

The Lepisto / Hill Farm
by Jonathan W. Stevens

On April 18, 1910, the brothers Alex Coburn and Ernest Coburn, who were originally from Malone, N.Y., but at the time were residents of Andover sold to Alexander "Alex" Lepisto of Fitchburg, Mass., "the Gilbert E. Hemenway farm" so-called, containing "115 acres, more or less." The farm consisted of three parcels of land. The first was all of Lot 20 in the 4th Range, except a parcel of 77 rods that had been previously deeded off lying south of the road to Boynton Hollow. The second was a parcel in Lot 19 in the 4th Range, consisting of 4 acres and 9 rods lying north of said road in the northwest corner of the lot. The third was a parcel in Lot 21 Range 4 consisting of 13 acres and 96 rods. The sale also made an exception the spruce trees and pulpwood as reserved by a previous deed of Park H. Pollard of Cavendish. It also included the following personal property now on the above premises: one Deering Horse Rake, one Deering Mower, one smoothing harrow, one wheel harrow, one spring tooth harrow, one side hill plow, one land side plow, one cultivator, one grindstone, one set of double sleds with "racks and what goes with sleds," hand rakes, shovels, forks, potato diggers, Paris Green sprayer, all the hay and fodder now on the farm, also six cows, one yearling heifer, one calf with cow, 12 hens, one pig, one 2 year old colt, one brown mare, about 150 sap buckets and pans, sap heater, sugar off pan, sap spouts, being all the sugaring apparatus on the premises, cream separator, one pair of best work harness, one single harness, also "the halters and blankets that belong to these horses mentioned," one top buggy, one double wagon and all that "goes with same, such as racks and body."

On February 25, 1864, John C. Ellison of Chester sold the "115 acre-farm" to Gilbert E. Hemenway of Ludlow. This was the same property that Willard Bailey had sold to Ellison on October 26, 1852, consisting of the above mentioned three lots that had been previously the property of Joseph Eaton. Gilbert E. Hemenway, was the son of Elijah and Caroline (Gilbert) Hemenway of Ludlow. Gilbert married Clarissa M. Chandler in Chester, Vt., on April 2, 1854. They first lived in Ludlow and then moved to Andover in 1864. Clarissa died in Andover, on July 12, 1896, and was buried in Pleasant View Cemetery in Ludlow. On October 16, 1905, Hemenway, sold his above-mentioned home farm plus an additional parcel he had purchased on July 2, 1874, from Abel A. Batchelder, consisting of 35 acres in Lot 18 in the 5th Range east of North Hill Road, to Herman M. Guild of Chester, who held the mortgage on the Hemenway's property. Hemenway moved to Ludlow, and lived the last few years of his life in the home of his daughter Emma Maria (Hemenway) (Lawrence) Spafford on High Street. Guild then transferred the property on November 28, 1905 to Park H. Pollard, of Cavendish, who sold the property on November 21, 1907 to Benjamin Harrison Rubado of Bombay, N.Y., but retained the timber rights. On September 21, 1908, Benjamin H. and Katherine Theresa "Katie" (Walsh) Rubado sold to the above-mentioned Alex Coburn and Ernest Coburn of Malone, N.Y.

Upon their purchase of the Hemenway farm, Alexander and Johanna Lepisto mortgaged the property to Benjamin H. Rubado, who had returned to New York State and was residing in Malone. The mortgage was discharged on May 31, 1913. Alexander Lepisto, son of Erik and Marija (Herranen) Lepisto, was born in Veteli, Vaasa, Finland, on May 15, 1873. He immigrated to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan on May 25, 1892. He made his primary declaration to be become a citizen of the United States before the Circuit Court of Gogebic County Michigan, on April 9, 1894. He then moved east to Fitchburg, Mass., where he married Johanna Oravala, on January 16, 1897. Johanna, daughter of Antti and Marija (Hielala) Oravala, was born in Toholampi, Central Ostrobothnia, Finland, on November 30, 1871, had come to the United States in 1895. Alex Lepisto appears in the Fitchburg Business Directories starting in 1897. In 1900, they were residing on Mechanic Street in Fitchburg, the family would later live at 148 Marshall Street and on September 24, 1904 Alexander Lepisto became a U.S. citizen. The children of Alexander and Johanna (Oravala) Lepisto, all born in Fitchburg, Mass.: Helmi Lulia Lepisto born on November 8, 1897 and died in Fitchburg, Mass., on August 6, 1995. Helmi married John Hämäläinen in Ludlow on December 21, 1916; Sigrid Maria Lepisto, born on October 27, 1889 and died in December 1975. Sigrid married Oscar Annala in Troy, N.H., June 10, 1922; Charles Alexander Lepisto, born on January 27, 1901 and died Keene, N.H., on June 18, 1947. Charles married Bertha L. Carter in Fitchburg, Mass., in 1923; Martha Johanna Lepisto, born August 25, 1902 and died in March 1975. Martha married John Edward Mattila in Keene, N.H., on October 23, 1926; George Alfred Lepisto, born on August 1, 1904 and died on June 17, 1968. George married Emma Elizabeth Marrotte in Troy, N.H., on January 30, 1935; Lauri "Lawrence"

Lepisto, born on December 18, 1906 and died Keene, N.H., on March 11, 1949. Lawrence married Lempi Mattila in Natick, Mass., in 1924. Lempi was born in Iowa, on December 13, 1905 and died in Troy, N.H., on October 25, 1997.

The Fitchburg Sentinel listed "The Following Persons Registered as Voters November 13, 1907, and among those in Ward Four was Alexander Lepisto. At the time of the 1910 U.S. Census the Lepisto family was still residing in Fitchburg, and the Fitchburg Business Directory for 1911 stated "removed to Vermont." *The Vermont Tribune* noted on March 16, 1911 noted that "Mr. Lepisto has bought a Bellows Falls evaporator, buckets, etc." Lepisto occupation was a carpenter and he ran ad in *The Vermont Tribune* that stated: "WANTED-Carpenter work on contract. Erection of buildings, or repair work. Alex Lepisto, Ludlow, RFD No. 2." He had assimilated to Vermont life and in the tribune noted that Alex Lepisto, Charles Esty and Harry Howard have each been lucky in getting a deer." *The Vermont Tribune*, November 7, 1912, "Mr. Lepisto is building a barn on the Benson place." Just as today, this part of Andover was receiving mail from the Ludlow Post Office. When the Puffer District schoolhouse, located at the intersection of Lovejoy Brook Road and East Hill Road, was destroyed by fire on the night of January 17, 1912. It was decided that a new school would be built and on May 22, 1912, John Kalinen and Henry Waltanen sold a parcel 1 ½ acres off the north line of Lot 19 in the 4th Range to the town of Andover for \$20 "to be used as a school ground." The foundation work and building of the school, by Alexander Lepisto, were done in summer of 1912. The expenses were detailed in the annual town report, that on June 15, 1912, Alex Lepisto was paid \$25 for work on the foundation, and on July 6, 1912, he was paid \$75 for work on the building, with the balance of \$75 paid on September 5, 1912 and on the same date he was paid \$37 for "building the water closet, grading." Finally on December 20, 1912, he was \$10 for setting desks, fixing desk, setting up stove and flag pole." *The Vermont Tribune* on August 22, 1912, noted that "Mr. Lepisto met with a mishap last Sunday night when the axle of his wagon broke. There were three in the wagon. Mr. Lepisto's leg was quite badly hurt."

On May 24, 1913, *The Rutland Daily Herald* noted that "the homestead of A. Lepisto was burned on the evening of May 21. It was formerly the Gilbert Hemenway farm." He soon rebuilt as *The Vermont Tribune* on July 3, 1913 noted that "Mr. Lepisto is getting things into readiness preparatory to rebuilding where he was recently burnt out." His new house was completed the following October, and *The Vermont Tribune* noted October 30, 1913 that "A. Lepisto has his new house so he has moved into it." Though it has been remodeled with an addition in recent memory, this is when the current house was built.

The Vermont Tribune, noted on Thursday, May 28, 1914, that "Rev. William Leeman, pastor of the Finnish Congregational Church at Troy, N.H. was the guest of Rev. William J. Ballou on Monday and Tuesday. They visited nearly all of the Finnish families in Ludlow and Andover. On Monday night a meeting was held at the home of A. Lepisto in Andover at which fifty-one were present, most of them coming several miles to the service after a hard day's work on their farms. Arrangements were made for starting a Sunday school with three men and three women for teachers. Mr. Lepisto's coffee and cake were served to those present, according to Finnish hospitality. It remains to be seen whether coffee and cake would raise the attendance at our local prayer meetings, but something is evidently needed if we are to keep up with the Finlanders." *The Vermont Tribune*, on June 18, 1914, also mentioned that "Rev. Mr. Leeman of Troy, N.H., the Finn minister, held services in the schoolhouse Tuesday evening." *The Vermont Tribune*, on February 3, 1916, noted that "The Finn people held a dance at A. Lepisto's last Friday night."

Park H. Pollard of Cavendish, having retained the timber rights on the Lepisto property, on March 5, 1917, quit-claimed his interest to Alexander, described as "being all the softwood and timber and poplar growing or standing upon the Gilbert Hemenway Farm so-called in said Andover and is the same farm now occupied by said Lepisto—Meaning to convey the right and property reserved by me in and to said timber, trees and poplar when I sold said Hemenway farm."

The Lepisto family appeared frequently in the Boynton Hill column in *The Vermont Tribune*. On January 6, 1921, the column noted that "Charles Lepisto and Lennie Argilander went Thursday to Troy, N.H., returning Saturday" and that "J.A. Rivers, Charles Lepisto and Walter Kalinen have been drawing pulp for John Wilmoth." The column noted on April 21, 1921, that "Alex Lepisto and John Kalinen have been working in Ludlow" and on May 5, 1921 the column contained several references to the Lepisto family, mentioning that "Miss Sigrid Lepisto spent Wednesday in Bellows Falls," and that "Oscar Annula of Troy, N.H., spent the weekend at Alex Lepisto's." Oscar would marry Sigrid the following year in Troy, N.H. The column also noted that "Charles and George Lepisto and

Miss Sigrid Lepisto were in Proctor on Sunday.” Finally, in a prelude to that second part of the article, the column mentioned that “Andrew Toorpaka [sic] and J. [sic] Hill of Quincy, Mass., have been here looking at farms.” This was the first appearance of Matti Hill in the area, though the paper didn’t get his name totally correct. On May 16, 1921, Alexander and Johanna Lepisto sold their farm to Alfred Toorpaka and Matti Hill both of Quincy, Mass. *The Vermont Tribune* noted on May 26, 1921, “Alex Lepisto who sold his farm to A. Toorpaka [sic] and J. [sic] Hill of Quincy, Mass., and has moved to Ludlow.” The newspaper also noted that Lawrence Lepisto, who is staying at Albert Helberg’s till school closes, spent the weekend in Ludlow.” Though the newspaper had mentioned that Alex Lepisto “moved to Ludlow,” the family soon moved to the Fitzwilliam Road in Troy, N.H. The move made perfect sense as there was strong connection with Troy, and especially with the Finnish Congregational Church there, its pastor Rev. William Leeman having visited the Finnish community in Andover back in 1914. Alexander worked as a carpenter and later along with his son George ran “Lepisto’s Garage -Pontiac Sales and Service.” Johanna died in Troy, N.H., on May 18, 1945 and Alex died at Elliot Community Hospital in Keene, N.H., on November 21, 1958, and they are both buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Troy.

On June 10, 1921, Andrew Alfred Toorpaka and his wife Selma Toorpaka conveyed “all our interest in and to our undivided one half of the same” to Matti Hill. Andrew Toorpaka, the son of Finnish immigrants, Matti and Mary (Niemi) Toorpaka was born in Gloucester, Mass., on January 9, 1894. He married Selma Wentto in Quincy, Mass., on August 1, 1917. Selma, daughter of Milo and Anna W. (Vehvalanen), was born in Finland, on March 31, 1888. After they sold their interest in the Lepisto farm to Matti Hill, they moved to South Reading, Vt., and then in 1950, they moved to Mount Holly, Vt. In 1972, they moved to Warrensburg, N.Y., where they resided with a niece, as they did not have any children. Andrew died in Warrensburg, on December 13, 1974 and Selma died there on September 22, 1982.

Matti Hill, son of Matti and Maria (Harri) “Hill,” was born in Lapua, South Ostrobothnia, Finland, on October 30, 1886. On December 5, 1940, the *Vermont Journal* included an article entitled: “December Term of Windsor County Opened Tuesday Eighteen admitted to Citizenship.” Among those listed was “Matti Miilumake of Andover, Finnish name changed to Matti Hill.” The abbreviation of the surname to the word mäki which means hill, slope, hillside, ascent, rise or run in Finnish. Therefore, it was not a name change, but a mere Anglicization. Matti came to the United States in 1912 and married Maria Susi in Quincy, Mass., on May 1, 1919. Maria, daughter of Abraham and Helen (Lemmetti) Susi, was born in Metsoreitti, Finland, on January 6, 1885 and immigrated on the ship the *Laconia*, leaving the port of Liverpool, England on November 11, 1913, and arriving in Boston on November 19, 1913, with a final destination of Quincy, Mass. Matti and Maria (Susi) Hill had two children: Reino Abraham Hill born in Quincy, Mass., on September 9, 1919 and Pentti Olavi Hill born in Andover on December 15, 1921.

On July 6, 1928, Matti Hill purchased an additional 70 acres of woodland located in Lot 21 in the 4th Range, north of his property from Fred Adams, who had purchased the property four days before on July 2, 1928, from Lena Plumley of Ludlow. She was the widow of Emery M. Plumley who had purchased the property from Israel Balch on August 14, 1907. This was the same premises that were transferred to Balch from Charles M. Gutterson, Administrator of Fernando Cortez Baldwin’s estate on February 22, 1900, and was the same parcel the Baldwin had purchased from Joseph Eaton, then a resident of Chester, on June 23, 1846.

Though he was a farmer, Matti like many of the men of the time, earned extra money from various highway work for the town. The following are just a few examples from throughout the years. In 1924, Matti Hill was paid \$12 in the “Orders Drawn by Selectmen” for “Breaking Roads and Shoveling Snow,” and \$21.67 for “Cutting Brush.” In 1936, he worked 25 hours at the rate of 30 cents an hour “and \$10 for care of own road” for a total of \$17.50. In 1939, worked on “resurfacing main road” for 16 hours at 30 cents and an additional 9 hours at 33 ¹/₃ cents an hour totaling \$7.80. He also worked on “Special Back Roads near Ludlow Line” for 96 ¹/₂ hours at 30 cents \$31.85. He worked for 7 hours “Special Road Work Main Road between Bentley’s and Kallio’s” at the rate of 30 cents totaling \$2.10. In 1942, the town paid him for 10 loads of sand on Boynton Hill at the rate \$1 for a total of \$10.

In 1939, Reino Hill was among the many men who did road work for the town. He worked 19 hours “special road work” and was paid \$6.34. He also worked 131 hours of “flood work” and was paid \$43.67 and 8 hours “bridge work” and was paid \$2.67, plus another 3 ¹/₂ hours of work on “town bridges” and was paid an additional \$1.05. In 1940, Reino worked 18 hours on “back roads” and was paid \$5.50. The majority of this labor on the roads and bridges

during this time period, was due to the destruction caused by the Hurricane of 1938. By October of 1940, Reino Hill had moved to California, where he was a student at Aero Industries Technical Institute in Los Angeles. He served as a corporal US Army Air Force during World War II. Reino married Mildred C. Morgan in California, July 13, 1943. Reino died in Kingman, Arizona, on May 10, 2005 and is buried in National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona in Phoenix.

Pentti Hill graduated from Black River High School in 1939, and the yearbook included the following entry "seven miles from Ludlow there is a place called Andover, and from Andover comes Pentti every day to school. That's ambition." In 1939, Pentti employed by the town for special road work amounting to 23 ½ hours and was paid \$7.83 and he worked 383 hours for "flood work" and was paid \$127.66. He worked on bridges for 436 hours and was paid \$145.23. In 1940, he worked 7 hours on "town bridges" and was paid \$2.10. As with his brother's work for the town, this had to do with the 1938 Hurricane. In addition to road work, etc., he was employed as a machinist at Jones and Lamson on Clinton Street in Springfield. He enlisted in the Navy on September 24, 1942, and completed basic training at Newport, Rhode Island on October 22, 1942, and was selected for the Aviation Machinist Mates' School in Jacksonville, Florida. Pentti married Priscilla Marie Young in Jacksonville, on June 26, 1943. Priscilla, daughter of Massy Barker and Ruth M. (Stearns) Young, was born in Windsor, Vt., on April 29, 1926. Pentti was discharged from the service on November 23, 1945, and he and Priscilla lived in Chester until 1947, when they moved Seattle and later to the suburb of Renton, Washington. He was employed by Boeing Airplane Company for 35 years. He died in Renton, Washington, on August 9, 1983 and Priscilla died there, on July 3, 2010.

As his sons left home, Matti hired help to operate the farm. The *Springfield Reporter* noted in the July 13, 1949 issue, that "Leo Nummi is working for Matti Hill." Nummi, who was 15 at the time, and the Nummi family lived on Rte. 11, just west of Rowell's Inn. Tragically, Nummi, at age 19, would die in car accident with Leo Jacob "Jack" Soujanen, age 17, whose family lived on Chauncey Road. The accident occurred about midnight on Saturday, December 20, 1952, when Soujanen's car, a 1950 two-door sedan, heading south on Rte. 103 a mile and a half north of Chester Depot, collided with the rear of a 1945, 6 by 6 Army type GMC stake truck, operated by Roland E. Fisher, age 37, "a Ludlow lumberjack," and owned by Neil McKenzie of Chester. The truck, though parked on the highway, with no lights on and the car collided into its rear and the boys were instantly killed. The police theorized the boys might have been blinded by the lights of an oncoming car, and didn't see the truck. Fisher, who was unharmed in the cab of the truck, initially claimed that had blacked out due to flashback to his service in World War II, but later plead guilty to being intoxicated, and was fined. There were resulting lawsuits in the names of both Soujanen and Nummi in Federal Court and settlements were reached.

Matti Hill ran an ad in the June 5, 1957 issue of the *Springfield Reporter* and June 13, 1957 issue of the *Vermont Journal*, for his 1952 Chevrolet pick-up with 9,000 miles and a Surge Milking Machine vacuum pump "used one year." His health began to decline, he had "Generalized Lymphoma," and was admitted to Rutland Hospital that October. He died at the Pratt Convalescent Home in Rutland, on December 19, 1957, (he had only been there for three days) and was buried on December 24, 1957 in Heald Cemetery. A week after his death, on December 26, 1957, his two sons: Reino of Glendora, California and Pentti of Seattle, Washington quit-claimed their interest in their father's estate to their mother. On July 9, 1958, *The Springfield Reporter* noted that "Mr. and Mrs. Pentti Hill of Seattle, Washington returned home Sunday after spending a while with his mother, Mrs. Matti Hill." and it further stated that "Mr. and Mrs. Reino Hill of Los Angeles, California are spending a time with his mother, Mrs. Matti Hill." Ralph S. Parker, the administrator of the estate of Matti Hill, submitted his account to Windsor District Probate Court, and after the payment of debts of said deceased, funeral expenses of administration allowed by said court, the residue consisting of the homestead farm, and the personal estate consisting of a farm tractor and farm implements, tools, and 194 shares of Ludlow Savings Bank and Trust Company Stock, was decreed July 2, 1958 to his widow Maria Hill, as Reino and Pentti had already quit-claimed their interest to their mother. On August 30, 1960, Maria sold the property to Ruth (Stearns) Young, Pentti's mother in-law, who had moved to Tacoma, Washington, and on November 6, 1964, Mrs. Young, with Pentti and Priscilla as the witnesses to her signature, sold the property to Robert S. and Linda (Harden) Attiyeh of Pacific Palisades, California.

Maria (Susi) Hill died in Glendora, Calif, where her son Reino resided, on October 26, 1975, at the age of 91, in a rest home where she had been for the past six years. She was buried in Rose Hills Cemetery in Whittier, California, just to the southwest of Glendora, though her name is included on the gravestone in Heald Cemetery.