

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

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From the President's Pen

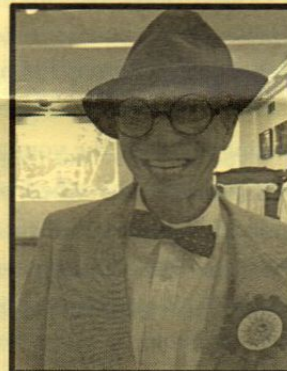
by Cathryn Baird

"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 2016 NHS season, I was struck by the insightful glimpse into the past provided by programs that highlighted the diversity of people, places and events in Newport's rich history. Publication of the book, *Billy B. Van, Newport's Sunshine Peddler*, by Jayna Huot Hooper, the reincarnation of Billy B. Van by Dean Stetson, *Postcard Visions of the Past* by Larry Cote and Steve Taylor's programs about *Agricultural Fairs* and *The Grange Movement* provided new information and some common assumptions were challenged.

Please join us in our mission to preserve the history of the "Sunshine Town." Your membership and program attendance will keep Newport's unique character and history alive. Becoming a member supports the ongoing work to acquire, preserve and share diaries, artifacts and information so that new light might shine!



Our own Dean Stetson as Billy B. Van in the NHS August program "Newport's Sunshine Peddler"

Meeting & Program Times

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

BUSINESS

MEETINGS:

NHS museum, 6:30-8 PM

Mon., Oct. 10

Mon. Nov. 14

PROGRAMS:

6:30 to 8 PM

Tue. Oct. 11 *A Walk Down Memory Lane.* Richards Free Library Ballroom, Newport

Tue. Nov. 15 TBD

IN OLLI'S WORDS: OLLI TURPEINEN ON FINNISH BATHS AND FINN HALLS

By Ann St. Martin Stout

Olli Turpeinen moved to Newport at age six and with his parents participated in the activities and lifestyle of the Finnish community in Newport. Following his retirement in 1985 from his position of teaching at Newport High School for 30 years, Olli "wrote the book" on the Finnish in Newport. Literally. This book, *The Finns of Newport, New Hampshire* is available for purchase at the Newport Historical Society Museum.

During a 1998 interview with Olli he recalled the Finnish Baths in Newport. There were three public baths. Olli remembers using the Finnish Bath owned by Mr. and Mrs. Wattling, located on Canal Street. In addition to the public baths, Olli recalls that about a half-dozen Finnish families in town had private steam baths. "These would be used by family and friends. Sometime others would use the private baths and maybe leave some money," says Turpeinen.

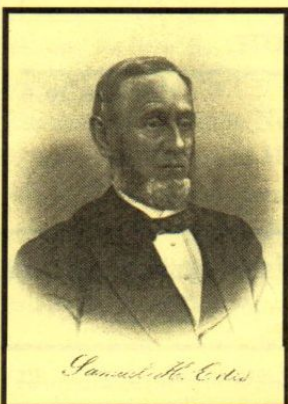
"When showers started to be added to the traditional baths some people objected."

Another topic Olli described was the Finnish halls on Sunapee Street and Winter Street. "The [Sunapee Street] Finnish Hall was started as a temperance hall. Many of the Finns had a drinking problem. The early Finns who came to the areas -- many were only 18 or 19 years old -- would spend the week working and the weekend at the saloon and the card table. The Finnish Hall on Sunapee Street was begun as a Temperance Union where the wiser ones would preach the cause of temperance. They would provide wholesome, intelligent, uplifting entertainment in the hall. The poor workers would go to the hall and it would eventually have a civilizing effect.

Olli also spoke of Finn Woods, a sporting complex behind the Finnish Hall (now *Z's Toys and Gifts*), across the river from the Sunapee Street hall. There was a track and space for other outdoor sports activities. Turpeinen noted that the heyday of the Finn groups was the mid-1920s. The Temperance Union closed around 1930; the Finnish Hall on Winter Street closed around 1952.

NEWPORT NOTABLE: SAMUEL HART EDES

by Larry Cote



Samuel Hart Edes was the son of Amasa and Sarah Hart Edes, born in Newport on March 31, 1825. He married Julia A. Nourse on December 30, 1847. They had four children; only the eldest and youngest survived. The Edes family can trace their ancestry back to 1517, in the eastern counties of England.

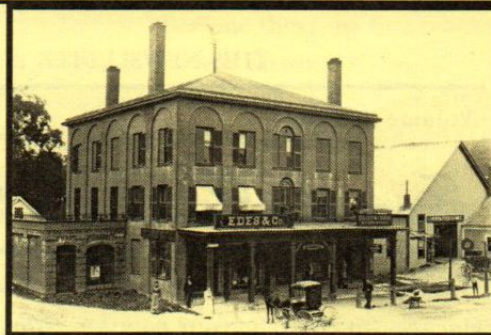
He attended Kimball Union Academy from 1838 to 1840. He was admitted to Dartmouth College in 1840, graduating in 1844, the youngest in his class. He settled on a farm in Sunapee where he lived from 1847 to 1849. He returned to Newport and was admitted to the Sullivan County Bar in 1851. He continued to farm 600 acres where he kept sixty head of mostly Ayeshire cattle.

In 1856 he purchased the Cold Springs property immediately north of town. The water delivery system of the day was to bore a hole through the length of a 6" diameter log to be used as a water pipe. Using this method, Mr Edes introduced water to Main Street, north of where the Sugar River crosses Main Street. After 3 or 4 years, when the logs decayed, he laid cement and iron pipes. He built a reservoir on the Common at the south end. During the Newport House fire of 1860, water from this reservoir was used to fight the fire, thus saving the town from a much greater loss from the fire.

In 1856 Mr. Edes purchased the old Eagle Hotel, which was built in 1826 by James Breck and Josiah Forsaith, and converted it to the Eagle Block. The lower floors were used for business and the top two floors for offices and small apartments. He built a one story addition on the north end for his law office and for the "Newport Social Library" that was started in 1803.

After admission to the bar in 1851 Mr Edes entered into the law practice with his father, Amasa Edes. While he ventured into several businesses, law

was his professional career. About 1866, Mr Edes acquired the old Eagle Mills property located near Central Street.



The Eagle Block, circa 1900

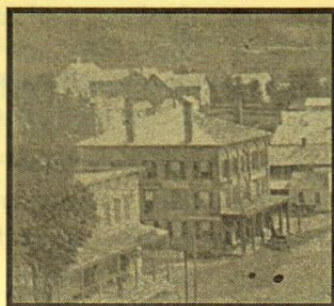
Previously, this building had a long and varied history of use. In 1822, it was an oil mill, and in 1835, it housed the Newport Mechanics' Manufacturing Company. From 1835 to 1854, Parks & Twitchell used it as a factory for producing *Cassimeres* and *Satinets*. He replaced the old machinery with new, employing 20 hands, turning out 700 yards of blue mixed and twilled flannel per day.

Mr Edes was a strong supporter of Newport schools. In 1877, a law was enacted granting independent action of union districts, today's SAU. He was elected to the Board of Education and became its financial agent. Mr Edes was a Constitutional Democrat and believed in the strict observance of the Constitution. In 1860, he represented Newport in the State Legislature. Mr. Edes was a founding member of the Newport Savings Bank in 1868, today known as Lake Sunapee Bank. He served on its first Board of Directors.

This short sketch of the life of Samuel Hart Edes demonstrates the nature of our founding fathers. They were immersed in many aspects of life in their town. Their guidance and endeavors have formed our town into what it is today, "a model of an American town".

Citations:

Granite Monthly, August 1882, Samuel Hart Edes, Esq.
Wheeler's History of Newport NH 1761-1878



The old Eagle Hotel



THANKSGIVING COMPANY?

What can you show them about Newport?

How about the Nettleton House,
the Newport Historical Society Museum?

Special Thanksgiving weekend hours, 10AM to 2PM,
on Sunday, November 27.

THE MUSEUM REPORT

By Larry Cote

It is the Newport Historical Society's practice to try to have all new or refreshed displays at the Museum for the anniversary of the signing of the Town Charter on October 6. We can report that this has been accomplished. We have hung many of our paintings, including several by Kenneth Andler, Barbara Huff, Felix Smith and Edna Eggleston. Please come to the Museum and see the work of these talented local artists for yourself. Thank you to Stan Sweeney, one of our Board members, who assisted with the rotation.

As always, the Museum is open Sundays from 10 AM until 2 PM (except on Holiday weekends), or by appointment. To make an appointment, leave a message on the phone at the Museum, 863-1294, and we will get back to you ASAP.

Jayna Huot Hooper's new book *Billy B. Van, Newport's Sunshine Peddler* is available for purchase at the Museum or any of our offsite venues. Jayna has also transcribed and produced a book titled, *Journal of Matter and Things in General*, the diary of Jacob Wheeler dated 1846/47. He writes about his observations around town with his future brother-in-law, Austin Corbin. You get a real feel for the town from that era from these publications.

The Museum Committee is always accepting donations of Newport-related artifacts from all eras. What makes an item a Newport artifact? Anything owned by someone from Newport past or present that will help us preserve Newport's story. It takes a large inventory to rotate displays so please help if you can. Items do not have to be "old" to be donated. Many interesting and historic items may end up in the trash during family home "clean-outs."

Things we are looking for are: Winter Carnival pin back buttons from the 1940's and 1957. High-school year books from most years. Photographs of Newport especially of Sunapee Street. Business memorabilia: coffee cups, pens, literature. Postcards of Newport, Guild, Kelleyville and Pollards Mills. We have no information on the Reeds Mills section of Newport.. Documentation on the various Mens & Womens clubs past and present is wanted. Over the years Newport has been very generous and has made the Newport Historical Society what it is today.

FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK

By Jackie Cote

October begins our new membership year. Our membership drive began in mid-September and your response to -date has been tremendous. As of **October 9**, we have **157** new and renewed members! Thank you so much for your continued support.

Renewed, new, or Life Members are eligible for the Nov. 8 drawing for the four \$25 gift certificates donated by Kathan Gardens, Dorr Mill Store, LaValley Building Supply, and Shaw's Supermarket, or, Brunch at the Courthouse Restaurant. Newport Historical Society (NHS) thanks these merchants and all the new and renewing members for your continued support. Your help is the key to our success in achieving the goals of our mission statement.

Again this year, the Sugar River Bank has kindly offered their foyer for an NHS offsite holiday sales venue on Friday and Saturday mornings, beginning Nov. 4 through Dec. 23. The exception is Saturday, Nov. 5 when we participate in the Richards School PTO Holiday event from 9 to 3 in the Richards gym. We will also be available at the Opera House on Saturday evening, Dec. 10, for "Twas Just Before Christmas". These venues, in addition to our Museum on Sundays, from 10am to 2pm, provide numerous locations for holiday shopping. You will be receiving a mailer shortly, with information on NHS merchandise available for holiday gifts. Sales of these items support the NHS mission.

Two new offerings this year are the books written by Jayna Hooper, *Billy B Van, Newport's Sunshine Peddler* (\$15.00), and *Journal of Matter and Things in General - 1847*, Jacob Wheeler's diary of his life in Newport and friendship with Austin Corbin Jr. (\$10.00) .

We have three new ornaments for 2016 in commemoration of Newport's 100th annual Winter Carnival, the **Queen, King Carnival Snow Sculpture** and **Dog Sled Racer** by the Corbin Bridge. The **Firehouse** and **Depot** (2015) ornaments were retired at year end with very limited supply remaining, so check your list and pick them up if you're collecting. The **Parlin Field** and **Tiger Mascot** ornaments will retire at the end of this year with quantities dwindling. **Nettleton House** and **Eagle Block** retire at the end of 2017 and **Towle School** and **Newport House**, end of 2018. Price remains \$12.00 boxed and bubble wrapped.

NHS Board Members: Cathryn Baird, Pres.; Jerry Hagebusch, V. Pres.; Larry Cote, Museum Director; Jackie Cote, Treas.; Jayna Hooper, Secretary; Priscilla Hagebusch, Rita James, Laura McCrillis Kessler, Dean Stetson, Ann St. Martin Stout, Stan Sweeney. (*Presently, there is an opening for a new board member. If interested, please apply in writing to the Newport Historical Society.*)

NEWPORT'S CULTURE-MAKERS

by Jayna Hooper

Newport is a hard-working town. There is a strong ethic of cooperation and a proud and stubborn sense of determination. As Billy B. Van once articulated, Newport doesn't feel the need to "be the best," just "the best that it can be." The lives of the three Newport notables mentioned in this newsletter – **Samuel H. Edes**, **Olli Turpeinen** (and his fellow Finns of Newport), and **Billy B. Van**, – are examples of the Newport culture. Their individual stories are diverse, yet, their lives present threads in the tapestry of our town that possess a remarkably similar texture.

Olli Turpeinen's work, *The Finns in Newport, New Hampshire*, is an outstanding resource that reveals the power of "cultural legacy". The following is a bit of Olli's personal story, showing the unfolding of this legacy, its echo of "Yankee" values, and its generational impact.

Born in Sunapee in 1924, Olli moved to Newport in 1930, where his parents were both weavers in the mills. Finnish immigrants had made a name for themselves due to their hard work ethic – one borne out of Finland's harsh land, poor soil and scanty crops, where "you had to work to survive" (Turpeinen, p.98). Olli shared that legacy, wherever life carried him.

Long-time friend and protégé, Jim Luppold, recently shared, that Olli "was a dairy farmer, mill worker, then at the beaches of Normandy in WWII, and then traveled the world as a courier for the Government. But he was happiest returning to Newport to be a teacher and then growing Christmas trees."

According to Luppold, Olli "always jumps into whatever he is doing with both feet." For one thing, he turned a substitute teaching job into a 30-year career. Olli himself might say that such a trait is not unlike the Finns he has written of – people with a penchant for turning whatever they made a go of into an all-consuming passion.

Olli's love for teaching never has left him, and Luppold (born well after Olli retired from the classroom) is thankful: "I always remember walking down the rows of his Christmas trees. Olli would trim one side of the trees as I did the other, and the entire time he would give me history lessons just because he was a natural teacher. He taught me to drive in the lower fields of the tree farm in the work truck. He would insist we stop at every 'intersection', look both ways, use the blinker, and then honk should we encounter any other traffic, while practicing among the trees."

Olli's generosity with resources – time, effort, property – was never unnoticed by Luppold. "Anyone who Olli thought might be down on their luck or couldn't afford a Christmas tree, he usually gave it to them. But he would follow footprints of people who snuck in the back to steal one, because he was dead set against thieves."

According to Luppold, "Olli believes you can never be too prepared. He has a car and a truck for travel, four work trucks for the farm, two backhoes, three four-wheelers, eight chainsaws...but, in typical old Yankee farmer fashion, only one or two is working at any given time."

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P.O. Box 413, Newport, NH 03773, Museum phone number 603-863-1294

Website www.newportnhhistory.org Email newporths1761@gmail.com Facebook [NewportHS1761](https://www.facebook.com/NewportHS1761)

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

Contributors to this issue: Cathryn Baird, Jackie Cote, Larry Cote, Jayna Hooper and Ann Stout

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