



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

110 Main Street, P.O. Box 177, Westminster, MA 01473
(978) 874-5569 WestminsterHistoricalSociety@gmail.com www.WestminsterHistoricalSociety.org

January 2017

Facebook: Westminster Historical Society

ICE HARVESTING

We were very fortunate to receive from George Lane a collection of manuscripts written by students in the late 1800s to show their accomplishments during the fall semester. They attended the old schoolhouse No. 3 once located on West Princeton Road. Most of the families who attended there were Millers, Merriams and Boltons. Because of Herbert Merriam's writing about the ice harvest, this issue of the newsletter focuses on ice harvesting.

This manuscript, entitled "Ice" was written by Herbert Merriam on Feb. 14, 1877.

"Ice is a very common thing in our cold climate, and especially this winter. It formed in ponds, lakes and sometimes on rivers if the water does not run very fast. Within a few years, the trade in ice has become very extensive; and it is now sent to almost every Foreign port, where the climate does not allow of its formation. When the ice gets thick enough, men and boys go and saw it into square blocks, and it is then packed in sawdust in houses made for the purpose. Late years our farmers are getting to use it more than they did, and in the hot days of Summer it is very much appreciated."

With today's refrigerators it's a long jump backwards to think about how our ancestors kept their food cold. Originally in New England, there was no need for refrigeration because food was prepared on a daily basis. Meat was butchered fresh each day and dried for the season, and farmers grew their own produce or bought it fresh at the market weekly. However, when the American diet changed and more fresh vegetables were desired all year long, a need for food preservation became important.

And so, ice harvesting became a huge business by the mid 1800s. Clean ice could be cut

from virtually any pond or river in America. Thoreau even spoke of the operation at Walden Pond. In the winter of 1846-47 he wrote, "A hundred Irishmen, with Yankee overseers, came from Cambridge every day to get out the ice. They divided it into cakes by methods too well known to require description, and these, being sledded to the shore, were rapidly hauled off onto an ice platform, and raised by grappling irons and block



Fig. 4.—CANALING TO THE HOUSE.

Illustration is from the book America's Icemen, An Illustrative History of the United States Natural Ice Industry 1665-1925 by Joseph C. Jones, Jr.

and tackle, worked by horses, on to a stack, as surely as so many barrels of flour... They stacked up the cakes thus in the open air in a pile 30 feet high on the side and six or seven rods square, putting hay between the outside layers to exclude the air" until 10,000 tons stood covered with hay and boards.

In February, 1908, the *Gardner News* reported that C.B. Kendall in Gardner had a large force of 70-80 men harvesting ice. After all the ice houses lining Crystal Lake had been filled (with a total of 12,000 tons of ice), the number of men was cut down to 50, who then filled railroad cars with ice. 110 railroad cars were being filled with ice

(Continued on page 4)

**2016-2017
OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS**

<i>President</i>	Barry Roy
<i>Vice President</i>	Linda Malizia
<i>Clerk</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Treasurer</i>	Patty Leonhardt
<i>At Large</i>	Linda Dube
<i>At Large</i>	Mark Landry
<i>At Large</i>	Tom Marien
<i>At Large</i>	Michaelene Morris
<i>At Large</i>	Bette Roy
<i>At Large</i>	Darlene Wildes

STAFF

<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Nadine Leger
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i>	Anna Noyes
<i>Curator</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Genealogy Researcher</i>	Darlene Johnson
<i>Historian</i>	
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Patricia Gendron
<i>Registrar</i>	

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, Wednesdays 9-11 am, Fridays 9-12 Noon, and other times by appointment.

MISSION

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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

January 31, 2017

Dear Members and Friends,

I am honored to have been elected president of the Westminster Historical Society. I look forward to the next two years working with the dedicated members of the Board. I would like to thank them for their willingness to serve our organization.

The Upton building renovation is currently our most ambitious undertaking. As plans for this project proceed, we are actively seeking members for the Capital Campaign to assist us in fund raising. If you are interested, please contact the WHS.

The Upton building project is an exciting opportunity that will benefit our children and all future generations. As the Society headquarters, it will be used for educational programs, historical displays and meeting space. We invite everyone to participate in moving this project forward.

The WHS recently published a postcard book [Vintage Views of a New England Village, A Postcard Tour of Westminister, Massachusetts](#). It was a fun project to work on with Betsy Hannula. Through the generosity of members and residents, we were able to select over 100 postcards from our own collection and from the collections of individuals depicting Westminister around the turn of the century. The book is a wonderful view into the life of our town. Signed copies are available for purchase at the gift shop or online.

This will be an exciting year for the WHS. Thanks to all of you for your support!

Sincerely,

Barry E. Roy
President

CURATOR'S CORNER

There's nothing like an actual artifact for people to look at and touch to make the past come alive. The variety of items we get is amazing, and some go back a couple centuries, such as the recent donation of a large collection of documents from Willard Allen who was born in 1801 and lived in Westminster. History comes alive with original materials! We are grateful to the following people who have donated items for the Historical Society collections:

Phil and Sally Allen with their grandchildren and Curator Betsy Hannula. Phil donated an album of original documents about his family in the 1800s.



- Phil Allen:** album of documents on his ancestry Willard and Frederick Allen
Eunice Arcangeli: hooked rug and hooked chair pad made by Clara Eaton
Connie Chartrand: 4 photos of classes in Westminster Elementary School
Anita Dube: Sitzmark restaurant cocktail napkin
Paula D'Entremont: postcard of the Old Mill and photos of apartment building at 109 Main St and Colony Day at East Gardner State Hospital in 1939
Len and Amy Engman: 1857 map of Worcester County and Taverns and Stagecoaches of New England, Vol. I & II
JoAnn Fisher: stamp of Town of Westminster seal owned by Vieweg.
Karen Gormley: sword blade found at 5 East Road and photos of LeRoy Ryder
Joyce Hannula: photos of the construction of the first playground for Westminster Elementary School
Frank Hebert: First Oakmont Parents Handbook in 1960 and two issues of Oakmonitor
Lawrence Hicks: two postcards of the Old Mill and Burt's Garage notepaper
Mary Lasky: photos of Patricia Lasky's students and faculty at Westminster Elementary School
Jeannette Lemieur: 4 photos of classes at Westminster Elementary School
Barry Roy: 8 postcards of Westminster
Bette Roy: photo of Ivar Tiiainen
Jeannette Lemieur: 4 class photos
Michael May: 3 postcards & class photos

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE UPTON BUILDING RENOVATIONS

In order to renovate the Upton School for the Historical Society's new headquarters, we've established a Capital Campaign Committee. We are grateful to these leaders in our community who are agreed to step forward and head the Society's campaign to raise the funds we need to renovate the building.

It is a multi year project, and will require the combined efforts of all our members in town and throughout the country, residents of our town who care about one of the most beautiful buildings in our town, persons who attended the Upton School and descendants of those persons who want their association with the school remembered, and Westminster families who would like to leave a legacy in this town for the future generations.

You will be receiving brochures in the mail with options how you can participate in this important effort. We hope you will be able to contribute at whatever level you can in this important campaign to ensure the Historical Society's ability to fulfill its mission to save and share Westminster's history.

VIRIDIAN UPDATE

If you've been receiving telephone calls about switching your electrical power supply from National Grid, please remember that Viridian has a competitive electrical rate. The Historical Society signed up with Viridian years ago because at least 50% of its energy sources are renewable, such as water, wind and solar power. We like living green and buying local!

A bonus 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. Thank you! Just click on Viridian Green Energy program on the Historical Society's website.

(Continued from page 1)

for the meat company, Swift and Co. in East Deerfield. Many visitors came to watch the operation. The ice was kept clear after snow storms, and before cutting, the ice was scraped and then plowed so the ice was clear with no slush. The ice was then marked and cut with big saws. Then the ice masses were floated in sheets to the raceway, where other men broke up the individual cakes of ice and pushed them in a long chain up to a run where they were scraped so that only solid ice was packed away. The blocks of ice were finally brought up elevators into massive ice houses each as long as 500 feet. They were packed with sawdust so they would not melt and they lasted this way for as long as a year.

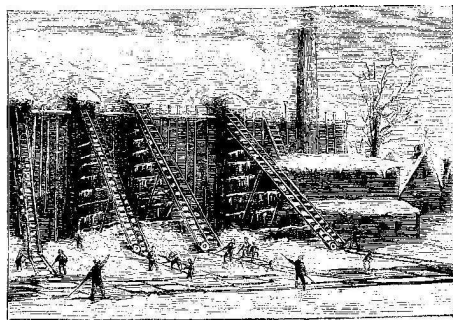


FIG. 5.—THE ELEVATORS.

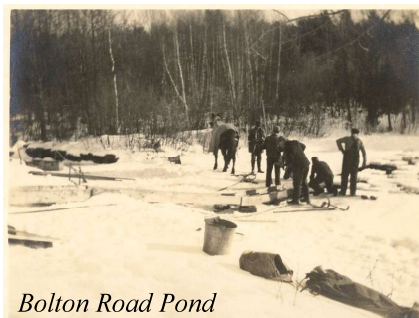
As far as we know there were no large commercial ice harvesting operations in Westminster. Heywood does not even mention ice harvesting in his 1893 *History of Westminster*. But we do know ice



harvesting was done in town. A 1959 pictorial book of Westminster shows a photo of an ice house, but its location is not identified.

Fortunately, the Historical Society does have photos of ice harvesting at the pond on Bolton Road, quite likely the same pond mentioned in the article written by Herbert Merriam.

In addition, the Westminster Farmers Cooperative had ice harvesting equipment which is currently stored at the Farmers Camp on Leominster Street. The Farmers Cooperative purchased many large pieces of equipment for the use of Farmers Coop members, and everyone took turns



Bolton Road Pond

using it at farms throughout the town.

The ice blocks stored in these ice houses were then ready to deliver to the homes in the area throughout the summer. The ice man was a common sight. Protected by a rubber sheet over his shoulder, he had in his wagon scales for weighing the ice blocks, ice tongs for carrying the ice, and a small whisk brook for sweeping the sawdust off the blocks, and wooden tubs for carrying chopped ice to businesses.



Old timers remember the arrival of the ice man who often had chips of ice for children to take and suck on hot summer days. Families relied on their ice boxes, but they required lots of attention. After the ice blocks were heaved up to the top section, the cold from the ice drifted downwards to keep the foods in shelves below cool. But as the ice melted, the water collected in a drip pan on the bottom of the ice box, and you could distinctly hear water dripping all summer long. And, of course, families had to remember to empty the drip pan or the water would overflow on the floor.

This photo shows the farm at 154 Davis Road, owned by Axel Tuomi. The ice house is the small building to the left. Axel built this ice house in order to store the milk he got from his dairy cows before the milk was picked up. For this reason, it was called the milk house for a long time. Axel cut ice from Noyes Pond, also called Blacks Pond, which bordered his property, and also delivered ice to area homes.



One of those area homes was at 68 Harrington Road, where John Viganotti ran a popular summer boarding home for vacationers from Boston. The ice box there was huge so it could accommodate all the foods served to his summer guests. When Mr. Viganotti left Westminster in 1937, he gave the ice box to Axel, and 45 years later Axel gave it to his granddaughter Betsy, who had renovated the house at 68 Harrington Road. So, the ice box is once again in the house where it began.

ANNUAL MEETING 2016

Our Annual Meeting took place this year at the American Legion Hall where a delicious buffet was enjoyed by thirty eight people. At the following business meeting, the Nominating Committee presented a slate of officers which were voted on by the body included a vote on amendments to the Society's By-Laws, which were unanimously approved.



WHS members enjoyed the program and a delicious buffet catered by Sean McNally.

The evening's program was a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the old Town Hall by Betsy Hannula. When first built in 1837 the Town Hall was planned to be a gathering place, and was the home of the Grand Army of the Republic, the Westminster Grange, the Farmers and Mechanics Association, and countless other organizations. Not until the 1960s was it also used for town offices. It served as a venue for graduations, dances, weddings and Scout programs for 167 years.



The old town hall, soon after it was raised to make it a three story building in 1893. At a town meeting this November, 2016, town residents voted to allow the Selectmen to sell the building. A committee has been established to create an RFP to invite persons interested in purchasing the building to submit applications.

WESTMINSTER CRACKER FESTIVAL

The Historical Society geared up for increased participation this year in the second annual Cracker Festival held on October 22. We decided to have the fireplace blazing and discovered lots of people came out of the wind and rain into our house which was cozy and warm.

A visitor watched Wendy Pro-venial cooking sausage



Children enjoyed the pumpkin faceboard on the front lawn which families could use to take photos.



Inside the house we had vintage school desks where people could try writing with old fashioned ink pens.

In addition, the Gift Shop was open and everyone had a good time sharing the warmth inside on a cold day outside!

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.

PLANT SWAP ON MAY 1



Snow may cover the ground but we're planning the Annual Plant Swap and Sale in May. We're going back to an early date to accommodate everyone who is already busy thinning their flower beds in April. Save Sat. May 6 from 8 to Noon. Bring all your extra plants and then pick up new ones

that others have donated. For those who are starting new, you're welcome to take what you like and leave a donation. There will be a huge variety including raspberry plants and lilac bushes.

We're doing something special this year for Crocker Pond on this day. Crocker Pond Committee members will be set up to accept plant donations to beautify the Crocker Pond recreational area. You may bring plants especially for this, and in addition all plants left over from the event will be donated to Crocker Pond. Both sun-loving plants and shade-loving plants will be welcomed. In addition, Eino Jarvenpaa & Sons donated some containers which can be filled with plants.



A bonus is that the Crocker Pond Committee members will be on hand to issue the free 2017 Crocker Pond stickers to Westminster residents with a valid driver's license and car registration verifying a Westminster home address. If you haven't visited this gorgeous beach, picnic grounds, and children's playground, you should make it a priority. You will love it!

CHRISTMAS FLEA MARKET



shutterstock · 234833803

We decided to take advantage of folks getting into the holiday spirit early in the season by holding our Christmas Flea market in November. Since we receive so many holiday items as donations, we saved them for this event, and it works out well for everyone. Thank you to all our workers for this Sale!

NEW BOOK IN GIFT SHOP



Barry Roy and Betsy Hannula with newly arrived box of

We recently published a new book: Vintage Views of a New England Village – A Postcard Tour of Westminster, Massachusetts. With 206 postcards from the earlies, about 1880s to the 1940s, it's a fabulous look at early Westminster.

Barry Roy and Betsy Hannula culled the best postcards in our collections for the book – many popular ones and then some very unique ones showing views that most people have not seen. Then we added a few from other collectors. The book is on sale in the Society Gift Shop for \$25 (for members, \$22.50).

CHRISTMAS MEMBERS FAMILY NIGHT

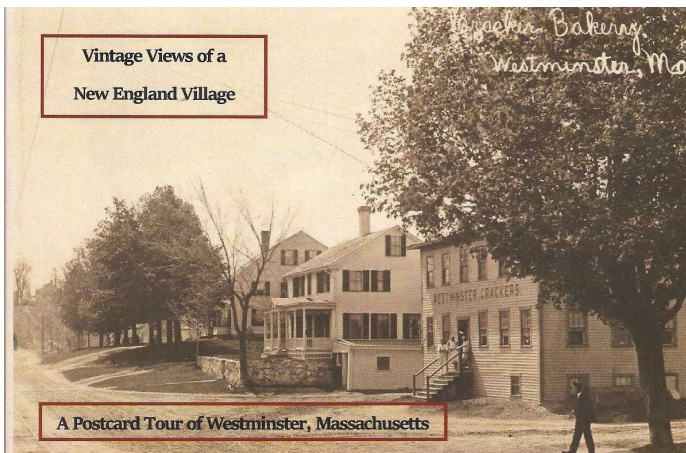
We started a new tradition this year for the Members Family Night– featuring a particular country's Christmas traditions. Marc Rouleau planned this year's theme - Acadian French customs that his family has practiced for generations. We even got to try the poutines that are a specialty at holiday meals. Young and old en-



Members enjoyed Marc Rouleau's talk.



? And ? Roy watched the fire at Members Family Night.



UPCOMING PROGRAMS

MAPLE SUGARING

Maple sugaring is a science and an art. Learn how the clear almost tasteless sap that comes from trees becomes the amber colored syrup that countless people love to have on pancakes and waffles. Adam Bean invites you to visit his sugar shack at 10 Harrington Road on Sat. March 11 from 10 am—12 Noon.



S.K. PIERCE MANSION

Tuesday, March 14, the Pierce Mansion in Gardner will be the topic at our Historical Society meeting. Marion Luoma, the manager of the Mansion, will talk about the company which is restoring it to its original beauty. The building has some dark mysteries and is notably inhabited by ghosts.



The Pierce Mansion on West Broadway

Come learn about of the Pierce family connections to Westminster!

HISTORY OF HOLMES PARK

On April 11, the Historical Society meeting will focus on Holmes Park, created by the Holmes family on State Road West. With movies, dances, and roller-skating, it was a popular gathering place in the early 1900s

The Finish Education Association purchased this park from the Holmes family and eventually it became the Workers Federation of Gardner. Our recent research shows that this was a well known gathering place for local Communist Party cells in our area in the 1920s and 1930s. Bring stories and photos to share if you have them!

GEOCACHING

Bob and Pat Feeley will teach us about geocaching and how we can use it on Tuesday May 9. They've found it's a fun way to get outside and learn about places of interest all around us.



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, Wednesdays 9-11 am, Fridays 9—noon and other times by appointment. Members receive a 10% discount on all purchases. These are also available on our website.

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	75.00
<u>History of Westminster, 1961</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>Vintage Views of a New England Village—A</u>	
<u>Postcard Tour of Westminster, Massachusetts</u>	25.00
<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
Westminster Tapestry wall hanging	35.00
Tobacco Shed pottery (last of the line!)	priced as marked

ANOTHER ROGERS PAINTING!

What a surprise when we received a donation to our collections of a painting by E.H. Rogers, a local artist who often worked with charcoal. What's surprising is that we received a painting by Rogers eight years ago from Mary Arcangeli, and we later wrote an article about it in the Society newsletter because it was a previously unknown artist to us. You may recall that Rogers was a Fitchburg artist who was quite skilled in charcoal and often did works for consignment in area homes.

And, here we are with another painting! Even more interesting is the fact that this painting once hung over the fireplace in the Society's house on Main Street. It belonged to Gerald and Adelbert Miller whose parents bought this house at 110 Main Street at the turn of the last century. Before Deb Miller died, he gave this painting to his friend Jack Schick, who was a fellow Mason member. After Jack's death last year, Jack's wife Margaret decided to give the painting to the Society so it could hang in the house where it originated.



As you can see from this photo, the painting has a large water stain on it, probably because the ceiling in this room where it hung had water problems. (We also experienced a water leak here—which we've now fixed.) We would like to restore this painting. We have begun a fundraising project to raise the estimated \$600 required. If you are interested in helping us, please go to our website where there is a DONATION button to click on specifically for this project. Or, you could just send your contribution to the Historical Society. Every donation is tax deductible since the Historical Society is a non-profit organization under IRS guidelines. Thank you!

ATTIC TREASURES SALE

We were lucky to have a gorgeous day for the Attic Treasures Sale this year! We thank everyone who donated items and we thank everyone who came looking for a bargain. This fundraiser raises a significant sum for our operating budget, and it's a good way to recycle all the material things families seem to collect!

Thank you to all volunteers who helped make this event a success.



This event is always held the last Saturday of September and we welcome donations all year long.

UPTON UPDATE

The cupola has become the biggest issue with the upcoming roof repairs. Should it be restored in place? Or should it be taken down and repaired or replaced on the ground? Experts have weighed in on both sides. It's such a visible structure that we're taking the decision very seriously! Since the project is huge, we are separating it into manageable pieces.

We have learned from photos taken when the Upton School was first built, that the cupola had openings all around, and probably because of a desire to increase its stability, metal louvered shutters were added inside the openings. We will be returning the cupola to its original configuration with open spaces and will strength-



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

- Maple Sugaring at Beans March 11
- S K Pierce Mansion program.....March 14
- Geocaching with the FeeleysMay 9
- Holmes Park April 11
- Plant Swap and SaleMay 2

ANNUAL APPEAL

Thank you to all those who contributed to the Annual Appeal. Our operating expenses continue through the weeks and months, and this financial support is greatly appreciated.

BENEFIT AUCTION

In 2018, the Westminster Historical Society will be holding an Auction to benefit the renovation of the Upton School. We are accepting donations of all kinds of items. They may be works of art, antique furniture, vintage items, objects of local historical interest, sports memorabilia, or even larger things you may be thinking of. Since the Historical Society is a non-profit organization, all donations are tax deductible on your income taxes.

WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN SKI PROGRAM

If you purchase a ski ticket on line before going to Wachusett Mountain to ski, you can benefit the Historical Society by clicking on “coupon” and inserting the code:



“HISTSOC”

at the time of your ticket purchase. Wachusett Mountain Associates will donate \$5 to the Historical Society for every ticket purchased this way. We thank them and we thank you!