

Washington Historical Society Newsletter

SPRING 2007 EDITION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As March turns to April, we can reasonably hope for (and expect) a disappearance of the wintry residue. Winter months are usually quiet for your Historical Society and spring brings renewed activity. The officers and Board of Directors that remained in Washington have coped with several necessary judgments during the winter months.

The barn and museum received a needed update in their security systems and the installation of smoke/fire alarms.

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, bids on the specifications for the repair/replacement of the Museum foundation were received and weather permitting, work will begin in April. Please feel free to drop by and observe the progress during the spring. This work will accentuate the need for additional fundraising and donations and/or suggestions from members will be happily received by the Board and officers.

The return of our monthly meetings - April 9th - can be entered into our calendars. We look forward to seeing and hearing from all our members.

Sincerely,

Bob Evans
President, Washington Historical Society

THE ORIGIN OF THE WASHINGTON, N.H. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By Its Founder, Phil Barker

Preston Rolfe was a long time resident of Washington. He was a Civil Engineer by profession. But he had a passion for history and collected whatever he could whether written or physical. One time in the 1970's his son told him of a piece of metal protruding from a brook in East Washington. Preston and his son went to investigate, and excavated by hand from among the rocks what turned out to be the Eureka Turbine waterwheel, which had powered the Lovell Creamery in East Washington, 1886-1896.

The Eureka was invented by George L. Mellen of Washington in the early 1880's.

Preston transported the parts home and put them in his barn to save them, as there was no museum or Historical Society at the time. Upon Preston's death in 1982 his children, knowing why the waterwheel pieces were there, went to the Selectmen and inquired what they wanted to do with the waterwheel. They disclaimed any interest in it by saying: "What waterwheel? It isn't ours."

This information was told to me by Preston's son the day of the funeral. I was interested, but did not feel that it was proper to personally take possession of the items, so I told him to hold on and I would see what I could do. After very little thought I printed up an invitation to an organizational meeting to be held in the Town Hall for the purpose of establishing a Society. I then hand delivered 100 copies of the invitation throughout Washington and East Washington. On the designated night the balconies in the upper hall were nearly full of interested people. I outlined the story much as it appears above and indicated that Washington was long overdue to start preserving the past. (In the meantime another person who collects mill equipment had heard of the turbine and went and asked for it and it was given to him).

From that meeting committees were formed to work on by-laws, a charter, and other necessary tasks. Kenneth Brighton offered to take care of the legal matters, and I solicited assistance from Arthur and Betty Nelson of Goshen. By plan, on December 13, 1982, the 106th anniversary of the Incorporation of Washington, the Charter Meeting was held, the Charter was signed, by-laws adopted, and a slate of officers was elected.

The purpose is stated, in part, "To promote historical interest and preservation of artifacts and records, to encourage public knowledge and interest in local history of the town, for ourselves and for future generations."

Meetings were first held in the Town Hall and later moved to Camp Morgan Lodge, where they are still held on the second Monday of each month from April through November.

WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT THE NEW ENGLAND QUILT MUSEUM



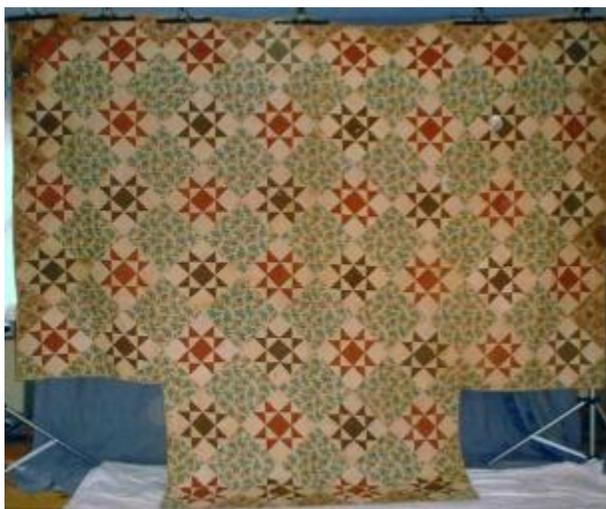
Sarah Perkins, quilt maker

When our Historical Society sponsored a quilt demonstration day in August of 2003, we had many beautiful quilts documented. One of them was an "Eight Pointed Star" or "Eastern Star," made by Sarah Augusta

(Perkins) Davis, prior to her marriage in 1853. She was born 21 September, 1832 and died 22 November, 1910. Mildred (Ramsey) Ball, Great Grand-daughter of the maker, inherited the quilt through her family. Mildred donated the quilt to the Washington Historical Society in Washington N. H. where her Great- Grandmother grew up. Our Museum Committee has received word that this quilt has been selected for exhibit at the "Uncovered in New Hampshire" exhibit at the New England Quilt Museum. Antique quilts from the New Hampshire Quilt Documentation Project will be featured from June 14th to August 19th at the museum located at 18 Shattuck St., Lowell, MA.

Our Society's Museum Committee has consented to have our quilt included in the exhibition, as it is an honor to have it selected and it is nice to share something that is a beautiful part of our history. It will also provide some publicity for our Society. Tell your friends about the exhibit and perhaps take a day trip yourself to see the exhibit of old quilts.

Speaking of publicity, watch for the Summer issue of the "SooNipi" magazine, coming out in June. It is a freebie at many stores and restaurants in the area. We expect to have articles in it.



Eight Pointed Star quilt

TO WASHINGTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

By *William H. H. Davis**

<p>Kindly listen to this story 'Bout an old New Hampshire town; Town that seems to us important; Though it has no great renown.</p> <p>Washington, "The country's Father," To this town gave his great name, First of all, were we to take it; And with pride we make this claim.</p> <p>There are Washingtons, yes many;</p>		<p>Here is peace, and here is quiet, Nature too, seems at her best; Pleasant place up in the country, Where the weary come for rest.</p> <p>Here our parents, yes grandparents, Came so many years ago; To a wild unsettled country, Hard their living then, we know.</p> <p>Back to them we look with reverence, Sturdy ancestors of yore, They who made this town for</p>
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<p>Through this country scattered 'round; Nearly all the States now have one, So by searching we have found.</p> <p>There is Washington, the Capital, Also Washington, a State; Though the place be large or small one; Yet the name is always great.</p> <p>Way up here among these high hills, When the summer breezes blow, Birds and flowers have we in plenty; Lakes are 'round us down below.</p>		<p>others, When their days should be no more.</p> <p>Now 'tis "Home Sweet Home" for many Grateful should we be indeed; Thankful to those pioneers hardy, Glad their efforts did succeed.</p> <p>In our peaceful homes here living, Always should we bear in mind, That we have our duties also, And to each and all be kind.</p>
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* Mr. Davis was born on Sept. 5, 1841 and was the brother-in-law of Sarah A. Perkins Davis, who made the quilt pictured above.

QUILT RAFFLE WINNER

It has finally dawned on us that we forgot to mention the winner of the raffle of the barn quilt made by members of the Society and awarded over a year ago to Ellie Moore of Massachusetts, who plans soon to retire to Washington. Gwen Gaskell and Richard Crane at the right enjoying the celebration and, at the left, the surprised Ellie Moore who had tears of joy in her eyes as she accepted the prize. In the end, the raffle provided over \$4000 towards the barn restoration and the committee wishes to thank all who contributed, in making the quilt as well as participating in the raffle.



HELP PLEASE HELP

As reported in last fall's newsletter, we have a serious problem with the back section of the main museum foundation, which is slowly sinking.

This basement is our archives and storage area but much too much moisture, bugs and even mice come through the cracks. They have been repeatedly filled and repeatedly get larger. This winter we advertised for bids to fix the problem permanently and received 3 ranging from 16 to 42 thousand dollars. The board has accepted the lowest bid and we are confident a good job will be done in time for summer opening. This will drain our museum treasury and may not leave a sufficient balance for normal operating expenses such as telephone, light, heat, security and insurance. Some of our funds which are reported at meetings are tied up in trusts for the old school house and may NOT be used for anything else.

PLEASE if you can, a donation from YOU toward this project will help protect our collection and we will be very pleased to show you the work when we open in July. THANK YOU! from the Board and the Museum Committee on behalf of the collection you will be helping preserve!

AMERICAN YOUTH HOSTEL BARN

The American Youth Hostel barn, between the Woodward Brook and the Grange Hall along the East Washington Road, appears to have its days numbered. It looks as if another snowstorm or windstorm will surely collapse it. This would reduce the number of old barns in Washington to fifty- one. A rope fence has been placed around it to warn any would-be trespassers. The AYH used it as a dormitory and kitchen in the late 1930s and early 1940s for young bikers and hikers touring the region. See page 203 of Portrait of a Hill Town, by Ron & Grace Jager.



P.S. About a year ago we had an exchange of emails with a man who had once stayed in that barn. Here is a quote from his notes: "There were seven of us on bikes-boys and girls (including my sister) and my Father (chaperone?). We belonged to the AYH (American Youth Hostel) and paid 25 to 50 cents a night to sleep in chicken coops along the way--went up as far as Sugar Hill and then down the Ct. River to Haverhill where we were picked up for a car ride to Andover, Mass--our home town at that time. I have traveled the world but that still was the best trip I ever had." -Cliff

[update from Tom Talpey Friday, April 6, 2007]:

I drove by the AYH barn this afternoon and here is how it looked. I'm not surprised.



It looks to me like it may have fallen in two stages. My theory is that part of it collapsed during or just before yesterdays' snowstorm -- note the snow on some of the beams on the ground. And the rest collapsed after the snow had ceased -- note the lack of snow on much of the debris. I noticed that there is a large tree behind it which also had fallen and I'm guessing that this may have been what brought down the final pieces of the barn that have no snow on top of them.

Looks like I got the photo for the newsletter just in time.



AYH sign

MERTIE BRUCE LEMOS AND THE POSTAL STUDIO

by Evie Boyce



*Mertie and her two children, the boy Audrey and the girl Meva. Melva was Ron Boyce's mother. Note Mertie's knickers, her customary form of dressing. The seal at the upper left of the picture reads "*Postal Studio* Milton Hills, NH" and in the center "Dollar a Dozen" the picture must have been taken when she had a studio in Milton, just north of Rochester, NH. Scratched on the picture in the lower left is "Three of a Kind" as a title.*

If you were driving through the countryside and happened to see a young woman dressed in man-tailored clothing, climbing over stone walls and fences to lie in the tall grass, waiting to catch just the right lighting for the right photograph, you might not think much about her. And if you learned that photography was a hobby turned into a profession to help support herself and her two young children, you might begin to admire her courage. Times have changed to the point where this might not seem unusual, but I am talking about 1920 and the young woman was my husband's grandmother, Mertie Bruce Lemos. You might well call her a woman who was ahead of her times.

She was born on May 30, 1889, in Randolph, VT. Both parents died when she was quite young and being of an independent nature she began supporting herself doing odd jobs. Her life reads like a romantic Gothic novel. Mertie Bruce met and married Pearly Lemos, who was said to have descended from Portuguese royalty, his father being one Count De Lemos who dropped the title and the "De" from his name when immigrating to this country.



The Lemos home on the edge of the East Washington Mill Pond. It had been remodded into a home, having formerly served as Hixon's Store. Note the old auto at the right of the photo. Picture taken about 1925, both the house and the barn have long since been torn down.

Two children were born from this union: a boy, Audrey Lemos in 1910 and a girl, Melva, in 1913. When Mertie and Pearly divorced, Mertie bought the post office in East Washington and began to pursue her love of photography. The post office had been Hixon's Store, opposite the Purling Beck Grange, and in the days of

horse and buggy transportation it had also been the stage stop for regular service from Hillsborough. Mertie converted it into a home and lived there in the 1920s and into the 1930s with her two children.

Mertie traditionally wore knickers, so that she appeared to be dressing in man's clothing (In the early part of the last century it would have been unseemly for a woman to be seen practicing what was then considered to be a man's profession!), while she went about the countryside taking photographs. These she would develop herself, make into postcards and sell under her trademark The Postal Studio, with the by-line: "Private Post Card Views Exclusively." Many of these cards exist with different place names on them, such as Portland, ME, Derry, NH, Manchester, NH, etc., but it is believed that she continued to maintain her home in East Washington, while setting up temporary "studios" whenever she spent appreciable time in one of these other cities.

BY POSTAL STUDIO, EAST WASHINGTON, N. H.
Private Post Card Views Exclusively

Notation stamped on the back of Mertie's postcards. There are other cards with the words "Portland, Maine" or "Derry, NH" replacing "East Washington, NH."

Among her many talents, Mertie would sew clothing, cut hair for family, neighbors and friends and, acting as a dowser, was able to locate water for many a new well. She was known to be of boundless energy and never intimidated by the restrictions of the era or of the gender to which she was born. Family lore also has it that she, as well as her children, also sometimes worked at the Bradford Springs Hotel (since torn down), about a mile to the north along the road to Bradford, doing odd jobs.

Melva graduated from the District #5 School on the East Washington Road, being the only student in the eighth grade at the time, the last year the school operated. She went on to high school, attending the Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, NH, and eventually became Ron Boyce's mother. Visiting his grandmother in East Washington on weekends and summers were among my husband Ron's most treasured memories. Another vivid memory that stuck with Ron was the severe dressing down he received from the rest of the family after giving his aging grandmother a ride on the back of his bike, traveling downhill from Eccard's Farm to the center of East Washington, but she probably loved the ride!



Fourth of July parade, 1925, in front of the Purling Beck Grange Hall in East Washington. Town Band in front, veterans with flag in the middle, scouts, children and ladies in the rear.

Audrey never married and remained a bachelor all his life, living in Manchester. In her twilight years Mertie moved to Manchester to live with her bachelor son, maintaining her studio there. After her death in 1970, her son inherited the property and for many years kept it much as it had been during her lifetime, although he never lived there after moving to Manchester. Indeed, if you had walked into her parlor then you would have seen the sheet music sitting on top of the piano and you might almost have expected to see Mertie walk in, sit down to

play and start a good old-fashioned evening of sing-alongs and tall tale telling. Having fallen into disrepair after not being lived in so long, the house was finally demolished in 2002.

Adapted from a presentation given to the Washington Historical Society, April 17, 1995, with additions and illustrations provided by the author.

FROM THE NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On June 2nd, from 9 AM until 5 PM, the Newport Historical Society is hosting a celebration entitled "Reliving New Hampshire's Past." This will be an historical event for the whole family, to show visitors a glimpse of what life might have been like in New Hampshire during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. Their publicity reads:

"Come enjoy re-enactors, children's games, traditional craft vendors, food booths, demonstrations and a fireman's muster. Various NH Historical Societies will be set up at the Newport Opera House (our Washington Society included) displaying items from their collections as well as merchandise they wish to sell. This is a fundraising event with donations benefiting the Pier Bridge Project (a covered bridge) in Newport." However, Admission is Free and Open to the Public.

Just in (April 17, 2007):

[Fritz Wetherbee](#) will be speaking from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM at the Opera House on June 2nd.

View poster (added May, 9, 2007):

THE COUNTRY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

From June 17th through the 20th, the CSAA will be holding its 7th Annual Conference at Rivier College in Nashua, NH, with workshops relating to the preservation, interpretation, history and appreciation of one-room schools. Our District No. 5 School is included in their roster, and although not included in their tour they invite everyone to "Enjoy a tour of five beautifully preserved one-room schoolhouses!" For further information consult their [newsletter](#).

FROM THE FRANKLIN PIERCE HOMESTEAD

On Saturday, July 21st, from 10 AM until 4 PM, there will be a Traditional Artisans Fair at the Homestead on Route 31 near the junction with Route 9. Fritz Wetherbee will be there in the morning, signing copies of his book and there will be booths and demonstrations and exhibits by local artisans. Rain or shine. Admission \$5 per carload which includes visiting the grounds and Homestead. On Saturday, May 26th, at 10:30 AM the Franklin Pierce Homestead hosts a Memorial Day Observance, featuring the Hillsborough Deering High School Band. On this day, veterans and their guests are invited to tour the Homestead at no charge.

WASHINGTON'S MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATION

Washington's traditional Memorial Day Service will be held at the Monument on the Town Common on Monday, May 28th at 9:30 A.M. Refreshments will be served in the Town Hall after the ceremony.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S WEBSITE

Our website [*you're there!*], ably maintained by member Phil Budne, continues to receive compliments. In a recent conversation the NH State Director of Charitable Trusts expressed admiration for it and we frequently receive email referring to its features. Recently a descendant of Ephraim Davis, a Washington resident who fought in the Revolutionary War contacted us, inquiring about death certificates and gravestones. He had seen our listing on the web of burials in the public cemeteries in town, and wanted more information. The museum contains a dozen or so notebooks containing photographs and transcriptions of the inscriptions on all the graves, which are frequently consulted by visitors in the summer. In researching the descendants of Ephraim Davis in order to respond to this email, we discovered that his great grandmother, Julia Davis Hurd, was also Nellie Newman's aunt. Readers will remember our report on receiving and transcribing the contents of Nellie's Diary in the Spring 2004 Newsletter, where on Feb. 11, 1869, Nellie reports: "Went over to do up Julie Hurd's hair. Had a present of an apron."

[Note from the webmaster: I was first contacted on January 13, 2004 about the Diary:]

Subject: 1869 Diary, Washington, NH

A couple of years ago I purchased a diary at an antique shop in Florida. I saw the word "Washington" and thought it was Washington, DC in 1869, right after the Civil War. I do research on my ancestors who fought in the Civil War, so I bought the diary thinking there might be some good tidbits to read. Turns out it was Washington, NH. The diary was written by a 16 year old girl named Nellie Newman who lived in Washington, NH. From this website I got into the New Cemetery listing and found Nellie. She died in 1875 and would have been about 23. How tragic to have died so young. A couple of tidbits from the diary. She talks of going to the Lyceum to listen to readings. She went to Lempster Pond to a dance. She read Alcotts' "Little Women" (which came out in 1869). And she notes on her 17th Birthday, that it is also President Grants' 47th Birthday. I have scanned some of the pages into my computer where I can enlarge the print to make for easier reading, and I am transcribing each entry. I have been trying to locate a relative of Nellie to make them aware of the diary. I do not believe she married or had children, so she would not have a direct decendent. I have made contact with someone in Washington who takes care of a 92 year old lady who may be a relative. Since you are a historical society for this town, I thought someone may be interested in reading this diary. Let me know if you are, and I can e-mail you some of the pages.

Thanks,
Jerry

It is a great pleasure and an honor to be able help out! -phil