



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

110 Main Street, P.O. Box 177, Westminster, MA 01473  
(978) 874-5569

E-mail: [WestminsterHistory@Verizon.net](mailto:WestminsterHistory@Verizon.net); facebook: Westminster Historical Society; website: [Westminsterhistory.org](http://Westminsterhistory.org)

January 2015

*A recent donation to the collections at the Historical Society was this lovely article written by Elaine Nikki when she was in the 7th grade at Westminster Junior High School. Along with it came the pair of roller skates she used in her experiences! Interestingly, we also have been given three other pair of roller skates representing different periods of time. Enjoy reminiscing!*

## The Art of Roller Skating

by Elaine Nikki

Unfortunately, I happen to be one of those people who find it difficult to use roller skates properly. It gets me to see others just swaying along without a care in the world. It looks very simple, but just ask any beginner if it is. I can well remember from my own experiences what an art it is with me. Trying to convince myself that it is easy just coasting along, going backwards, and turning circles, I have had many bumps and black and blue spots. When my skates are on I start shaking and waving my arms about. It's a wonder that I don't push all the skaters down as I wobble along. One time I found out that my skate wheels were loose and when fixed, helped matters a little.

I can imagine what the people think of me dusting the floors. Once a friend of mine took a hold of my hand and just then my skates got stuck together and I suddenly stopped. Before I was aware of what was happening, I was on my stomach with four skaters on the top of me and two had actually flown over the pile. Sometimes I think it is much wiser to occupy the benches on the sides.

After requests to skate couples and triples I usually go

and it seems that going solo is much more difficult. My favorite way is doubles which I have accomplished quite well. With a partner one at least has something to cling to when he loses his balance but on the other hand in triples there are two supporting sides, but it is hard to keep in step with both skaters.



*Elaine Nikki's skates*

A great temptation to go backwards came to me. Asking my girlfriend to lend a hand, she offered to push me backwards. I was beginning to think that it was simple when, thump! Both of us were sprawling on the floor, I first turning a somersault. Since then I haven't tried that stunt again but my skating days aren't over yet.

Learning to skate in one direction is another thing from going "reverse." After learning a few points on going the common way, to my dismay the red sign above me read "reverse." This meant for me to learn all over again. My left foot didn't want to cross the right one when going around the corners, so I bumped the walls.

Doing the whip is very interesting, that is if you don't do it sitting down. During the time I tried it, I was on the end. I went around the corners so fast that it seemed as if the wheels didn't touch the floor at all and I was so dizzy that I could see the ceiling, floor and the people all at once. First my legs would go far apart and again too close. It must have been a terrible sight.

I hope you aren't one of those unfortunate ones but have the art to skate perfectly. It is quite embarrassing to wobble around the way I do.

**2014-2015  
OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS**

<i>President</i> .....	Roni Beal
<i>Vice President</i> .....	Beth Bowen
<i>Clerk</i> .....	Wayne Klemetti
<i>Treasurer</i> .....	John Bowen
<i>President Elect</i> .....	
<i>At Large</i> .....	Betsy Hannula
<i>At Large</i> .....	Tom Marien

**STAFF**

<i>Administrative Assistant</i> . . . .	Heather Bowen
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i> .....	Michelle Valentino
<i>Curator</i> .....	Betsy Hannula
<i>Genealogy Researcher</i> .....	Darlene Johnson
<i>Historian</i> .....	Patricia Lasky
<i>House Director</i> .....	Rob Johnson
<i>Newsletter Editor</i> .....	Patricia Gendron
<i>Registrar</i> .....	Joan Longcope

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

**MEETINGS**

Meetings are held September 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 9:00-11:00 am and 7-9 pm, and Fridays 9-Noon.

**MISSION**

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



**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Dear Westminster Historical Society Members,

At last we are issuing a newsletter for historical society members and all those interested in the history of Westminster. Beth Bowen and I (coordinators of the flea market this past September) send a special thank you to everyone who helped set-up display tables and especially with clean-up after the flea market. In particular, I would like to thank Dorcas Hurd, who was there for the long haul and helped set-up tables in the large tent in the backyard and stayed to clean up after the flea market. It was a daunting task.

On October 25, the Society held its Annual Meeting at the Old Mill Restaurant in Westminster. The Annual Meeting is when new officers and board members are elected for the coming year. In addition to our annual business meeting, our guest speaker was Katie Green of Princeton, who is a storyteller and impersonator of historical characters. Katie entertained everyone with ghost stories in historic places, such as a guided tour through the former Martha Washington College in Virginia by a well dressed ghost named Pete.

Soon after the Annual Meeting, a committee started planning the Society's Open House for the Holidays, which took place on December 6 for members and December 7 for the public. This year it was more of a community open house with Santa visiting the Forbush Library, the Westminster Pharmacy holding its Annual Champagne Reception and the Lutheran Church holding a Living Nativity.

By the time you receive this newsletter, you will have already received Westminster Historical Society's Annual Appeal letter. The appeal is for both the Society house on 110 Main Street and for Friends of the Upton Building. In the summer 2014 newsletter, Beth mentioned in the President's letter that the first 100 donations of \$1,000 or more will receive a copy of the History of Westminster, Massachusetts 2008. It is worth noting again that this offer still stands.

Thank you to everyone for your support and contributions this past year.

Warm regards,  
Roni Beal

## CURATOR'S CORNER

We are pleased to accept the following donations to the collections at the Historical Society. Our mission is to save and share Westminister's history. We thank these donors for sharing the responsibility to think about future generations learning about our town's past:

*Stan Herriot:* collection of Ashburnham Westminister Rotary Club documents, banners, gavels, pins, and misc. paraphernalia.

*Bette Roy:* Collection of materials related to school activities of her own and her mother's, Elaine Nikki and roller skates.

*Richard Spencer:* First Baptist Church bench seat with cushions.

*Tom Torrans:* Fallout shelter sign



*Items used by Rotarians at their meetings for more than 50 years were given for safe keeping to the Historical Society once the organization disbanded this summer*

*Flea Market donations:* Oakmont yearbooks, Bakers Dairy milk bottle, Old Mill coffee mug.

In addition, the Historical Society often receives items that are not directly related to Westminister's history. Some can be used by school groups to learn about a period of time. Donors we thank now are:

*Betsy Hannula:* Finnish phonograph records, stereoscope and stereoscope cards.

*Tom Torrans:* collection of misc. Civil War items including Confederate money, bottle capper, wooden plane, sextant, trivet and sad irons.

*Allan Waronen:* brooder house for chicks, four men's waist coats

## CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE, DECEMBER 5-6, 2014

Committee members Roni Beal, Beth Bowen, Theresa Grenier, Janet Lauricella, Sandy Ouellette and Julie Scapparone were busy getting ready for a splendid weekend.

We started the holiday season off with the Member's Christmas Open House on Friday Dec 5th. Members were invited to come in and enjoy roasted chestnuts and fresh popcorn made by the colonial fire by Heather and John Bowen. The gift shoppe was brimming with treats of all kinds. Hand blown glass ornaments by local artisan Kevin Englemann, unique stocking stuffers & the Lottery Ticket Tree for raffle by Sandy Ouellette, vintage glass dishes for entertaining and of course a good old fashioned cookie sale ( thanks to our talented WHS bakers!). Members were also treated to a preview of Santa's Flea Market where you could fill a bag with treasures for only \$5!

The fun continued on Saturday with fresh greens selling outside and Stan Skamarycz's local honey as an added treat for sale in the bake room. The weather didn't keep folks away as they came to the society after visiting Santa at the Library. Santa's Flea Market continued to be a popular stop!

Many thanks to the committee and volunteers for their generosity of time, talents and more!



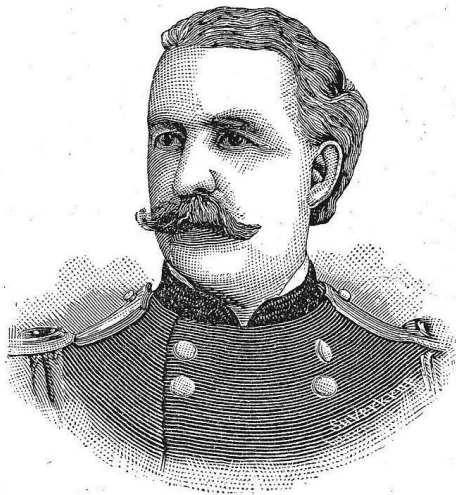
*Bambi Azarian was the winner of the "raffle ticket" tree and Kevin Englemann is the local artist who created glass ornaments on display on the table at the Christmas Open House*

## GENERAL NELSON MILES

*In our last newsletter we began an article on the life of General Nelson Miles, born in Westminster in 1839. He gained fame as one of the many “boy generals” in the Civil War, as a soldier in the Indian Wars, and then again in the Spanish American War. This continues the story after the Civil War when he was assigned to go west. As before, I am quoting liberally from local historian Tom Malloy’s informative book, Profiles of the Past.*

Soon after General Miles was sent out west, a family traveling by covered wagon was attacked by the Comanches. Four girls survived due to the efforts of a military expedition led by Miles. He

Miles name is connected to several famous Indian leaders



A Distinguished American General.

### *Miles as a General during the Indian Wars*

acquired the name of Indian Fighter and continued to play a major role in pacifying the Cheyenne, Comanches, Kowas, Sioux, Nez Perce and the Apaches. During this difficult post-Civil War time when Americans from the east were settling on the Native Americans’ lands, Miles followed Army orders and fought several famous Indian leaders: Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph and Geronimo.

His name is connected with well-known battles such as Custer’s Last Stand in 1876 where Custer and his 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary unit were all killed, and the defeat of Chief Joseph, where Chief Joseph’s surrender speech was given. This speech is considered one of the great documents of American history and ended with the famous words, “Hear me my chiefs, my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will

fight no more forever.”

Miles was an innovator which helped him in his successes on the battle field. In the pursuit of the Sioux in the winter, he had “his men cut up woolen blankets to make underwear and face masks so they would be protected against” sub-zero temperatures and used buffalo skins as coverings. At a meeting with Sitting Bull, “Miles was wearing a coat trimmed with fur. When the Indians noticed this, they whispered in Sioux ‘Bear Coat,’ which afterwards remained their name for Miles.”

In 1880 he commanded troops of several thousand against the Apaches. Their leader, Geronimo, had only about 25 warriors, but they used tactics of guerilla warfare which Miles could not overcome. He became one of the first military leaders to use a new form of communication called the heliograph. “This was a system of mirrors on tripods to flash Morse Code messages. As a unit of Cavalry gave up chase they would signal another unit to pick up the pursuit. Under this constant pressure Geronimo agree to meet with Miles. At their meeting the General explained



*General Nelson Miles in a bearskin coat*

to Geronimo that while he was in the desert, all of his people had been moved to Florida and thus there was no use in continuing the fighting. The following day Geronimo surrendered, officially ending the Indian Wars.”

*(To be continued in next newsletter)*



## IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened by the passing of long-time member of the Historical Society, **Bob Mason**. His family goes back to the founding days of Westminster and he and his mother before him, Ellen Harrington Mason, were a never ending source of information about the town. He started the Maple Sugaring events we offered in the spring, and supplied us with occasional pieces of wood from his sawmill. We will miss his quick smile and abundant energy.

Historical Society member **Tom Connell, Sr.** also died this summer. He was very active in Civil War enactments with his family and loved to share these activities with others. Both of these men were also members of the Westminster Historical Commission and will be missed by those with whom they worked.

**Joan Keena** passed away this fall. Her volunteer work with the Historical Society goes back to the 1970s. She and Librarian Irene Mattila worked as Co-Curators of the Historical Society when the Historical Society managed the town museum on the second floor of the Library, a labor of love for them both. We will miss her dedication, her interest in town history and her sunny disposition.

## GARDNER COLONY FOR THE INSANE PROJECT

We are continuing our work on inventorying our collections on the Gardner State Hospital, first known as the Gardner Colony for the Insane. Don Stevens and Rachael Vincent have catalogued all 603 negatives and photographs by Donald Barton, a photographer who took photos as part of his observations at the hospital. Most of them appear to have been taken during the 1960s and 1970s and none were labeled.

When trying to identify nurses in some of the photos, we learned that ear-



ly on in the history of the hospital, advertisements were put into newspapers in Maine asking for people to apply to work at the hospital in Gardner. We would like to interview persons who know about this. Please contact Betsy Hannula, Project Coordinator at 978-874-0430 or [BetsyHannula@gmail.com](mailto:BetsyHannula@gmail.com).

This project is funded in part by Mass Humanities, which receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. We are delighted to receive this support as we inventory all the resources we have in our collections on the Gardner State Hospital.



*Henry Heywood Hospital School of Nursing students did training at the Gardner State Hospital. These young women were photographed during the 1970s.*

## 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 Heather 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, your membership is free!

### WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

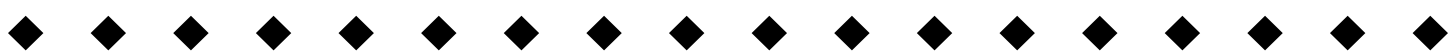
Individual \$25  
Family 40  
Senior (over 65) 15  
Contributing 50  
Friend 100  
Honorary (over 75) 0

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.



### ENROLL TODAY FOR ENERGY THAT'S AFFORDABLE AND BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

About a year and half ago, the Westminster Historical Society (WHS) signed onto a unique opportunity to save money on its electric bill and we are offering this opportunity to families and companies. The program is through a socially responsible energy company which supplies electric companies with green energy. A minimum of 50% of the energy they supply is from renewable sources – solar, wind and hydro.

When you sign up, your electric bill looks the same and your maintenance and delivery stay the same. Rates have been lower than utility rates and they can be locked in. Watch a Viridian video and learn more about the company at [www.Viridian.com/WHS](http://www.Viridian.com/WHS).

The Historical Society is happy with its decision to save money on monthly electrical bills, while being a "green" consumer using renewable sources. In addition, the Historical Society benefits from a small residual income from everyone who chooses Viridian for his or her energy supplier. Go to

[www.ViridianCares.org](http://www.ViridianCares.org)

to view benefits for non-profit organizations. You can sign up on-line at

[www.Viridian.com/WHS](http://www.Viridian.com/WHS).

After you complete application on-line, click the "Contact Us" button and send an email to WHS from the corporate website. Your email will notify Westminster Historical Society that you enrolled in the program. You may contact the Society directly at

[WestminsterHistory@Verizon.net](mailto:WestminsterHistory@Verizon.net)

or get onto our website:

[www.WestminsterHistory.com](http://www.WestminsterHistory.com)

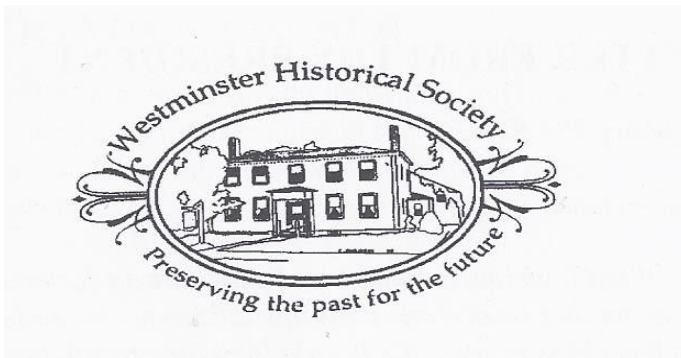
to learn more and sign up.

## HOUSE & GROUNDS UPDATE

The Historical Society house was built in 1800, so it stands to reason there will be ongoing maintenance to keep the place running well. Most everyone who owns or rents property has either lost electricity, had heating or plumbing problems. During our first real cold spell this January, the motor in the boiler at the Society needed to be replaced. Fortunately, Bob Reed Plumbing & Heating came to the rescue and was able to find a motor for the aging boiler.

We had to wait a day for the motor to be shipped from the Cape to Bob Reed in Gardner. Heather Bowen and Roni Beal brought space heaters to the Historical Society house to help prevent the pipes from freezing.

In addition to the unexpected furnace repair, the His-



torical Society has two other projects that required attention. We hope to purchase a front storm door to keep out the draft that is a constant problem in the winter months. The other project is replacing the outside rotted trim on a window in the first floor meeting room where we hold most of our monthly programs.

Membership dues and funds raised through the Annual Appeal, Christmas Open House, the upcoming Fishing Derby, the Wachusett Ski Lift Discount Coupon program and other fundraisers are used to pay for repairs and household costs, such as electricity, gas heat and other utilities. The Board of Directors would like you to know that we are very appreciative of your support and generosity. The Historical Society is able to fulfill its mission to preserve the past for future generations because of you. Thanks!

## UPTON UPDATE

The Upton Building Committee met last month with Chenot Associates, our architectural team, and discussed the condition of the present roof at the Upton School and options. It was decided to repair the few shingles that are leaking, giving the Society more time to make a decision about the replacement of the slate.

## 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 Westminister, 1832</u> by Hudson . . . . .	5.00
<u>History of Westminister, 1893</u> by Heywood. . . . .	96.00
<u>History of Westminister 2008</u> by WHS . . . . .	95.00
<u>History of Westminister,</u> by Tolman . . . . .	20.00
<u>Homestead Heritage of Westminister,</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>200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Westminister,</u> . . . . .	5.00
<u>Wajusett Gatherings,</u> by Sinclair (softcover) . . . . .	20.00
Tapestry wall hanging . . . . .	35.00

### 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 Westminister 1855. . . . .	6.00
<i>Downtown Westminister 1831</i> by Peckham . . . . .	30.00
Postcards . . . . .	3/1.00
Children's books . . . . .	7.95
Tobacco Shed pottery . . . . .	priced as marked
Westminister tapestry wall hanging . . . . .	35.00

Westminster Historical Society  
110 Main St., P.O. Box 177  
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## DATES TO REMEMBER

February 7 Ice Fishing Derby  
April 11 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Tea 2 to 4 pm  
April 14 A History of the Westminster  
Fire Department

## DISCOUNT ON SKI TICKETS AT WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN

You can **save \$5.00** on your ski ticket now! Support the Westminster Historical Society and save money on ski ticket purchases. Log on to [www.wachusett.com](http://www.wachusett.com) and click on "coupon" and enter **HISTSOC**.



## THIRD ANNUAL ICE FISHING DERBY ON FEBRUARY 7

The Westminster Historical Society will be holding its Third Annual Ice Fishing Derby on Saturday, February 7 from 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If Mother Nature doesn't cooperate, the alternate date is February 14. Anyone who registers for the fishing derby may fish in any local pond or lake in Massachusetts.



Registration fee is \$15 for adults, age 15 or older (must have a fishing license to legally fish) and \$5 for children under age 15. Registration forms are available at Westminster Town Hall, Forbush Memorial Library and the Westminster Historical Society Info Box located outside the front entrance. Cash prizes will be awarded for largest bass, pickerel, yellow perch and crappie for both adults and children. If you want to learn more about how to ice fishing, come to the Historical Society on Saturday, February 7.