

44 Chapin Road

This house is the first constructed on the upland now known as “Beech Hill”, having been built in 1782 by John Stillman on land that he had purchased from Samuel Mills. I am afraid that I have contributed to a misunderstanding as to the first dwelling on this upland, because the Town Records say that Seth Hurd built the first dwelling there in 1786, and descriptions are given of the road that led from the Rock School to just east of the tier line between the fourth and fifth tiers. The text reads as though the town accepted the path created by Hurd a year earlier as a public road, but now, if the intent of the Town Fathers at that early time can be discerned, two Stillman brothers from Sandisfield came into Colebrook and purchased land consisting of lot 68, fifth tier (on which there was no town road) on March 20, 1782 and built adjacent houses. Over the years the northernmost of these houses, built by Roger Stillman, fell into disrepair and eventually fell into its cellar hole, but John’s had a better fate, and survives to this day as 44 Chapin Road.

I believe that the confusion as to the roads and whose house was erected first was caused by the fact that there were no hard and fast rules as to where one geographical feature and another began or ended. The Stillman brothers had come originally from Massachusetts, and so would have entered from the north; Seth Hurd, originally from Roxbury, Connecticut, would have come from the south, with his starting point beginning on the Sandisfield Road at the present-day location of the Rock School. I believe at this early date that Viets Brook bridge did not exist; the only road to the Beech Hill upland went up what we call today Campbell Road, thus credit was given to Hurd for the “first house on the Beech Hill, so called”, while the Stillmans, coming down what we today call “Simons Pond Road”, and settling on the southern physical lobe of the Beech Hill upland, south of the actual high point named “Beech Hill” were not thought of as being residents of Beech Hill.

Today, all roads have their own name, but until the latter part of the twentieth century, everyone who lived on present-day Beech Hill Road, Chapin Road, Simons Pond Road, Cobb City Road and Moses Road considered themselves residents of Beech Hill.