

Mill Town Messenger

This newsletter is generously sponsored by the James E. Lantz Family Trust

Volume 2, Issue 2 May 2008

From the President's Pen ~ Cathryn Baird

"A morsal of genuine history is a thing so rare as to always be valuable." ~ Thomas Jefferson

A smorgasbord of historical "morsals" exists in the NHS Museum collection, currently located on the top floor of the 1827 Sullivan County Courthouse. Yes, it is also the home of the Old Courthouse Restaurant! Dedicated Society members faithfully continue to volunteer to sort and inventory the vast amount of artifacts and ephemera. Entering acquisitions into a data base called Past-Perfect is definitely a great expense of time, but the cost of preserving the past for future generations is priceless. Throughout the years, there have been many individuals who have cared enough to keep the Newport Historical Society alive. This past year membership has grown from twelve to one hundred and twelve! Your interest and support is essential to the Society's sustainability. As the current Society president, I look forward to continued growth and development. Newport is a place of beauty, pleasant living and historical richness.

Let's work together to preserve our "morsal(s) of genuine history."



Newport to celebrate its 250th!

October 6, 2011 marks the semiquicentennial anniversary of the signing of Newport's charter on October 6, 1761.

Here is an opportunity for Newporters to come together to appreciate the past, celebrate the present, and look to the future. Do you remember the 1961 celebration? Do you belong to one of the ethnic

groups that made Newport strong? What do you most enjoy about Newport today?

Come to the Richards Free Library at 6pm on June 3 to contribute your ideas. This organizational meeting of interested townspeople, businesses, and organizations will begin to set the course for a town-wide celebration in 2011. MM

1761 - 2011

Please be sure to attend - everyone's help is needed!



1911 Newport Bicentennial Float

Over 40 attend ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Hosted by the NHS and sponsored by the UNH Center for the Humanities and NH Humanities Council, this workshop at the Sugar River Bank Community Room on Saturday, April 19 was a huge success. Forty people from Newport, Croydon, Goshen, Lempster, Unity, Grantham, Bradford, Cornish, Newbury, Claremont, and Sunapee

learned the proper techniques for taking an oral history. Jo Radner, folklorist, oral historian and storyteller from Lovell, Maine kept her audience spellbound. Some of the areas covered were developing a practical plan, managing interpersonal dynamics, effective questioning, and triggering memories. Ms. Radner addressed the legal side of the

oral history process and gave tips on the crucial steps to take after completing an interview. Everyone left with enthusiastic plans to begin oral history projects in their community.

Thanks to everyone who helped make this day a success!

JC

Please join us!

Monthly Meetings

Open To All

Second Monday of the Month

Sugar River Bank Community Room

June 9

July 14

August 11

September 8

7:00 pm

The Inside Scoop

- Winter Programs
- Prattling Hattie
- Call for Museum Donations
- Newport Firsts
- Newport Notables: A. Chéronnet Champollion

April program: 1st NH Cavalry... Neal Boucher

Newport resident Neal Boucher, a Civil War reenactor, gave a wonderful account of life in the NH Cavalryman at the NHS April program. Mr. Boucher began by removing, piece by piece, the many layers of the required uniform. Although strikingly designed, the wool uniform was very heavy and uncomfortable in the extreme southern heat. He described how cumbersome it was to load guns on horseback, and demonstrated how many supplies one soldier needed sim-

ply to survive. The horses bore the brunt of this load, along with a heavy saddle and the weight of the rider. This resulted in severe swayback for the horses, and many could only be consoled before literally collapsing from exhaustion. Neal also spoke in detail about the generals in charge throughout the Civil War and their struggles to maintain morale and keep the soldiers well fed and supplied. He described the great confusion at the beginning of the war in

determining what supplies were required, and where to locate them. We saw some rare and fascinating photographs of mounted soldiers, and although there are romantic notions of soldiers on horseback, it became clear from Mr. Boucher's talk that it was an extremely exhausting and dangerous job. We are humbled to remember the sacrifices of these noble men who fought for our country.

Thank you, Mr. Boucher, for a fascinating presentation!

CO



the Riverside trotting park... Kevin Sargent



Saturday, April 26 was a perfect day for a walk in the woods!

Newport native Kevin Sargent led a tour of the Riverside Trotting Park, once located between the

Sugar River and the old railroad bed adjacent to LaValley's. A turn of the century flashbulb, cigar tin and horseshoes are some of the treasures he found on site with his metal detector. These finds inspired him to gather personal accounts and spend many hours at the Richards Free Library researching the Park's history. Mr. Sargent gave a history of the Park and

pointed out the 1/2 mile track's curve and straight away, the location of the barn, and the finish line. Established in 1878, this park was in operation until 1901; area horse racing then moved to Claremont's Highland View Farm. Kevin also brought us to the place where the Finn Park was located. He pointed out the dam which created the swimming hole,

the location of the high jump and cross country track, and the "Snack Shack." The Finns rented the land for \$25 a year, and hosted sporting events for Finnish groups from Massachusetts and Vermont.

We thank Mr. Sargent, his brother Bob Baker, and his son Dakota for an enjoyable and informative day in the park!
MM

February Program: black history... Lynn Clark & Rebecca Courser

Thank you to Lynn Clark (NHHS) and Rebecca Courser (Warner HS) for helping us celebrate Black History Month! Lynn and Rebecca's research of early black NH settlers is reported in the Spring 2007 Historical New Hampshire. Information is not readily available, but they located the following black settlers in the Newport area: Charles Hall, escaped slavery in Florida in 1837, and

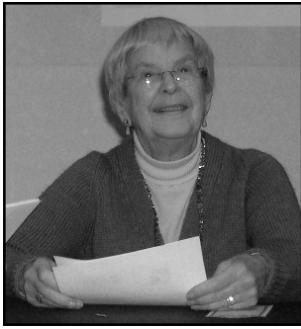
was a carpenter by day and an avid fiddler by night; Richard Coit settled on Coit Mountain between 1775 and 1790 with his wife, a white Newport native; John Reed, a Revolutionary War soldier, purchased 50 acres of land near Coit Mountain; Shipyo Page, listed on the 1796 Croydon tax list, commanded an unofficial black militia group and is known to

have sold fruit and baked goods at Town Meetings. Other blacks living in the Newport area in the 1800's were servants for white families and not listed on any town census. Their children's births were not recorded, either, leaving an inaccurate account of the black population of the time. Blacks were not allowed to vote, but could purchase land and own livestock. In-

terracial marriages occurred, mainly because more young black men than women were brought into town. The children of these interracial marriages were treated more favorably because of their lighter skin color. Many of these children married whites, losing much of their black heritage. Some of their descendants may remain in Newport today.

CO

March program: Newport Through The Years... June Liberman



June Brill Liberman gave a colorful description of her Newport childhood in the 1930's and 1940's. She was born in Newport in 1919 and attended local schools: Grade 1-3 at the Primary School (the current Selectman's Room); 4 & 5 at the Richards Annex; and the Richards School. With no snowplows at the time, driv-

ing a car during the winter was prohibited. Mrs. Liberman recalled that one of her teachers, who lived in Sunapee, stayed with her family one winter and walked to school with the children. Other wintertime activities included sliding, as opposed to sledding, down Church Street hill and building ice dams with neighborhood kids. At summer camp she climbed Mount Kearsarge and Croydon Peak, and rode horses along the road in the warm evenings. Back in town, she hung out with friends on Main Street at Kelly's Drug Store and the Anastos Ice Cream Parlor, which became the Priscilla Sweet Shop.

Newport was culturally diverse: she knew Finns, Poles, Italians, Greeks and Turks. Local amenities were different, too. Mrs. Liberman recalled her grandmother telephoning the local grocer, John Condon, to order groceries. Mr. Condon not only packed up the groceries, he delivered them by horse and buggy. Now that was service! As June shared memories of the elm trees along the Common and minstrel shows at the Opera House, she shared many humorous anecdotes. Remembering the first fire engine in town: two beautiful black horses pulled the fire wagon, the most gentle of animals, until the fire whistle blew! June's eyes truly lit up when she

spoke of dancing, which is how she and her friends spent their spare time in high school. Beginning at 8:30am, they were allowed to dance until classes began... they danced during their lunch break... and they danced after the final bell until supper time. They did the Jitterbug, the Foxtrot and any ballroom dance that came along. The young people attended many social events in town, some of which lasted until 4am. Newport was certainly different back then, and it was most enjoyable to hear this first-hand Newport history, and envision a much simpler time! CO

Little Prattling Hattie... Information wanted

NHS member and Newport native Brenda Curtis is currently researching the story of "Little Prattling Hattie" who is buried in the North Newport cemetery. If you have any information to share, even if it is just hearsay, Brenda would appreciate your help!

Here are some basics: Her father James Emerson was born in Bradford, NH (1823); her mother, Sarah Ann Whitcomb of Newport, was born in 1827. Hattie Franchette Emerson was born and died in Massachusetts (1857 - 1860). Her grave originally had an isinglass window (now

cemented over) because she was afraid of the dark. We believe her history is associated with the Josiah Wakefield place located on Fletcher Road.

If you know anything about her family or her story, please contact Brenda at 863-1535.



Spring cleaning? We're interested!



Please remember the Historical Society when you are cleaning out closets and attics!

We would appreciate the donation of any Newport items you might find - no matter how insignificant they may seem to you. We are interested in any items you have.

This quarter we are especially focusing on acquiring old diaries, journals or letters. Much of the history of everyday life is only recorded in these personal documents, and they shed light on the human side of many local events.

Recent acquisitions include a sizeable collection from the Dodge family and items from June Liberman, such as the political flyer for Francis Murphy pictured here.

Please call Ray Reid (863-3147) or Mary Lou McGuire (863-5119) if you have anything to donate.

Newport Historical Society Membership Form

Date: _____

Name(s): _____

Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Membership Type: ___ Individual (\$15) ___ Family (\$25) ___ Junior (\$1)

Corporate/Business: ___ Bronze(\$25) ___ Silver (\$50) ___ Gold (\$75) ___ Platinum(\$100) ___ Diamond(\$100+)

Here's my additional donation to the: Museum Fund \$_____ Operating Fund \$_____

Payment Method: ___ Cash ___ Check (Newport Historical Society) Total Enclosed \$_____

Please mail to: Newport Historical Society PO Box 413 Newport, NH 03773

Newport firsts: From an 1846 document provided by Ann Tenney

First settlers: Ezra Parmelee, Jesse Wilcox, Uriah Wilcox, Stephen Wilcox, Benjamin Bragg, Absalom Kelcey, Samuel Hurd, Daniel Dudley, Ebenezer Merritt, Jesse Kelcey.

First churn: made by Mrs. Robert Lane.

First taxes: compiled by Mrs. Benjamin Bragg.

First sawn board: by Ezra Parmelee.

First factory: built by

James D. Wolcott (1813).

First birth and first

death: Mary Willcox 1768.

First male birth: Nathaniel Willcox 1769.

First stagecoach: 1818

Windsor to Boston.

First public house: Benjamin Bragg.

First woman in town: shared by Mrs. Bragg and Mrs. Clark.

First framed house: built by Ezra Parmelee

Newport Notables: André Chéronnet Champollion

Jean François Léonce Austin Andre Chéronnet - Champollion was born in Paris on September 20, 1880. The son of Mary Corbin and René Chéronnet-Champollion, his grandfather was Austin Corbin II and his great-grandfather was Jean François Champollion, decipherer of the Rosetta stone. His father died in Newport in 1886; his mother died in Paris in 1892. After their deaths he lived with the Austin Corbin family in Newport and New York City.

Mr. Champollion attended St. Paul's School and Harvard College, his grandfather's alma mater. He graduated from Harvard in 1902 with the intent of becoming a portrait painter. His first world tour in 1902 focused on the Near and

Far East. Perhaps drawn to Egypt through his family ties, he continued on to India, and became so enamored with that country that he planned to make it the subject of his future paintings. Returning to America, he studied four years at the Art Students League in New York City.

He married Adelaide Knox in 1908, daughter of John Jay Knox and sister of classmate Herman Knox. His only child, a son René, was born in 1909. Champollion was a prolific photographer of the people and places he visited, and the negatives of his trip to India and Tibet in 1908-1909 are at the Richards Free Library. The notebooks and photographs of this journey, and the resulting paintings and drawings, are at

Harvard's Peabody Museum. Champollion became an American citizen in August of 1904, but enlisted in the French army at the outbreak of WWI. His hopes of becoming an interpreter never materialized, and he remained a private from October 1914 to March 1915. Refusing promotion to a higher rank, he found war to be morally painful and eventually regretted his enlistment. Champollion saw little action, and was killed soon after being sent to the Front. Champollion is buried in Peton at Bois-le-Prêtre. Cited for bravery, he received the Crois de Guerre.

His family home, built by Austin Corbin for his daughter Mary, is the site of the

Sugar River Farm on N. Main Street. A memorial tree was planted on the Common by his widow, but no longer exists.

Champollion considered Newport his home, and spent much time at the Blue Mountain Forest. His war letters are in the RFL historical collection. MM

Sources: Howe: Memoirs of the Harvard Dead in the War Against Germany, 1920; Peabody Museum; NHS Research.



Andre Champollion
1880 - 1915