



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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(978) 874-5569

Winter 2019
facebook: Westminster Historical Society

This past week we had a forecast of rain with temperatures at 32 degrees, and some of us were fearing a repeat of the ice storm of 2008, where many people lost power for a week or more. Luckily, the almost half an inch of ice on the trees and bushes in Westminster stayed on for just two days before warmer air began to melt it.

Since 10 years doesn't seem like much in terms of our history reaching back 280 plus years, I thought I'd talk about a horrendous ice storm which occurred in Westminster on November 28, 1921. Most of this article is taken from the History of Westminster, 2008.

“The worst ice storm to ever hit Westminster (until recently - in 2008) occurred on November 28, 1921. There were few direct references to Westminster in the Gardner News of that day; however, from the professional storm photos of Westminster locations in the collections, the damage was extensive and severe.

The *Gardner News* of November 28, 1921 stated, “Thousands of dollars worth of damage was caused by the most devastating ice storm in years that swept through Gardner during the night. With the main feed wire supplying electricity to Gardner broken down along the high tension wire all industry dependent on electricity for motive power was paralyzed... Hundreds of telephones were put out of commission. In many sections of the town telephone and electric light poles snapped off and toppled into the highways. Fire alarms and police signal systems were crippled. Highways through the town were strewn with fallen trees and huge limbs that were broken off by the heavy ice coating that encased everything.



The Putney House on Main Street next to the Historical Society House.



The Westminster Garage, then owned by Leonard Fairbanks.

All street car service was suspended early this morning. Falling trees and branches and limbs dropping off unexpectedly were a constant menace to pedestrians and wheel traffic. Hundreds of narrow escapes of people walking and in automobiles endangered by falling limbs from overhanging shade trees were reported during the day. Highways and sidewalks were littered with broken branches and fallen tree trunks. In many places the sidewalks and the roadways were completely blocked.... Telephone and electric light workers were called out early this morning, but the damage to over-head wires is so widespread that it will be several weeks before the electric or telephone service will be back to normal.



A house on the way to South Gardner, near the Power Plant for the trolley.

Trains on the Fitchburg division of the Boston & Maine were dispatched by the block system,

as the Western Union was out of commission, the storm having grounded the poles in the Union Station yard.

(Continued on page 6)

**2018-2019
Officers & Board Members & Staff**

<i>President</i>	
<i>Vice President</i>	Linda Malizia
<i>Clerk</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Treasurer</i>	
<i>At Large</i>	Linda Dube
<i>At Large</i>	Bob Feeley
<i>At Large</i>	Pam Marengo
<i>At Large</i>	Tom Marien
<i>At Large</i>	Phil Marysz
<i>At Large</i>	Michaelene Morris
<i>At Large</i>	Patty Schmid
<i>At Large</i>	Ann Williams

STAFF

<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Nadine Leger
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i>	Lisa Burns
<i>Building & Grounds Manager</i> .	Luther Bradley
<i>Curator</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Genealogy Researcher</i>	Darlene Johnson
<i>Newsletter</i>	Betsy Hannula
<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 7-9pm, Tuesdays 9:30-11am,
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

February 8, 2019

Dear Members and Friends,

The Westminster Historical Society was truly blessed over the last two years under the leadership of Barry Roy as president and his wife Bette Roy as a board member. They gave tireless support and much creative energy to our organization and we are sorry that they have had to leave their official posts for personal reasons. Thankfully, they have let us know that they will still be involved in programs they have grown to love, and will participate in our activities on a much more limited basis. We are truly grateful for their help and dedication and we wish them good health and best wishes.

As Vice President, I have taken the reigns until we fill this position on the board. Our public programs this year started off great with learning about Westminster native, Jim Walker's, adventures walking Te Aurora hiking trail in New Zealand. In February Mark Landry gave a program on a local World War II hero, bomber pilot Wayne Friberg, who was born and raised in Westminster. We will continue our travels with a slide show of Jim Walker's two years living in Kazakhstan building grain elevators and being a part of the local culture.

Please join us at all our upcoming adventures. Come March 2nd to the Bean family sugar shack where they will be making maple syrup at 10 Harrington Road and we'll be serving ice cream with maple syrup for everyone.

We also want to extend a warm invitation for you to participate in planning and helping with our events. Or maybe you'd like to be a member of our board of directors. Just contact us. We welcome your creativity and energy in helping to preserve our wonderful town's history!

Sincerely,

Linda Malizia
Vice President

CURATOR'S CORNER

Sometimes items are given to us that do have a direct relationship to people or events in Westminster, but they would be helpful to describe a time period that was part of Westminster's past. When this happens, we accession these items into the Society's Education Department and save them for use with programs we conduct with the public or school groups.

Such was the case this winter, when we received a large number of items from Carol Gregory whose husband, Kim, was a long time volunteer at Deerfield Village in western Massachusetts. He played the character of Town Crier at Deerfield, and in preparing for this role, they researched a number of sources. We became the happy recipients of Colonial period costumes and related items as well as several dozen books on the history of the time. We're very grateful for this donation!



Bob Feeley portrayed the Town Crier during the Westminster Cracker Festival in October, wearing the newly donated costume from the Gregorys.

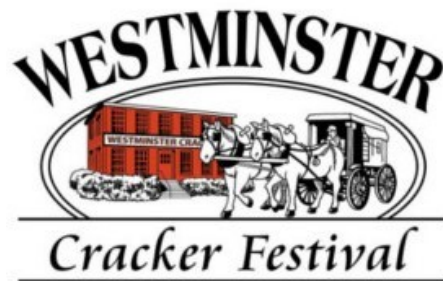
In addition, our collection of artifacts continues to grow with the addition of the following items:
Marilyn Dunn: set of traveling weights and measures used by Ed Ruuska, misc. documents
Flea Market Donations: pair of ice skates



WESTMINSTER CRACKER FESTIVAL

We are enjoying participating in the annual Cracker Festival.

This year we produced a quiz with a table full of artifacts from the Colonial period, and asked visitors to guess their uses. It wasn't easy since so many items no longer have a use in the modern American household. It was fun to watch people try to figure out the use of these old tools!



Wool carders used to shape rolls of sheep's wool before making it into yarn.

Steelyard used to weigh things, often chunks of meat.



This year Claudia Ewing made the soup in our fireplace and her daughter and friends made cornbread in the bake oven. We offered it for free to all our visitors!

CHRISTMAS FLEA MARKET & OPEN HOUSE

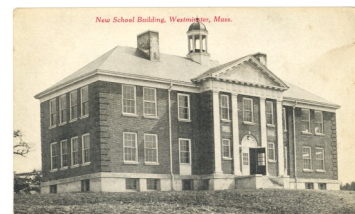
We had beautiful days for our Members Family Christmas party and our Christmas Flea Market and Open House! Thank you to all our volunteers. It was a very successful weekend!



Thank You

We are grateful to everyone who donated to this year's Annual Appeal, which is essential to help fund our operating budget. Many thanks!

George & Joyce Aghjayan	Laila Michaud
Roni Beal	Bill Miller
Juliette Bedard Parisi	William Osier
Chris Bjurling	Sandra Ouellette
Don Blood	Mike & Jean Popik
Theresa Grenier	Barry & Bette Roy
Eddie & Betsy Hannula	Scott & Kim Samson
Patricia Hatzis	Elianne Scapparone
Lawrence Hicks	Patricia Schmid
Lois Heikkila	Roger & Marsha Smith
David Kamila	Tom & Jean Torrans
Thierry Krumeich	Sheryl Vaillette
Jane Kelley	Wayne Walker
Don & Jessica Leger	Dr. Stephen Weedon
Bud & Patty Leonhardt	Ann Williams
GuangGuan Lin	Alan Young
Susan Marble	



In addition, we are extremely pleased with the those who have committed to being members of the Friends of Upton. This donation helps support the insurance and miscellaneous expenses as we take care of the Upton building while we are working in it. We are indeed grateful to you all:

John Gronroos	Mike & Jean Popik
Eddie & Betsy Hannula	Patricia Schmid
Lois Heikkila	Sheryl Vaillette
Kevin & Jeanne Keena	Dr. Stephen Weedon
Laila Michaud	Ann Williams
Chris Mossman	Alan Young



Mary Lyons and Michaelene Morris helped a customer purchase her bargains at the Christmas Flea Market.

ANNUAL MEETING



Keith Dunn presented to an attentive audience.

The Westminster Historical Society Annual Meeting was held this year at McNally's with 35 persons attending. Keith Dunn presented a program on the history of the Westminster Cracker Factory. He first recapped the early history beginning in 1828, which he had already presented in an earlier program at the Historical Society and then continued the evolution of the company into the larger company it is today in Westminster, Vermont. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed his presentation!



BENEFIT AUCTION

We had a huge variety of items donated to our Benefit Auction! Many thanks to the following businesses and friends who contributed to the success of this fundraiser:

- Anderson Bagley Insurance*
- Advanced Glass & Mirror*
- Allure Salon*
- Anthony's Liquor Mart*
- Beyond Petals*
- Boston Red Sox*
- Depot General Store*
- Discovery Museum*
- Ecotarium*
- Edward Jones, Jennifer Wironen Corso*
- Fitchburg Welding*
- Green Tea Chinese Restaurant*
- Joe Serio*
- Keith Dunn*
- Betsy Hannula*
- Roslyn Hartford*
- Robert Hudson*
- Linda Malizia*
- Phil Marysz*
- Price Chopper*
- Smith Mullahy, Masciarelli Funeral Home*
- Stefanos*
- Subway*
- The Beauty Shop*
- The Green Dog*
- The Institute of Contemporary Art*
- The Laundry Room*
- The Old Mill*
- Barry & Bette Roy*
- Vincent's Country Store*
- Wachusett Brewery*
- Westminster Woods*
- Young Dry Cleaners*



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 MEMBERHSIP FORM

Name _____
 Address _____
 Phone _____ Fax _____
 e-mail _____

Individual	\$30
Family	45
Senior (over 65)	20
Contributing	60
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.

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From the Gardner News of November 29, 1921 is this clip, 'Westminster state road cut off by fallen poles and trees. George Dawley driving to Gardner last night had to go through Hubbardston.' In an article written for the Historical Society in 1955 (by an unknown source) it was stated, 'Between Westminster and South Gardner only four telephone poles remained standing.'"

It was quite a storm, and surpassed only by the Ice Storm on December 2018. THAT one was one for the history books as well!



Bacon Street with the old Town Hall and the Lynde House (now the Pharmacy) on the right.



A lonely Model T on Main Street after the ice storm.



The old road to Gardner—now Route 2 West.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

MAPLE SUGARING

Please join us on Saturday, March 2nd from 10am-12pm at the home of Adam and Sherry Bean, 10 Harrington Rd in Westminster to watch



maple sap being boiled down into maple syrup in their sugar shack on site. Enjoy a special treat of maple syrup over vanilla ice cream.. Provided by the Historical Society. Bring the family!

JIM WALKER—BUILDING A GRANARY IN KAZAKHSTAN

Jim Walker has walked many famous trails in the world and will share his experience working in construction building a grain elevator in one of the former Soviet republics. See his photo journal on Tuesday, March 12th at 7pm.



G. W. Bruce had a general store at 108 Main Street at the turn of the last century and then Nye's in early 20th century. It was purchased by John Marysz in 1946 and it became Johnny's Market.

EARLY GENERAL STORES IN WESTMINSTER

Old general stores still exist in parts of New England, but Westminster's have been long gone. We will have photos of early stores in our town—Bilson's, Bradbury's, Millers, and Johnny's Market—and talk about the culture that developed around them on Tuesday, April 9th at 7pm.

New in the Gift Shop is this soup mug with matching spoon filled with a couple packages of Westminster's oyster crackers. Only \$10!



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, 1832</u> by Hudson	5.00
<u>History of Westminster, 1893</u> by Heywood.96.00
<u>History of Westminster 2008</u> by WHS95.00
<u>History of Westminster, 1961</u> , by Tolman	20.00
<u>Homestead Heritage of Westminster</u> , by WHS50.00
<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

<u>Wachusett Mountain</u> charcoal print60.00
<u>Calligraphy sampler</u>	12.00
<u>Cracker Factory</u> print by Dana Vickery, signed	45.00
<u>Map of Westminster 1855</u>	6.00
<u>Downtown Westminster 1831</u> by Peckham	30.00
<u>Postcards</u>50
<u>Children's books</u>	4.95
<u>Paper dolls, Assorted</u>	5.00
<u>Westminster Tapestry wall hanging</u>	35.00
<u>Tobacco Shed pottery</u> (last of the line!) . priced as marked	
<u>New Soup Mug with Spoon</u>	10.00

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

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DATES TO REMEMBER

March 2: Visit a Sugar Shack at
10 Harrington Road!

March 12: Jim Walker photos of
building a granary in Kazakhstan!

April 9th: General Stores

May 11h: Plant Swap & Sale



This photo is of the big ice storm on November 28, 1921. (See front page story.) It is one of the clearest photos of the horse watering trough that used to be between the Universalist Church (now the American Legion Hall) and the Clark's house (now the Masciarelli Funeral Home). There were several throughout town for everyone's horse to drink from. This one on Main Street has been missing for years. If you know its whereabouts, please let us know!