



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2014

GENERAL NELSON MILES

By Betsy Hannula.

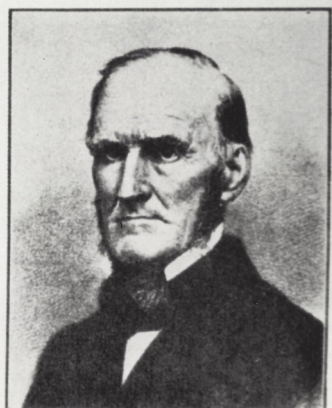
We have been focusing on Westminster's connections to the Civil War for the past several newsletters as we commemorate the sesquicentennial of our nation's most devastating war. This article features the life of Nelson Appleton Miles who gained fame as one of the many "boy generals" in the Civil War, later as a soldier in the Indian Wars, and then again in the Spanish American War.

I remember local historian Tom Malloy telling me how he happened to learn about General Nelson Miles soon after he came to live in Westminster, and was astounded that no one in town seemed to know anything about him. Tom did some extensive research on our local hero, created VCR tape recordings about his life and then used them in the courses on local history he taught at Mount Wachusett Community College. Later he included Nelson Miles in his book Profiles of the Past, a collaboration with the artist Jim Murphy. I am going to quote liberally from Tom's book in this article.

Nelson was born in Westminster in 1839, the son of Daniel and Mary Curtis Miles, who moved here

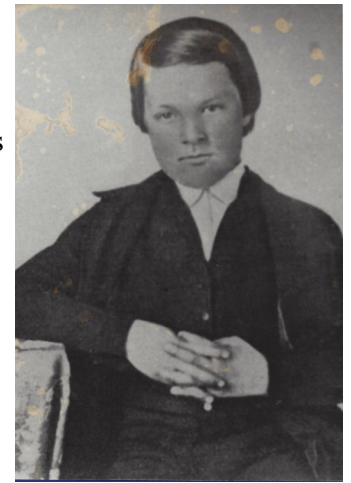


MOTHER



FATHER

from Petersham, MA. Nelson and his three older siblings were born in the house at 104 Turnpike Road, and the house across the street is where he lived as a boy. He attended school at the district #4 schoolhouse at the foot of Hanks Hill Road in the Narrows, and later attended Westminster Academy, which was in the center of town, located half way up Academy Hill Road on the right. In his memoirs Miles stated, "no more ideal setting for innocent and happy childhood could be found than at my home, the recollection of which I cherish and my happiest memories are of that period of my life."



Miles as young lad

"At the age of 16 Miles moved to Boston where he took a clerical job. There he hoped to receive some expertise in the business world. However, as time went on, Miles became more interested in military affairs. His spare time was spent reading military history, manuals on army regulations, and papers on strategy and military tactics. He also studied military protocol and discipline under a former French army officer. Then, when the Civil War broke out, Miles organized his own military company. His company was incorporated into the 22nd Massachusetts Infantry and Miles was commissioned as first lieutenant. In order to recruit this company he had to use his own savings and some money borrowed from an uncle."

"At the opening of the war Miles was considered too young by his superiors to exercise command in battle, and he was given the position of staff officer. However, before the war was over Miles par-

(Continued on page 4)

**2013-2014
OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS**

<i>President</i>	Beth Bowen
<i>Vice President</i>	
<i>Clerk</i>	Wayne Klemetti
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<i>Historian</i>	Patricia Lasky
<i>House Director</i>	Rob Johnson
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Patricia Gendron
<i>Registrar</i>	Stephanie Boucher

If you've ever had an interest in being on a committee or the Board, we're looking for additional members. Call Liz to talk about it.

MEETINGS

Meetings are held October through June on the 3rd Tuesday at 7 pm at the House, and are free and open to the public.

HOUSE & GIFT SHOP HOURS

The Historical Society House is open Mondays 7-9 pm and Fridays 9-12 Noon. and other times by appointment.

MISSION

The Westminster Historical Society's mission is to save and share Westminister's past.



NEW WEB SITE ADDRESS

Our web site address is now **WestminsterHistory.com.**

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Westminster Historical Society Members and all interested in the History of Westminster,

The Society's focus is the renovation of the Upton School. I wish to inform you that a request for funds will be sent to all town residents, through a town-wide mailing. The renovation of the Upton School will cost \$2,500,000, a major fundraising effort . The citizens of Westminster have continuously voted that they wish Westminster to retain the charm that brought them to town and the appeal of growing up in a small town. So we must save the buildings of importance, such as the Old Town Hall and the Upton School,. They help preserve Westminister's unique character.

For over 100 years the Upton School has looked down Academy Hill announcing Westminister's support of education. Now this beautiful lady needs our support to fix her roof, walls and everything in between. The Society wants to continue our mini courses, historical research and collection displays in this stately building. Some families and businesses have already stepped forward with generous donations and pledges. However, we must have the whole town involved to make this renovation happen. Please read our appeal letter when it arrives and give as generously as possible, based on your personal finances.

The first 100 donations of \$1,000 or more will receive a copy of the History of Westminister, Massachusetts 2008. If you wish more information on the renovation, would like to give with the opportunity of naming a part of the building in honor of your parents or family, or would like to create a legacy gift please call me at 978-874-0544 and I will visit you.

Thank you to all who have contributed to date and to all who will contribute to this exciting project.

With appreciation,
Beth Bowen

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Tammy Cirillo
Melanie Miller
Tom Torrans

CURATOR'S CORNER

We are grateful for the following gifts which have been given to the Historical Society for preservation and enjoyment by future generations:

Brenda Malloy: photo of Westminster Elementary School class

Betsy Hannula: wooden stool, Finn phonograph records, article on Wachusett Mountain old growth forest, and Westminster Elementary School class photos

Donna Hutchins: songbooks, photos of Allard's Hardware store and Allard's home

Virginia VanHazinga: History of the Warttinen family

Jean Saari: 150th Anniversary of Westminster book and Congregational Church plate

Ron Fields: pieces of etched glass from doorway of Sprague farm, Fairy album, Bible, and collection of photos of Sprague farm and Dupree farm

Sandi Thibodeau: collection of school photos of her mother's, Lili Marble

Joyce Hannula: lace blouse liner

Robert French: two postcards of Westminster

Sallyann Dunton: collection of photos from the 1950s and 1960s

Eunice Arcangeli: 4 receipts from the J.P. Roper farm

Tom Torrans: Vietnam-era Army uniform, collection of Honorable Discharge documents

Julie Savage: collection of clothes from her family

Philip Manseau: collection of Westminster Elementary School material

Carol Kaski: Genealogy of the Kaski family and collection of books about Finland

Karl Hakkarainen: Finnish baptismal certificate

William Miller: a large collection of artifacts connected to the Jonas & Betsy Miller family in Westminster in the 1800s

We also thank the following people for allowing us to make copies of their school photos: Karen Ryder Gormley and Patricia Leonhardt.

It's such a rare and wondrous thing to receive donations for the collections from a long time ago. Several such things recently arrived at the Society from William Miller, a long time member of the Society. (Our house on Main Street belonged to members of his family!) Bill is the Miller family historian and has taken the huge responsibility of making sure the Miller family items will be cared for - forever. This trunk is a fabulous thing to behold, wooden and covered with animal hide, still showing hair and fur in a few areas. The trunk belonged to William S. Miller's (for whom the Legion Hall in town is named) great grandmother's brother's wife



Miller Trunk

Trunk Trimmer, Lancaster, Mass." Thank you Bill and the Miller family!

and the family story is that she carried all her clothes in it when she left home on a stage-coach. The label inside reads

"James Robbins Saddle & Harness

Maker, Chaise and

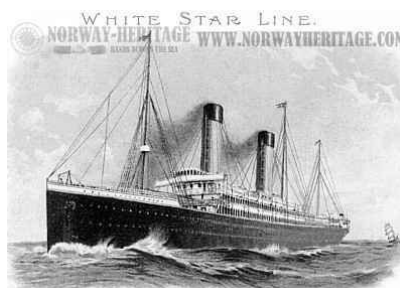
UPTON UPDATE

It has been a long winter of research and discovery with the slate roof on the Upton building. The biggest decision was whether to replace the slate, repair it, or replace the slate with shingles. The decision was difficult because of differing opinions of contractors on the condition of the slate and how much money we should spend on the roof. In the end the Board decided to replace the slate with shingles that look like slate. We are now in the process of acquiring bids for this shingling project and expect the roof to be completed by November.

FINNISH MIDSUMMER PROGRAM

This year's Juhannus program was held at the Westminster Farmers Camp on Leominster Street on June 17. The Historical Society has been continuing the Finnish tradition of celebrating the longest day of the year by hosting a program meeting at the building the Finns constructed in the early 1920s.

This year's theme was researching your family's history – in particular, when did your family arrive in America, and how did they get to Westminster? Betsy Hannula presented a Powerpoint show on how her mother's parents left Finland and eventually found their way to Westminster.



Betsy's grandfather sailed on this ship Arabic from England to America.

Everyone learned that records are easily available on the internet for researching immigration of relatives to this country. You can often find your relatives listed on a ship's manifest.

(Continued from page 1)

participated in every major battle of the Army of the Potomac, with the exception of one.” Miles was wounded four times in battle, rising through the ranks with every engagement. “He and his division participated in the final campaigns of the war which led to the surrender of Confederate forces at Appomattox, Virginia. Six months after Appomattox he was promoted to major-general of volunteers. With this rank, at the age of 26, he was the commander of 27,000 officers and men. Miles had thus become one of the boy generals of the Civil War.”



General Nelson Miles

At the close of the war, Miles was placed in charge of Fort Monroe in Virginia where he was responsible for the incarceration of Jefferson Davis, the former

president of the Confederacy. In 1886 Nelson Miles married Mary Hoyt Sherman, who came from a very influential family. Her father was a judge, and one of her uncles was a United States senator. Another uncle was William T. Sherman who conducted the famous march through Georgia during the war. Soon after their marriage Miles was given command of an



Mary Miles

infantry regiment and sent to the American west where he spent the next 15 years fighting Indians on the Great Plains.

(to be continued in next newsletter)

GIRL SCOUT TROOP VISITS WHS

Girl Scout troop #11651 fulfilled an interesting badge requirement at the Historical Society in May. Called “The Savvy Shopper” badge, this activity focused on the difference between needs and wants, and asked the girls to examine at least ten items from early times and discuss whether they answered a need or want. It was a fun activity looking at curling irons from the early 1900s. It was explained to them that they were heated by placing them inside a burning kerosene lantern!



Curator Betsy Hannula speaking to the Girl Scouts

After being seated at a table set in Victorian china and utensils, the girls realized that bone plates for holding bones from meat on your plate were

really not a necessity, and neither were little bowls of individual salts, or individual little plates for pats of butter. This led to a discussion about what was actually really needed or just desired in their lives today. It’s fun to help these young women learn things from the past!

COLONIAL DAY

We had a great day working with the Westminster Elementary School third graders for their Colonial Day. Every class came to the Historical Society as part of the day and watched teacher Wendy Provencial explain what it was like to plan meals and cook in the 1700s. Children watched waffles being made in the fireplace with a cast iron waffle iron and then had an opportunity to eat waffles! It’s always a fun day for everyone.



Wendy Provencial teaching a class

SPRINGTIME IN PARIS TEA

The 2nd annual spring tea was held on April 19 at the Historical Society. The theme this year was “Springtime in Paris” in hope that spring would come soon after a long, cold winter. Committee members Roni Beal, Beth Bowen, Julie Scapparone, Karen Sargent, Janet Sponagle, and Sheryl Vaillette created French delights such as Madeleine cookies, chocolate covered éclairs, truffles, goueres (cheese puffs), mini quiches, tea sandwiches, and tea, coffee and lavender lemonade.



Lois Gallagher and Mary Leger and two young friends enjoyed wearing festive hats to the tea party!

Ladies wore their finest hats and Mary Leger and Lois Gallagher won the hat contest. Several children aged seven months to thirteen joined their mothers. Everyone enjoyed all the laughter, music and conversation.

The annual tea is one of several fundraisers for the Upton School building renovation and maintenance project. Even though the Upton building is not occupied, we must pay operating costs, such as property insurance and electricity.



Committee members Beth Bowen, Sheryl Vaillette, Karen Sargent, and Roni Beal hammed it up at the event!

A special thank you goes to the tea committee for all their work in making “Springtime in Paris” a success. We hope you will join us for the 3rd annual tea in spring 2015!

WESTMINSTER’S FINNISH HISTORY BEING RESEARCHED

Betsy Hannula and Mary Lyons are researching all families with Finnish heritage who lived in town at any time for a future book on the history of the Finns in Westminster. In the 1930s, more than a third of all the people in Westminster were Finns - a remarkable number.



Finns first arrived in Westminster in the 1880s and the database we are creating has more than a thousand families already listed and there are more to come. We have created lists from the birth, marriage and deaths records and the Valuation and Tax publications in years past. We are also examining early copies of the Fitchburg Sentinel which carried local articles about Finns in Westminster. It is a very interesting project!

Forms are available and being distributed to anyone who is willing to help gather information for this book. Finding out where the first immigrants came from in Finland is part of the research.

We are also interested in photos of your families and the homes they lived in. This will be a valuable records for future generations!

Please contact Betsy at 978-874-0430 or at BetsyHannula@gmail.com if you have any information about Finnish families and would like to have your family included in the book

PLANT SWAP

The Annual Plant Swap took place on Sat. May 24, with many lilies and herbs donated. This event is a great way to find good homes for plants at your house which have multiplied and need to be thinned. Marion Knoll and Roni Beal supervised the swap. At the end, the remaining plants were donated to the First Lutheran Church for their reflections garden.



Roni Beal and MarionKnoll

MEMBERSHIP

If you're not yet a member, please consider joining today. It's easy. Just fill out the form below and send it along with your check to the Historical Society. Your membership support is essential to us.

Thank you if you have already renewed their membership this past year. If you are unsure of your status, just call Liz at the office (978-874-5569). You will want to be a member in order to take advantage of the ten percent discount on all items in the Gift Shop! If you are 75 years of age, let us know, and your membership is free!

WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ Fax _____
e-mail _____

Individual \$25
Family 40
Senior (over 65) 15
Contributing 50
Friend 100
Honorary (over 75) 0

All members receive a 10% discount in the Gift Shop.
Please contact me about volunteering. These are some of my interests:

- Sorting, cleaning, and cataloging items.
- Putting data about items into a computer database.
- Helping with newsletters and brochures.

Please send form to Westminster Historical Society, Membership Committee, P.O. Box 177, Westminster, MA 01473.

MASS HUMANITIES GRANT AWARDED!

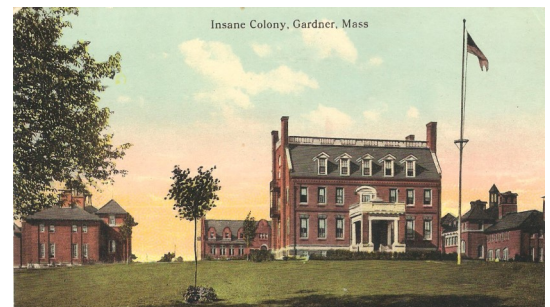
We are very excited to announce that the Historical Society was awarded a grant from Mass Humanities for a research inventory project on the Gardner Colony for the Insane. In 1900 the State Colony was created by taking a tract of land 1600 acres lying partly in Gardner and partly in Westminster, the property being held by twenty-five different owners under forty separate titles. Many of these were large farms in Westminster. On this Westminster side a substantial group of buildings was erected for the accommodation of 100 patients, known as the "Westminster group."

The Colony thrived and quickly became recognized as "one of the most modern and best hospitals for insane patients in the state, and for that matter, in the country." It is this Colony system that the research will shed light on. At one time the Colo-

ny housed 1,500 persons with 750 staff. It was a truly remarkable endeavor.

The Historical Society collections on the hospital include a gift of about 600 negatives that were donated by Donald Barton, a photographer who did some observations at the hospital, and this Mass Humanities grant of \$1500 will pay for getting the negatives made into prints. The grant will also pay for organizing and inventorying all the other materials we have in our collections on the hospital, and research and exploration of other sources of information on the hospital treatment centers for the mentally ill in Massachusetts.

Don Stevens and Rachael Vincent live near the old hospital grounds and walk through them regularly. They came to us to learn more about the hospital. Their interest developed into this project which will create a good picture of what life was



Postcard in our collections

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR UPTON

The Capital Campaign Committee is interested in speaking to families about family gifts to the Upton School project. We believe that we can make a significant impact by joining together with those who have connections to the Upton School and our town of Westminster. Families will have an opportunity to name parts of the building for their family. Please call the Historical Society or our president Beth Bowen for more information.

The committee is also working on making it possible for persons to make donations to the Historical Society directly from our web site. Funds will be able to go directly to the Capital Campaign through our Pay Pal account. Raising funds through the internet has proven successful to many organizations, and we want this effort to be integral to our campaign as well. In addition, it's easy to do and easy to keep records of the transactions. We thank you for considering donating to this important campaign to renovate the Upton School for our headquarters!

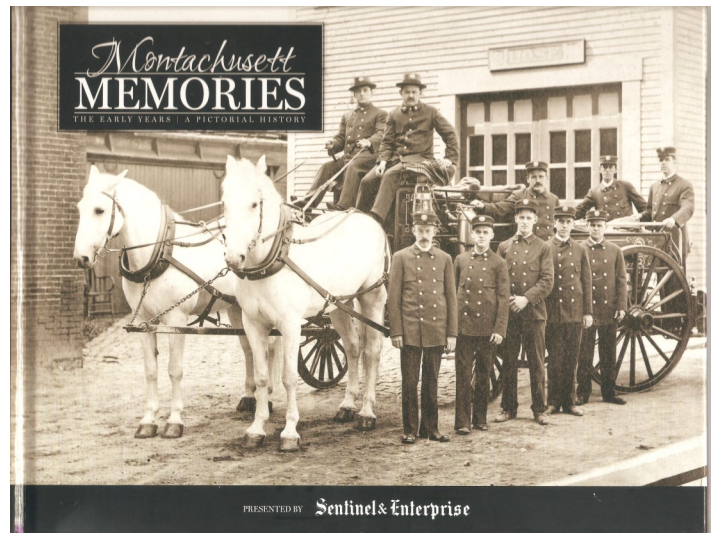
IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened by the passing of two long-time members of the Historical Society.
 Beverly Lothrop
 Elaine Waronen

NEW BOOK IN GIFT SHOP

Montachusett Memories is the newest book in our Gift Shop. Published by the Sentinel and Enterprise it is a commemorative book celebrating the newspaper's 175th anniversary.

Several hundred old time photos from towns in the Montachusett area, including Fitchburg, Devens, Leominster, Lunenburg, Shirley and Westminster were solicited and compiled for this book. The Westminster Historical Society contributed several photos for this book, which is on sale for \$35 in our Gift Shop.



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY GIFT SHOP

When looking for a unique gift for birthdays, anniversaries, and other holidays or special occasions, be sure to browse the WHS Gift Shop. Whether shopping for yourself or someone on your gift list, you are sure to find the perfect gift here. The Gift Shop is open on Mondays from 7-9 pm and Fridays from 9 until noon and other times by appointment. Members receive a 10% discount on all purchases.

Books

<u>Cemetery Inscriptions</u>	25.00
<u>History of Westminster, 1832</u> by Hudson	5.00
<u>History of Westminster, 1893</u> by Heywood.	96.00
<u>History of Westminster 2008</u> by WHS	95.00
<u>History of Westminster</u> , by Tolman	20.00
<u>Homestead Heritage of Westminster</u> , by WHS	25.00
<u>Images of America</u> , by WHS.	19.99
<u>Montachusett Memories</u>	35.00
<u>Olin Warner, Sculptor</u> , by Hyson	4.50
<u>200th Anniversary of Westminster</u> ,	5.00
<u>Wajusett Gatherings</u> , by Sinclair (softcover)	20.00

Other

Wachusett Mountain charcoal drawing	60.00
Calligraphy sampler	12.00
<i>Cracker Factory</i> print.	45.00
Framed pen & ink of <i>WHS house</i> by Santora	28.00
Map of Westminster 1855.	6.00
<i>Downtown Westminster 1831</i> by Peckham	30.00
Postcards	3/1.00
Children's books	7.95
Paper dolls, Assorted	5.00
Tobacco Shed pottery	priced as marked
Tote Bags	priced as marked
Westminster tapestry wall hanging	35.00

Westminster Historical Society
110 Main St., P.O. Box 177
Westminster, MA 01473

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Permit 10

COMING UP
Sept. 25 Flea Market
October 24, Annual Meeting

VIRIDIAN—A GREEN ENERGY PROGRAM

The Historical Society signed on to a unique opportunity to save money on its electric bill, and now we're offering it to families and companies. It's through Viridian, a socially responsible energy company which supplies electric companies with energy. A minimum of 20% of the energy they supply is from renewable sources—solar, wind, and hydro.



When you sign up with Viridian, your electric bill looks the same and your maintenance and deliver stay the same. Rates have been lower

than National Grid's, and they can be locked in. Learn more about the company at ww.Viridian.com.

The Historical Society was happy with its decision to save money on our electric bill; we're always looking for ways to save money! We also like being "green" by using renewable sources. In addition, the Historical Society benefits from a small residual income from everyone who chooses Viridian for his energy supplier. We are always in a fundraising mode, and any income is a benefit to us. Contact us to learn more and sign up.

EXHIBIT AT GARDNER MUSEUM

The Gardner Museum at 28 Pearl Street in Gardner is hosting its summer exhibit entitled "Reflections of the Past." Local historical societies



were invited to share treasures from their town. Our exhibit features the schools in Westminster with special emphasis on the Upton School.

Committee members Roni Beal and Julie Scapparone displayed items from the Upton School including a tiny desk and chair, a model of the Upton School, and photos of students in years past. A map of the original 13 school districts is also on display.

The summer exhibit opened on June 26, and will be open until Sept. 28 Wed.—Sun. 1-4 pm. Visit!