

Mill Town Messenger

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

Volume 2, Issue 4 November 2008

From the President's Pen ~ Cathryn Baird

"History is malleable. A new cache of diaries can shed new light, and archaeological evidence can challenge our popular assumptions."

~ Ken Burns

While reviewing the 2008 NHS season, I was struck by the insightful glimpse into the past provided by last season's programs, which brought forward the diverse people, places and events in Newport's history. We learned new information and some common assumptions were challenged by the following presentations: summers in Newport recollected by Igor Blake; memories of WWII by Newc Eldredge and Larry Zullo; early black settlers in Newport and surrounding towns by Rebecca Courser and Lynn Clark; Newport through the years by June Liberman; sacrifices of the 1st NH Cavalry as recounted by Neal Boucher; and a walking tour of the Riverside Trotting Park and the Finn Park led by Kevin & Dakota Sargent. Workshops on local oral histories and understanding Newport's cemeteries have contributed information for future generations to build upon as they continue the documentation of Newport's rich heritage.

Please join us in our mission to preserve the history of this "Model New England" mill town. Attending our programs will keep Newport's unique character and history alive, and becoming a member supports our continuing work to acquire, preserve, and share diaries, artifacts, and information so that new light might shine!

NHOGA Meeting: September 13, 2008

The NHS hosted the September meeting of the NH Old Graveyard Association in the RFL ballroom. This day-long event consisted of a short business meeting, a presentation, and cemetery visits. Many thanks to NHS members Andy Andrews, Ray Reid, Larry Cote, Brenda Curtis and Mary Lou McGuire for their presentation on the Cemeteries of New-

port, NH. This overview of our cemeteries was followed by visits to the Pine Street East/West, North Newport, and Maple Street cemeteries. During the on-site visits NHS members heard basic how-tos of caring for headstones, useful tricks to help read eroded inscriptions, and common problems in cemetery preservation. Many thanks to Brian Richardson and his crew for "sprucing-up"

our cemeteries for this event.
MM



Andy Andrews helps decipher an epitaph.

Wcni 1010 takes second prize

When Steven Smith moved WCNL back to Newport's Main Street in 2007 to make it a home-town radio station, he initiated the Newport Historical Society Minute. The Minute broadcasts seven days a week at 8 and 11am, and is a great success! It won second place in the NH Association of Broadcasters Golden Mike competition. We thank Steven for the opportunity to share little known information about Newport's history, and for providing window space for our rotating picture displays. Newport is lucky to have such a dedicated businessman interested in helping our town become a vibrant community. Be sure to tune in to WCNL-1010 on the AM dial!

Please join us!

NHS Monthly Meetings

Open To All

Second Monday
of the Month

Sugar River Bank
Community Room

November 10

December 8

January 12

February 9

6:00 pm Historical
Display

7:00 pm Meeting

The Inside Scoop

- October Program
- Newport Ghost Story
- NHS Annual Meeting
- Oral History Project
- Museum News
- Pier Bridge Update
- Newport Notables:
Henry E. Baldwin

October Program ... The Cemeteries of Newport, nh

Many thanks to Kate Niboli and the Library Arts Center for hosting our October program on the cemeteries of Newport, NH. Fifteen people attended this interesting and informative armchair tour of Pine Street East and West, Maple Street, North Newport, Pine Grove,

and St. Patrick's cemeteries. Included was the history of each cemetery, examples of gravestone art from each, and information about funeral procedures in early Newport. Brenda Curtis, Larry Cote, Ray Reid, and Mary Lou McGuire created the presen-

tation. Special thanks go to Andy Andrews for sharing his expertise as well as the many hours he spent in the cemeteries taking pictures. This program is available to any interested local organization. Call 863-1294 or 863-3147 to schedule an event. MM



Soul Effigy, Pine Street West

A Newport ghost story ... Ca 1970

Every morning at 5am I'm on the job, tramping up and down Laurel Street, delivering the Eagle Times. My friends were not as industrious, staying in bed until the very last moment. It's a daily challenge, high school students fighting their mothers for those few extra minutes of sleep. But not me, I had plans: study hard, work hard, attend UNH two years from now. It wasn't easy to get up in the deep dark every morning, but at least by the time I returned home it was gray around the edges.

That all changed one October, just as daylight savings time ended. I'd just tossed Mrs. Jackson's paper onto her porch, well I might have missed the porch, but in the dark I heard it hit the stairs. As I turned toward the Pierson's, something moved in the lot just beyond their house. I couldn't make it out at first, thought it might be a dog, hoped it wasn't a coyote. With all the talk of coyotes in the area, the last thing I needed was to run into one. I slowed my pace, straining to make out exactly what it was without calling attention to myself. Well, it wasn't a dog. Was it a child? ...pulling a

wagon? ... a red wagon. How could I see the color in the dark? It was a little girl with ... with... no head. NO HEAD? I do not spook easily, but for a couple of seconds I wished it were a coyote. Those few seconds were all it took for me to drop my newspaper bag right there on Pierson's lawn, turn, and run. I made the five minute walk to my house in two. I flew through the kitchen door, slamming it so hard the giant decorative wooden knife and fork on the wall clattered. Startled, my mother dropped the tea kettle and screamed "Marcy! What...!" White face, chattering teeth, Mom's arm around my shoulder, I gasped for air. "I... I... you won't believe... Up by Pierson's, the back lot? I saw a headless girl pulling a red wagon. She looked straight at me. I don't know how I know, because, like I said, she didn't have a head. But I'm sure she was looking at ME. What does she want with ME?"

I drew a deep breath, flopped into a chair, repeated the story more calmly. "There was gray fog everywhere, and a red wagon, and a headless girl that was looking... maybe she was looking behind me. Maybe up the hill behind Pierson's. It was

so real. But it had to be a ghost because of the headless part. I couldn't see her clothes, but the wagon was red, with black wheels just like Tommy's." Mom turned to face me, holding my hands. "I don't know exactly what you saw, but I do know you saw something. I've never felt comfortable walking there myself. There used to be a funeral home on that lot when I was young, a big old Victorian with a tower on the side. It was always dark because the big porches shaded the windows from the sun. I never told you because I didn't want to scare you when you were little. And I was going to mention it before you took the paper route, but I thought you'd teased me for being silly."

"Mom, I can never go out there alone again. I can't. I'll ask Mr. Williams for another route. I don't mind getting up early and I don't mind walking down dark streets alone, but believe me, I'm never going near that place again." The next day I reported what happened to the police. I felt really foolish when the officer smiled dismissively when I reached the part about the

little girl having no head. When I wrote the Newport's Littlest Ghost paper for an English assignment, it was so good it got published in the Eagle the next Halloween. Well, I made it through UNH —environmental ecology —and moved to Pennsylvania. My husband Jim got a big, loud, German Shepard to keep us safe in the night.

Mom called the other day. Seems a woman came into the library asking her about the ghost; she thought she might have seen it too and wanted more details. Thankfully Jim got the phone and knew to tell Mom that I didn't remember anything else, didn't want to talk about it. I wasn't mad at Mom, even though I had asked her never to mention the incident to me again ... but when Jim told me about her call, I shivered. I knew for sure, tonight, in my sleep, I'll see that little red wagon... (Names have been changed to protect the sleep of)

AA/MM

Email your Newport ghost story:
maryloumcguire@hotmail.com
Subject: Newport ghosts

Election of officers at Annual meeting

The NHS celebrated the 33rd anniversary of its present organization on October 13 with a display of Newport artifacts and election of officers. The annual meeting is held at the beginning of October to commemorate the signing of Newport's second charter by Benning Wentworth in the name of King George III on October 8, 1761.

Officers for the 2009 term are President Cathryn Baird, Vice President Todd Coull, Treasurer Jackie Cote, Secretary Harold Perkins, Museum Committee Ray Reid, Larry Cote and Mary Lou McGuire. We extend great appreciation to outgoing Secretary Christina O'Brien for her very dedicated service. MM



NHS Oral history project is underway

In April 2008 NHS hosted an Oral History workshop lead by Jo Radner and attended by fifteen area Historical Societies. As a result of this training, NHS has crafted its own Oral History Project, attempting to capture the

thoughts of our senior citizens relative to all facets of Newport's history. To facilitate this project, NHS recently purchased recording/transcription equipment which will allow transcription of the conversations. Oral history

interviews will be stored on tape and paper, and a topical index created for easy access. If you would like to share your memories of Newport, please call Jackie Cote (863-3105) or Ray Reid (863-3147) to schedule an interview. JC

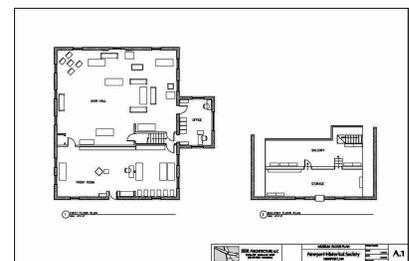
What's happening at the museum

Many thanks to member and architect Christina O'Brien who created a floor plan of the museum. This essential step in planning exhibit, office areas and storage space for historical artifacts provides a birds-eye view of the walls, location of doors and windows, furniture, shelving, etc. Unfortunately, this space is not conducive to a museum, which is why it has been closed to the public for some time. We have a lack of heat in winter, air conditioning in summer, and no handicapped accessibility.

Our inventory is taking much longer than anticipated. This huge task consists of locating materials, sorting them without losing information about the donor, and reviewing the material to decide how to best preserve it. Since the majority of our collection is either photographs or written material it lends itself quite nicely to being placed in acid free sleeves and three ring binders. After this step, another important task can begin: entering it into the PastPerfect database, which assigns a description and location so it can be found at a later date. We are in great need of people to help with this project, especially people who

enjoy working with computers. We invite the community, from High School to the Senior Center, to lend a hand. Please call the Museum (863-1294) or Larry Cote (863-3105) if you can help. Thank you!

LC & CO



Pier bridge/Wright's Bridge update



Last October (2007) Newport received a quote from the engineering firm of DuBois & King for their portion of the project. It was much higher than expected, leaving less money for the actual bridge work. Dan O'Neill and committee spent the next six months re-negotiating a contract, signed in June 2008, for a more reasonable quote. The project is now in the evaluation/study phase. D & K is gathering

information and making on-site visits to both the Pier & Wright's bridges. A full report is expected in December, and the design phase will ensue during the winter of 2009. Construction bidding is scheduled for summer 2009; actual work will take place at the end of summer or fall of 2009. All pledges have been paid and we sincerely thank all who helped make this project possible. JC



