



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

110 Main Street, P.O. Box 177, Westminster, MA 01473
(978) 874-5569 E-mail: WestminsterHistory@Verizon.net; Facebook: Westminster Historical Society; website: Westminsterhisto-

January 2016

MEETINGHOUSE HILL

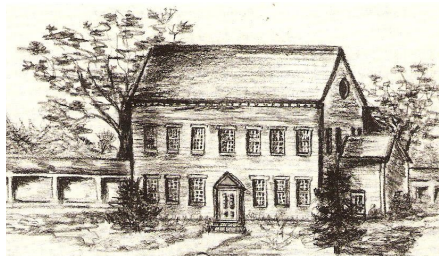
Our guest contributor for this article is Bambi Azarian who grew up in the Squire Dustin house at 22 Academy Hill. She has a deep love for our Town and in particular the Town Common. We thank her for her research and welcome her enthusiasm in volunteering at the Historical Society!

Before our town was called Westminster it was called Narragansett #2 by state legislators who were trying to get the areas west of Boston settled. It was an area so desolate and uninhabited that the Commonwealth had to offer a bounty to attract settlers.

The law required that the first settlers must construct a meetinghouse and a school. During the first meeting of the Proprietors in 1737, settlers appropriated funds “for preaching” and for a meetinghouse (a house of worship and a town hall in one structure) to be built on the hill.

The hill was our Common, which was the town center, as it was in most New England towns. This land was originally laid out to accommodate all public uses including use as a military training-field. Covering about six acres originally, it was greatly reduced “by sale and otherwise” since then.

The second meetinghouse built in 1789, without the bell tower which came later, drawn by Ruth Wellner according to specifications in the town meeting records, for the History of the First Congregational church.



We know the Common had to be a busy place. It was surrounded by the 1793 Silas Beaman house

(Continued on page 4)

MEMBERS FAMILY CHRISTMAS PARTY & CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

A great time was had by all at the Historical Society’s Members’ Christmas Party. Children made cranberry and popcorn chains to hang on a Christmas tree, and adults purchased items in the Gift Shop and Christmas Flea Market before the Open House on Sat.



The Landry and Rouleau children stringing popcorn and cranberries.

Adults enjoyed wine and cheese and crackers and

children had popcorn and cider Christmas carols were even heard being sung by the crew gathered around the fireplace!



On Saturday the cash register was operating in the Gift Shop and Christmas Flea

Marc Rouleau, Linda Manseau, Mark Friberg, Joyce Hannula, Darlene Wildes, and Linda Landry

Market. Many thanks especially to Whitney and Mark Friberg and Stephanie Boucher for their help in decorating and marking



Whitney Friberg and Bambi Azarian with a shopper

items for sale along with Linda Malizia, Michaelene Morris and Betsy Hannula. Roly Boucher kept the fireplace going and Marc Rouleau helped with clean up!

**2015-2016
OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS**

<i>President</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Clerk</i>	Whitney Friberg
<i>Treasurer</i>	Patty Leonhardt
<i>At Large</i>	Mark Landry
<i>At Large</i>	Linda Malizia
<i>At Large</i>	Tom Marien
<i>At Large</i>	Michaelene Morris
<i>At Large</i>	Mark Rouleau
<i>At Large</i>	Cynthia Schramko
<i>At Large</i>	Darlene Wildes

STAFF

<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Kerry Cormier
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i>	Michelle Valentino
<i>Curator</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Genealogy Researcher</i>	Darlene Johnson
<i>Historian</i>	Pat Lasky
<i>House Maintenance Staff</i> ..	Rob Johnson
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Patricia Gendron
<i>Registrar</i>	Stephanie Boucher

MEETINGS

Meetings are held November through June on the 2nd 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, Tuesdays 1-3 pm, Fridays 9-12 Noon, and other times by appointment.

MISSION

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



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

January 1, 2016

Dear Members and Friends,

I'd like to wish everyone a happy new year and thank you for supporting the Historical Society, if you already do so. If you don't, this would be a good year to begin. We are off to a new beginning with a new board and committees that are working hard on our mission to save and share Westminster's history. With confidence and optimism we believe we can achieve great things.

In three months the Nominating Committee did an amazing job talking with dozens of people about the mission of the Historical Society and what it can achieve for the community, and ten of those people have taken seats on the board of directors. In addition, fifteen others have agreed to serve on Historical Society committees, which do the bulk of the planning and work of the Society. It's a tremendous responsibility and a fantastic effort by these persons who have stepped up as volunteers.

We were very fortunate to have the assistance

I love quotes which can inspire us to be better persons., and I will try to include one in each letter this year. Sometimes, the shorter, the better. Here's the first one.

"None of us is as smart as all of us." by Ken Blanchard

We are looking for guest authors for the newsletter. If you have any ideas, please contact us. There is so much fascinating history in our town, and each person knows a little bit of it. Our goal this year is to reveal as much as can about what we've all discovered in the past and share it with others.

CURATOR'S CORNER

History is never so meaningful as when we touch and handle things from the past. That is why at the core of what historical societies do is save and preserve items from the past.

It is also why the Westminster Historical Society is so grateful to persons who help us do this by donating items to the Historical Society for us to save for the future.

Persons who have given items for us to preserve the past few months are:

Janet Lauricella: class photos, Westminster Jr. High school jacket and Westminster 200th Anniv. Jacket

Betsy Hannula: collection of books used in Westminster Schools in 1950s

Jeannette Lemieur: ring and pins related to Westminster Elementary School Band

Sieglinde Friberg: portable typewriter brought from Holland to the US

Mark Destro: collection of 4 old bottles & brass tag

Eileen Goguen: oil painting by Lois Howard of "Morning Visitor"

Flea Market: Lighting the Way From Our Past – history of the Congregational Church

Sallyann Dunton: scrapbook, school memorabilia, and photos

ANNUAL MEETING

The Historical Society's Annual Meeting was held on October 23, 2015 at the Old Mill where a delicious buffet dinner was enjoyed by all. At the following business meeting, the recommended by-laws were not approved. The outgoing board members were thanked for their service and a new board was installed. They included President Betsy Hannula, Treasurer Patty Leonhardt, and at large members Mark Landry, Ted McIntire, Linda Malizia, Cynthia Schramko, and Darlene Wildes. Other Board members unable to attend that evening were Secretary Whitney Friberg, Tom Marien, Michaelene Morris and Marc Rouleau.

STRATEGIC PLANNING EFFORTS

On December 1 all Historical Society Board and Committee members were invited to attend a special strategic planning session with Mike Greenwood, a professor of management and entrepreneurship at Fitchburg State University. His years of experience as a strategic planner were clearly evident as he guided our group through "grounding" exercises. This new term was another way to require each of us to think about what was important in the work of the Historical Society.



Next all the goals were combined

Mark Landry, Luther Bradley, and Mike Greenwood at one of the group sessions in the strategic planning process.



Cynthia Schramko, Patty Leonhardt, Michaelene Morris, Darlene Wildes, Linda Malizia, and Bambi Azarian with Mike

from both groups. A final task was for each person to prioritize the goals in individual surveys. The results were then compiled and became a "Just Go Do It" list, another

new term which in essence is a priority list for what the Historical Society will focus on this year and in the near future. The good part about this type of planning is that everything mentioned by everyone is on the list, and we will be working on everything in the order they were prioritized. It's exciting to have a new approach for our organization!

ATTIC TREASURES SALE

It was a glorious day in September and treasure hunters were enthusiastically looking for the purchase that would make their day. Their purchases made our day successful as well. The name of this annual event was changed from Flea Market to Attic Treasures Sale because we are now focusing on items that have a little more value since our storage space is so limited. It worked out well this fall and we expect to continue in the future. Families who participate in the Town Wide Yard Sale (date is set for June 18) will still be able to select items from their left overs to be donated to the Historical Society for its Attic Treasures Sale on September 24.

(Continued from page 1)



24 Academy Hill Rd

built in 1849 (18 Dawley Rd), and dwellings such as the 1829 Abraham Wood house (19 Foster St.), the 1809 home of attorney

which served as an inn and store (24 Academy Hill), the 1815 Rev. Cyrus Mann parsonage (6 Dawley Rd.), the Town Pound next to the Augustus Eager house



6 Dawley Rd

Squire Dustin (22 Academy Hill Rd), and the circa 1800 home of Dr. Pearson (3 Foster St.).

The original settlers erected the first school on



22 Academy Hill Rd.

the Common 15 years later, and then two more followed on this town land. When the first large school was eventually constructed in 1789, it was located at



The Town Pound where loose animals were kept till their owners paid a fine before taking them home.

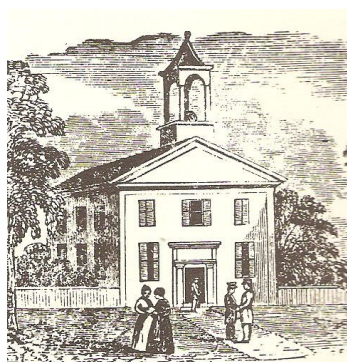
the base of the hill and was known as the Center School.

In 1829 a private secondary school was built just below the Common. Students from all over New



The Central schoolhouse on Academy Hill Rd.

England attended, paying \$3 per quarter tuition. There was no other secondary school in town so several students from town attended at a time when most children finished school in the 8th grade.



Westminster Academy

After the Academy closed its doors in 1860, it was purchased by the Town and used as a high school from 1871 until it burned down in 1888. But the name of this road - Academy Hill - will always remind us of the Academy which once stood on the right hand side of the road as you climb up the hill. Look for the plaque still attached to the old steps leading to the Academy the next time you march up the hill on Memorial Day!



Why did the center of town activities move down the hill, leaving the Town Common a quiet and undisturbed area? The major reason was because in 1800 the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike was changed from going over the top of the hill to going around the hill through what is now the downtown of Westminster. Businesses were thriving in this area with a river providing power along the main street and homes were being built nearby for all the workers.

However, a major factor for moving the meetinghouse from the Common had to do with the first amendment of the Bill of Rights of 1791 which states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Thomas Jefferson coined the phrase "wall of separation between the church and the state" 1802, and the legal concept of a separation of church and state was embraced by various courts since then.

In Westminster, like other New England towns, residents believed the meetinghouse could no longer serve two purposes, so they voted to construct two separate buildings and the obvious choice was to locate them down the hill where the commercial center of town was developing. The new town hall was built on Bacon Street in 1839, and the new house of worship was built on Main Street where the First Congregational Church stands now.

Perhaps the next time you attend a town concert, the farmers market or salute the flag at a Memorial Day ceremony, you will have a greater appreciation of that little piece of earth on the top of a hill and what it has meant to Westminster. How fortunate we are that those who have lived in Westminster since those early settlers have acknowledged and guarded the historical significance of the Common.

Although no longer a training ground for revolutionary troops or a place for cattle to graze, Meetinghouse Hill, or Academy Hill as we now know it, is still the center of many town activities and remains a place preserved for all Westminster's people, today and into the future.

UPTON UPDATE

Keith Chenot of Chenot Associates, the architectural team that has worked with us for six years planning the renovation of the Upton School, wrote to inform us that as of Dec. 31, his corporation will end. Thankfully for us, architectural services will continue through his associate, Phil Warbasse, who will call his business Warbasse Associates, LLC. When consultation was needed, Phil spent much of his time on our project.

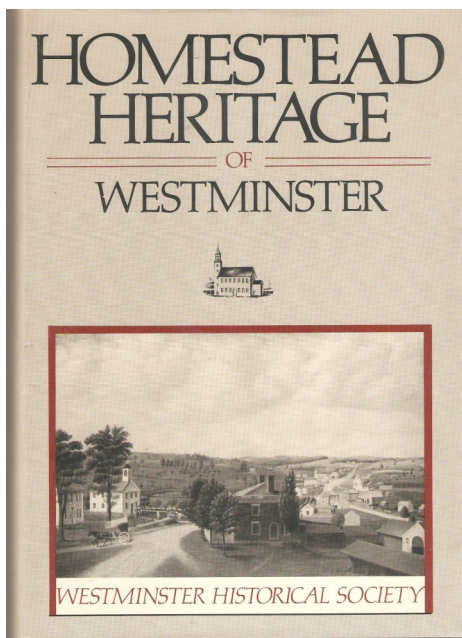
When I expressed our gratitude for the work they've done, Keith wrote back and said, "Glad to hear that the Historical Society is running on new energy and that you have been able to meet with Mike Greenwood.... Keep up the good work in preserving history!"

Keith will continue teaching at Fitchburg State University where he focuses on historical preservation.

HOMESTEAD HERITAGE BOOK REPRINTED

The most popular book on sale in our Gift Shop is the Homestead Heritage. It was sold out for the past six months but we are happy to announce that it has been reprinted by Higginson Book Company.

It was written in 1984 by a group of dedicated Historical Society members who had just completed a decade-long research project of documenting all the pre-1870 homes in Westminster. They were all old-timers and used their first hand knowledge to write as much as they knew about the old homes in town. The book was edited by Lois Greenwood of Winchendon, and published in 1984. It was such a beautiful book and so comprehensive that it won an award from



WELCOME TO KERRY CORMIER

Don't be surprised and think you've got the wrong number when you call the Society and hear a British accent on the phone. It's Kerry Cormier, our new Administrative Assistant. She's been a town resident for ___ years, and has worked at several jobs including a paralegal and —.

The position here is a busy one and only a few hours to do it all— from getting and sorting mail, preparing and making bank deposits, answering telephone and email messages, printing reports and above all, being an administrative assistant to all the committees which work for the Historical Society.

Kerry will be working on Fridays from 9-11 am and other times as needed. Give her a call at 978-874-5569 or email her with any questions you may have.

PHOTO

VIRIDIAN POWER SUPPLY

The Historical Society is entering its 3rd year using Viridian as its power supply for its electricity through National Grid. We thought we'd give you an update.

We bet you've been receiving telephone calls about changing the supply portion of your electric bill at home. In Massachusetts electric customers stay with their local utility for service and delivery but can select alternate companies for their supplier.

The Historical Society chose Viridian for many reasons. Viridian uses at least 20% of its energy sources are from renewable sources like solar, wind, and hydro, whereas other suppliers get the bulk of their energy from fossil fuels. Viridian is cheaper rate than National Grid. But a benefit for the Historical Society is that with our word of mouth advertising for Viridian we receive a benefit of \$2 for each customer. That's a win-win for everyone!

For more information about Viridian, please visit the Historical Society.org and click on "Viridian Green Energy program" which will then link you to the Viridian web site where you can sign up for this program and become a customer. You can also contact Deb Healey at debhealey63@gmail.com or at 508-776-5668 to talk to someone about details.

We've been happy to make this choice!

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 Kerry 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.

WISH LIST

- Tea cups and saucers
- Tea pots
- Straw hats

STACY ACHIEVES MILESTONE

Stacy Marysz, a longtime member of the Historical Society, had reason to celebrate; it was her 100th birthday December 7!

Betsy Hannula and Darlene Johnson represented the Historical Society when they visited her to mark this special occasion. Darlene had purchased a beautiful pin designed to replicate a small Boston Post Cane to take the place of the actual Boston Post Cane which has traditionally been given to the oldest person in town.



Darlene Wildes, Phil Marysz, Betsy Hannula, and Stacy Marysz.

Stacy is well remembered by old timers in town who who shopped at Johnny's Market, the first "modern supermarket" in Westminster. She and her husband John Marysz were the cheerful couple who owned the Market and served families from 1946 to 1969.



Johnny's Market in 1958

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

FISHING DERBY: Get your long underwear and woollens on to go ice fishing on Saturday Feb. 6 and maybe you'll win a trophy for one of your fish! All entries must be caught in MA waters and then brought to the WHS house for documentation. Registration is \$15 adults and \$10 children.

DNA TESTING FOR GENEALOGY RESEARCH—A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE by Peter Jefts on March 8, at 7 pm at the WHS house. Free.

MOTHER DAUGHTER TEA PARTY: On Sat. April 9 invite your daughter or granddaughter to join you at a Victorian tea party. Decorate a hat to wear and then bring home the tea cup and saucer you used and a photo of you and your daughter at the event! \$40/adult, \$5/child.



ANTI SLAVERY EFFORTS IN NORTH CENTRAL MA by Carla Charter, who is researching this early history which is difficult to document, but so important to understand our past. Free.

CROCKER POND HISTORY TOUR: If you missed last year's tour with Tom Torrans, don't miss this chance to explore the area! Free.

GARDNER COLONY FOR THE INSANE: Much of the grounds of Gardner State Hospital came from Westminster. Share your stories with Don and Rachael Stevens who cataloged our collections on this topic.

TWO NEW EVENTS PLANNED

Whitney Friberg gave the Program Committee a couple good ideas that she has successfully carried out in previous areas she's worked and we are anxious to try them. They both involve food – which is a great way for people to connect!

The first is a picnic on the Common on July 4; it will be free and fun! The new twist is that there will be a prize for the most interesting or exciting set up. How traditional do you want to be? Or, how elaborate do you want it to look? What tasty foods do you have in mind to tantalize onlookers? Do you want to aim to be classy or funny? Crazy is also allowed! Watch for more info later.



The other food event is an evening of Town Dinner Parties on Saturday August 6 to benefit the Historical Society. Several homeowners volunteer to host a dinner party at their house for a limited number of persons with a price set by the homeowners. The public is invited to sign up to attend a dinner party at one of the homes.

That evening everyone first gathers at the Historical Society house to share an appetizer as they anticipate the meal ahead, and then everyone travels to their designated home. It's proven to be a fun way to raise funds in other communities and we're looking forward to trying it in Westminster!



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 7-9 pm, Tuesdays 1-3 pm, and Fridays 9—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</u> , 1832 by Hudson	5.00
<u>History of Westminster</u> , 1893 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	50.00
<u>Images of America</u> , by WHS	20.00
<u>Olin Warner, Sculptor</u> , by Hyson	4.50
<u>200th Anniversary of Westminster</u> ,	5.00
<u>Wajusett Gatherings</u> , by Sinclair (hardcover).	30.00

Other

<i>Wachusett Mountain</i> charcoal print	60.00
Calligraphy sampler	12.00
<i>Cracker Factory</i> print by Dana Vickery, signed	45.00
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	50
Children's books	4.95
Paper dolls, Assorted	5.00
Tobacco Shed pottery (last of the line!) . priced as marked	
Westminster Tapestry wall hanging	35.00

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

NON-PROFIT
US Postage Paid
Westminster,
MA
01473
Permit 10

DATES TO REMEMBER

Feb. 6: Fishing Derby
March 8: Dna Testing for Genealogy Research
April 9: Mother Daughter Tea
April 12: Anti Slavery in Westminster
May 2: Crocker Pond Tour
May 10: Gardner State Hospital
May 21: Perennial Plant Swap

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

FISHING DERBY: Get your long underwear and woolens to go ice fishing on Saturday Feb. 6 and maybe you'll win a trophy for one of your fish! All entries must be caught in MA waters (6 am—4 pm) and then brought to the WHS house for documentation. Registration is \$15 adults and \$5 children.



**DNA TESTING FOR GENEALOGY RESEARCH—
A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE** by Peter Jefts on
March 8, at 7 pm at the WHS house. Free.

MOTHER DAUGHTER TEA PARTY: On Sat. April 9 invite your daughter or granddaughter to join you at a Victorian tea party. Decorate a hat to wear and then bring home the tea cup and saucer you used and a photo of you and your daughter at the event! \$40/adult, \$5/child.



**ANTI SLAVERY EFFORTS IN NORTH CENTRAL
MA** by Carla Charter, who is researching this early history which is difficult to document, but so important to understand our past. Free.

CROCKER POND HISTORY

TOUR: If you missed last year's tour with Tom Torrans, don't miss another chance to explore the area! Sat. May 14, Free.



GARDNER COLONY FOR THE INSANE: Much of the grounds of Gardner State Hospital came from Westminster. Share your stories with Don and Rachael Stevens who cataloged our collections on this topic. Free.

WACHUSETT MTN SKI TICKET PROGRAM

Wachusett Mountain has generously agreed to donate to the Historical Society through its Ski Ticket program. We are excited to benefit! Here's how it works.



Any time you purchase a ski ticket ON LINE before you go skiing, you should click on the word "coupon" and then insert this code: HISTSOC. For every ticket purchased this way, Wachusett Mountain Associates will give the Historical Society \$10. Please tell your family and friends!