"It is not a big house," writes Mary Stone in 1953, reflecting on her unembellished, functional 100 year old farmhouse, yet Stonehurst is unique in Dunbarton. "[It] is clothed with the distinction of having sheltered members of one family only, grandfather, father, son and grandson in turn."

James Hazelton Stone and Hannah Lund built the Stone homestead in 1853, nine years after they were married, and Hanna gave birth to their only son, James Ephraim in 1854. It was built in a colonial style, with a center doorway and two chimneys. The wide pine floor boards most likely came from the massive trees cut to clear the fields. Similarly, the seven large stones used to build the impressive archway in the cellar that supports the kitchen chimney were surely dug from the earth on their land.

Over the years, James and Hannah and their family labored hard, as all farmers did in those days, setting the stage for their land to be used for agriculture for generations to come. Stone family letters talk about harvesting hay, corn and potatoes; picking blueberries, peaches and apples; cutting wood and gathering chestnuts. Hanna made and sold tubs of butter (30 pound each). She boiled apples for cider (12 gallons at a time), smoked hams, made pickles, painted flower pots and sewed socks. James sold bushels of chestnuts and the cordwood he harvested each winter ($4 per cord.) They sold what they could to provide income for the family.

When Ephraim was 23 years old, he entered Dartmouth College. After graduating with a degree in Chemical Engineering, he went to work in the textile industry in Lowell, Massachusetts and married long-time girlfriend Anne Hammond , then a student at Wellesley College. Their son, James Hammond, was born in 1882. The family was feeling the pinch of the slowing down of the textile industry.

So here is where the Stone farm story nearly ended. Thirty years after building the farmhouse, James and Hanna were having trouble making ends meet. Hanna writes to Ephraim in March of 1883, "We have got to pay our debts faster or we shall get where we never shall pay. I would sell our farm now if I could and get out of this place." Perhaps because Ephraim and Anne were experiencing financial difficulties in Lowell, they returned to Dunbarton.

James Ephraim and Anna Stone made Stonehurst their home for the rest of their lives. The letters, ledgers, receipts, photos and diaries that have survived paint a fascinating picture of how the farm operated 130 years ago. Much more on that and the family's tragedy in the next story!

For more information on the Stone Farm Conservation Campaign or to make a donation, go to **www.5RTC.org**.