



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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

Spring 2017

Facebook: Westminster Historical Society

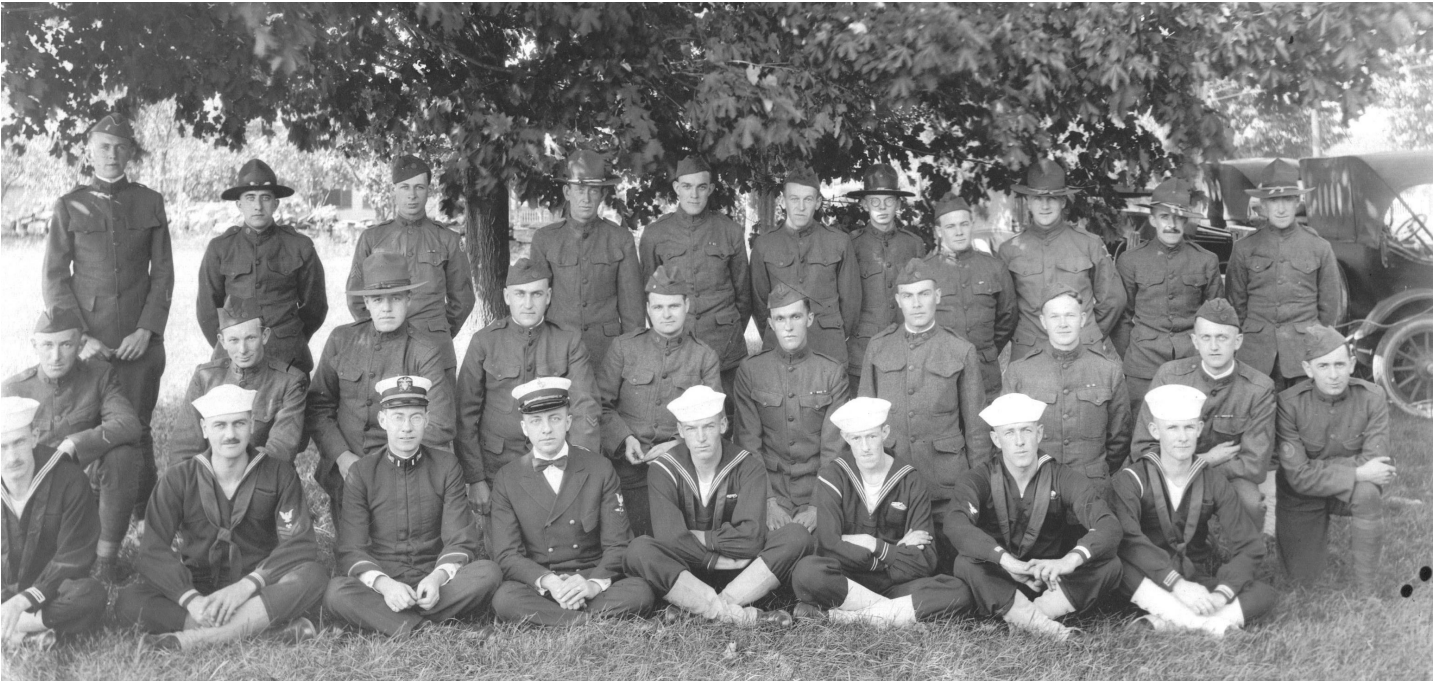
With the entry of the United States into World War I one hundred years ago, several men in Westminster signed up for duty. This article is the first of a series on Westminster servicemen who did their part to fight "the war that would end all wars." We are focusing on men with photos in our collections. If you have photos you could lend us, we would appreciate receiving them for future stories. We thank Mark Landry for his extensive research!

WORLD WAR I SERVICEMEN

by Mark Landry

Ivar Tiainen was born on October 10, 1889 in Wiitasaari, Waasautaam, Finland to Juho and Mathilda (Hassinen) Tiainen. His education only went as far as the 4th grade, but he could read and write. At the age of 19, he immigrated to America

(Continued on page 4)



WORLD WAR I VETERANS FROM WESTMINSTER

Standing: John R. Carlson, Arthur E. Withington, Richard F. Hanks, Arthur G. Eaton, Raymond I. Stockwell, Emory J. Raymond, George F. Cannon, Roy W. Stockwell, Winfred E. Merriam, Harry E. Withington, and Benjamin H. Page;

Kneeling: Roger W. Battles, Hervey W. Bell, Paul E. Derby, Guy L. Miller, Thomas H. Holmes, Roland C. Houghton, Harry N. Howard, Arno E. Hurd, Harold A. Towle, and Kenneth R. Durling;

Sitting: Henry L. Curtis, Charles S. Merriam, John A. Sargent, Arthur K. Rice, Charles D. Towle, Leslie E. Harris, John J. Miller, and Daniel W. Havener.

**2016-2017
OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS**

| | |
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| <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 Westminster's past.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

May 12, 2017

I am happy to tell everyone that much has been accomplished since the last newsletter. I want to thank the Upton Building Committee, especially Von Salmi, Phil Young and Dave Turcotte, for their ongoing efforts in getting the Upton Center slate roof repaired.

In order to raise the funds for the renovation of the Upton School, we have established a new Capital Campaign Committee. I want to thank the following for agreeing to spearhead this campaign with me: Brenda Albert, Missy Urban, Laila Michaud, Burt Gendron, Jeff Aveni, Jessica Leger, and Betsy Hannula. We will be preparing brochures for distribution in September.

Our public programs have been great - including a special private tour of the Pierce Mansion in South Gardner organized by Marion Luoma and "Holmes Park - The Communist Connection" by Mary Lyons, presented to a standing room only crowd.

The Maple Sugaring program at Adam and Sherry Bean's farm was a special treat. Thanks to all of you for very entertaining programs! Our next exciting event will be the Juhannus Program. Come join us to celebrate this Finnish holiday at the Farmers Camp on Leominster Street.

Despite the rainy weather, the Plant Swap and Sale was also well attended. I want to thank the Crocker Pond Committee for setting up a table where town residents could get their free registration stickers for using Crocker Pond. They also received donations of plants for beautifying the site at our event.

And finally, our outdoor sign has been repainted. Thanks to Bette Roy for her work on the lettering and to Luther Bradley who repainted the post. It looks great!

Respectfully,

Barry E. Roy

CURATOR'S CORNER

We are grateful to the following persons who have given these items for preservation. They will tell our story after we are gone.

Eunice Arcanbgeli: collection of 5 deeds and correspondence relating to land purchased by Dante, Peter and Giacomo Arcangeli

Sally Calhoun: Westminster Community Guide

Karen Colageo: newsletter & misc. documents from Westminster Elementary School

Paula D'Entremont: Beulah Howard's Uptonian yearbook, miniature rocking chair, doll and pillow

Joyce Hannula: vintage diaper and pin

Virginia VanHazinga: collection of documents and letter of Eino Friberg's ministry & book of poetry.

Myrtle Walker: Sid Walker's WWII ammunition belt

Karole Messier: William & Helmi Kultti's sewing machine used in their upholstery business

In some cases, the Historical Society receives items that are duplicates and we keep them because they will be useful in the Education Department where they can be used by students. Or we may place something that is not directly related to Westminster in the Education Department because it is helpful in learning about life in earlier times in Westminster.

Some items given to the Education Department this winter include:

Betsy Hannula: old fashioned school desk with doll, which belonged to Pat Lasky

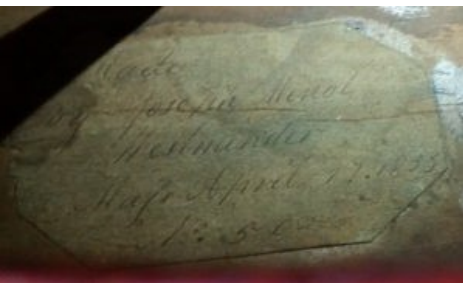
Joyce Hannula: two copper pots for Finnish traveling trunk

Keven Morris: First Lessons in Geometry by Thomas Hill.

Bette Roy: leather covered scrapbook, Fireside Gems by Tiffany

Linda-Jean Snellman: Finns of Ashburnham by Kaino Waltari Rajala

Steve Weedon: One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Town of Westminster book



The label inside the bass viol which reads, "Made by Joseph Minott, Westminster, Mass, April 17, 1833."

BASS VIOL GETS ATTENTION

Olivier Whelan of Westborough came to the Historical Society with a very interesting request. What musical instruments did we have in our collections and were they made locally? He has undertaken an unusual Eagle Scout project for Boy Scouts - cataloging, describing, and photographing musical instruments in historical collections throughout Worcester County. He is doing this in collaboration with the *American Musical Instrument Society*, of which he is a member. Mr. Darcy Kuronen, the curator of musical instruments at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is his mentor.



Olivier and his Dad Patrick (holding a flashlight) inspecting the bass viol.

Olivier's focus is to add information to a database of musical instruments in historical societies and smaller museums, which Mr. Kuronen began several years ago, providing a valuable tool to researchers in his field. We were delighted to show him what we had, in particular the bass viols. They were astonished to see that the original paper label was inside this one, a rare circumstance.

Joseph Minot was a carpenter by trade, and carried on the business of building for some years with his older brother, Jonathan. At length he turned his attention to the manufacture of bass viols, in which calling he proved to be a skillful and satisfactory workman. His instruments had an excellent reputation, both for purity and richness of tone and quality of construction, and found a ready and extensive market. His workshop stood on the ground now occupied by the Baptist meetinghouse, near his place of residence...he passed away Dec. 10, 1835, at 54.

From The History of Westminster, Mass. 1728-1893

(Continued from page 1)

in 1909 aboard the ship, RMS Saxonnia. His final destination was listed as Fitchburg, Mass. When America entered World War I, Ivar registered for the Draft in Fitchburg on June 5, 1917. He was 27 years old and his nationality was listed as “Russian” because Finland was controlled by Russia at that time.” He was working for A. Haris in Fitchburg as a mechanic and was also a fireman.

Ivar enlisted into the army on September 19, 1917. He was stationed at Fort Slocum in New York where he was a Private of the 21st Recruit Company until October 6. He was assigned to Company F, 6th Engineers under the command of Colonel W. W. Harts in the 3rd Army Division. The boys left camp from Washington, D.C. in a series of trains on December 3 and the 2nd Battalion embarked onto the S.S. Huron. The ship got underway late on December 4th for their 16 day journey to France. Ivar was promoted to Corporal on the 14th of December.



Ivar Tiainen. The Historical Society is very fortunate to have Ivar Tiainen's entire WWI uniform, including his sewing kit, canteen, and Bible, along with a dozen postcards of France which he had purchased during the war. These items were given to us by Wilho Mayranen, a neighbor, who was given them after Ivar's death, and eventually donated them to us. We consider them a real treas-

They arrived at St. Nazair on the 20th and anchored at the mouth of the Loire River. The 2nd Battalion then boarded box car trains, 40 to a car, and on a bitter December 28, they arrived at the tiny town of Champlitte. Company F commenced to building barracks in the freezing weather for additional troops. On January 28th, 1918, the company commander, Captain H.L. Robb led his men to Bazoilles-sur-Meuse where, along with Company C, built seven hospitals each capable of

housing a thousand beds.

Just before Ivar's company boarded trains bound for the front lines on March 15, 1918 he was transferred to the Base Censor & 2nd Press Company in the Army Service Corps. This inspection of letters was required to look for disclosure of military secrets, to test the morale of the soldiers, and to find out about “subversive ideas”.

The most stringent censorship of soldiers' letters was applied in the US army: All letters, without exception, were controlled three times by the company censor, the regimental censor and the base censor who, in this way, controlled each other as well. Family correspondence put into a blue envelope – allowed once a week – and letters in foreign languages were only read by the base censor.

Ivar was promoted to Sergeant on March 20, 1919. He served overseas from December 5, 1917 until June 29, 1919 and was honorably discharged at Camp Devens in Massachusetts on July 1, 1919.

After the war Ivar moved to Westminster to a home that he owned at 35 Bacon Street and worked for himself as a painter. He was also a member of the Douglas E. Hicks VFW post 7389 in Westminster. He died On June 29, 1977 at the age of 87 in the VA Hospital in Jamaica Plain and is buried in Woodside Cemetery in Westminster.

Look for the World War I monument at the intersection of Academy Hill Road and Leominster Street. Veterans honor the dead on Memorial Day here.



(Continued from page 4)

Guy Lewis Miller was born and grew up in Westminster. He was on the town baseball team which was named "The Westminster Stars." Guy was 22 years old when he entered the army as a Private First Class in the 26th "Yankee" Division made up of all New England soldiers. His unit was the first American Division to arrive in France where he and his unit fought in 5 major battles. It was also in combat longer than any other American Division and suffered the most number of poison gas casualties of World War One.

Guy was near a shell that exploded with poison gas on two separate occasions. He wrote the following in his diary for one particular day: "April 14—Fair More shelling. I had been out of bed about 2 minutes when the head of one shell



Guy L. Miller

came thru the roof right over where I had been sleeping. Gas at 5 a.m. Went to church at Salvation Army. A piece of shell came thru the hut during service but we continued as if nothing had happened. Heavy shelling during evening along with a thunder shower so stayed in dugout until 11 p.m."

In a letter he wrote to home, Guy said the following: "The 4th of July found me on my way to Chateau Thierry to relieve the Marines who had stopped the Germans in their drive for Paris. I stayed in the front line 14 days and Sat. afternoon July 20th at 3 P.M. I went over the top in the first wave of the big drive. Only those who go thru a thing of that sort knows anything about it. No one is ever able to describe the feeling that passes thru you when your comrades begin to drop all around, but it is something I never want to go thru again.

We were in the drive 6 days and on being relieved, I went to the hospital for repairs, gas and

burn water mostly to blame I guess."

Another entry in his diary reads: "July 20 - After waiting in the trenches 36 hours we went over the top at 3 p.m. thru Belleau Woods. How I ever went through what followed I don't know, being the only man in my squad left. But the old 26th Division did its share all right. And I don't think I need to write details here as I will remember most of them to my dying day."

Another diary entry reads: "September 29 - We were relieved by G Company, 2nd Battalion and took up support on top of hill in front of artillery. We stayed here a week under shelling. At first I slept in tent but after ammo dump 100 ft. off blew up, I decided to dig a hole. Every night we had to dig trenches in the rain and take it all around. We didn't have a very good time as it was pretty cold. I had picked up a German blanket so was better off than some. I also got paid 2,195 Francs. Grub was scarce a day or two as a shell blew up our kitchen."

After one year and seven months of service, Guy was honorably discharged from the army.



World War I veterans marched in the welcome home parade in Westminster.

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.

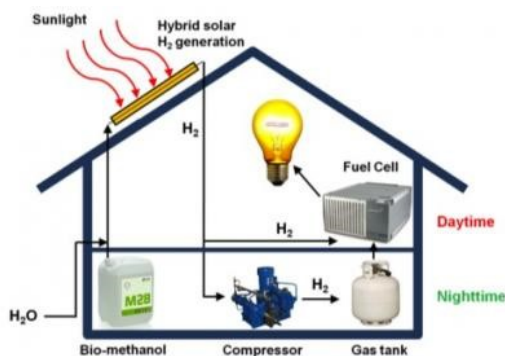
Please contact me about volunteering. These are some of my interests:

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

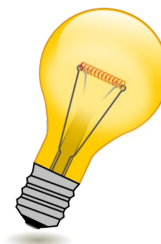
Please send form to Westminster Historical Society, Membership Committee, P.O. Box 177, Westminster, MA 01473.

VIRIDIAN

The Westminster Historical Society has established a new relationship with Viridian. Since solar panels have become such a big industry, Viridian has created a whole new division of its company focused on solar energy systems. They do not market their program by traditional methods (robo calls, newspaper, tv or popup ads). Instead they partner with non-profit organizations to generate referrals from persons who are interested in purchasing or leasing solar panels in order to reduce their electric bills.



And, remember, you can still sign up with Viridian for your electrical power supply on your monthly electric bill and take advantage of competitive rates. The Historical Society signed up with Viridian years ago, because at least 50% of Viridians' power sources are all renewable - wind, solar and water power. We like living green and buying local!



If you're interested in producing clean and green energy on your roof and paying a lot less for your power, call Matt at 508-353-9001 at Crius Solar Co. who will explain the benefits. You could save as little as \$300/year or up to \$5,000 a year. The consult is free, with no obligation. FYI. Today's panels are constructed so they blend into the roof, and are much more sleek earlier models. The Historical Society will benefit by a donation from the Viridian Company, so make the call!

S.K. PIERCE MANSION TOUR

Our monthly public program in March took an interesting twist this year. A winter storm forced the cancellation of the program – a talk about the S.K. Pierce Mansion in South Gardner by Marion Luoma, the manager of this beautiful property. The decision was then made to hold the meeting the following week, but at the mansion



This fireplace was one of many in the house.

itself! Because the number of persons on the tour had to be limited, it was decided that only Historical Society members could be allowed on the tour.

If you're wondering why we were visiting this unique three story Victorian home in Gardner, it's because S. K. Pierce was born in Westminster on Sunset Road. He became the owner of a furniture company across the street in South Gardner, and his wealth was prominently displayed in the home he built for himself.



This safe belonged to Ellen Pierce.

The house has had several owners in recent years because of its unusual history. It is known to have resident ghosts, and the current owner is renovating the home and planning to open a bed and breakfast for adventurous guests. In addition it will be open for tours by next fall.



Beautiful hinges on the doors!

HOLMES PARK – THE COMMUNIST CONNECTION

Mary Lyons, a Historical Society member and retired history teacher, gave a fascinating lecture on the history of the Communist Party in Westminster. It was clear from the 35+ people in attendance that no one had known about the history of the Holmes Park after the Holmes family sold it to the Finnish Education Society of Gardner in 1922.

That organization was the first of three that had direct ties to the Communist Party. In her research Mary discovered that the Communist gatherings at Holmes Park were so extensive – thousands of people in some cases - that Russian leaders in the Communist Party were guest speakers.

Although this group organized dances and sporting events similar to many Finnish organizations of this time period, its primary goal was to spread Communist ideology. It was most interesting to learn how the selectmen during the 1920s and 1930s sought to control the activities at the Park by not allowing licenses to hold dances or conduct programs. Newspaper articles Mary found explained how the educational programs were actually Communist Party training camps for young people.

It was a fascinating program and current residents of Holmes Park were particularly attentive to the history of their neighborhood.



A room full of people interested in learning about the Communist connection to Holmes Park listened intently to presenter Mary Lyons.

PLANT SWAP AND SALE

Despite the showers, the annual Plant Swap and Sale was another success. We were glad to be able to assist those who are new to gardening and had nothing to swap. With plants and bushes now available for sale, everyone can take advantage of great prices on items, and those who are thinning out their perennial flower beds had lots to choose from for their swaps.



Rain didn't deter people from bringing their plants to swap for others at our annual Plant Swap and Sale.

A special addition this year was the Crocker Pond Committee which set up a table to give out to Westminster residents their free stickers for enjoying Crocker Pond this summer. All the left over plants were given to the Crocker Pond Committee to beautify the grounds at this special swimming and picnic area.

COLONIAL DAY

The annual Colonial Day program with the third graders at the Westminster Elementary School was another fun day. Four classes of students watched Wendy Provencial talk about kitchen life in the 1800s and demonstrate how to cook waffles in the fireplace. Everyone enjoyed a sample of waffles afterwards.



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</u> , 1832 by Hudson | 5.00 |
| <u>History of Westminster</u> , 1893 by Heywood. | .96.00 |
| <u>History of Westminster 2008</u> by WHS | 75.00 |
| <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>Vintage Views of a New England Village—A</u> | |
| <u>Postcard Tour of Westminster, Massachusetts</u> | 25.00 |

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 |

GEOCACHING – MODERN TREASURE HUNT

Patricia and Bob Feeley described their fascination with geocaching at the Historical Society in May. Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity in which participants use a global positioning device or a smart phone and other navigational techniques to find containers hidden all over the world. These containers are called "geocaches" or "caches" and can be found at specific locations marked by coordinates all over the world.

The Feeleys have traveled all over New England and many other parts of the country finding geocaches left by others. It's a great intergenerational activity which everyone can play and enjoy.



Bob and Patricia Feeley spoke about geocaching and left us with a treasure to be found!

Anyone can register with the basic free version of geocaching found at www.geocaching.com, where you will also find all the information you need to get started. A plus is that the Historical Society now has a geocache hidden on its property! Will you be able to locate it?

TOWN WIDE YARD SALE JUNE 17

The annual Town Wide Yard Sale is June 17. If you'd like to participate as a household, you can register on our website. For bargain hunters maps are \$2 – a great way to find all the homes which have signed up. A list of unique items to be found at each home is on the back. The downtown is really hopping on this day, but make sure you visit all the homes in the outskirts of town. They're ready for a great day! So, join the fun!

ATTIC TREASURES SALE DATE SET

If you're cleaning up at home and need to get rid of things, you're welcome to drop off items in the Historical Society barn for our Attic Treasures Sale on Saturday, Sept. 23. Please bring things in boxes with covers since we do stack them, and we would appreciate it if you put anything broken right into the trash at home. Your items can be valuable to us! Thank you.

BENEFIT AUCTION

An Auction to benefit the renovation of the Upton School is being planned for 2018. We are accepting donations of all kinds of items. They may be works of art, antique furniture, vintage items, objects of local historical interest, or sports memorabilia. Since the Historical Society is a non-profit organization, all donations are tax deductible on your income taxes. Please call us with your ideas!

HOUSE TOUR BEING PLANNED

In the summer of 2018 the Historical Society will be holding a House Tour of Westminster homes. If you know of a beautiful or unusual home that you think would be noteworthy to have on this tour, please let us know and we will follow up and ask the homeowners if they would be interested in participating. House tours have always generated a lot of interest, and we hope to make this one really special.

CAMPAIGN NOTES

The Capital Campaign Committee has established a plan of action to raise funds for the next phase of the Upton School renovation project, which will include sealing the slates on the roof, installing all new gutters and downspouts and restoring the cupola.

The Committee is developing a new brochure that will be mailed to all town residents and Historical Society members. A special initiative will be reaching out to all persons who attended school in the Upton School and their descendants. The Committee will also meet with Linda Mack, the Director of the North Central MA Community Foundation, for fund raising training.

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

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Tues. June 11: Juhannus Program
Sat. June 17: Town Wide Yard Sale

UPTON UPDATE

Steve Quinn and his crew from Skyline Engineers have replaced over 100 slates on the roof of the Upton School. They have also done important structural work in the attic to support the cupola and to fix the bow in the roof.

In the next few weeks, they will be removing the two large vent stacks that can be seen when looking at the front of the building. These vents were included in the original plans of the building because it was believed that a complete air flow from the outside throughout the building would prevent TB and other illnesses. These stacks will no longer be needed because a new HVAC system will be created. In addition the stacks have deteriorated above and below the roof lines so the Board, the Upton Building Committee, Steve Quinn and Phil Warbasse our architect, made the decision to remove them.



Dave Turcotte and Von Salmi getting ready to climb into the bucket of the crane to view the roof from the top down.



Phil Warbasse, our architect for the Upton School project talked with Steve Quinn.