

Bethel's Sudbury Inn

October 6, 1911 Wallace Kilgore of North Newry has purchased the buildings formerly owned by the late Judge Woodbury and expects to open a hotel soon.

Oxford County Advertiser,

"Maple Inn is the sign at the new house opened on Main Street. Mr. and Mrs. Kilgore formerly of Poplar Tavern, Newry, are the landlord and landlady" reported the Advertiser's December 22nd's edition.

The Kilgore's most likely furnished the existing rooms for guest occupancy as a Bed and Breakfast as quickly as possible—making no significant changes to the building itself.

(Judge Woodbury was prominent in Bethel affairs and a retired business man. Therefore, his home was probably in relatively decent condition.)

During the next two years the Kilgore's enlarged the inn by adding what amounted to a house next to that of the Woodbury's with the gable facing Main Street. This work was done by the Portland firm of Smith and Rumery. (Remarkably after the "new" Maple Inn was completed it was similar in design to the Poplar Tavern—a combination of old inn and new clubhouse.

A fire damaged the inn in the 1920's—the details of which, have to be added later. Repairs to the building apparently did not change the overall inn appearance. Thus the inn's basic structure and appearance as left by the Kilgore's in 1939 survived pretty much unchanged into the 1960's.

October 31, 1940

Maple Inn to Re-Open Under New Ownership-Management

After being closed for a year, the Maple Inn will open within a few days under the ownership-management of Robie L. Watson. The new owner has had a varied and complete training for his new position, with 22 years experience in the hotel business. He has been manager of hotels in Rangeley, Belgrade and Biddeford, and comes here from Newport where he was resident manager of Jones Inn for the Day's Hotels.

The Maple Inn property is well designed and located to meet local needs and the requirements of the traveling public, and under good management in the past has been a noticeable asset to the town.

Mr. Watson has the best wishes and support of the townspeople in his venture. Bethel Citizen

June 10, 1948

William R. Davis Buys Hotel Sudbury

A change in ownership of the Hotel Sudbury took place the first of the week when William R. Davis took over the management. Mr. and Mrs. Marcel Fredey, who have conducted the business the past year and a half, left on Wednesday. Mr. and Mrs. Davis arrived last Saturday from Michigan, where Mr. Davis has been in charge of a chain of restaurants. Mr. Davis a native of New England and welcomed the opportunity to return here.

During the Fredey's stay here the name of the hotel was changed from the Gateway House to the **Hotel Sudbury**. Previously the place was known for years as Maple Inn. During the past winter Mr. Fredey has represented the Eutectic Welding Alloys Corp., of New York as field manager in Maine and Rockingham County, New Hampshire and plans to continue in their work. Bethel Citizen

March 1951—Norman Johnson Begins Ten Years Ownership of the Hotel Sudbury

In March 1951, Norman & Ethel Johnson purchased the Hotel Sudbury and was to own it for ten years, selling it to Howard Cole and Norman Greig in March 1961.

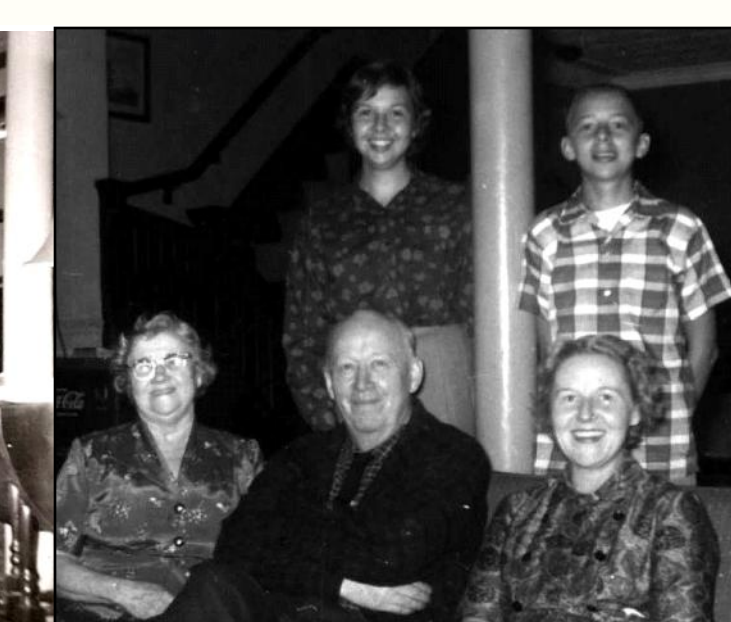
Mr. Johnson's grandson, Ed Sloan, and granddaughter, Norma J. Sloan-Telford, lived at the Hotel Sudbury while their grandfather owned it and have this to tell:

There are two parts to Mr. Johnson's background that first need telling. His family lived in Denmark and had come to New Brunswick to settle in St. Stevens. During World War II some of the family members were still in Denmark and had helped Jewish families hide from the Germans.

Mr. Johnson acquired the Sudbury at a sensitive time in New England history – a time of unspoken anti-Semitism - which was reflected in the 1947 novel and movie "Gentleman's Agreement". Largely due to Mr. Johnson's wartime family's experiences and complete lack of prejudices, he saw to it that no one was turned away.

"We had quite a number of Jewish families stay at the hotel if they were attending an NTL session. We also had 2 young Harvard men who stayed for several summers while they were doing a paper for one of their geology classes." Many was Jewish and the other an Italian. They walked the mountains every day mapping the geology fields." One French Canadian traveler was also guests at the Sudbury.

While Norma, Ed and their mother, Sylvia, lived at the Sudbury, they remember how it was furnished with many antique pieces of furniture, roll top desks, Franklin stoves, clocks, lamps, chairs, etc. Two other things they remember connected to the inn's history. The Maple Inn sign was stored in the basement and the old hand crank telephone was still there. It connected to the Locke's Mills operator – our number was 8016. Years later when Ed came to visit all of the old time furnishings had gone. We had heard that they were stolen during a time when the hotel was vacant.



Left to right clockwise: Innkeeper Norman Johnson lounging between fireplace and front desk. Lobby with new furniture which had been purchased in 1957 and the whole family, Ethel and Norman Johnson, Sylvia Sloan and standing Norma Jean and Ed Sloan. Photo of the grandparents and grandchildren taken in the parking area at the rear of the inn. Darker building at the right (behind the Caddy) is an attached two story barn. Norma reported, "In the month of November we had hunters (6 brothers who owned a truck farm) from Connecticut spend the month with us. The deer they shot would hang from the top openings of that barn."



Big changes had occurred in the Bethel tourism environment from 1951 to 1961. The town had gone "Wet" and anyone in the hospitality business was pretty much expected to go "Wet" too. Mr. Johnson did not want to add a bar/cocktail lounge to the inn with younger family members living there.

The other change was the opening of Sunday River and Mt. Abram ski areas. Skiing had pumped up great expectations for increases in hotel and motel demand (which took another twenty years to occur). Of the partners who eventually purchased the Sudbury in 1961, Howard Cole was a Sunday River Founder and Norm Greig was the town's only real estate agent – Mr. Greig was also the go-to man for lot sales at Viking Village at Sunday River.

Now under Cole-Grieg ownership—1964 news: February 13, More than seventy members and guests attended the sixth annual meeting of the Bethel Area Development Corporation held at the **Sudbury Inn**. Guest speaker was Standish K. Bachman, newly appointed Commissioner of Economic Development in Maine.

Richard N. Bryant was elected to the board of directors while Kimball Ames, Guy P. Butler, Arthur F. Lincoln and John W. Trinward were re-elected to the board. Other remaining directors are Philip H. Chadbourne, Charles Chapin, Howard Cole, Richard Davis, Henry Hastings, Roger Luce, Burton Newton, Dexter Stowell, Murray Thurston and Edmund Vachon.

After the main meeting the board met to elect officers: Roger Luce, president; Burton Newton, vice president; Guy P. Butler, secretary; and Edmund Vachon, treasurer.



1964 Sudbury Inn Cocktail Lounge—Public Dining Room—Maine Cooking

Also in 1964, the Citizen printed a photo of the sign collection at the Railroad and Main Street intersection. The Sudbury Inn sign was part of the array.

In the late 1970's John Gasser operated the Sudbury and the Bethel Rotary Club held weekly meetings at the inn. After Gasser, a couple from Ohio (?) took over the inn. For a while things went well but in the early 1980's the inn closed.

1982: the inn reopened with David and Cheri Thurston as the new owners.

From here Dave Thurston tells the Sudbury Inn story during the Thurstons' ownership.

"Over the first 2-3 years from 1982 we gradually upgraded all the guest rooms to have private baths, except those rooms which had been 2-room suites sharing a bath.

During that time period we also renovated and enlarged the original upstairs Pub to include what was formerly the owner's/manager's quarters on the ground floor of the Main/Clark corner. Also added the original outside deck at that time.

In 1986 we jacked up the building and poured a full foundation in what had been a crawl space (which housed a Volkswagen Beetle-sized pile of mold due to the upstairs beer drain running directly into the dirt crawl space!) and created Suds Pub.

Also expanded the space toward Clark St. and created the skylight area where the dining room fireplace is suspended on steel beams. Pub opened on Mollyockett Day 1986.

Also purchased and renovated the carriage house circa 1988. I bought it from Larry and Janice Bennett, but, growing up, I remember it as the house Beth Brown grew up in. House thought that was Salwys', I believe, then Jodrey, then Hutchins.

By way of interest, Mrs. Cole (does anybody but me still use "Mrs.?"?) once told me that at one time there were 32 children living in all the various homes on Clark Street."

Part two involved Sudbury Inn dining and the Suds Pub:

"The background of the kitchen: We hired local legend Rae Bartholomew as our original chef (though "cook" was probably a more apt moniker), then she was followed by Cheri and Leigh Breidenbach, sister of Gordon, who had run food services at Sunday River, then went on to open his own widely acclaimed restaurant in Newburyport, MA.

A couple of others came in and went, but it was Irv Skaff (now deceased) who "ramped it up". He had been a sous chef at the Ritz-Carlton in Palm Beach, and brought a whole new look to the menu and sense of professionalism to the kitchen.

When we built the (Suds) Pub, we also totally reconfigured the kitchen to accommodate 2 menus - one for the Pub and one for the dining room. On some nights we did nearly 400 dinners between the two. A far cry from the 30-40 we did on a busy Saturday night the first couple of years.

We probably prided ourselves as much on the dining room atmosphere and congeniality as the food, and that may be where some of your memories come from. (Kathy and I rated dinner as the Sudbury as best in town during this time.)

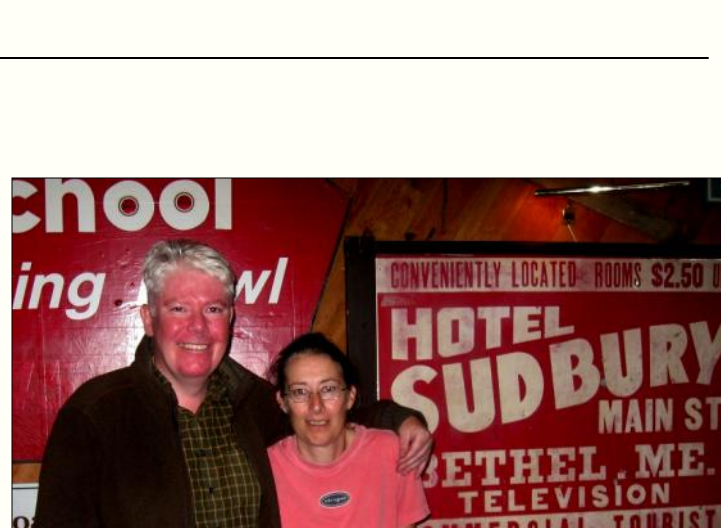
Forgot to mention an interesting sidebar: about two days before we were scheduled to open in 1982, The Sudbury almost ceased to be. A chimney fire caused by a crack in the Pub chimney liner let fire between the chimney and the wood mantle, and we almost lost it. Bethel Fire Department does it again! Probably would have been better off with the insurance check.

All of this recounting reminds me of what a fun run it was."

Suds Pub Opens— May 17, 2012

Sudbury Inn's new owners were on hand for opening night last Thursday as the Suds came back to life. Steve Thomas and Ali Smith are the new owners but Scott Davis will be running the show as General Manager. Bob Lausier is Pub manager. The new owners are a very pleasant couple to talk with. Steve came to the U.S. from the U.K. to land in Califon, NJ which is not far from where our daughter lives. Now they have a place in Bethel on Ridge Street off Paradise Road.

Steve said that they had met and became friends with Scott Davis and decided that they could help keep the inn open. As the season progresses more functions will return, dinners, lunch, etc and the inn is open for guest lodging.



Steve Thomas and Ali Smith at the Suds

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