

## Washington Historical Society Newsletter

WINTER 2016 EDITION

### Presidents Message

This season was very interesting with the various well attended programs. A couple of them set records for attendance. With folks coming from outlying towns.

We were fortunate to receive some very substantial donations from members and friends of the Society. Some of them from anonymous donors, for such things as painting and a lawn mower. We thank them all with sincerity.

We plan to have painting done early in the spring as it was too late this fall when we located a painter. Some new volunteers came forward to assist with the museums open hours, however more are needed.

Thanksgiving is upon us and soon Christmas, I'd like to thank everyone that helped out this year. I wish everyone Happiness, Peace, and good health thru the winter and look forward to seeing you again in 2017.

Phil Barker

### Washington Historical Society Officers

President:		Barn Committee:	Phil Barker Volunteers needed
Vice President:	Phil Barker (495-3640)	Museum Committee:	Gwen Gaskell Volunteers needed
Treasurer:	Elaine Crandall (495-3416)	Museum Aide:	Gail Revane
Secretary:	Marian Baker	Newsletter Committee:	Gwen Gaskell Tom Talpey Barbara Gaskell
Archivist:	Gwen Gaskell (495-3231)	Program/Publicity Committee:	Tom Talpey Pete Martin
Board of Directors:	Brenda Gililand Tom Talpey (495-3284) Pete Martin		
Auditor:			
Webmaster:	Phil Budne		

## **The 2016 Season**

*by Gwen Gaskell*

The past season was a successful one at the museum. There were many visitors, some by the bus load, to see the display of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Farnsworth family. While they may have come for our featured displays, visitors enjoyed the whole museum while there. Many of them were from large cities and were not used to small towns and our pride in our history.

The Museum Committee chose to put up the SDA Church display when we learned that the Church was having a 25 year celebration for their Sabbath trail and that they wanted to include the museum on their "tour" of the town.

Some of the SDA visitors were eager to buy souvenirs and several made suggestions of items that the museum could sell for a dollar or two, like buttons or magnets. These are a definite possibility that we are considering. They did like the sets of pen & ink drawings by Joyce Paradis.

We have just been given a new acquisition which will be on display at the museum next summer. It is an oil lamp which is said to have been retrieved from the town hall back in the 40's when electricity was put in and the lamps were taken off the walls. I'm quite sure there is no one left around that could verify this information or recognize a lamp.

Do you have any suggestions for future displays or articles? Please let me know.

## **The W.H.S. 34 Years Young**

*by Gwen Gaskell*

Our fall 2001 edition of the Newsletter had an article by Phil Barker giving the history of the founding of our Historical Society. The organizational meeting was held on October 25, 1982, with 45 people attending. A committee was chosen to investigate and further ideas, intents and ideals. Judge Ken Brighton volunteered his legal services in drawing up a charter and by-laws in accordance with the aims of the Society and the laws of the state of NH. The first formal meeting was held on December 13, 1982, which seemed appropriate since the town was incorporated on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1776.

The Charter Meeting opened with chairman Phil Barker presenting the proposed Articles of Agreement for the Society together with the Constitution and By-Laws, which were approved and officers were elected.

Early meetings were held in the Town Hall with our 45 original members. Upon reviewing that list, it appears that regrettably, many have passed on over the 34 years but 18 are still living and 5 are still active in the society.

It is interesting to note that one of the first topics discussed was the task of locating some of the old family burial grounds in town. We believe they have mostly been found except for the one on the northwest side of Lovell Mountain. A few hunters have reported seeing it but cannot locate it again for us to mark it or take pictures. Here is an opportunity for someone to be a HERO!

In 1983, on January 5<sup>th</sup> our Charter was recorded by the Secretary of State and on January 7<sup>th</sup> by our Town Clerk. Members started forming plans for cataloging graveyards, making a cookbook, preservation of the town pound and made a recommendation to the selectmen to name town roads.

In 1984 it was brought to our attention that a postage stamp would be issued honoring General Sylvanus Thayer who spent several years of his youth in Washington and attended Tubbs Union Academy here. There is a stone marker with his history to the right of the town hall, which was placed there in 1976 during the bicentennial. There are several engineering schools which bare his name and he is considered "The Father of West Point" where he instituted the disciplinary code.

In 1985 work began toward our town common being placed on the National Register of Historic Sites. This became a reality in April of 1986.

The next 5 years were largely spent on receiving the District #5 school in East Washington from the School Board and raising funds for its preservation, which ended up in a trust that doesn't pay the expenses. This was explained last spring in an article about the school.

In 1992 we acquired our own museum building on Half Moon Pond Road. It had been built on the foundation of the former Harry & Dora Newman home and had been Half Moon Antiques. Work was done and in 1993 the museum artifacts were moved from the Library basement and various locations in town to our building where a security system was installed. One item being the barn loom which had been stored for 100 years finding that only 2 pulleys and the pegs were missing so it was made operable and items are made on it each year.

1994 was the year for moving the large safe which had been acquired, as a gift, from Brookstone in Peterborough into the basement through a new door made into the basement of the museum. This had to have the use of Rick Niven's large excavator due to the weight & size. The safe has proven to be very useful for the storage of the oldest and most valued documents. A security system was installed.

In 1995 we were awarded a Conservation Assessment Grant for our museum and the District #5 School. Assessments were made and most of the suggestions were in the process of being done or have been since then. Our mortgage was paid in full!

1996 Found "Crams Corner" being reconfigured and there was a great opportunity to do some landscaping with millstones that had been rescued from the brook coming out of Half Moon Pond. We got permission from the selectmen to place them at the corner, part way up the bank, to honor the mills and the men who had worked them in the previous century. With our aging membership we are finding it difficult to keep the weed whacking done a few times each summer. Help! That year a metal roof was put on our museum building.

1997 was the year of the woven throw with scenes of Washington woven into it. So many were sold by pre-order that we re-ordered before the first ones were ready. We were out of stock for a few years but have them again as so many new people are in town and children have grown and wanted their own. They are available in green or navy with white. The good news is that the price has NOT gone up. \$44.95 but shipping has. Two Renni gas heaters were installed.

In 1998 the museum was sided with white vinyl and new windows were installed on the front of the building. Windows at the School were scraped, glass reset, glazed and painted. Lexan was put over the windows to protect them and add security.

We held our first "Sidewalk Cafe" at Mirage Alpacas during the Wool Arts Tour in October which turned into a successful fund raiser for several years.

We purchased a new dehumidifier for the museum in 1999 and bought new roll up shades for the school.

In 2000 the society provided information and pictures for a book and film on the history of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. A copy of each was given to the society and is available on loan. The Society sponsored the Antrim Players for two evenings for a Variety Show held upstairs in the town Hall. A computer was purchased for the records and acquisitions of the society.

In 2002 a new roof was put onto the dist. #5 School.

The year of 2003 saw the acquisition of the Bruen Barn, next to the museum, become a reality after a few years of considering the possibility and working out details. The winter and summer were spent clearing out debris and preparing for some serious work to begin after getting bids of contractors to do some of the tougher work.

A Quilt documentation day was held at the Camp Morgan Lodge.

"Nellie's Diary" became of much interest to a few of us that transcribed and researched information. Jerry Johnson who found the diary in Florida came to visit and gave us the actual diary in the summer of 2004. We have kept in touch with Jerry. Information has been passed on over the years.

The Barn" was the focus of our attention in 2004. We hired Richard Thompson of Cornish NH to work with us on the barn preservation. Ladies made a quilt depicting the 52 barns left in Washington at the time and raffled it off to raise \$ toward the restoration. With completely new underpinnings and new planks on the floor we celebrated in October with a barn dance.

Old fashioned cut clapboards were found on line in Maine which were purchased and early in 2005 were cut, stained on both sides and prepared to be installed onto the exterior of the barn by the members and volunteers but Richard Thompson & crew was hired to come back to do the high portions, as well as put on our new metal roof.

The quilt was raffled and raised \$4,240. Throughout the process there were many other fund raisers, contributions of materials, money, time and labor as well as artifacts that have filled the barn which answered the once asked question, "What will we put in it?"

In 2006 we were honored to have the Executive Director of the NH Preservation Alliance come to speak at our May meeting and she presented our barn committee members Phil Barker, Jim Gaskell and Richard Crane and Richard Thompson with certificates of recognition for their work in "Preservation, Planning and Education" on the Societies barn.

In 2007 it became obvious that we had to do some work on our museum basement as the back portion which had been filled in when the building was built was settling and the cracks could no longer be filled to keep out moisture and bugs. The bid went to Phil Barker, as others thought the job to small to bother with. Phil jacked the back of the building and successfully did the job with a poured foundation and framed the portion a few feet above ground level, installed a double door on the side toward the barn, waterproofed the foundation and installed drain pipe on the parking lot side of the foundation. New steps and a new handicapped ramp has been built.

In recent years there have been interesting historic type articles on the centenarians of Washington, Stores in town, the History of Camp Morgan, which has been made into a booklet available through our gift shop, the first snowmobile in town, taverns, Shedd Free Library, our Civil War Monument, Orchids in Washington and many, many more.

In 2010 we were notified that 40 years of diaries of Clara May Hurd were up for auction. We bought them and by donations of generous people were able get our budget back in line, to transcribe them and learn a great deal about "OUR" town and its way of life from 1872 through 1912. In 2014 a generous contribution made it possible for us to have the diaries of Clara's daughter Alice who raised her niece, Jeanette Hurd Meier, who some of us knew well and admired. We were even given the square Grand Piano that was purchased for Jennie to practice on as she grew up and spent summers in Washington and was in the Hurd home for nearly 100 years. We invite people play it when they visit the museum in the summer.

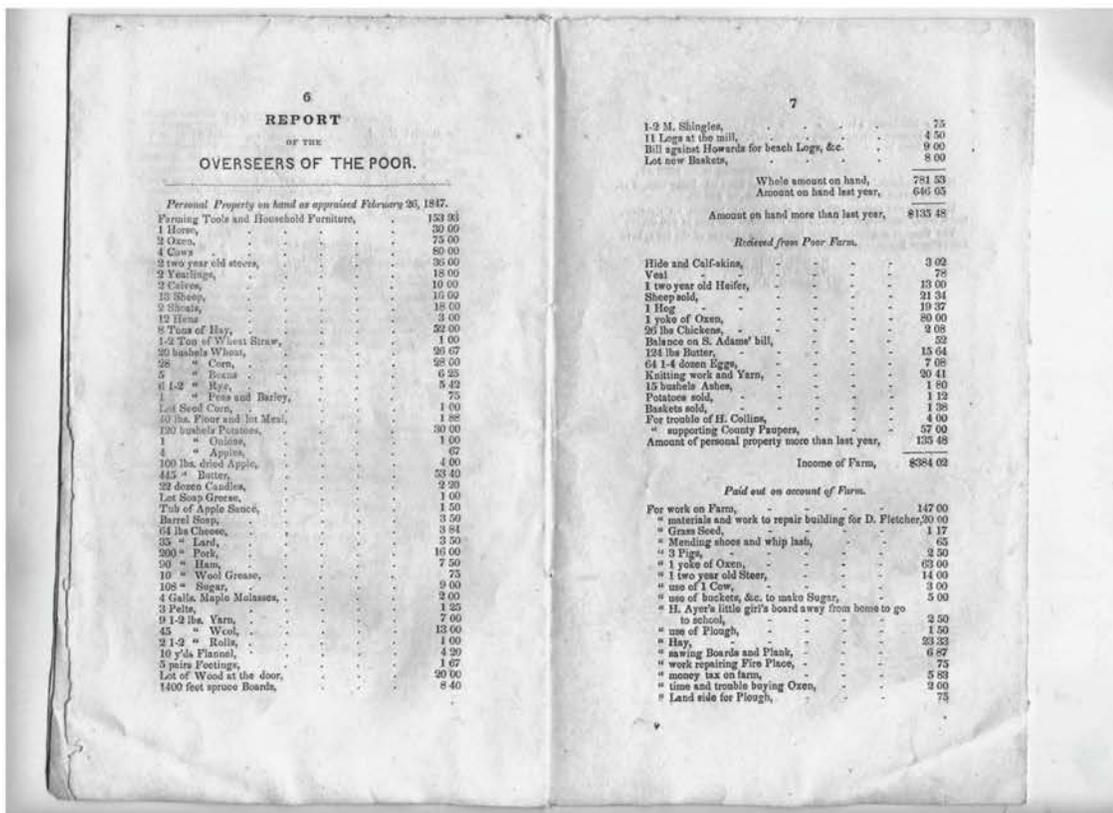
We have added trivets with a lovely picture of the town common to our gift shop collection as well as the DVD of the documentary about the town hall which was done for the meetinghouse 225<sup>th</sup> celebration in 2012.

For the past 3 years our big fundraisers have been the July pie sale and an August Pot Roast supper.

I titled this article 34 years young but the fact is that that while our Society is relatively YOUNG, the membership is getting OLD. We need some young blood and new ideas and people with enthusiasm to help keep this Society on the move.

If you have ideas or are interested in any way please send a letter or e-mail to the society or just come to our meetings when they start up again in April. Our newsletters are on line or share this hard copy with a friend.

Remember, "A stranger is only a friend you haven't met yet." So-- come join us and become friends!



The report of the Overseers of the Poor in Washington dated 1846.

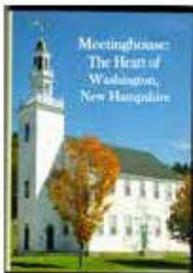
The original is in the Town of Washington archives.

**ITEMS FOR SALE  
FEATURING FAVORITE LANDMARKS OF  
WASHINGTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Please order by mail, or call: Elaine Crandall (603) 495-3416, ecrandall@verizon.net  
Gwen Gaskell (603) 495-3231 jimgwen@gsinet.net

ITEM DESCRIPTION	PRICE
<b>Tote Bag</b> This custom designed tapestry tote bag depicts the much photographed buildings on our Town Common. Tapestry woven in an array of beautiful colors, it measures a generous 17 1/2 inches square. Long 25 inch handles are easy on the shoulders. Lined, with inside pocket.	\$30.00
<b>Afghan.</b> Featuring scenes of Washington woven into a beautiful memento of our Town. It is available in green or blue on an off white background	\$45.00
<b>Puzzle.</b> Our 494-piece, 14" x 19" puzzle is an aerial photograph of the Washington town center by Bill St. Pierre. A limited edition collectible.	\$5.00
<b>Mug.</b> White ceramic mug with sketch of the three steepled buildings in the center of Town. They are 11 ounce and can be used in the microwave and dishwasher. White mugs with black print.	\$5.00
<b>Trivet.</b> A 6" x 6" ceramic trivet, or tile, suitable for hot or cold, with a leather backing, featuring a color photograph of the three steepled buildings in the center of town. Gift boxed.	\$15.00
<b>Gustine Hurd Images Postcards</b> Two postcards have been generated, using copies of very old photographs taken in the early 1880s by Gustine Hurd. Also available as single fold notecards packaged in sets of four, including envelopes. Two of each or all four of the same image. Both the postcards and the folded notecards are 5 1/2 x 4 1/4 inches.	50¢ each \$5.00 per set
 <b>Glass Medallion</b> – Suitable for a window hanging, depicting the Town Hall. Adapted from an early 1880s wet plate photograph made by Gustine L. Hurd. These 3 inch diameter medallions are available in Blue or Green.	\$5.00 each

**DVD Available**



Meetinghouse: The Heart of Washington, New Hampshire

Few structures say "New England" as eloquently as does a classic eighteenth century Meetinghouse. The small hill town of Washington, New Hampshire, claims such a Meetinghouse. Erected on the 4th of July, 1787, it is still the heart of the town. In this film the town opens its heart to the world. It displays 225 years of affectionate, sometimes contentious, interplay between generations of Washington citizens and the Meetinghouse on the Town Common.

\$20 per DVD Shipping is: \$3 for one DVD plus \$2 for each additional.

*All items can be shipped for an additional charge. Call or email Elaine Crandall or Tom Talpey at the contact info above to ascertain the amount required. It will be in the range of \$4 to \$10 per package, depending on your zip code.*

## Washington's Town Farm

by Tom Talpey

*“Over the hill to the poor-house I’m trudgin’ my weary way—  
I, a woman of seventy, and only a trifle gray—”*

Thus begins a poem written in 1872 by poet and journalist Will Carleton about a fictitious destitute woman, whose several family members were unable or unwilling to care for her. Few people today realize that this could very well have been written to describe a resident of Washington living 150 years ago. There actually was the equivalent of a poor-house in Washington, labeled on old maps as the “Town Farm.” It was on Barden Pond Road off Valley Road about a mile north of the Stoddard town line. It is now a Class VI and not passable for cars.

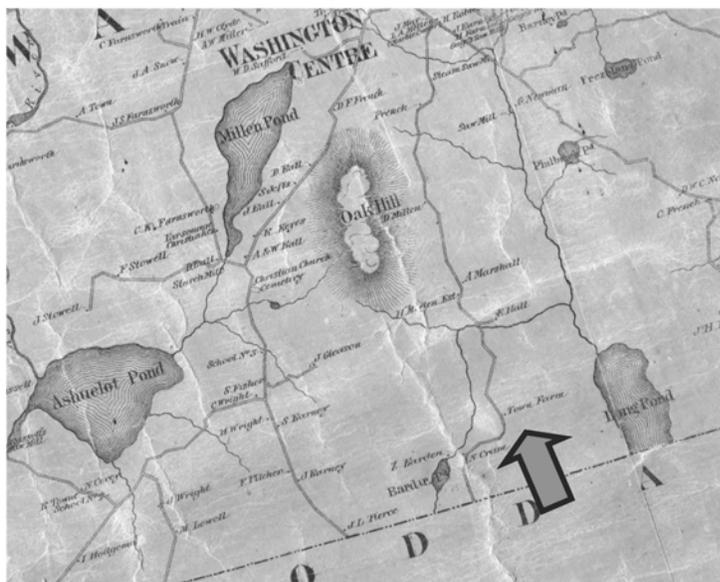
According to the Town Clerk’s Records in the Archives, in 1841, pursuant to State and Federal laws requiring towns to care for their poor, Washington voted at its Town Meeting to purchase a Town Farm as its way of complying with the law. There were other ways to comply, such as “boarding out” where a family would take in a needy soul and the town would pay for his or her expenses (this occurred to some extent in Washington,) and another dubbed “auctioning off” wherein the town sought the lowest bidder to care for the individual. These occurred mainly between the era of town farms and the creation of the Social Security program.

Apparently the vote to purchase the Town Farm was not without controversy, as there is also a record of an unusual “special” Town Meeting held about 3 weeks later, called specifically to reconsider the vote. The original vote prevailed, however, and a month later, for the sum of \$1200, a farm of 144 acres owned by Augustus Harnden was acquired. It appears that he and his wife remained on the farm for a number of years thereafter, presumably acting as superintendents. A Town office, known as “Overseers of the Poor” was created, with the Selectmen generally acting as the overseers as part of their duties. There were still reverberations, however, for in the warrant for the 1842 Town Meeting an article to sell the Town Farm appears but was dismissed and finally at the 1843 Town Meeting it was voted to “leave to the discretion of the Selectmen to make what disposition they think proper of the Town Farm and Support of Paupers.” Another attempt to take the Town out of the farm business was made in 1846 when a warrant article again appears to sell the farm. This time the minutes indicate that when the article came up the meeting was “adjourned for one hour,” perhaps to allow some one-on-one “arm twisting” at a nearby tavern. (Remember, in those days only men could vote at town meeting.) Upon reconvening, however, the article was again dismissed.

Records from this far back are hard to come by but in the Town Archives, there is a copy of the 1846 Overseers of the Poor report, which gives an inventory of items on the Town Farm property at that time, together with a summary of the farm’s expenses and profits. It appears to have been a fully working farm at the time, with a statement that the farm profit was \$45.69. At that time the farm was supporting the supervisor and his wife, as well as two paupers, whose names are given.

The NH State Library has a copy (printed in 1862) of the Washington Overseers of the Poor report for the year 1861, which was fifteen years later than the one discussed above. The expenses are reported as \$623.70, whereas the income was only \$183.00, resulting in a loss of \$440.70. There were 6 paupers supported on the farm by then and another 5 who did not reside on the farm, but were supported in other ways by the town at an expense of \$82.31, making the total expense of caring for the Poor in the farm’s 20<sup>th</sup> year \$523.01.

Meanwhile, Augustus Harnden died in 1850 and is buried in the East Washington Cemetery. His wife, Mary Pratt (commonly called Polly) died in 1863, aged 83, and is buried next to him. They had 10 children; Augustus himself having been one in a family of 11, so it would be fair to say that he was accustomed to a large family. His eldest granddaughter, Susan C. Wilson (b. in Stoddard Dec. 13, 1834) married Gilman G. Spaulding of East Washington, so that may explain why her grandparents are buried in East Washington.



Meanwhile, the town had built a fence as well as a barn on the farm, an addition had been added to the farmhouse presumably to accommodate a growing number of residents, and a road had been laid out connecting King Street to Barden Hill Road near the farm. After Augustus died, the town hired a supervisor as superintendent of its farm. He apparently did not do well for he was not rehired the following year and rumblings of selling the farm again started.

Expenses continued to rise in all towns across the country in the years following the Civil War, undoubtedly augmented by support required for the wives and widows of men who had left their farms to fight in the war. Many of these men had enlisted partly to secure the enlistment bonuses offered by towns to meet the enlistment quotas set by the State, perhaps in their enthusiasm giving little thought to the possibility of being wounded or even killed in the war.

Beginning in the mid-1860s many towns decided to sell their town farms and began to support paupers in other ways. Washington's first attempt at this can be found in the minutes of the 1867 Town Clerk's Records. It appears that the Selectmen perhaps began to consider a warrant for the next town meeting to ascertain the town's interest along these lines because on Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>, 1867, they appointed a committee to immediately investigate the management of the affairs connected with the town farm. The report was due only two weeks later.

The committee reported that, in their opinion "the Overseer of the Town Poor for the years ending in 1866 and 1867 was negligent of his duty in that no written agreement was made with the Agent on the farm and recorded, as should have been done and he did not cause a record book to be kept on the farm giving a detailed statement of all the business transactions of the Agent of debit and credit of the farm accounts but we do not find on the part of said Overseer any malicious intent to defraud the Town, neither do we find any evidence to show that the Town has been defrauded."

Finally, in 1869 there was a flurry of activity spearheaded by Selectman Martin Chase which resulted in the sale of the Town Farm. In June, after 28 years of ownership, the Town of Washington went out of the farming business by selling the Town Farm to Erastus Wilson, son of the innkeeper of Wilson's Tavern in Hillsboro Upper Village. Erastus had gone to sea at age 19, worked at that until he was 32, getting married to Susan Swift of Charlestown, MA, in between at about age 25 and tried his hand at looking for gold in California for a few years. He returned in 1869 and settled in Hillsboro Upper Village. So there may have been some profits from California gold which ended up benefitting Washington, although it would be impossible to prove it!

Today the Washington Town Farm, together with a number of farms which surrounded it, is part of a 402 acre tract which has reverted to natural forest. It is now owned by a subsidiary, Wild Lake, of the Highland Lake Association and since 2002 has been under a Conservation Easement granted to The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. This means that it can never be developed and that the Forest Society will be responsible for its maintenance.

#### Notes:

1) The complete poem by Will Carleton, too long to be included here, is well worth the read. It can be found on the Internet by Googling "Over the Hill to the Poor House" or looking up Will Carleton in Wikipedia.

2) Portion of an 1860 map hanging in our museum showing the Town Farm's location between Barden Pond and Long Pond (now called Highland Lake.) Barden Pond Road can also be found on Google Maps. Phil Barker vouches for the presence of the cellar hole, although I have not yet seen it myself.

3) The most readable treatment of Poorhouses can be found in a book entitled "The Poorhouse, America's Forgotten Institution" by David Wagner, published in 2005 by Rowman and Littlefield. I read a copy obtained by our Shedd Free Library through Inter-Library Loans.

4) Recently many of our members were treated to a talk, by Steve Taylor, sponsored by the NH Humanities-to-Go program, entitled "Poor Houses and Town Farms: The Hard Row for Paupers." An excellent program if you can get to one of his presentations. One of our members sent me a newspaper clipping from the Nov. 13, 2015, issue of the Merrimack Journal, with an excellent review of Steve's lecture.

WHS is deeply indebted to Tom Talpey for all the interesting articles Tom has done for us through the years. Now that he and Betty are in their 90's and have recently been facing health problems we wish them well. Hopefully Tom can continue to write interesting articles for future newsletters.

Washington Historical Society  
PO Box 90  
Washington, NH 03280

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES** are \$10 for an individual and \$15 for a family (including children under 16). For those who would like to contribute more to the Society to help us cover our expenses, we have a new sustaining membership for \$25. The membership year is August 1 through July 31. We appreciate your continued interest and support of our projects. New members are always welcome. If you would like to join us as a member, please complete the form below and send to THE WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. Box 90, Washington, N.H., 03280. If you know of someone who might be interested in our newsletter, please let us know or pass this one on to them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participating family names: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. Winter: \_\_\_\_\_ Summer: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Level:  \$10 Individual  \$15 Family  \$25 Sustaining

**PLEASE NOTE:** As a non-profit historical society, we qualify with many companies for matching grants provided the company you work for, or are retired from, supports such benefits.

**Email: [washingtonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com](mailto:washingtonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com)**