

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER IS CURRENTLY UNSPONSORED

Volume 9, Issue 1

January, 2015

From the President's Pen

by Cathryn
Baird

"Inspiration can be found in a pile of junk. Sometimes you can put it together with a good imagination and invent something."

Thomas Alva Edison (2/11/1847-10/18/1931)

Our lives are riddled with trash and junk that can be morphed into a treasure trove of artifacts and ephemera by historians, archeologists and hard working members of local historical societies! Knowledge of Newport's past has come from discarded and often forgotten papers and pictures that collectively shed light on the heritage of our town. Who knew that William Dexter Richards was instrumental in establishing one of the first electric companies in NH enabling Edison's invention to shine in the Sunshine town? Edison once said "I hope that someday electricity will be cheap enough so that only the wealthy burn candles." Wouldn't that be wonderful?!? In several weeks there will be more natural light in our lives as the days get longer. Spring is a harbinger for cleaning so remember to share your "junk" with YOUR Newport Historical Society so another exhibit can be invented.

Here are a few more quotes from Edison to light up your day:

- ♦ *Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.*
- ♦ *Many of life's failures are experienced by people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.*
- ♦ *If we did all the things we are really capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves....*
- ♦ *The three great essentials to achieve anything worthwhile are hard work, stick-to-it-tiveness and common sense.*
- ♦ *Time is really the only capital that any human being has and the thing he can least afford to waste or lose...*
- ♦ *The thing I lose patience with is the clock. Its hands move too fast.*

Meeting & Program Times

All members and the public are invited to all meetings and programs.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Held at the museum, 6:30-8 PM

Mon. Jan. 12

Mon. Feb. 9

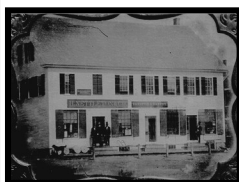
Mon. Mar. 9

Mon. Apr. 13

PROGRAMS:

Programs are usually held on the second Wednesday in the month, 6:30-8PM. Programs will resume in the Spring. Check the Newport Historical Society website, www.newportnhhistory.org for scheduling, until the next newsletter.

NEWPORT BUSINESS BLOCKS: We are beginning a series of short articles about the Newport Business Blocks. A discussion about a "Business Block" gets confusing very quickly; because, the name of the block can and often does, change. The historically correct name of a block would be the name of the person who built the building. Over the years the building can become known by the current tenant or the most successful business that was or is in that building. I will use early Newport Business Directories from 1903 & 1905 as the reference.



Nettleton Block

The Lewis Block rests at the corner of Main Street and Sunapee Street. It was built in 1886 after the fire of 1885 destroyed the Nettleton Block that had previously resided at that spot. It is a two story brick in the Romanesque Revival style with four bays for businesses. Due to the keystone reading 1886, the Lewis Block has always been known as the Lewis Block. Over the years people may have referenced it by the name of a business such as The



The Lewis Block, 1886

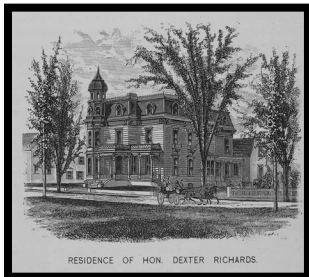
Corner Pharmacy, Douglass Barber Shop or Petal Patch; but, without doubt, it is The Lewis Block.

NEWPORT NOTABLES

Colonel William F. Richards, by Larry Cote

William F. Richards was the youngest son of Dexter Richards and brother of Seth M. Richards. He was born on January 28, 1867,

in Newport at his father's home once located at the south-east corner of North Main and Pearl Streets where the Professional Building now sits.

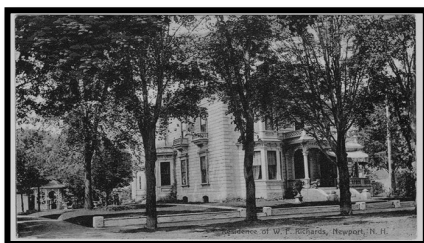


RESIDENCE OF HON. DEXTER RICHARDS.

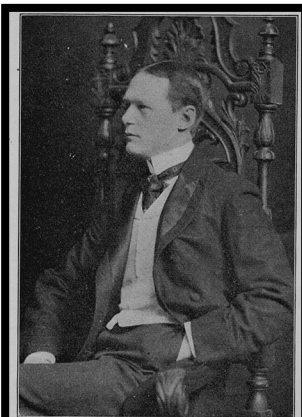
William completed his preparatory education at Phillips Andover Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard in 1889 at the age of 22. Following graduation he toured Great Britain and Europe and in 1896 toured the world.

He was said to be slightly aloof, not having the genius for business like his father, Dexter, or his brother, Seth. However, when confronted with a problem, he could keenly analyze it and act decisively when necessary. He was said to always be faultlessly dressed, owned fine horses and dogs, was an avid supporter of the conventional bicycle and the high wheeler. He was one of the first in Newport to own an automobile. William was interested in theatrical matters and was a loyal supporter for many years.

William was very active in promoting his native town helping many men to obtain an education. Like his mother and father, he was a staunch supporter of the South Church. He served on the Newport School Board and was elected President of the Newport First National Bank in 1911, a post he continued until 1915. He made possible the Children's Room at the Richards Free Library where he was a Trustee for many years. His business interests in Newport consisted of Dexter Richards and Sons Company whose woolen mill was one of the largest, best built and equipped in the country. He was a Director of the Concord and Claremont Railroad and with his brother, Seth, was co-owner of the Newport Electric Light Company.



Newport home of William F. Richards



Col. W. F. Richards

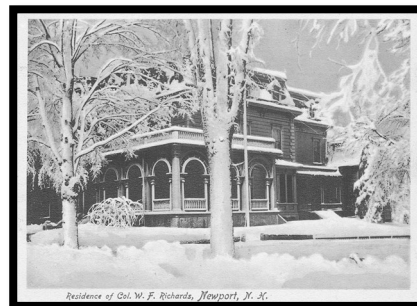
Due to poor health, he divided his time between Newport and Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he owned a 2,000 acre ranch. He was also Vice President of the Colorado Springs National Bank.

William's military title of Colonel dated to 1901 when he was on the staff of New Hampshire Governor Chester B. Jordan.

William died on March 5, 1932 (we believe the year to be 1932) and was interned in the Newport Maple Street cemetery.

Sources:

1. The Granite Monthly, G A Cheney, August 1908, Pgs 279-280
2. Unsigned, undated paper, part of NHS museum artifacts, that appears to be notes for William's obituary or eulogy.

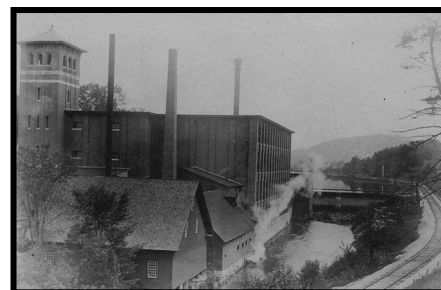


Home of D. Richards after remodeling by W. F. Richards in the Italianate style.

NEWPORT ELECTRIC LIGHT CO.

One cannot write an article about William F. Richards without writing about the Newport Electric Light Company. On May 27, 1892, Seth M. Richards, president; William F. Richards, treasurer; Myron W. Tenney, superintendent; Martin Whittier and Arthur Chase incorporated the Newport Electric Light Company with 300 shares at \$50 per share as capital. This occurred just 13 years after Thomas Edison invented the first successful light bulb in 1879.

The first generator of electricity in Newport was run by water power and located at the Richards Mill on Sunapee Street. Looking at the picture of the back side of the Richards Mill, the far left upper corner by the dam was the location of the dynamo; note the smoke from this area.



Richards Mill Power Plant

Continued on next page

Newport Electric Light Company, continued from Page 2

The first test of lighting Newport's streets occurred on June 3, 1892. After the town's streets were illuminated, factories, churches, businesses and fraternal organizations went on line. By 1900 some homes were being electrified. By January of 1902 a coal fired steam plant was built near the Richards Mill to generate additional electricity. By 1905 the Peerless factory had installed 15 electrical motors. This really allowed factories to increase production and have evening shifts. It also allowed factories to be located far from a river, which for about 200 years, was the old power source for factories all over New England.



On January 1, 1924, the Newport Electric Light Company and several other light companies were merged into the New Hampshire Power Company. By March 31, 1936, the New Hampshire Power Company was purchased by the Public Service of New Hampshire, a company that was formed in 1926.

The three globe lamps in front of the Opera House in this picture were installed in 1913. There is a great timeline in the book "*-Celebrating Community Newport, N.H. 1761-2011*" on pages 112 & 113.

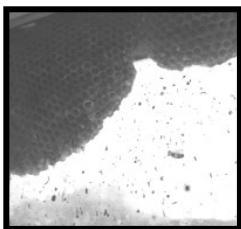
Citations: Celebrating Community Newport, N.H. 1761-2011 by Jayna Huot Hooper, p.112-113; 1961 Bicentennial Booklet, p. 59;

FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK

By Jackie Cote

Thank you to everyone who shopped with us for their Christmas giving during this past Christmas season. Profit from all sales supports the operating expenses of the museum building such as electricity, propane, water & sewer, etc.

Windows Replacement Project: We offer our sincere and heartfelt thank you to all who have purchased one of the 23 windows in the Museum building or who have contributed funds to this project. Each window specifically purchased will have a plaque on the window sill that states "Donated By" with the name of the purchaser or "In Honor Of" a person that you may designate. The names of contributors to the entire project will be displayed near the entry on the second floor. **Four windows** bearing plaques can still be purchased for **\$1,000 each**. Certainly, we welcome **any amount** contributed toward this project. We are accepting pledges for the purchase of a window or for any amount with the final payment due by May 31, 2015.



As an example of the state of our current windows and storm windows, I've included a photo of one of the front 2nd floor windows where a hive

was built between the window and storm sash. Not to worry, the hive has not been active for two years! They had entered this space through a gap between the bottom of the storm window and the window sill.

A **Corbin Covered Bridge Pewter Ornament** from Hampshire Pewter in Somersworth, NH, is now available as part of our memorabilia offerings for \$16.00. See the photo for a glimpse of this wonderful Newport covered bridge. Hang it on your Christmas tree or enjoy it year-round by hanging it on a window, as Rita has, or on any wall in your home for a decorative touch.



2015 Membership Drive has yielded 214 new and renewing members as we strive for 254 members (matching the number of years since Newport's charter was attained in 1761). Reminder letters have been mailed to members who have not yet renewed. If you have received one of these reminder letters, it is important to know that this is the last issue of our newsletter that you will receive in the mail if your membership is not renewed before our next issue in April 2015. We hope that you will continue to support the collection, preservation and publication of the history of this wonderful town.

WINNERS OF MEMBERSHIP RAFFLE

Your 2015 membership contribution entered you in a raffle for prizes donated by local businesses.

- **\$25 gift certificates:** *Huberts* - Rita James; *Harringtons* - Katherine Sanborn; *Newport Meat Market* - Peggy McKenney; *Country Kitchen* - Dottie Collins, *Z Pharmacy* (donated by SRB) - Virginia Irwin.
 - **\$50 gift certificates:** *LaValleys* - Ed Perkins; *LaValleys* - Larry Zullo
- Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all the generous donors!

MUSEUM COMMITTEE REPORT

By Larry Cote

2014 was a great year for the Newport Historical Society and the Museum. We saw growth in membership. Our goal is to have at least one member for every year of the town's existence since the signing of the town charter. Our goal for 2015 is at least 254 members.

We know that all visitors do not sign the register. That being said, we had 204 visitors sign the Museum's register. We have come a long way from the days when we were above the Old Courthouse and averaged 12 visitors per summer.

We had 68 individual donations of artifacts to the Museum in 2014 for a total of 759 individual items. Some were only one item while others numbered a dozen or more. Each and every item is important as they help to piece together the story of Newport. They also give us inventory to make or improve displays.

We want to thank the Museum Committee Members, Executive Committee Members and the Docents that have given up their Sundays to staff the Museum. They make the Museum available for the public to learn about their town and answer questions from the visitors. We are always looking for new Docents; training will be provided. You will enjoy your time there and will learn a little more about your Town.

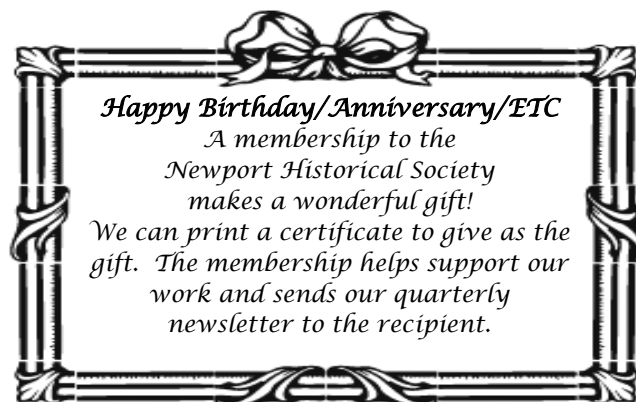
Respectfully Submitted: Larry Cote,
N.H.S. Museum Director

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MOST WANTED LIST

We missed out on purchasing two match books with pictures of Newport Service Stations. One was Smet's Gulf Station and the other was an Amoco Service Station on Sunapee Street. While small, they were very detailed and would have been a great addition to our collection.

At one time Newport seemed to have a service station on every corner. Taking a look at the photographs at the Museum, it is sad to say we have very few pictures of these service stations. If you have a picture of one of these service stations, please consider donating it to the Museum to help tell Newport's story in the 1950's.

We are also in need of a paper cutter for the Museum. Perhaps someone has an extra they are not using and would donate to the museum.



The *Mill Town Messenger* is published quarterly by the Newport Historical Society
P.O. Box 413, Newport, NH 03773

Website www.newportnhhistory.org, Email newporths1761@gmail.com

Museum phone number 603-863-1294

Call the Museum number above for appointments to tour the Museum at alternative times

Contributors to this issue: Cathryn Baird, Jackie Cote, & Larry Cote

Newport Historical Society Membership Form:

Date: _____ New Membership _____ Renewal _____

Name(s) _____

Address/City/State/Zip _____

Email _____ Telephone _____

Personal 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 \$ _____ Operating \$ _____ Buildings \$ _____

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

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