

RAYMOND EDWARD WELCH, SR.

Raymond E. Welch was born in Gorham, NH, the third of three children of James Frederick Welch and Lanor Jane (Dickson) Welch. James was born in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia on 6 May 1859. His wife, Lanor, was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick on 8 October 1867. It appears that they immigrated into the US about 1887-8, settling first at Percy, where they had their first child; Freeman Charles Welch on 23 March, 1889. They then moved westward to Groveton where they had their second child; Mabel Rosilla Welch on 6 April 1892. It was here that James became a naturalized US Citizen on 1 October 1892. While living in Groveton, James served as a local policeman.

The family then moved on to Gorham, New Hampshire where their third child; Raymond Edward Welch was born on 28 July 1894.

During the winter of 1899-1900, while sledding, Raymond fell off of his sled and was struck in the hip by another sled. This chipped the bone and while, with present day medicine this would be no big problem, in 1900 the seriousness of the injury was not appreciated until infection set in. The best doctors of the day could not save his leg and at age seven his leg and hip was removed.

Raymond had no hip so could not wear a wooden leg. Using just a crutch, he attended schools in Gorham with his big brother Freeman pulling him to school on a sled. He completed 8th grade but could not pursue further education as the upper grades were in another building making it impossible for Freeman to pull him to school. But living near the railroad, Raymond began hanging around the station and soon learned the Morse Code. Armed with this skill he soon apprenticed with the Boston & Maine Rail Road and was hired first as a telegrapher and later as a Station Agent.

Raymonds first station assignment was at Bowman Station, which used to sit at the height of land about a mile beyond what is now known as Lowes Garage in Gorham.

Raymond eventually worked most of the stations in the White Mountain Division of the B&M Rail Road, including Fabian, Northumberland, Ashland, Lisbon, Beebee River, Thornton and many more, retiring from the Lisbon Station at age 65, where he continued to make Lisbon his home until his death on 16 March, 1964.

Raymond never considered himself handicapped and would argue with anyone who said that he was, nor did he have sympathy for those who would use their handicaps to beg for handouts. In all fairness, having been raised as a one legged person from childhood, he adequately adapted to any situation and though he never tried skiing, he could dance and skate and was often seen riding a bicycle. During the early 1930's, Raymonds mother, Lanor Jane, was working at the Tip-Top House atop Mount Washington as a cook. Raymond was working the Northumberland Station and as a result of some local urging, entered the race on August 2nd, 1932 to be the first "one legged man" to climb Mount Washington. This he accomplished in 1932 and again in 1933.

Raymond met Wyoma M. Witham, the eldest daughter of a Methodist Minister from West Milan.

They were married on 1 January 1918 in Landaff, New Hampshire by her father, Rev Ned David Witham. Their first child, Raymond E. Welch Jr. was born in Ashland. They later had four more children with the last two boys, Frederick James and Harry Allan being born in Lancaster, New Hampshire in 1933 and 1934.

Raymond's sister, Mabel Rosilla, met and married Henry J. Arsenault on 22 December 1909. Residing in South Grafton at the time, their first child, Henry Gordon (Bill) Arsenault, was born in Grafton, NH on 11 June 1910. He was the first of eight children. Their second child, Darrell Dosity (Mutt) Arsenault returned to Groveton where he met and married Mary Anne Lambert. Mutt and Mary both lived out their entire lives in Groveton where they raised their adopted son Donald, who was the son of Mutt's sister Elizabeth.

The Arsenault families spread out in northern Grafton County while the Freeman Welch families populated most of the area from Swiftwater, NH to Lincoln, NH. Raymonds families spread out primarily in Grafton and parts of Belknap Counties.