



# WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Spring-Summer 2018  
Facebook: Westminster Historical Society

*This article continues our coverage of World War I, the war which was supposed to end all wars. Mark Landry, our veterans researcher submitted this information on another one of the 62 men from Westminster who were in the service of our country—Ernest T. Barrett. A newspaper article shortly after the war reads:*

**"WESTMINSTER FIGHTER, CAPTURED BY GERMANS, IS NOW AT HIS HOME.**

A World War hero who has just returned home after an experience of battle wounds, privation, capture and internment in German prison camps, an experience that fell to the lot of only a few men is Ernest J. Barrett of Westminster, a son-in-law of Cy Rameau. Twice cited for heroism and bravery by his regimental commanders, this soldier is as modest as he is commendable. He is the son of Alphonse Barrett of Westminster Narrows.



*Ernest Barrett service Photograph*

Barrett, who worked for Crocker Burbank & Co. in West Fitchburg, enlisted Sept. 21, 1917 in Gardner and was at once transferred to Camp Merritt, N.J. where after training was sent to Liverpool. He was soon sent to France where he landed May 21, 1918. He was then forwarded to the Toul sector where night patrols and raids were frequent occurrences and from Toul to St. Mihiel where his regiment, the 328th of the 82d Division distinguished itself and Barrett was cited in regimental orders at Norray, Sept. 15, 1918.

They were sent to a rest camp at Morback from which they were sent up into the Argonne, Oct. 1, to relieve the 26th Division and take over their sector. The 82d was on the extreme left of the line

with the exception of the 90th whose left joined up with French. This division took Apremont in the Argonne, and Grand Pre. It was here that some of the heaviest fighting occurred, down to the west where the ravine runs. Just above Grand Pre is the famous Death Valley.

After continuous fighting for two weeks the 82d crossed the valley and occupied the heights on the northerly side. The last time Barrett went over the top, Oct. 17, there were only 25 men left of his original company. Previous to that time he was detailed as a runner, but that day was with his own Co. D and part of Co. M.

They pushed ahead of the line, and as Barrett says, they never went back, and found themselves shut off on both flanks by machine gun fire. The two runners sent back to call for a barrage were killed and they stood the Boche off as long as castside was left. The company held to their shell holes until they became entirely untenable. The German flanks closed behind them and they were trapped.

Ten minutes later the American barrage was lifted and the Boche was driven back but in the meantime the prisoners taken by the Germans had been hurried to the rear. Had the barrage been 10 minutes earlier they would not have been captured. For three days prior to their capture Barrett said that the company had had no sleep and the men were practically exhausted. Not until four days later did Barrett discover that he had been wounded with a machine gun bullet through his leg.

At Montmedy they were put to work as prisoners of war, repairing roads for which they were paid one mark a day. When the German lines were pushed back the prisoners were sent to Rastatt, a strongly fortified town, nine miles from Carlsruhe, made famous by the treaty of peace signed by Prince Eu

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**2017-2018  
OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS**

<i>President</i> .....	Barry E. Roy
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<i>At Large</i> .....	Phil Marysz
<i>At Large</i> .....	Michaelene Morris
<i>At Large</i> .....	Bette Roy

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<i>Assistant Treasurer</i> .....	Anna Noyes
<i>Curator</i> .....	Betsy Hannula
<i>Genealogy Researcher</i> .....	Darlene Wildes
<i>Newsletter Editor</i> .....	Patricia Gendron
<i>Registrar</i> .....	Pam Marengo

**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.



**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

May 24, 2018

Dear Members and Friends,

“The Art of Visiting”

Growing up in the 1950s and 60s was dominated by playing outside with neighboring children until it was dark. No electronics. Very little television. Just playing.

For my parents, weekends were for visiting friends and family. As children, my two brothers and I actually looked forward to these visits. We always had something fun planned such as an elaborate picnic, swimming and just running around.

One great tradition in my family was visiting my Finnish grandmother’s Aunt Tynne, Uncle Frank and cousin Toivo. We would climb into the old station wagon with the coveted rear-facing seat and drive to their summer cottage in Paxton.

When we arrived, we knew there would be plenty of leisure time for talking (usually in Finnish), sauna, and very special treats like kahvileipa (coffee bread) and pannukakku (oven pancake) served cold with powdered sugar and fresh strawberries. Aunt Tynne served strong coffee in Finnish Arabia cups with saucers on lace tablecloths. My grandmother always gave my brothers and me some coffee but with a lot of cream and sugar.

I remember there was never a rush to get up and go someplace else. We were there for the day. I heard laughter, talking and more laughter as my grandmother and aunt reminisced about their time living together on Elm Street in Fitchburg. My brothers and I would run through the fields of tall grass, build forts in the woods and complain when it was time to leave.

Today, there is usually a rush to pack in several activities in one day. Children and adults are often preoccupied with their electronics. Let’s take the time to slow down and share some laughter along with coffee and pannukakku on lace tablecloths.

Barry E. Roy  
President

## CURATOR'S CORNER

Many thanks to the following people who have donated items for the collections. Westminster's past is best understood when we can hold items used by those before us.

*Vance Butterfield*: book 165 Days 25th Division on Luzon

*Paul Kiuru*: Vieno Harju's diploma for the Palmer Method of Business Handwriting

*Barry Roy*: 3 postcards

*David Keyser*: brochure & menu from Old Mill Restaurant

*Betsy Hannula*: Oakmont yearbooks 1990, 1991, 1993, & 1994

*Darlene Wildes*: United Coop. Farmers & Westminster Farmers Coop. by-laws & photos

*Lillie Gilligan*: 1988 Oakmont yearbook

*Princeton Historical Society*: postcard, print of Westminster Academy, misc. documents

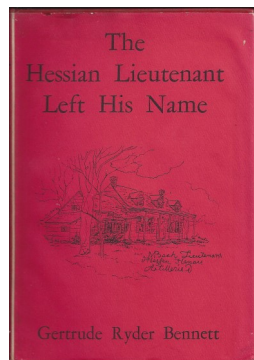
*Keith Honkala*: photo of 150th Town Anniversary float, graduation & play programs from Westminster High School

*Bill Wilen*: Gardner State Hospital bid box & Finnish pin

*Eileen Aiken*: collection of photos & certificates of her Engman parents and grandparents

*Flea Market*: Natures Classroom tee shirts & St. Edwards coffee mug

The Historical Society occasionally purchases items that fit into our collections. This was the case this month when we purchased a book The Hessian Lieutenant Left His Name. It has more information about the Hessian (German) soldiers who were quartered in five homes in Westminster after they were captured in the Revolutionary War battle in Bennington, Vermont.



We already had one book in our collections which referenced the captured German soldiers: An Eyewitness Account of the American Revolution and New England Life: The Journal of J.F. Wasmus, German Company Surgeon, 1776- 1783 by J.F. Wasmus. This additional book quotes from Heywood's History of Westminster which describes in detail the Whitney homestead where these German officers were treated very humanely until their release.

## MAPLE SUGARING

A sure sign of spring in New England is a small shack with two smokestacks on the roof - one with smoke billowing from a wood fired stove and the other with steam evaporating from maple sap cooking over that wood stove. Such is the case at Baile an Chataigh Farm in Westminster.



*Adam Bean's maple syrup team. The fellow on the right is totally covered with steam!*

The Historical Society partnered with the Bean family for a delightful Saturday morning in March, when the public was invited to view the process for making maple syrup from sap. Everyone was invited to have vanilla ice cream with fresh maple syrup on top. What a treat!



*New evaporator equipment purchased with a Farm Administration grant.*



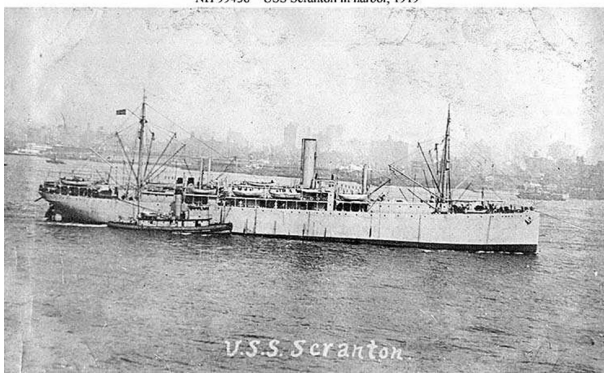
*Bette and Barry Roy served maple syrup on top of ice cream to visitors.*



*Fresh maple syrup for sale at the farm*

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gene and Marquis Villars which put an end to the war of the Spanish succession. At Rastatt the prisoners were not required to work and there were 2400 men there. They would have fared rather badly had it not been for the American Red Cross which sent them a parcel of food every week.



NH 99438 USS Scranton in harbor, 1919

The troop transport ship "Scranton" arrived in the U.S. on May 20, 1919.

.Barrett is unstinted in his praise of the Red Cross as well as the Salvation Army. They were right on the job and met them at the railway station at Geneva in Switzerland when repatriated."

He lived in Westminster the remainder of his life and raised six children here. In the 1940 US Census, he was living on Old Turnpike Road. He died on May 5, 1961 at the age of 74 years old and is buried at Woodside Cemetery in town.

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**BENEFIT AUCTION DATE SET**  
**Saturday, November 10, 2018**  
**6pm - 9pm**



The Historical Society will hold a Benefit Auction to raise funds for the renovation of the Upton School on Academy Hill to be our new headquarters. Called the Upton Center, it will provide a place for the community to gather for meetings and workshops, while also preserving the collections and making them available to the public.

The Benefit Auction will be held at McNallys Event Hall on Sargent Road, and will feature hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar for guests. An on-line auction will be held simultaneously with the in-house auction and a silent auction of unique items will also be offered on-site.

Come join us for an evening of great fun while you meet other guests who are all doing their part to support the efforts of the Historical Society. Until that time, we are looking for donations of items that would help the Society raise funds. Please consider donating to this important event! Thank you.

## COLONIAL COOKING

Another year of baking waffles over an open fire with an antique waffle iron with the 3rd graders of Westminster Elementary School for their Colonial Day experience! Wendy Provencial led the activities at the Historical Society with the assistance of Kim Sugar and Claudia Ewing. It's always fun for the children to learn about life before department stores and refrigerators and microwaves!



Wendy Provencial displayed the antique waffle iron she used to make waffles over the open fire.

## PLANT SWAP AND SALE

A cool but glorious day after a long and snowy winter arrived on the day of our plant swap and sale. Old time gardeners brought their extras and many others interested in expanding their gardens or starting new came for the bargains.



## CUB SCOUTS VISIT

The Westminster Cub Scout troop wanted to fulfill a project to learn about Westminster's history. Where to go? Where to start? The first answer was easy—the Westminster Historical Society. The next question was a bit harder. With 291 years of history beginning in 1727, where should we start with second and third graders?

Betsy Hannula, Curator and past elementary school teacher, decided to try something different this year. A quote from Heywood's History of Westminster by a 15 year old boy named Abner Holden started us off with his graphic description of the conditions the first settlers endured, "A howling wilderness it was, where no man dwelt. The hideous yells of wolves, the shrieks of owls, the gobbling of turkeys, and the barking of foxes, was all the music we enjoyed; no friend to visit, no soul in the surrounding towns—all a dreary waste, exposed to a thousand difficulties."



*Cub Scouts examined an 1831 map of Westminster*

From there we talked about the challenges the first families had —constructing roads through the wilderness, getting people to make and run sawmills so they could build houses and grist mills so they could grind their grain into flour, erecting a meetinghouse for town meetings and church services, and building schools in every district.



*Robert Peckham's painting of Westminster in 1831, when the land was stripped of trees in order to build homes and keep home fires burning all day and night all year.*

## UPTON UPDATE

Upton Committee members Chairman Von Salmi, Dave Turcotte, architect, Phil Young and Betsy Hannula met at the Upton building to examine the cupola with Jason Twomley of Testa Engineering, Shane Brogram, a local carpenter, and the Historical Society Building and Grounds Manager Chuck Fenner.



*Von Salmi, Dave Turcotte, Jason Twomley, Shane Brogram, and Phil Young discussing the reconstruction of the cupola.*

The cupola will be taken down and reconstructed on the ground and then replaced on the roof, creating a much more stable structure.



*Jason Twomley, the structural*

It was also decided to create a roof hatch so that future repairs and maintenance could be done from the inside of the attic rather than getting on the new roof slates at any time. A permanent ladder will be included in the plans as well.

Watch for developments in this project!

## 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 Nadine 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 \$30  
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.  
Or renew on line at [www.WestminsterHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.WestminsterHistoricalSociety.org).

## HISTORY OF LICENSE PLATES



*Alan Young enthralled those who attended the program and delighted everyone by giving away vintage license plates as prizes for trivia questions he asked the audience.*

Alan Young of Nichols Street in Westminster, a long time collector of license plates, gave a very informative talk on their history at the Historical Society. He was fortunate to acquire the first registration lists for vehicles in Massachusetts so he could supply us with lots of information for area towns. We learned that the first plates issued in Massachusetts were in 1903.

What made his talk so interesting was that he has done a lot of research on the persons who owned these vehicles, going so far as to getting photos of the owners and their homes and cars if they can be found.

For example, the first car licensed in Westminster in 1904 was to Dr. Alvah Mossman who lived at 2 Leominster Street. His was followed by Ernest Rumery who had a "locomobile" and then Frank H. Battles with a "St. Louis." Later came Melville H. Warner with a "Steamobile" and then Edward E. Withington with a "Prescott and Luther F. Smith with a "Packard."

## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE UPTON CENTER

Brochures have been sent out to Westminster residents informing everyone of the Historical Society's plans to renovate the Upton School to become its new headquarters and establish a meeting space and workshop area for community groups.

Brochures for our out of town Members will be sent out in June.

## MINIATURE TRAIN DISPLAY

The local Train Club invited Historical Society members to visit their amazing train display in Gardner. What a fascinating evening!

Several trains were running on tracks set up to look exactly as they would in real life. From city scenes to farms to villages, we could imagine ourselves in these wonderfully designed and manufactured vignettes of life long ago.



*Dennis Lyons, Train Club member who arranged this visit, talked with Paul Brown, Barry Roy and Bette Roy about the exhibit.*



## 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 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, 1832</u> by Hudson . . . . .	5.00
<u>History of Westminster, 1893</u> by Heywood. . . . .	96.00
<u>History of Westminster 2008</u> by WHS . . . . .	95.00
<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>200<sup>th</sup> 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

<u>Wachusett Mountain</u> charcoal print . . . . .	60.00
Calligraphy sampler . . . . .	12.00
<u>Cracker Factory</u> print by Dana Vickery, signed . . . . .	45.00
Map of Westminster 1855. . . . .	6.00
<u>Downtown Westminster 1831</u> 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

Westminster Historical Society  
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## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

Tues. June 12, 7 pm: Juhannus program  
Sat. June 16, 8-3: Town Wide Yard Sale  
Sat. Sept. 22, 9-3: Attic Treasures Sale

## **JUHANNUS PROGRAM**

There's hardly an old home in Westminster that does not have an old photograph of family members or friends from the early and mid 20th century. Oftentimes you can find "Bergroth" either handwritten or printed on the front of the photo or on the back of the more modern folders.

This year to celebrate the Finnish holiday of Juhannus, Judith Lindstedt will present her program on George Bergroth, a longtime photographer in the Fitchburg area. He had a summer camp in Lakewood Park in Westminster. And many residents there knew him well.

On June 12, the Historical Society invites the public to the Juhannus celebration which will be held at the Westminster Farmers Cooperative on Leominster Street. While commemorating the longest day of the year, in Westminster we have been featuring programs with Finnish interest for more than a decade.

We invite everyone to bring old Bergroth photos to share, and maybe you can help identify some of the unknown folks in them, such as this young child!

