



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

110 Main Street, P.O. Box 177, Westminster, MA 01473
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June 2016

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WESTMINSTER GRANGE #203

In the early 1890s many public spirited citizens of Westminster felt a need for an organization wherein farm families of the town, including men, women, and young people, could meet together for both entertainment and helpfulness to each other in their agricultural pursuits.

After much investigation and meetings, they decided to turn to a new organization, the Patrons of Husbandry, called the Grange, that had been founded after the Civil War and was sweeping the eastern and middle States. The first Grange in Massachusetts had been founded in 1873 in Greenfield, and at their highest involvement after World War II there were 414 Granges in the Commonwealth.

The Westminster Grange #203 was founded on May 15, 1894 with a charter membership of thirty-three people. Meetings were held on the second and fourth Wednesdays each month at the Town Hall on the third floor.

The first leaders were Master: Arno E. Hurd, Overseer: William W. Sterlin, Lecturer: Alice W. Sterlin, Steward: William H. Benjamin, Assistant Steward: W.H. Waterhouse, Chaplin: Alfred Ty-

ler, Treasurer: Mohn Minott, Secretary: Hester Porter, GateKeeper: Edward A. Estabrook, Pomina: Emma Goddard, Flora: Mabel F. Sawin, Ceres: Emma Boardman, and Lady Assistant Steward: Nellie Waterhouse.

Persons who served as Master through the years included: Arno E. Hurd, W.H. Waterhouse, Fred Parcher, Sherman Rice, Frank Derby, Hervey Bell, Robert Hurd, Lucius French, Arthur Nye, Harold Towle, S. Edwin Story, Mildred Nye, Kirwin Bilson, Clara Waterhouse Eaton, Anna Terrill, Mabel Story, Allan Holmes, Everett Lacey, Charles Warner, Florence Rice, Edwin Bilson, Robert Luoma, and Thayer French.

In its early days the Grange served the community well as a social and intellectual medium where the entire family could spend an evening together.

Although it tried its hand at co-operative buying of farm necessities, such as grain and fertilizer, this didn't work out too well. In some people's

minds that was because there was no one with enough time to supervise it on a volunteer basis.

However, their charitable efforts were always ready in time of need whether it was sickness, fire, disaster, or just a belated haying or plowing job for a sick member. Their goal was to work in harmony

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Westminster Grange taken on stage of Town Hall. Front Row: Ruth Warner, Miriam Mela, Betty Kely, Ruth Butterfield, Rev. Lucy Giles (Universalist Church minister), Mabel Story. Second Row: Eddie Bilson, Jalo Snellman, Ida Barrett, Mr. Phelps (Congregational Church minister) Elaine Nikki, Thomas Luoma, Charles Warner (School Principal) Betty Conant, Allen Holmes, Ed Terrill, and Emory Raymond.

**2015-2016
OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS**

President Betsy Hannula
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At Large Bette Roy
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Assistant Treasurer Michelle Valentino
Curator Betsy Hannula
Genealogy Researcher Darlene Johnson
Historian Pat Lasky
Newsletter Editor Patricia Gendron
Registrar

MEETINGS

Meetings are held November through June
on the 2nd Tuesday at 7 pm
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.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear members and friends,

Spring in New England is a time of renewal, with brilliant green foliage bursting all around us. In this exhilarating season with visible signs of new life everywhere, it has been uplifting to work with new members on the Board of Directors. Their vitality and new ideas bring up lively discussions of what is best for the Society and its members. It's a healthy environment and will serve us well as we forge ahead with the many tasks before us.

The strategic planning exercise that all board and committee members participated in in November created a prioritized list of tasks to accomplish. It's available on line on our website, so please take a look. There may be something there that you would like to help us achieve. If so, we heartily welcome you to join us.

Meanwhile, enjoy the Town Wide Yard Sale on June 18. It has become a wonderful town event and the downtown will be buzzing!

Betsy Hannula
President

WISH LIST

Computer with at least Windows 8 operating system
Printer/Scanner



CURATOR'S CORNER

Collections are at the heart of what historical societies do. Saving and sharing the history of Westminster is most meaningful when we have artifacts that people can touch. It's so much easier to imagine those persons who have touched them in the past. We take our mission seriously and are grateful to the persons who have donated items for our collections.

Eunice Arcangeli and Carol Barber: collection of their mother, Edna Hurd's, school materials from Upton Jr. High School and Westminster High School, Westminster Anniversary program, Telephone directory sheet, Westminster National Bank note, the Farm Journal.

Patricia Dube: set of spats and two button hooks

Eileen Goguen: collection of archives from Westminster Elementary School, Mineral Club, and Ann Sargent.

Flea Market: for the Education Dept. stereopticon card, Creative Needlework book, group of ten toy Civil War rifles for the Education Dept., two dolls dressed in Victorian clothes

Betsy Hannula: tin pie plate and book, The Management of Small History Museums

Bette Roy: collection of photos, two postcards, ration booklets

Janice Roy: World War II ration booklets

Tom Torrans: Westminster Digital employees cookbook, also Victorian style shaving set, miniature Statue of Liberty, Civil War shell casing, knapsack J hook, and New York Herald Feb. 8, 1862 newspaper for the Education Dept.



This pair of spats donated by Pat Dube will be added to the collection of Victorian-era clothes in the Historical Society's Education Department. We will be creating programs in which students can dress up in Victorian clothes. It ought to be interesting to see children putting on spats using the button hook to button them up tight. No Velcro existed a hundred years ago!

TEA PARTY – FUN AND FUNNY



The girls and gals enjoyed decorating their own hats for the tea party! Many thanks to Patricia Lasky for donating several hats for the occasion.

The 4th annual Spring Tea Party began with little girls and their mothers and friends decorating hats with flowers and ribbons. The hats were worn during the tea and made for a fun tea time at the Historical Society house.

A variety of teas were served along with sweets and little tea sandwiches. Each person was given her tea cup and saucer and a photo taken that afternoon of each couple, plus their hats, of course—nice tokens to remember a lovely afternoon!



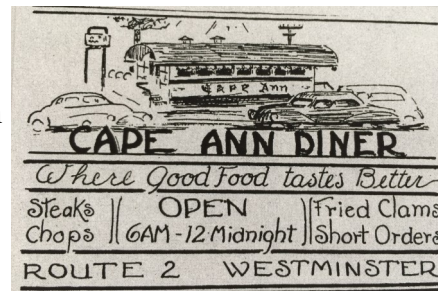
Dali Morales with her daughters Rebecca and Cecilia Maki enjoyed the tea.

MAIN STREET IN AN EARLIER TIME



The Westminster Hotel, managed by J.E. Harrington, served the public from 1903 to 1948, when it burned to the ground.

The Cape Ann Diner, purchased and then run by Arvo Niemi, was in operation from 1948 to 1965. It also had a barber-shop in the rear.



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with all other organizations in town to promote social, educational, political and religious welfare among the inhabitants.

From a reading of miscellaneous program calendars, the meetings often focused on rituals related to the "Patrons of Husbandry" they were known for, and it was often mentioned they would be "conferring degrees" on certain evenings.

Just as equally, meetings had topics for discussion including "Can an unmarried man carry on a farm with as much profit as a married man?" or "Which is more profitable, poultry or dairy?" A statement on the program says, "There will also be vocal and instrumental music each evening, and readings, recitations, and discussion of questions from the question box, whenever time permits. Every member is expected to be prepared to take part in general discussions."

Membership through the years fluctuated, and at the height of its popularity, about the years 1925 and 1926, there were over two hundred members. There were many social events and field trips planned throughout the year. Mentioned were a maple sugar party and at least one person remembers a Mystery Ride evening for whole families to attend.

The Westminster Grange held its last meeting on September 30, 1962. Interest had waned by then, most likely because of the decline in agriculture in Westminster. And, for the persons who were farming for their livelihood, the Westminster Farmers Cooperative Association was available in town for information and cooperative buying of supplies and selling of farm goods.

At the close of the Westminster Grange demits were required from the Massachusetts Grange. From the list of persons who requested demits, we know that the following were Westminster members: Levina Barrett, Herby W. Bell, Kirwan J. Bilson, M., Alice Bilson, Gertrude Bradford, Annie Conant, Carrie C. Cummings, Mae S. Cummings, Clara M. Eaton, Carrie I. Estabrook, Mabel R. Fenno, Margaret French, Fred Coolidge, Allan Holmes, Estelle A. Holmes, Irene Holmes, Carl J. Lindquist, Selina Lindquist, Barbara Morse, Raymond Morse, Laura Murdock, Vivian Prouty, Florence B. Rice, Jennie Russell, Frederick Slade, Dorothy Slade, Emma D. Stockwell, Helmi Soini, Mabel W. Story, Minnie F. Young, Hazel Goodridge, Joseph C. Harrington, Fred G. Parcher, and Priscilla Hill.

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

Mark Landry and Mark Friberg carried the Historical Society banner on Memorial Day this year. Despite the earlier gentle rains, the parade went off without a hitch. Filled with fire engines, the Firemen and Policemen marching in formation, and the bands from the Elementary School, Oakmont Regional High School and the Town Band, the parade exemplified Westminster's commitment to remembering those who died in the service of our country.

The Historical Society was proud to be represented, and we thank both of these men for carrying on the tradition!



Don and Rachel Stevens gave a presentation using photos in the Historical Society collections for the May meeting.

GARDNER STATE HOSPITAL

A large group of people came to hear about the research done by Don and Rachel Stevens on the Gardner State Hospital, first known as the Gardner Colony for the Insane. With funds provided by the Mass Foundation for the Humanities, they researched the history of the Hospital and then cataloged the Society's collection of photos.

It was very interesting to hear the different points of view on life at the hospital. In the early years it was apparent that the self sufficient colony had ample staff to provide a comfortable life for the patients but as time went along the State was not able to provide the care needed. Although some attendees believed closing the Hospital in 1984 was necessary because inadequate funding created some awful conditions, others, who were staff members at the time, felt the closing of the Hospital was traumatic for both the patients and staff.

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.

IN MEMORIAM

We extend our condolences to these families:

Stacy Marysz was one of the Historical Society's long time supporters. We just helped celebrate her 100th birthday in December, and are sad to see her days ended. She will be missed.

Helen Snyder gave her time and her talents to

the Historical Society for many years, serving on the Board as Secretary using her excellent shorthand skills and taking on the role of president of the Society for a term. She also worked with Betsy Hannula and Ann Howard every Monday night for nine years cataloging the collections. She was a faithful member who will be greatly missed.

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> , 1961, 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>Wachuset 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	5.00
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
Westminster Tapestry wall hanging	35.00
Tobacco Shed pottery (last of the line!) priced as marked	

COLONIAL COOKING

All the third graders from Westminster Elementary School enjoyed a day of learning about the Colonial times in Westminster with four stations focusing on different activities. The Historical Society provided a stop where the children saw a demonstration of cooking waffles over an open fire, followed by a sampling of waffles to eat.



Wendy Provencial and Kim Sugar took a break while watching an activity until the children's morning snack arrived.

The Historical Society is grateful to Wendy Provencial and Kim Sugar who have volunteered for the past ten years providing this wonderful experience. The Board of Directors thanked each of them for her service with a copy of the 2008 History of Westminster as a thank you gift.

CONGRATULATIONS HISTORY AWARD WINNERS!

In an effort to recognize the importance of history with our young people, the Historical Society asks teachers every year to choose a graduate from each of the three Westminster schools who has excelled in history. At each school's class awards event, each student chosen for this award received a copy of the 2008 History of Westminster for their personal libraries.

The Historical Society is pleased to announce the students who were honored this year:
Westminster Elementary School:
Fifth Grader, Trevor Gendron

Overlook Middle School:
Eighth Grader, Emma Roche

Oakmont Regional High School:
Senior, Marietta Carey

THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT IN WESTMINSTER

At a Society meeting in April, Carla Charter shared her knowledge of the abolitionists who lived in Westminster more than a hundred years ago and were actively involved in the anti-slavery movement. She is in the process of writing a book on this important subject.

It's amazing to realize how involved our residents were in this important effort. This was an important issue before the Civil War and several local and county organizations were supported. Even William Lloyd Garrison and other important leaders of the day came to Westminster to speak. We learned that many documents can be found that reveal the names of these residents involved in the Anti-Slavery movement.

The Underground Railroad also came through this town. There is some documentation that many slaves from the South came through Fitchburg and on through Westminster and Ashburnham on their way north to Canada. In order to make that trip they needed safe houses—the stops on the Underground Railroad. Evidence about these safe houses is almost impossible to find since it was against the law to harbor a slave, and if you did, you were liable to be arrested, fine and jailed. Sometimes the only resource is stories passed down through generations of families.

Sometimes there is physical evidence. We were surprised to hear from a guest that evening that one of Westminster's abolitionists lived in a house on Turnpike Road. He had been to this house and had been shown by the homeowner at that time a tunnel leading from the house to a nearby stonewall. This may very well have been a safe house on the underground railroad. Sadly, that house was sold and was recently demolished, a piece of history that is lost for future examination.



Carla Charter (in center) is shown here after the program meeting where she was the speaker on abolitionists of West-

HOUSE COMMITTEE

The House Committee is keeping on top of the maintenance of our house on Main Street. This winter we had to have exterior gas pipes, interior sewage pipes, and a storm window on the front of the house replaced. We also arranged for a MassSave energy audit. One of the first things we were required to do was improve the efficiency of the furnace, which was completed. We'll be moving forward this summer with additional improvements for saving energy.



Patty Leonhardt put her window washing skills to use at the house on Clean Up Day.



Steve Boudreau power washed the old shutters for the house. They will now get a fresh coat of paint and will be ready for the front of the house soon!

SPRING CLEANUP DAY

We had an excellent Clean Up Day in April with many hands on deck.



Mark and Whitney Friberg worked on the outside of the house, prepping it for painting.

We also decided to take down the shutters which have been in the barn since we purchased the house in 1984. We have enough of them to install them on the front of the house. After washing and painting them and repairing, we plan to hang them. Be watching for the "new" old look!

Thank you to all who helped

out that day: Luther Bradley, Patty Leonhardt, Whitney Friberg, Bambi Azarian, Mark Friberg, Steve Boudreau Darlene Wildes, Sophie Landry, Ben Landry, and Betsy Hannula.



Sophie and Ben Landry helped pick weeds in the Historical Society garden.

UPTON UPDATE

The Upton Building Committee has met several times this winter and spring to determine the best plan for the roof. Several slating companies have inspected the slates and stated that they are in good condition and do not need to be replaced. After several interviews, the Committee recommended to the Board of Directors hiring Skyline Engineers, based in Ashburnham, to repair broken or missing slates on the roof of the Upton School and to use their method of GESilpruf to ensure that slates will not fall off the roof in the future. Skyline Engineers has successfully used this process on similar projects throughout the country since the 1970s, and have not had any problems with slates falling in these forty years, so we are excited about finally moving forward.

The Board of Directors will make plans this fall for raising the funds to complete this project!

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

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DATE TO REMEMBER
Attic Treasures Sale: Sat. Sept. 24

ANOTHER DOWNTOWN CHANGE

Cumberlands, Young's Cleaners and Town House of Pizza were all demolished in May, making way for a new Cumberlands and gas pumps out front on Main Street. (Young's Cleaners and Town House of Pizza found new locations on the other side of the street.)

Who remembers the Westminster Hotel and the Cape Ann Diner that were here before this little strip mall? See photos inside this newsletter!



Demolition underway

ATTIC TREASURES SALE

Save the last Saturday in September for bargain hunting at the Attic Treasures Sale. We've changed the name from "Flea Market" to illustrate the fact that, with limited space, we are now focusing on larger items that will make it worthwhile for us to store during the year and put out for sale in September. It worked well last year, and we're looking forward to it this year.



This sale is a big fundraiser to help pay for the Society's operating expenses, so we are grateful to those who donate items for sale, and for those who come to purchase items on the day of the sale.