

# THE NEW SPENCER SUN

## CELEBRATING SPENCER HISTORY

Celebrate Spencer History Committee  
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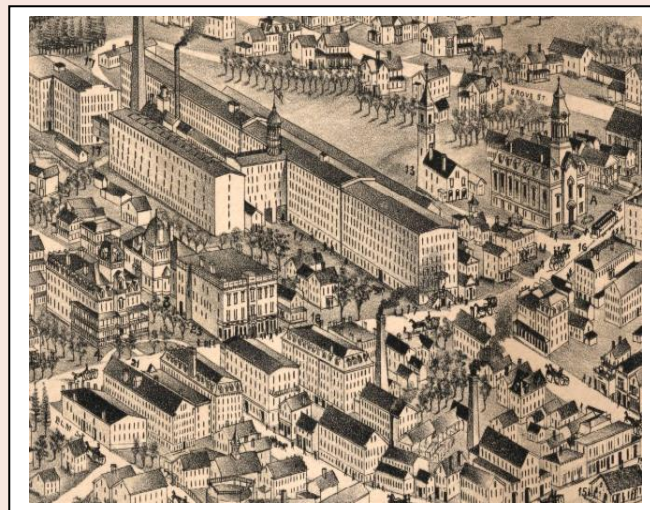
### NEW HISTORY COMMITTEE IN SPENCER

Spencer has “a wonderful history to uncover and celebrate” says Spencer Select Board Member John Stevens. With that idea in mind, a new committee has been formed to share resources and work on a slate of history programs and projects which will highlight stories about Spencer. The *Celebrate Spencer History* committee consists of members of the Select Board, Historical Commission, Historical Society and the Richard Sugden Library. Its purpose is to develop a variety of programs and exhibits which will highlight Spencer history and give residents a sense of pride in their own community. Some ideas that are being discussed are walking tours, curriculum materials for school age children, exhibits of artifacts, and web-based articles and digital projects. New members are welcome.

**Congratulations to Anna Marie Hughes, who is being honored for her 35 years of service on the Spencer Historical Commission (1980-2015).**

### The Spencer Sun

The first newspaper published in Spencer was the Spencer Sun in 1872. It was a weekly newspaper published briefly under the name Sun-Bulletin. It was last printed in 1902. The Spencer New Leader began publication in 1891 and continued over the years under the name of the New Leader, the Tri-Town Weeklies, the County Courier and the Spencer New Leader. Publisher William Heffernan donated a complete bound set of all the newspapers from 1872-1937 to the Richard Sugden Library. A complete set of these on microfilm is available at the library, which has plans to digitize the collection in 2016.



Downtown Spencer in 1892.

Pictured is the Old Town Hall and Isaac Prouty Boot Company, at that time one of the largest boot manufacturers in the country.

### HISTORY MYSTERY:

#### Where Is Potter Hill?

Spencer firefighter Edward Austin Prouty “dropped dead... fighting a brush fire on Potter’s hill in the south part of Spencer” in April of 1920. He was 58 years old and left a widow, Lizzie, and two sons. Spencer Fire Chief Robert P. Parsons plans to honor Prouty, who is the only Spencer firefighter known to have died in the line of duty.

The reference to Potter’s Hill led to a mystery: local historians have not found definite evidence of the location of Potter’s Hill. One older map lists a Porter living in the area who was in fact a potter. It is near Route 49 close to the New England Automotive Gateway and the East Brookfield line.

If you know the actual location of Potter’s Hill, or have further information on Edward A. Prouty, please contact the Chief at [rparsons@spencerma.gov](mailto:rparsons@spencerma.gov).

#### HELP WANTED

The Spencer Historical Society is looking for new members. Qualifications: Interest in learning about or sharing Spencer history and ability to volunteer a few hours a month to work on programs, displays, preservation, or fund raising. Next meeting is Thursday, December 17, 2015, 6:00 p.m. at the Sugden Library. If interested, contact Mary Baker-Wood at 508-885-7513.



## Spencer To Host Mass.

### Memories Road Show

The Mass. Memories Road Show (MMRS) at UMass Boston is an event-based public history project that digitizes family photos and memories shared by the people of Massachusetts. We do this by working with local communities to organize free public events where residents are invited to bring up to three family photos to be scanned and included in the archives at UMass Boston and online at <http://openarchives.umb.edu>. Contributors can also share “the story behind the photos” on video, have their own “keepsake photo” taken, and receive advice from professional archivists and historians on dating and caring for their family photos.

The MMRS is about more than documenting history. An important goal of the project is “to bring together local residents of all ages, ethnicities, races and backgrounds in lively and thoughtfully planned public events that celebrate each person’s family history and contribution to the community—whether they have lived there for generations or are recently arrived. We hope that both the events and the resulting digital archive will help build and strengthen connections within the communities of Massachusetts.”

The Town of Spencer has been awarded a Mass. Memories Road Show grant. We are one of the first towns west of the Boston area to be chosen. Project Director Mary Baker-Wood plans to bring together a Community Advisory Board which will sponsor the event on April 3, 2016. Dozens of volunteers will be needed to help with the planning and on the day of the event. Spencer Cable Access is a partner in this project as well as local businesses and organizations.

**KICKOFF MEETING  
FOR THE MASS. MEMORIES ROAD  
SHOW PROJECT  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2015  
6:30 p.m.  
AT THE RICHARD SUGDEN LIBRARY  
COMMUNITY ROOM  
ALL ARE INVITED!!!**



## Did You Know?

### A Spencer Man Fell at Custer’s Last Stand The Battle of Little Big Horn, June 25, 1876

Timothy Donnelly, who was born in Upper Wire Village in Spencer in 1857, died at the Battle of Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876. He served in the U.S. Army 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and was nineteen years old when he died. He was the first of eleven children of Patrick and Ann (Maguire) Donnelly. His father had been a foreman in Richard Sugden’s wire mills before becoming a farmer. It is said that Donnelly Road was named after Patrick. Timothy’s prominent family gravestone can be seen at the Queen of the Rosary Cemetery. It records the death of Timothy in “Custer’s Massacre”; he is buried in South Dakota.