

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

THIS NEWSLETTER GENEROUSLY FUNDED BY LAKE SUNAPEE BANK

Volume 8, Issue 4

From the President's Pen . . .

by Cathryn
Baird

"A Man, A Plan, A Canal – Panama!"

Leigh Mercer Notes & Queries, November 13, 1948

Perhaps you are wondering what the above quote has to do with The Newport Historical Society. I became fascinated with palindromes as a form of wordplay when my Jr. High English teacher made students write "don't nod" forward and backwards 100 times if one looked tired and bored! Aside from "Don't Nod", **"A Man, A Plan, A Canal – Panama!"** is the only other palindrome that I can remember. Since one of the articles in this newsletter is about the Sibley Scythe, I found myself reflecting on this palindrome and the 100th anniversary of the completion of the Panama Canal and its connection to Newport. No one knows for certain how many scythes were purchased from the factory in North Newport to aid in the jungle clearing for construction of the canal but due to the generosity of Gloria and John McDonough, the NHS Museum now has a fine example of this significant historical connection.

Palindromes have been around for centuries. Hopefully Newport's history will also endure the test of time. Here are a few more palindromes to all of the supporters of the Newport Historical Society:

Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to a new era?

Blessed are they that believe that they are blessed.

And as election day approaches:

Rise to vote sir!

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. Oct. 13

Mon. Nov. 10

Mon. Dec. 8

Mon. Jan. 12

PROGRAMS: Wed. Nov. 12

6:30 PM in

Sugar River

Bank Community Room.

Program: *Abe
Lincoln & Sara J.*

Hale, by Steve
and Sharon

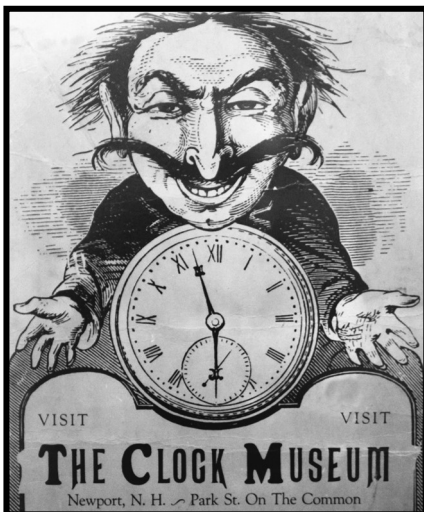
Woods. New-
port's own Sara

Hale relates her campaign to make
Thanksgiving a national holiday.

No Dec. or Jan. programs.



THE CLOCK MUSEUM by Larry Cote

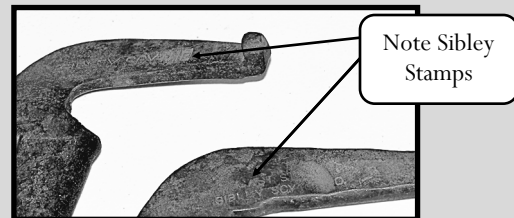


The Newport Historical Society recently purchased this poster of the Newport Clock Museum. We are exhibiting it in our new display of Newport Business. The Clock Museum was located at 43 Park Street and run by Wesley Hallett, a retired New York Banker, and his wife. The Museum had 720 clocks and 340 watches, some clocks dating back to the 1600's. They also ran an antique shop in the house with a large assortment of antique pistols.

In preparing for this article, I find almost no information is available about when the Museum opened or when it closed. Rumor has it that the collection of clocks went to the Smithsonian Museum. Rather than an informative article, this has become a request for information about the Clock Museum. If anyone knows where we can find something written about the Clock Museum, please let us know. Also, please drop by the NHS Museum to see the posters, photographs and brochures that we have on the Clock Museum.

THE SIBLEY SCYTHE SHOP OF NORTH NEWPORT

By Larry Cote



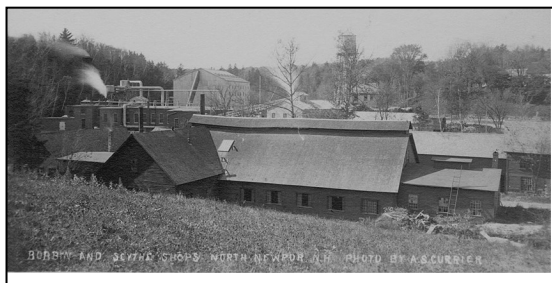
After searching for a "Sibley Scythe" for several years, John and Gloria McDonough donated a great example of a Sibley brush cutter scythe.



John McDonough and Larry Cote

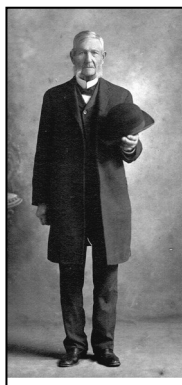
In 1842 Sylvanus Larned started a scythe shop in North Newport with a small group of men. The shop was powered by water from a canal channeling water from the Sugar River.

Sibley Scythe Shop in
North Newport



In 1845 Ezra T. Sibley purchased an interest in the scythe shop. From that time until it ceased operation it was known as "The Sibley Scythe Factory". Mr. Larned died in 1848 and William Dunton became associated with the business. In 1851 Mr. Sibley purchased the interest of Mr. Dunton and operated it by himself until 1873 when he enlarged the business and was joined by his son, Frank A. Sibley as a partner. The 1870 census indicates that the shop used 44,000 pounds of steel and iron, produced 30,000 scythes and paid \$7,500 in wages. Frank Sibley operated the shop until his death in 1909.

Ezra Taft Sibley at age 87



Sibley Home in North Newport,
now Oak St. home of Dr. A. Walsh

Frank's wife, Mary M. Sibley, ran the shop with D. K. Barry for two years when Charles E. Winter, a son-in-law of Mrs. Sibley, became the plant foreman. In 1912,

a new building was added to produce hatchets. Mr. Barry sold his interest in 1913 to Mrs. Sibley. Mr. Winter left in 1920 to enter the shoe business with his brother. Frank's eldest son, Homer T. Sibley ran the shop with his mother until it closed in 1929.



Interior of Sibley Scythe Shop

The original buildings were destroyed twice by fire, in 1848 and again in 1928. In the 1848 fire 100 dozen finished scythes and much of the machinery were lost. After the 1928 fire the buildings were quickly rebuilt but the business closed the following year.

Sibley scythes were shipped to Germany, India and were predominantly used to clear the land during the building of the Panama Canal, 1903-1914. The buildings are still standing on the Newport side of the green highway bridge in North Newport.



Employees of the Sibley Scythe Shop

Reference data:

Wheeler History of Newport 1761-1878
Newport's 1961 Bicentennial Booklet

WINTER CARNIVAL MEMORABILIA? (anyone?)

The Museum is planning an exhibit on Newport's Winter Carnivals for next year. As we look at the Historical Society's collection of pins, we see there are a few gaps. While Winter Carnival started in Newport in 1916, (Newport has the longest continuous carnival in the state) we believe that the issue of Winter Carnival pins/buttons began around 1941. The Historical Society has pins from 1960 clear through to 2014, with no gaps. But in the 40's

and 50's, we only **have** the following: **1941, 1942, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1958 and 1959 and a 1955 Press Ribbon**

If you have souvenir pins/buttons from the missing dates, we would be delighted to add them to the NHS collection. Other Winter Carnival memorabilia would be welcomed and be carefully conserved and displayed for our 1916 exhibit.

MUSEUM REPORT

By Larry Cote

At this time of year, we change the displays at the Museum for the coming year. The kitchen, bedroom and gallery have been refreshed. We have four completely new exhibits, including one in the first floor hall honoring Jesse Scott. The room across from the kitchen contains Newport business artifacts. Hanging in the second floor hall are old Newport pictures; and, the room across from the bedroom has a toy oriented display. We hope you will drop by and see the new exhibits.

Work has begun on correcting the water issue on the East end of the Nettleton House Museum Building. The excavating to remove the asphalt has been completed and the cement work will soon start. We did notice that once we removed the asphalt, the bricks below were wet, which could cause the foundation to fail if not corrected.

Sunday, September 14th we had a kickoff event for the fundraising for replacement windows. The attendance was good and the response was even greater, with several people pledging to purchase a window or contributing to the project. We hope to conclude the fundraising by mid-spring so we can order the new windows and have them installed by mid-summer. If you are interested in donating to the window fund, please contact Cathryn Baird or Jackie and Larry Cote (863-3105) or leave a message at the Museum (863-1294) and we will get you a pledge card.

In the past year, we received 73 donations of articles; some were one item while others were hundreds! Thank you all, your donations help to preserve the history of Newport and allow the Museum Committee to change and keep the Museum displays fresh.

We are always looking for Docents to staff the Museum on Sundays. Training will be provided and you will find working at the Museum interesting. Contact Virginia Irwin or Larry Cote (863-3105) or leave a message at the Museum (863-1294) if interested.

FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK

By Jackie Cote

Most important, please let me thank everyone for their past support of our museum by purchasing one or more of the over 60 items available for sale from NHS. The profit from these sales funds the operating expenses of the museum building.

Some of our new offerings include our newly designed quart crock at \$28,



our pint crock at \$22, glasses with the opera house etched image-14 oz tall and 14 oz "on the rocks" both at \$12 each.



We have a new Camp Mug in burgundy, hunter green and cobalt blue with the Nettleton House etched image for \$12 each.



Our 2014 new, hand-painted ornaments of the Nettleton House Museum and the Eagle Block (current home of Salt Hill Pub) come boxed and bubble wrapped with the price remaining at \$12. We have used the proofs of the ornaments to create beautiful

note cards offered with 5 cards & envelopes for \$5. These make great stocking stuffers. In addition, we continue to offer several books and our Newport Sunshine tee and sweat-shirts. As the holidays approach, we hope that you will consider our offerings for your gift-giving needs. Thanks in advance for your holiday support.



2014-2015 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Members are the heartbeat of any non-profit organization. At NHS your dues and donations support our mission of collecting, preserving and displaying Newport's history. At the end of our September 30 membership year, we were 248 members strong—just two short of our 2011 anniversary goal of 250 members in celebration of Newport's 250th birthday.

Please help us to attain and surpass this goal by renewing your membership or becoming a new member using the membership form below. We are grateful for your past support and look forward to your continued membership.

WINDOWS REPLACEMENT FUNDRAISING PROJECT

As an insert to this newsletter, you will find our Windows Fact Sheet with a pledge form on the back side. We have 23 windows in the museum building on three floors that need to be replaced for the reasons stated in the fact sheet. The cost per window is \$1,000 including the window, installation and painting of the inside face.

As of this date, we are over the half way point in our fundraising goal of \$23,000. Purchase a window or send what you can. Any amount will be greatly appreciated. Thanks in advance.



Dairy buildings on Spring Street

This stone DAIRY sign was mounted above the entrance of the dairy barn once owned by Billy B. Van. Van



had purchased Cutting Farm in 1918 for a commercial dairy venture. See the Newport Historical Society Newsletter of April, 2014 for the story. The building, now owned by Rick Bascom, is being razed. Mr. Bascom kindly donated the sign to the Historical Society. Kevin "Red" Onnola removed the sign from the building for us. Dean Stetson, NHS board member, transported the stone to temporary storage at woodlot property of another of our members, GK Stetson, while NHA considers appropriate display options. (photos by Dean Stetson)

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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