

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

THIS NEWSLETTER IS GENEROUSLY FUNDED BY MCCRILLIS & ELDREDGE INSURANCE

Volume 5, Issue 1 February 2011

SANFORD H. BASCOM, NEWPORT NATIVE AND CIVIL WAR SHARPSHOOTER

BRAD BASCOM

Sanford Horace Bascom was born in Newport on September 25, 1834 and lived his 77 years here, except for the period of his enlistment in the Civil War. More than 240 men from Newport volunteered to join the Union Army during the Civil War, and most were issued the blue Union uniform. That of Sanford Bascom consisted of a forest green coat, trousers, and forage cap: the camouflage uniforms of the elite regiment of long distance sharpshooters.

In 1861, Colonel Hiram Berdan (an inventor and renowned marksman from New York) was authorized by President Lincoln to organize a federal regiment of sharpshooters. Marksmen brought their own target rifles to competitions for enlistment that were held at several locations in the summer of that year. To qualify a recruit had to fire ten consecutive shots inside a 10 inch circle at a distance of 200

yards. Bascom qualified and served as a private in Capt. Jones' Company E from New Hampshire, joining recruits from other states to form Berdan's First Regiment of U. S. Sharpshooters. Berdan's initial recruits brought and used their own custom made target rifles, such as Sandford's which is

pictured on Page 2. These custom made muzzle loaders had an octagonal barrel, bored with spiral grooves and lands on the inside to apply spin to the ball as it exited the gun. A false muzzle, plugged into the end of the barrel with four pins, was used while loading to protect the



crown of the barrel from damage. If damaged, the ball might not fly true. The false muzzle was removed before shooting. These target rifles could weigh 35 pounds or more. Sandford's had a double set trigger. The rear trigger was used to pull and set the firing mechanism to the very edge of release, which prepared the gun to be fired with only the slightest touch

on the front trigger. Sandford's rifle also had a telescope which ran the full length of the barrel, a new and rare innovation at the time. The telescope could be adjusted with the wheel at the back to set it for the appropriate range. Continued on Page 2

250th Lecture Series

7:00 pm

February 7

NH on Skis

at the

Library Arts Center

March 14

Lafayette and the Farewell tour

April 11

Colonial NH: Newport

May 9

Covered Bridges of NH

The Inside Scoop

- *NHS Membership Drive*
- *Newport's First Meetinghouse*
- *Newport Memorabilia for Sale*
- *Inserts*
- *President's Pen*
- *250th Poem*
- *2011 NHS Program Guide*

SANFORD H. BASCOM

CONTINUED

On September 20, 1861 Sanford wrote in his diary: *"In camp 2 miles north of Washington, target shooting at 125 rods, visited by President Lincoln today; my rifle was the only one with a telescope on it, and President Lincoln fired it."* The New York Times published a brief article the following day which in part reads: *"Friday, September 20, 1861. Washington, DC. In the afternoon, Lincoln, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, Secretary of State William Seward, Prince de Joinville, of France, and others observe as Colonel Hiram Berdan's regiment of Sharpshooters demonstrates its efficiency... Two hundred and sixty shots were fired, the target being completely riddled. The President made an excellent shot."*

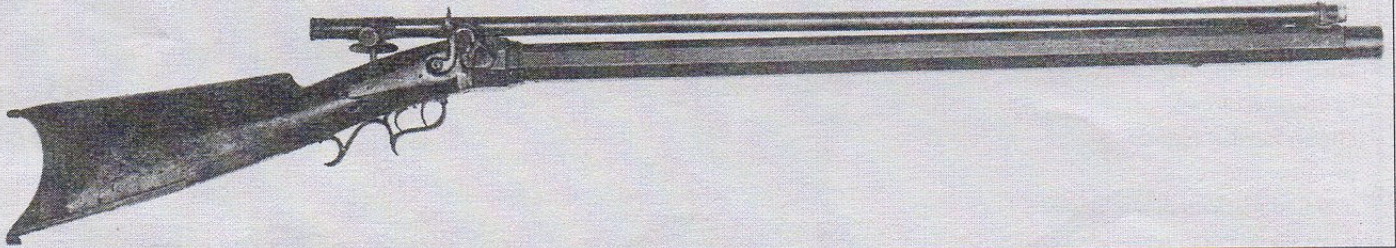
Sanford took part in some of the largest battles of the war including Great Bethel,

Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. His diary gives a glimpse of his experiences. One entry states: *"A bullet ripped the clothes off my shoulder"* In another entry *"Rebels have been shelling our boys most all day and night. They make such a noise I cannot sleep."* And *"I have read the New Testament through since the year came."*

Sanford served for three years and was honorably discharged September 9, 1864. His brother Elias also served, and two first cousins, James and Wallace, died in the war, the latter having been shot through the heart at Gettysburg. Sanford returned to his home in Newport and resumed his work as a carpenter and builder. He married Louella Haven and they had two children, Ethel and Ray. He died at his home in 1911 and is buried at the North New-

port Cemetery. Although there are no living descendants of Sanford, there are hundreds of descendants of the early Bascom family of Newport. This past July about 200 of them attended the Bascom reunion held at Bascom Maple Farms in Acworth.

The whereabouts of Sanford's rifle is unknown. For a while it was on display at the former Collins Clock Museum in Georges Mills, NH, but around 1963 it was sold to Mrs. George Hoyt of West Lebanon, NH. If anyone can provide further information on the rifle please contact the Historical Society or email Brad Bascom directly at bbascom@sover.net.



FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK: MEMBERSHIP

JACKIE COTE

Our goal is to have 250 members by the end of 2011 in celebration of Newport's 250th anniversary.

We are well on our way to achieving this goal. As of January 3, 2011, we have 159 members, of which 67 are new members. We have 39 members who have not yet renewed their membership. Our membership year coincides with our fiscal year beginning October 1 and ending September 30. Anyone who joins NHS in August and September is considered to also have paid their dues for the following year. For example, if someone joined NHS on August 26, 2010, their membership is extended until September 30, 2011.

How important are individual or family dues to our organization?

Dues paid by our members constitute the main source to fund our current operating expenses. Dues allow us to provide programs, host our website, distribute our quarterly newsletter (the printing of which has been generously paid by several NHS members and businesses), have a telephone and computer system at the museum, membership in other important like-minded organizations, postage and envelopes for our membership drive, and other incidental expenses that allow us to grow and increase our offerings in accordance with our mission statement. Without your financial support, the strides that we have made since 2005 would not have been possible. Some people feel that since they do not have time to be active in the Society, their membership would not be

valuable. Most of our current members are "Passive Patrons," that is, folks who are not active but appreciate what we do and support us with their dues. We are most grateful to all of our members for their support.

In closing, may I suggest this—call a friend or relative and encourage them to become a member, not only to help us reach our goal of 250 members in 2011, but to support our mission of educating our community and preserving the history of Newport for future generations.

Join Us!

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

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FROM THE PRESIDENTS PEN

CATHRYN BAIRD

Newport's 250th Anniversary Celebration Book It's not too late to contribute!

As you may be aware, in 2011 Newport will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of its charter, signed by King George III on October 6, 1761. In honor of this significant event, the Newport Historical Society is compiling a book, *Newport, New Hampshire: 250 Years and Beyond, 1761-2011*, to be published in partnership with the Eagle Times and ready for distribution for the charter celebration on 10/06/11. This book will include descriptions and historical information about Newport's founding and early community life, its emergence as a leading industrial center, important historical figures and prominent landmarks as well as how the town has adapted through many economic and societal changes wrought by the larger forces of our country's history. The world has not passed us by! The story of Newport has not been passively created. This book will reveal how Newport as a community of individual and collective ideas, action or inactions has made history. The Newport Historical Society would like you to be part of this! Tell us your story. What is it like to be a part of this community? How would you describe Newport and its people? What community members have made an impression on you? What community events do you most enjoy? What are your hopes for Newport's future?

Send your story to Jayna Hooper, Editor @jlh413@yahoo.com.

All submissions are requested by March 1, 2011. Pictures are welcome and will be returned. We hope that community participation in this exciting endeavor will re-ignite a spirit of communal pride and provide a common understanding of our heritage. Your contribution will help us to write Newport's history from which a strong identity and sense of pride can flourish for generations to come.

NEWPORT'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY 1760 - 2011

SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL MUSINGS ~ 2010

By Cathryn Baird, President, Newport Historical Society

With kudos to Samuel Clement Moore

T'was the night before New Years
and all through the town
Lots of people were stirring and
milling around.
The Opera House was decorated
with a holiday flare
For The Semiquincentennial that
soon would be there.

While some people were nestled
all snug in their beds
Dick Clark and others were
partying instead!
As for me, in my sweatshirt and
250th cap
I longed to settle down and just
take a nap.

My brain is overloaded with bells
and idle chatter
I just want to relax and dream of
what really matters.
When what to my very sleepy
eyes should appear
But flashbacks to old times and
the early pioneers.

Why, It's 1760 ~ the British and
French
Had just ended a war
That brought great consequence.

The soldiers and trappers who
passed through our land
Traveling to and from Canada
Now took a new stand.
The bountiful hunting and
richness of soil
Convinced them that Newport
was the place they should toil.

A Charter was granted by King
George III
And by Governor Wentworth the
decree was first heard.
The town was called Grenville
but that name didn't last.

The next choice was Newport
And though landlocked (no port,
doesn't make sense, go figure)
But the next choice was
Newport, the die had been cast.

Now in 1765, six brave men did
arrive
With axes in hand and a will to
survive.

From Killingworth Connecticut
they travelled alone
To lay the foundation of the
place we call home.

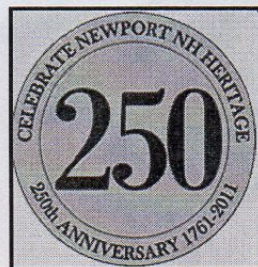
First comes Stephen Wilcox with
sons Phineas and Jesse
Ezra Parmelee, Samuel Hurd and
Absalom Kelsey.

Then Zephaniah Clark, Benjamin
Bragg and Amos Hall.
They dashed away and left
Connecticut to get away from it
all!

They went straight to work
Cleared six acres of land
On Unity Road and Pine Street
And they did it all by hand!

This story continues for two
hundred and fifty more years
And I hardly have time to reflect
on that here.

So a book will be published in
pictures and text
That continues the saga of what
happened next.



The Eagle Times and the Newport
Historical Society
Are working as partners to bring
a variety

Of your stories and pictures-
past, present, and future
Lend and share them with the
editor, Jayna Huot Hooper.
<Jlh413@yahoo.com

Hark, what noise is that out
yonder on the street?
Sounds like prancing and
dancing of someone's big feet.
As I'm clearing my head and
turning around
The Town Crier came dancing
and leaping in with a bound!

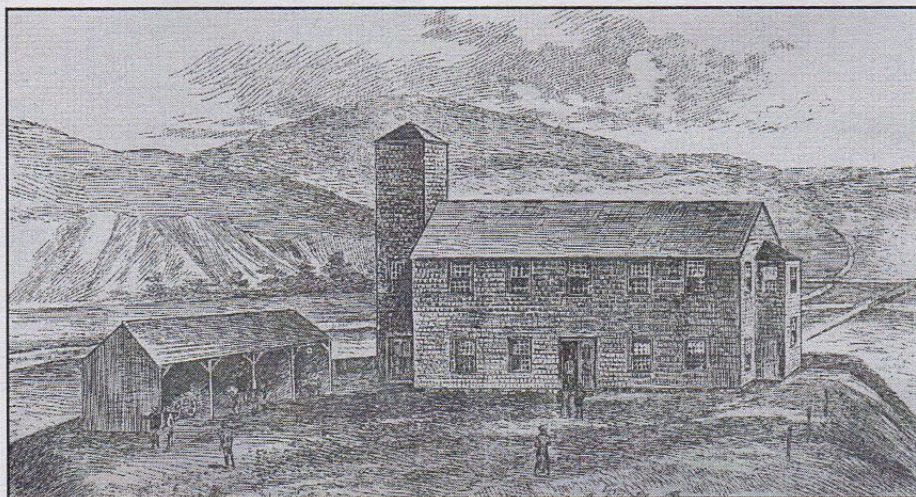
His eyes how they twinkled! His
dimples how merry!
I knew in an instant it must be
Dan Cherry.
His droll little mouth was drawn
up like a bow,
And his 250th moustache was
starting to grow!

He was chubby and boisterous, a
right jolly old elf,
And I chuckled when I saw him
in spite of myself!
But a wink of his eye and a twist
of his head,
Soon gave me the sign that
enough had been said.

It's time to spring to your feet, to
your team give a whistle
We must fly to the Common like
the down of a thistle.
But before you all leave and walk
out of sight,
"Happy Semiquincentennial to
all, and to all a good-night!"

NEWPORT'S FIRST MEETINGHOUSE

MARY LOU MCGUIRE



Sketch by S. H. Bascom

First Meeting House—1793-1823—Looking East

For over 200 years Newport has had a Congregational Church meeting house. This sketch of Newport's first meetinghouse was done by Sanford Horace Bascom at the request of Dexter Richards for inclusion in the 1887 Congregational Church Manual. Completed by June 26, 1793, this was the second building in Newport intended as a place of worship and for town meetings. The Proprietor's House on Unity Road was the first.

In November 1791 Town Meeting voted to purchase the land for this building from Absalom Kelsey, and provided £200 to erect the structure. The recorded deed is dated 19 December 1796 and conveys the land to a Committee of the Congregational Society (Christopher Newton, Samuel Hurd, and Jesse Willcox) for £10. As stated in the deed:

"beginning at a Stake and Stones Standing in the east line of the highway nine rods Southerly of the Northwest corner of the Sixteenth Lot in the first division of Lots thence east 7° North fifteen rods to a Stake and Stones—thence South 7° east ten rods, to a Stake and Stones thence west 7° South eleven rods to a Stake and Stones thence South 15° west to the highway thence North-erly by the highway to the Bound first mentioned."

This location has been plotted on the map below.

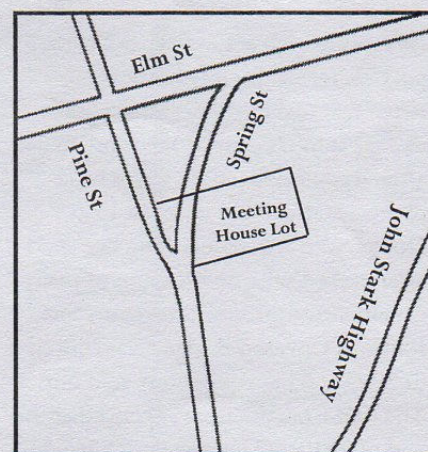
The committee in charge of the Meetinghouse construction was comprised of Christopher Newton, Samuel Hurd, Jeremiah Jenks, Phineas Chapin, and Aaron Buell. During its construction Charles Seamans, the nineteen-year-old son of Reverend Job Seamans of New London, died after falling from the roof plate. His grave can be found in the Pine Street West cemetery.

The Meetinghouse was painted yellow, and a description of the interior states:

"There was a high pulpit, flanked by the stairs, and the deacon's seats about half-way up; the sounding-board suspended from the ceiling like a huge inverted toadstool; the square, high-backed pews, with panels, and open space about the top filled with turned pieces, which supported the rail."

This first Meetinghouse was in use for close to thirty years, until Newport's "main street" changed from Unity Road and Pine Street to the current Main Street. In 1822 the Congregational Society decided to build the South Congregational Church on South Main Street. The first Meetinghouse continued to be used for town purposes until 1826 when our

first courthouse was built. Eventually the building was sold to Jonas Cutting, torn down, and reconstructed for use as a barn at his farm on Unity Road. That barn no longer exists, but was located across the road from the present day 75 Unity Road. The ornamental turned pieces from the pews were used as part of the South Main Street house built by Rev. John Woods. The first permanent Congregational minister, the Reverend John Remele, served from 1783-1791. He represented Newport and Croydon at the NH State convention to ratify the Constitution, which he voted against due to the African slave trade and a lack of provision for a strong government. He was dismissed with charges against his moral character, and when he left for Orwell, VT he took with him the Church records. One month after his departure, the town voted to build this first Meetinghouse. Abijah Wines became the next pastor in 1796. He was well-respected and served a tenure of twenty years, until 1816. Reverend Wines was the first Newport graduate of Dartmouth College. The next pastor was Rev. James R. Wheelock, who served from 1818 until 1823, and guided the congregation through the building of the Church on South Main Street.



Sources: Cheshire County Register of Deeds 46/1796; *History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties*, State's Copy of Records of Newport Town Records, *Argus and Spectator*, *Manual of the Congregational Church in Newport, N.H.*, *Wheeler's History of Newport*

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 \$ _____ Cemetery \$ _____

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

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

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

Contributors to this issue: Brad Bascom, Cathryn Baird, Jackie Cote, Mary Lou McGuire, editor.

NEWPORT MEMORABILIA FOR SALE

JACKIE COTE



As many of you are aware, the Newport Historical Society has several items that make wonderful keepsakes and great gifts. Among the most sought after are our collectible series ornaments hand-painted by artist Joan Dodge. We are replenishing our stock after record sales and sell-out of many ornaments. Our first ornament, Pier Railroad Covered Bridge, was retired in 2009 and has completely sold out. The Old Courthouse was retired at the end of 2010 and we have just a handful left for sale. This year, 2011, is the final year for Richards School and Newport Opera House ornaments. New for 2011 will be the South Church available this fall and for three years. All ornaments are \$12.00 each.

As you are aware, Newport is celebrating its 250th anniversary this year. A 250th Commemorative Ornament is currently being painted by Joan and will be available toward the end of April. It will be available during 2011 only. In addition our 250th logo hand bells are available for \$7.00. They are heavy gauge metal, painted shiny black with our gold logo, are very striking and have a distinctive ring tone. To-date we have sold more than 360 bells! If you have not already purchased one, you will want to have one for Winter Carnival activities, Homecoming Week this fall and other 250th events in between. Other items for sale include 250th logo tee shirts and sweat-shirts in black with the sunburst rendition of our logo on the back. T-shirts are \$15.00 for medium, large and x-large and \$17.50 for 2 x-large. Sweatshirts are \$30.00 for medium, large and x-large and \$33.00 for 2 x-large. They will be available through the end of 2011. We are waiting for our 250th logo buttons to arrive. These will cost \$1.00 each. We are purchasing high quality 16 oz (pint) glasses displaying our 250th logo. They will be available beginning at Winter Carnival. We are investigating other logo merchandise—useful items, reasonably priced, and will keep you informed of what becomes available.

Still very popular are NHS's two books ~

Mansions and Prominent Landmarks of Newport, New Hampshire at \$12.00 each and *Streets, Roadways and Byways of Newport, New Hampshire* for \$15.00 each.

NHS is hard at work on a 250th commemorative book under the editorship of Janya Huot Hooper with assistance from the Eagle-Times. The book will be available for purchase later this year—a definite must-have for anyone interested in the beginnings and development of the Town of Newport through the years!

For information on purchasing any of these and other items, call Stan Sweeney at 863-8469, Cathryn Baird at 863-5089 or email me at ljcote@iglide.net or NHS at newporths1761@gmail.com.

