

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

THIS NEWSLETTER GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY JEFF MILLER, EDITOR OF WWW.LAKESUNAPEECHAMPION.COM

Volume 3, Issue 2 May 2009

REOPENING OF NHS MUSEUM

The NHS Museum celebrates its **Grand Reopening** on June 5! We will be open to the public Friday and Saturday from 10:00am to 2:00pm each week, June through October. Visits can be scheduled at other times by calling the Museum at 863-1294. We are located behind the Opera House and above the Old Courthouse Restaurant, with convenient parking behind

the town offices, just off of Central Street.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Town of Newport, Sylvia McElravy, Linda Watts, and Ken Dennis for sprucing us up with a new coat of paint. The Museum Committee has been sorting, organizing, and re-searching the collection in order to create new exhibits. We will feature paintings by Sid

Bickford, a mariner's desk built by early cabinetmaker William Lowell, and a very early colonial lantern. Please come see the new displays of historical Newport.

When you visit the Museum this season be sure to bring along visiting friends and relatives, too! A full line of Newport items will be available in the gift shop.

PACK A BOX FOR THE MUSEUM THIS SPRING



One person's junk is another person's treasure! Have you started

your Spring Cleaning? Need someone to take away those Newport items you no longer

want to keep? Please call the Museum (863-1294) before visiting the recycling center if you are disposing of historical items such as photographs, scrap books, school programs, diaries, postcards, furniture, clothing, etc. Remember - today is tomorrow's history. *Preserving our history is even more criti-*

cal now, with the demise of the Argus Champion. Local events are no longer recorded for posterity by the press, so we all need to pitch in to preserve Newport history! Please "Pack a Box" for the NHS Museum this spring - or any time throughout the year - just call for a free pickup.

NEW "NEWPORT" ITEMS AVAILABLE

We are working on our newest Newport product: a striking dark blue ceramic **Camp Mug** featuring the Opera House etched in white. Also new are the 2009 additions to our **Hand Painted Ornament** collection. This year we offer three: the Richards Library, Corbin Covered Bridge, and one in honor of Sarah Josepha Hale. We commemorate her early inspirational life in Newport with an image of the school house where she taught

and a young girl kneeling beside a small lamb. This beautiful ornament captures the essence of her poem "Mary's Little Lamb." All ornaments are boxed with bubble wrap for safety, and the price remains at \$11.00 - a great bargain for hand painted ornaments!

The **Newport Town Crock** (\$28.00) is back. Manufactured by Salmon Falls Stoneware in Dover, NH, it has "Newport NH" painted across the top, a

large heart in the middle and "1761" underneath. What a wonderful way to show how much you love this great town of ours! All of these items are available by contacting Jackie Cote (863-3105) or by visiting the Museum gift shop. JC



Please join us!

NHS Monthly Meetings Open To All

Second Monday
of the Month

Sugar River Bank
Community Room

May 11

June 8

July 13

August 10

7:00 pm

The Inside Scoop

- *Diary of Charles Emerson*
- *Building Fund*
- *Recent Donations*
- *The Old Mill Pond*
- *Newport Notables: Jane & William Lowell*
- *Membership Form*

THE DIARY OF CHARLES EMERSON: 1852-1853

Last fall a typed copy of the diary of Charles Emerson was uncovered at the NHS Museum. The diary covers the years 1852-1853, and records his trip to San Francisco on the clipper ship *Staffordshire*. He left Boston in June, perhaps not realizing the voyage would place him in the middle of winter when rounding Cape Horn. The *Staffordshire* moved at 15 knots and traveled 127 miles in an eight hour period. Other factual information details the specifications of the ship, including the size of the sails. The Captain and the "important" members of the crew are named.

It took Mr. Emerson two months to complete the journey, during which he braved strong winds and rough seas which drove the ship towards rocks. At times conditions were so cold the crew had to chip ice from the frozen decks. He describes life below deck as the ship rose and fell in mountainous seas, and notes that a 300 pound hog penned on deck washed over the side.

Mr. Emerson also writes of periods when they lost wind, the ship almost motionless in the water, not gaining one mile in a forty-eight hour period. He tells of the whales and sharks that kept them company, swimming along side the ship for days. At one time they saw another ship, and raised the American flag to identify themselves. The two ships raced one another, and it became very clear the *Staffordshire* was superior. They finally reached the peaceful waters of the Pacific Ocean and sailed into San Francisco on August 13, 1852. Emerson's first thought was to get ashore and find a Post Office. On November 20, 1852 San Francisco received word that Daniel Webster had died a month earlier. Across the city flags were flown at half mast and guns fired.

Mr. Emerson lists the various jobs he took and the amount he was paid. He saw a tree 30 feet across at the base and 300 feet tall; herds of elk numbering to 1,000; and Indians taking immense

numbers of salmon from the river. He describes San Francisco in the 1850's as a lawless place where hangings and killings and duels were a daily occurrence.

The last passage in the diary is a short addendum, dated July 26, 1892, and describes a dinner meeting at the Newport House between the seventy year old Charles Emerson and his traveling companions Charles S. Day and Edmund Johnson. The three gentlemen reminisced of their trip to California in 1852 and their safe return home to Newport. To fully understand Charles Emerson's experience, visit the Museum and read his diary for yourself!

This Emerson family came to Newport from Newbury. Charles was the son of Clark Emerson, a brick maker, and was born in 1822. He became a stonemason and farmer, and is described by Edmund Wheeler in *The History of Newport* as "a man of extraordinary mechanical genius." LC

BUILDING FUND ESTABLISHED

At our January meeting NHS members voted to establish a **Building Fund** in order to begin saving for a new home for the Society and its Museum. The present site has many limitations. We lack handicap access; space issues limit gatherings to 25 people; and the collection (as well as museum staff) is subject to freezing temperatures in winter and cooking

aromas year round.

We do not yet have the sponsorship in place to mount a capital campaign, but the need is so striking that we must begin. All profits from the sale of our Newport products go to the building fund. In addition, any contributions from members or the community are most welcome! Remember - contribu-

tions are tax deductible. In less than six months we have raised \$851 - a small start, but we look forward to watching the balance grow!

We are ready to do the work, so please help spread the word that we need a major sponsor for this project. Thank you for your support! JC

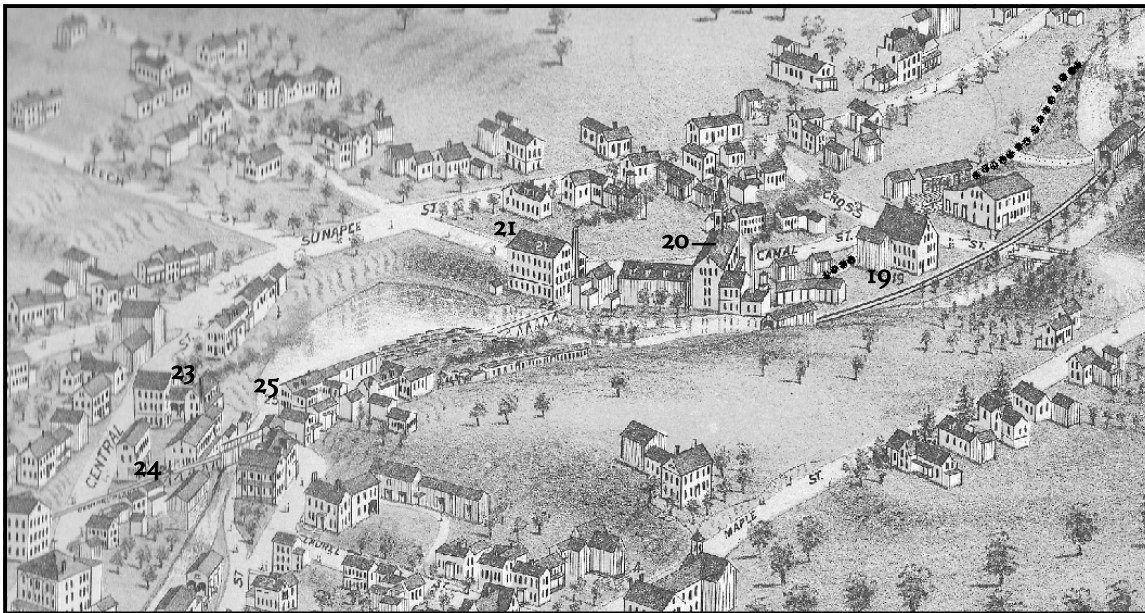
HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S LATEST GIFTS

Many, many thanks to the following people for their recent donations to the Museum. Dori Kimball gave us twenty-three items, the highlight of which is a near perfect copy of Wheeler's town history. Among the items donated by Angela Maxam are postcards, school pictures and school programs. Virginia Burton provided two beautiful scans of her family home in North Newport, and Charles Massey gave us a valuable matted poster and program of an 1897 Opera House production entitled "The Festival." The NHS appreciates all donations, which support our mission to collect and document Newport history. LC



1947 - 1948
Towle
Band

A VISIT TO THE OLD MILL POND



Newport's first settlers eyed the surrounding terrain and were grateful for the water flowing so abundantly through the site of their new town. They recognized early on the advantages of the swiftly flowing Sugar River, which helped Newport grow from an agrarian outpost to a busy mill town.

Using this 1877 Ruger & Stoner Bird's Eye View of

Newport, let's take a look at the area around the village mill pond, which became the heart of this industrious community.

Grist mills were so important that most communities had more than one. Newport's first grist mill in Guild, built by Benjamin Giles, is well known. The first grist mill in Newport village was built sometime before 1787, and located on the above map at #23 (just off Central Street.) It was financed by Daniel Dudley, an early settler from Saybrook, Connecticut and shoemaker by trade. His cousin John Dudley superintended its construction, and it was sold to Roswell Kelsey, the first owner. Dudley also built the first village saw mill. It was originally located near the grist mill and then moved to the location shown here in 1815 (25). William Cheney made big changes along this section of the Sugar River when he built a dam (located between 23 and 25) and canal (identified by the dots on the above map) in 1815. The dam helped supply a predictable source of falling water to turn the mill wheels. Eventually two more dams were installed in this area. The canal allowed more mills access to the flowing water. For over one hundred years the water powered mills in this area produced a myriad of products - from barrels to food to fine furniture - that supported Newport and the surrounding communities and shipped products throughout New England.

The W. L. Dow Company is at the center of this map (21). Originally on this site (1813) James Wolcott manufactured cotton yarn. The mill burned in 1831, and was rebuilt as a flaxseed oil mill. In 1844 it became the Eagle Mills and manufactured flannel. The Edes flannel mill (20) is to the right of Dow.

Following the map to the right is 19, the Scribner Hosiery Shop. This was originally the site of a carding mill and later became a toy shop. The Rounsevel tannery (24 - just below the grist mill) was once the site of William Lowell's cabinetmaking shop. Lowell and Willard Harris were leading Newport cabinetmakers from 1806 (Harris) and 1818 (Lowell) until the early 1830's. At different times other manufactories along this stretch of the Sugar River produced woodenware, tanned leather, silk thread, worsted yarn, and satin. In later years shoe factories predominated.

Study this map to see how much of old Newport remains today. Take a walk along this section of the Sugar River. You can still see mighty penstocks, a railroad bridge, a dam, and the remains of the foundations of our early village mills. MM



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 Fund \$_____ Operating Fund \$_____ Building Funds\$_____

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 through the generous funding of Jeff Miller, your local high school sports internet site. Contributors to this issue: Jackie Cote, Larry Cote, and Mary Lou McGuire.

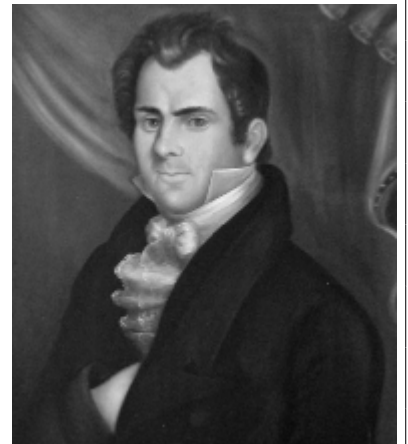
Newport Historical Society
PO Box 413
Newport, NH 03773

NEWPORT NOTABLES:



Jane Lowell 1803 - 1872

William Lowell, a native of Newburyport, Massachusetts, came to Newport in 1818 from Sutton, New Hampshire. He married twice, both times to Giles sisters from Sutton: Polly in 1818 and Jane in 1826. Jane is pictured here after the birth of her first child. Lowell and Polly had four children, of whom two survived. He had six children with Jane; their daughter Justina was the only one to live to adulthood. She married Benjamin Young of Sunapee, who became a Boston merchant. The heyday of Newport's furniture manufactories was from 1820 to the mid 1830's. During that time William Lowell and Willard Harris operated large rival cabinet-making shops. Lowell's shop was located on the mill pond behind today's Eagle Block. MM



William Lowell 1795 - 1839

Sources: Wheeler's *History of Newport*; Giffen, Jane C. "New Hampshire Cabinetmakers and Allied Craftsmen, 1790-1850: a Checklist." *Antiques*. July 1968; Garvin, Donna Belle. *A Neat and Lively Aspect, Newport, New Hampshire as a Cabinetmaking Center*. Historical NH, Fall 1988.