

Eben S. Kilborn

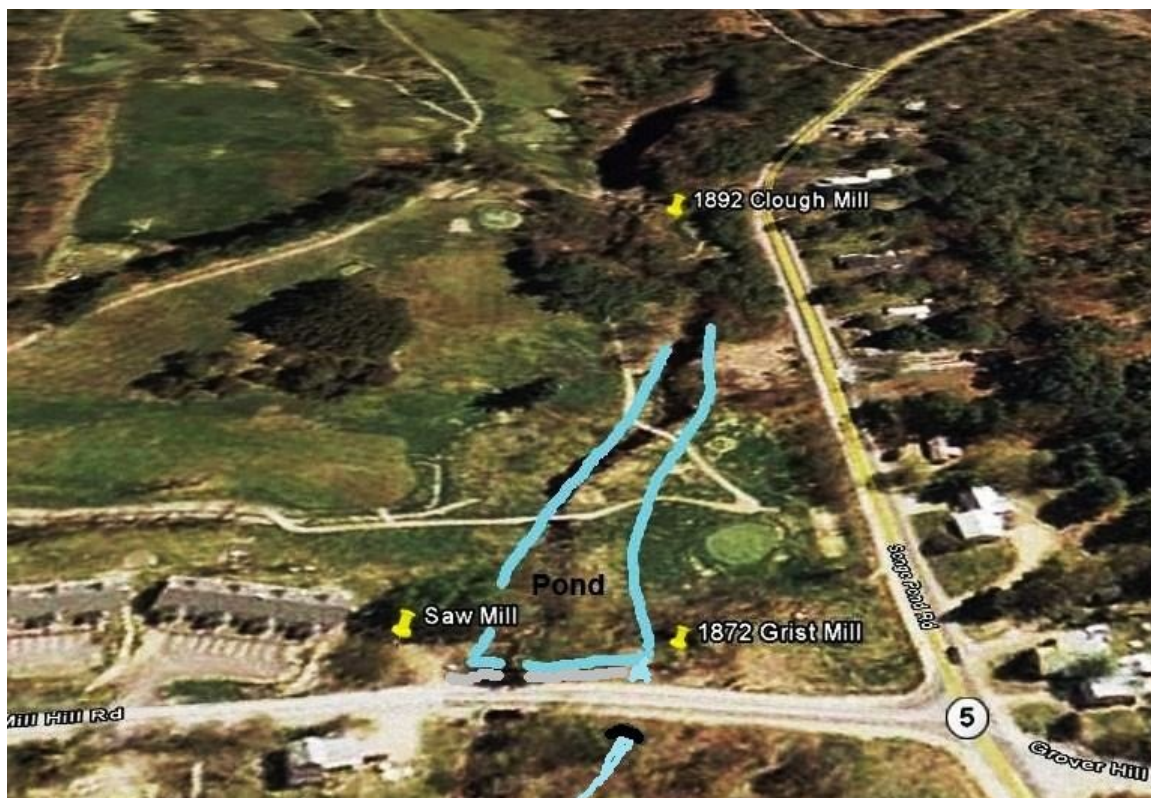
Eben S. Kilborn became one of Bethel's pre eminent businessmen during the last quarter of the 19th Century and held this position until his retirement around 1920. Mr. Kilborn's high standing was due largely to his thriftiness, investment courage and most of all his grasp of business opportunities in the surrounding area. Mr. Kilborn's capsule profile is included in the Who's Who of New England. In addition to his business activities, he served the town as a Gould Academy

trustee, a Bethel Water Company director, selectman, road commissioner, trustee of the Bethel Savings Bank.

Eben Shaw Kilborn was born on July 1, 1846 in Harrison and came to West Bethel with his mother in 1854 when he was eight years old. His parents were Enos and Rhoda Shaw Kilborn. Eben was descended from Capt John Kilborn a Revolutionary War officer and Roger Shaw who came to America from England in the 17th Century.

He attended school in West Bethel. As a young man he had saved enough money to buy a half interest in the old grist mill on Mill Brook at the foot of Mill Hill.; in 1872, he bought the remaining interest of the flour and grain mill. About 1880, he built and operated a saw mill for long and short lumber "on the same water privilege" (Mill Brook). He engaged in lumbering and real estate which included building several dwellings in Bethel village. In 1890, he built a home on Chapman Street and in 1892 he built a rental house on High Street. In April, 1892, he sold his mill property to Isaac Morrill. These mill properties were located by the so-called lower dam on Mill Brook the ruins of which are near to and can be seen from Mill Hill Road in the vicinity of the Bethel Inn golf course's first green. (See photo below.)

Then in 1892 he purchased the former Eber Clough property which lay next to the Mill Brook upper dam. Before 1890 the Town had acquired this property by foreclosure. The Town sold the property at auction in 1890 after the corn canning equipment had been removed. Mr. Kilborn's obituary in the Bethel Citizen stated that in 1892 Mr. Kilborn purchased the former Clough carding mill property. He converted it into a spool stock and dowel mill. Once the mill was ready to operate, it seems that James Hodgdon leased or bought the mill from Mr. Kilborn. In April 1895 a freshet washed out a section of the large stone dam which provided the mill with water power. In June 1895 Mr. Kilborn was arranging to repair the dam.



In the annotated photo above, blue outlines show approximate size of mill pond in the 1890s. Also at that time, two water channels drained the pond so that water power was available to both mill sites located at the dam.

After Mr. Hodgdon took over the mill at the upper dam, Eben Kilborn changed his business focus from running mills to acquiring large tracts of timberland, dealing in lumber, spool stock, pulp wood and cordwood. About this time, he went into partnership with Addison E. Herrick for the purpose of dealing in real estate. Mr. Kilborn's change in business operations from mills to timberland management seems to have been a forerunner of the same type of change which occurred in the 1990's when the P. H. Chadbourne & Co. mill in South Bethel was sold to Hancock Lumber and the new Chadbourne Tree Farms Company concerned itself primarily timberland management.

NOTICE.

The undersigned desires to inform the public that he is located in the Mill formerly occupied by Chapman & Locke, where he is prepared to offer for sale

Corn, Meal, Shorts, Oats, &c.,

At the Lowest Possible Rates.

Particular Attention Paid to Custom Grinding.

E. S. KILBORN, Bethel, Me.

Kilborn Advertisement 1877 Gould Herald

E. S. KILBORN,

DEALER IN

Real - Estate,

AND

Grey Birch Wood,

Bethel, Maine.

Kilborn Advertisement 1896 Gould Herald

The Bethel Journals – Bethel Maine History – Eben Kilborn

From 1888 to 1893 Mr. Kilborn served as one of Bethel's three selectmen and in 1899 he represented Bethel in the Maine House of Representatives. In 1890 he built a home on Chapman Street and in 1892 he built a rental house on High Street. After the brick grammar school was built in 1894, the town sold its two district school houses in the village at auction. Mr. Kilborn purchased the District 15 building on Broad Street and converted it into a stable. Also it was noted in Bethel news that E.S. Kilborn's house at the corner of Elm and Railroad Streets was being painted.

Eben Kilborn and Joyce Stearns of Paris were married on February 10, 1904. Mr. Kilborn was 57. Miss Stearns graduated from Gould Academy in 1896. Her sister had married Ellery Park, the law partner of Addison Herrick. Miss Stearns worked in their law office which was located in the Cole Block next to the Bethel Savings Bank in the same building. After their marriage the couple traveled extensively in Europe and in this country. Mr. Kilborn expressed pride in having visited every state in this country. About 1920 Eben Kilborn retired from active business. At the time of the 1931 Indian Raid celebration he had told a writer for the Bethel Citizen that "He was present and participated in the Centennial 50 years ago when Bethel celebrated the exit of the Redmen from its environs." During the 1930's the Kilborns spend their winters in Portland or in the South and spent summers at their farm by Songo Pond in Albany.

About 1870 he joined the Bethel Masonic Lodge and remained a member until his death. He was Master of the Lodge in 1876. He was also a member of the Mt. Abram Odd Fellows lodge. He was a Republican.

During the summer of 1940 Eben Kilborn fell ill for several weeks and entered the Central Maine General Hospital in Lewiston where he died Friday noon September 6, 1940. Funeral services were held at the Congregational Church Sunday, September 8. Masonic services were conducted at the church and the cemetery. Burial was at Woodland Cemetery.

In his obituary published in the Citizen September 12th, it was printed that he was endowed with a pleasing personality, rare tact, and excellent judgment, and was considered an outstanding example of a "self made man."

Notes: Other Bethel names that appear in the Who's Who in New England include Ernest C. Bowler, publisher of the Bethel News; Addison E. Herrick, attorney; Frank E. Hanscom, Gould Academy principal; George M. Twitchell, born in Bethel Sept. 17, 1847; Bertram L. Bryant, physician, born in Bethel May 8, 1872; David R. Hastings, lumberman, born in Bethel June 24, 1858; Merritt Caldwell Fernald, Gould Academy principal 1863-64; Henry Clay Peabody, graduate of Gould Academy, Maine Supreme Court Justice; Dr. John George Gehring, physician; and Edwin Wagner Gehring, Portland physician, married Alice Chamberlin of Bethel.

Sources: Oxford County newspapers, 1931 Special Edition of the Oxford County Bethel Citizen; obituary September 12, 1940 Bethel Citizen. Microfilm copies of newspapers, property of the Bethel Historical Society.