlando Bagley and Susan Colby  
 b. 1623 Ipswich, England d. 1663      b. 1635 Cambridge d. 1663 (both Gramercy Burying Ground Boston)  
 |  
(9G) Anthony Colby<sup>12</sup> and Susanna Waterman  
 |  
(10G) Thomas Colby and Anne Jackson m. 1595 Horbling, England  
 b. 1561 Sempringham, England d. 1625 Horbling      b. Nov. 21, 1574 Horbling d. 1625 (Knowlton Cemetery)<sup>13</sup>  
 |  
(11G's) Matthew and Mary Colbie      Richard and Elizabeth Dowby Jackson<sup>14</sup>  
 b. 1530 Poiton, England d. 1591 m.ca 1556 d. 1591      b. 1542 Horbling, d. 1607 b.c1540 d. 1619 (Knowlton)  
 |  
(12G) William and Anne Pickworth Jackson m. 1518  
 b. 1498 d. 1549 Horbling      b.1499 d.1569 Horbling (Knowlton Cemetery)  
 |  
 (13G) William Pickworth

An 1868 Map of Hebron and its numbered school districts found in the HHS website:  
[www.hebronthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.hebronthistoricalsociety.org)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/uconnlibrariesmagic/3404161509/sizes/o/in/photostream/>

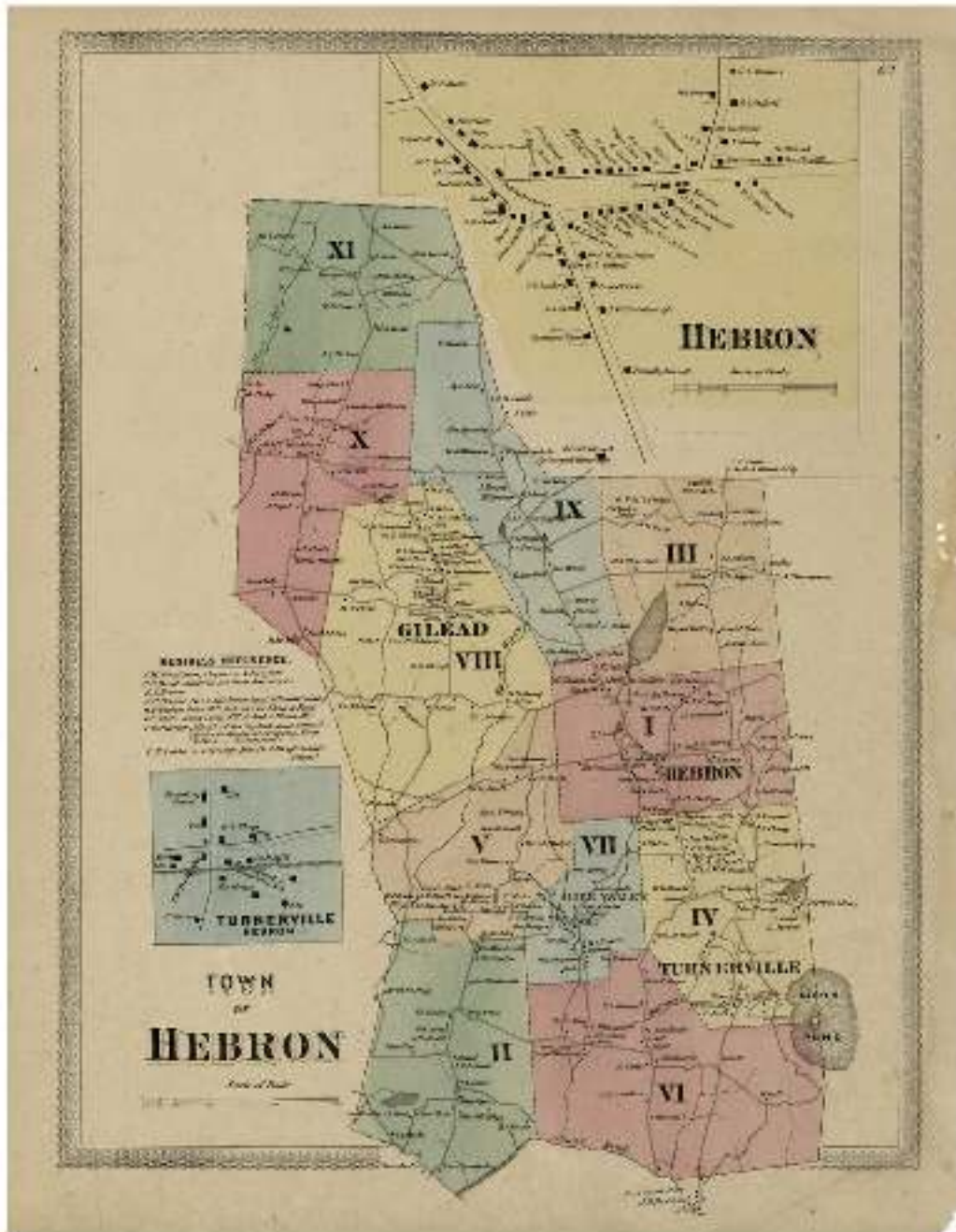
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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/52174163/anthony-colby>

<sup>13</sup> <https://maps.apple.com/?address=Horbling,%20Sleaford,%20England&auid=1073592689226941692&ll=52.903009,-0.338211&lsp=6489&t=k>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/64815728/elizabeth-jackson#>

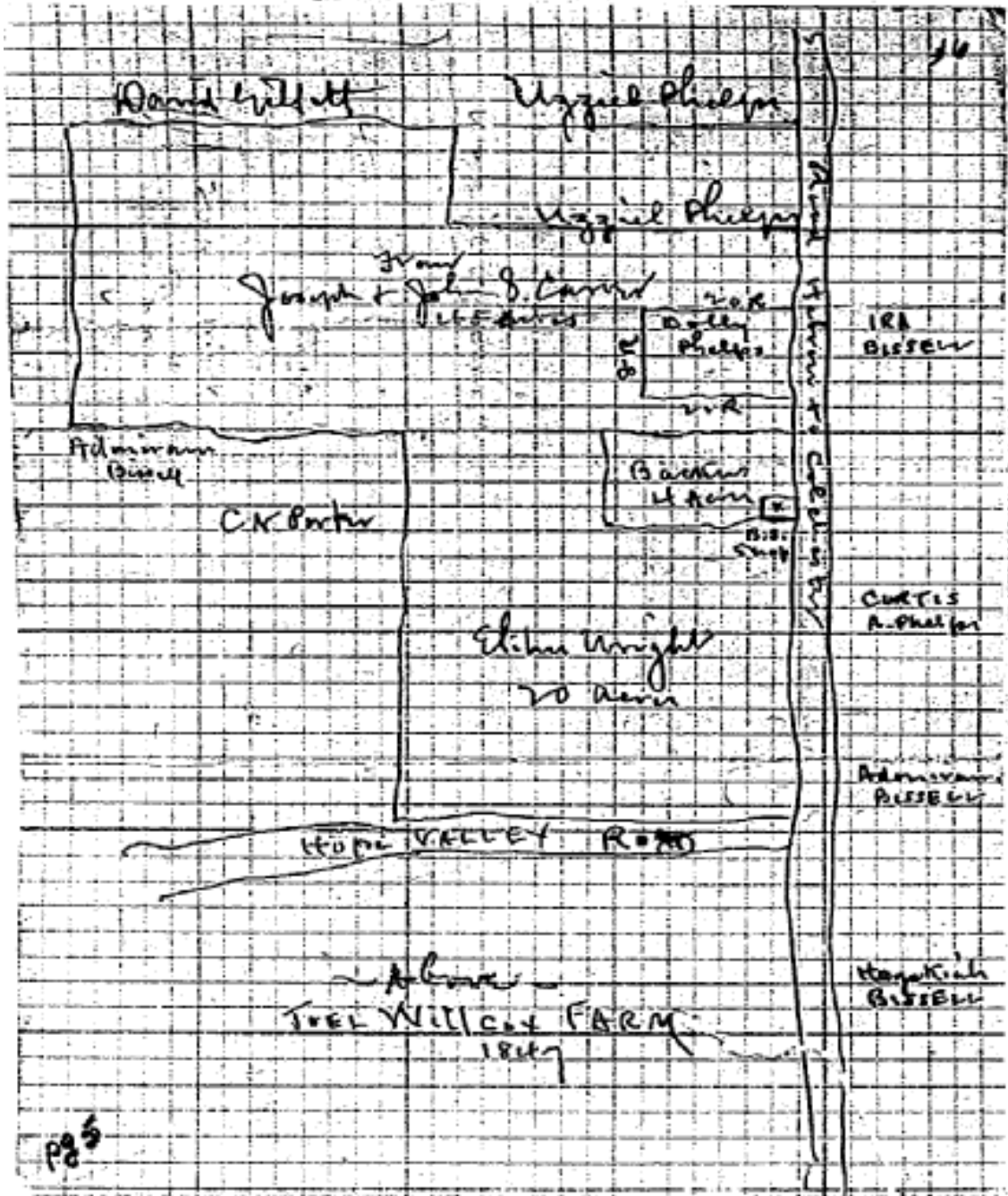




By enlarging the School District IV section on the 1868 map of Hebron, one can see many Bissells lining the east side of Church Street: F.L. (Francis) & W.H. (Warren Henry) Bissell, H.A. Bissell (Hezekiah Asa), R.S. Bissell (Ralph), all related to F.P. Bissell and his father Ira Bissell. F.P.'s journals mention all of them, but they were not close relations or friends. They are buried in St. Peter's. One can also see Turnerville Center at the bottom of the section at what is now Lake Road. Note F.P. in the "Business Reference"!

In 1857 Frederic P. bought the Curtis Phelps property that was adjacent to the Ira Bissell farm as shown in the 1847 sketch and 1857 map below. In 1870 he sold it to Timothy P. Bissell. Town records show Adoniram Bissell sold property to Hezekiah and R.S. Bissell in the early 1850's. Further up Church Street on the detailed 1868 map of Hebron Center is Timothy P. Bissell's house.





A Hebron town clerk recorded this sketch of property either side of what is now Church Street near Hope Valley Road in 1847. It shows Ira Bissell's 144.5-acre property, which he purchased from Zechariah Cone in 1839 with Curtis Phelps's and Adoniram and Hezekiah Bissell's property to the south.

From the Hebron Land Records, the November 11, 1839 purchase deed from Zechariah Cone to Ira Bissell of 144.5 acres for \$3870. It included "a dwelling house, barns and

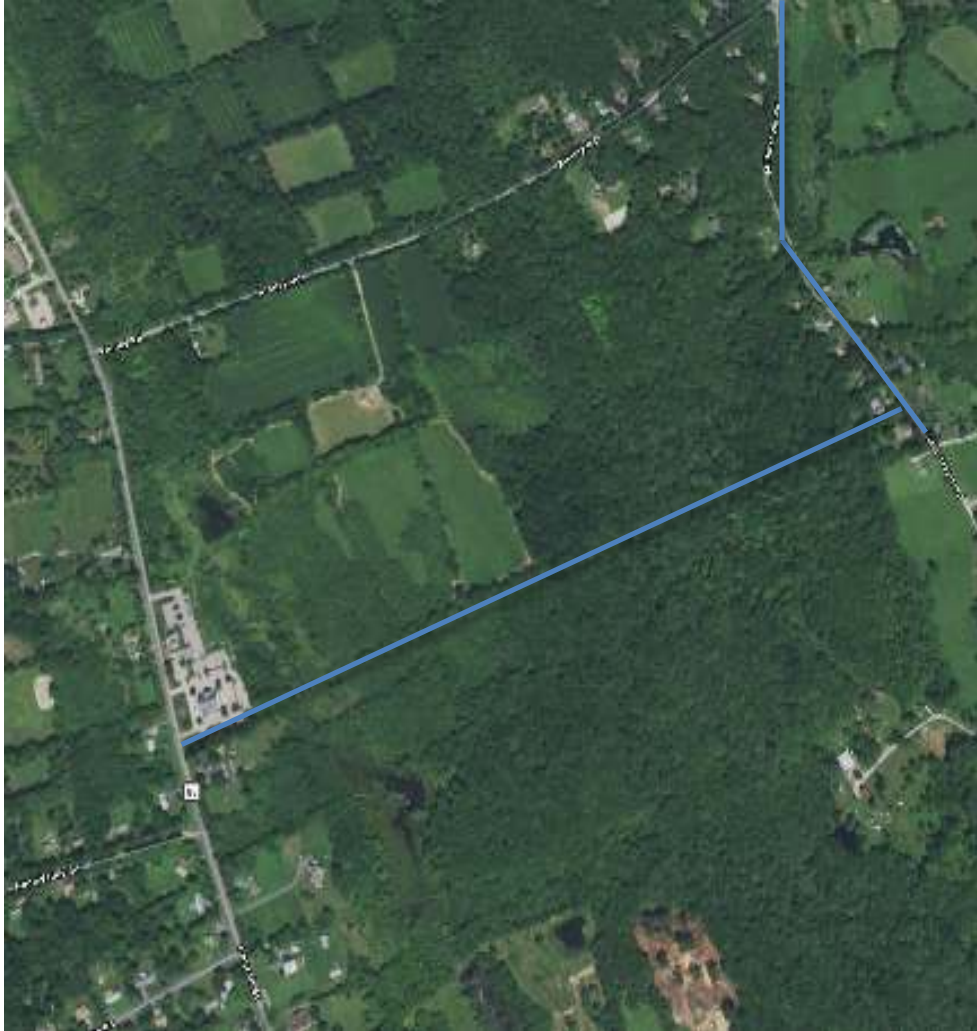




A "Google Maps", satellite photograph of the 144.5 Bissell Farm in Hebron Ct.



Judging from the 1847 sketch, the 1857 and 1868 maps, and the 1839 deed, Ira and Frederic Bissell's property was bordered by Church Street to the west with the southern border being above Hope Valley Road below today's Church of the Holy Family. Kinney Road is border to the north and the eastern border is past the end of the visible fields extending along Kinney to today's Millstream Road. The fields are bordered by stonewalls. Raymond Brook runs from runs from the northeast where the sawmill and associated pond was located. It eventually connects with a tributary that begins north of Kinney Road near Church Street to the pond and behind the Church and to the southeast. F.P's sorghum mill was on the tributary at the corner of Church and Kinney.



A "Google Maps", satellite photograph of the 144.5 Bissell Farm in Hebron Ct, running between Church Street on the west and Millstream Road to the east, bordered to the north by Kinney Road and south near the Hope Valley Road intersection with Church Street. I approximated the southern border of the property.



Sorghum Mill



Kinney Road

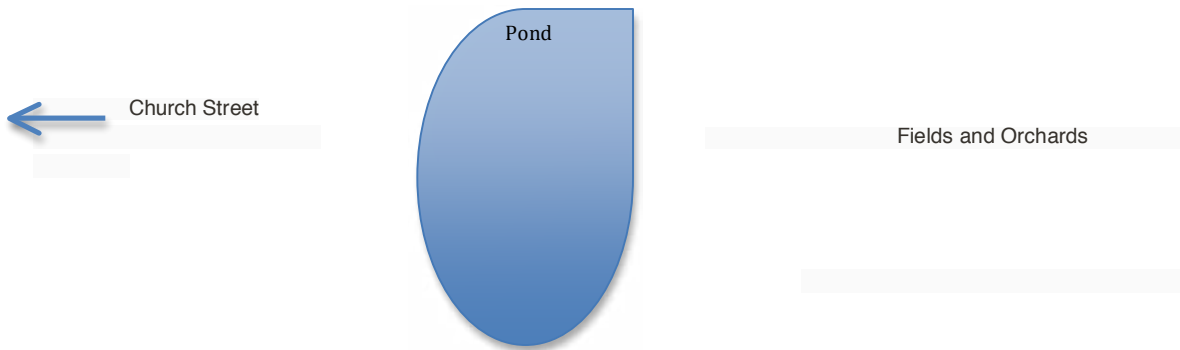
Sawmill, shingle mill

Raymond Brook Millstream Road

Raymond Brook Tributary and Marsh

"Privateer" Hay Field

### The Bissell Farm c.1860

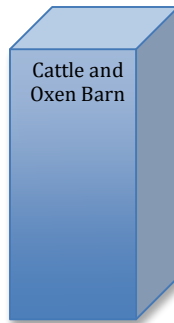


Orchards

Farm Road to Fields – Corn, Wheat, Hay, Barley



Ira and Lavinia Bissell



Cattle and Oxen Barn

Stream and Swamp



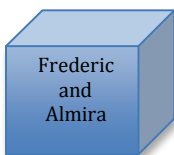
Shop



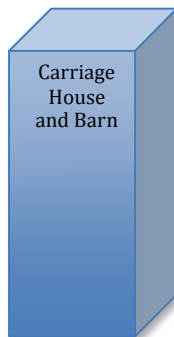
Pondrett

Clover Fields

Gardens



Frederic and Almira



Carriage House and Barn

