



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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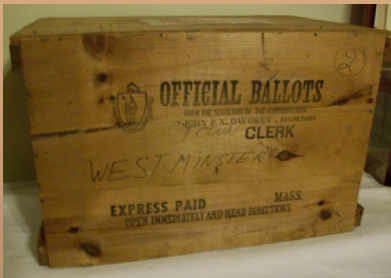
(978) 874-5569
www.WestminsterHistoricalSociety.org

Fall 2020
Facebook: Westminster Historical Society

This has been an exceptional year for many reasons, not the least of which has been the election races in this country. It's an appropriate time to share photos in our collections about voting in years past in Westminster. Following that are excerpts from our 2008 History of Westminster on the set-up of town political committees in Massachusetts and how the Democratic and Republican parties in Westminster have fared in Westminster for the last one hundred years or so.



These wooden privacy panels and stands had seen years of use in the old town hall and this Loughlin School.



Official ballots were sent through the mail like any other large packages—in wooden crates!



Ed Ruuska watched over the ballots being inserted into the ballot box.



An early ballot box used in Westminster's elections

The earliest voting in Westminster took place in the Meetinghouse on Academy Hill, and then the old Town Hall. When the Loughlin School was built in 1936 voting took place there because it had a gymnasium. It was used until 2000.

It's been said that all politics is local. The local elections in Westminster often have very few contests. Local officials such as the selectmen, library trustees, or school committee members occasionally find that there is no one interested in running against them for the position! And then there are occasions when something contentious is on the horizon and we have a spirited campaign and election, and at those times it's energizing to experience the democratic process.



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**2020-2021
OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS**

<i>President</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Vice President</i>	
<i>Clerk</i>	Ann Williams and Patty Schmid
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<i>At Large</i>	Bob Feeley
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<i>At Large</i>	Phil Marysz
<i>At Large</i>	Linda Malizia
<i>At Large</i>	Patty Schmid

STAFF

<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Nadine Leger
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i>	
<i>Curator</i>	Betsy Hannula
<i>Genealogy Researcher</i>	Darlene Johnson

MEETINGS

Meetings are normally held November through June on the 2nd Tuesday at 7 pm and are free and open to the public.

Until conditions are safe again, please get onto our website WestminsterHistoricalSociety.org to see what is happening and how you can join us!

HOUSE & GIFT SHOP HOURS

The Historical Society House is open by appointment for now.

MISSION

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



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

November 4, 2020

Dear Members,

We have endured enormous challenges in the past seven months. It's been extraordinarily stressful to have state and national elections taking place during the pandemic. No one will ever forget it.

The one hopeful thing that I am left with is the resilience of the people in our country. The largest number of people who have ever voted turned out for this election. We overcame obstacles that we could not have imagined.

I am very grateful to live in a country where the political process requires citizens to vote. Granted, there have been years past when lots of people did not have enough interest to vote. It seems to me that this time people realized we are facing extreme dangers and people realized they had to vote. (The number of first time voters was dramatic!) It made me realize how fragile our democracy really is, if we don't individually stand up and be heard *and* be counted.

The feature article in this newsletter is about voting in Westminster and the Town Committees. If you have never been involved with the Democratic or the Republican Committees in town, now would be a good time to do so. Learn how they are formed, how they operate, and you may realize there's a place for you to participate. Democracy requires an active citizenry and this would be a good place to start.

If you want to start getting involved with local issues where you can actually make a HUGE difference, you can volunteer for one of several dozen positions on town boards and committees. Call the town hall or get onto their website and use your skills and expertise to help our town.

Or you may want to help our town in other ways, such as volunteering with organizations that contribute to our citizens and community. One is the Historical Society. We would love to have you join us as we work to save and share our town's history. You will discover it personally rewarding!

Sincerely,
Betsy Hannula

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sat. Dec. 5, 9am-2pm Christmas Flea Market

With covid guidelines in place, we will hold our annual event for those looking for vintage decorations and entertainment pieces for your holiday season! We've got lots at bargain prices. Our Gift Shop will also be open!



A Saturday in March: We hope to partner with Adam and Sheri Bean to watch maple syrup being made. Watch our web site for more information.

UNITED WAY DAY OF CARING

Volunteers from local businesses teamed up to help local non profit organizations through this United Way program, and we were very pleased to have the help! One group got our flower garden ready for winter, and thinned the beds of perennial flowers, in preparation for our Plant Swap and Sale next May. A great job done—in the rain!!



On another day, a group scraped the peeling paint on our steps in preparation for painting.



WESTMINSTER SCAVENGER HUNT

Gather the family in your car and join in the fun with the Westminster Historic Sites Scavenger Hunt! The list of places to find is now available. Pick it up either in the INFO Box at the Westminster Historical Society at 110 Main Street in Westminster, or download it from the website WestminsterHistoricalSociety.org. There are 15 places to find in Town and answer questions about.



You have until November 15 to submit your Answer Sheet, but don't wait too long. Answer sheets can be sent by postal mail to the Society at 110 Main Street, PO Box 177, Westminster, MA 01473 or take a photo of your completed Answer Sheet and email it to WestminsterHistoricalSociety@gmail.com. All Answer Sheets with the correct answer sheets will be placed in a bin and five will be drawn as winners. Each winning team will be awarded a collection of books from the Historical Society Gift Shop.

There is a BONUS to this hunt. You can take a photo of yourself in front of your favorite historic site and email it to the Westminster Historical Society. Every contestant who emails a photo of himself will receive a prize!

NEW BOOK RELEASED

Leonard Haug visited the Westminster Historical Society regularly over the last three years as he researched Gamaliel Waldo Beaman, who was born in Westminster and became a renowned landscape painter. We were impressed by Len's perseverance, resulting in finding original works of art by Beaman all over the country! His works of art are exceptionally beautiful in print.

Visit our website to purchase this book. Don't miss out on this limited edition! It's a wonderful gift for yourself or someone special who enjoys local history and art.

Gamaliel Waldo Beaman *His Life and Art*

by Leonard Allen Haug

Foreword by Diana Korzenik, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Professor Emerita

This fine arts case-bound **limited edition** book is now at the printers and available for advance purchase! **This 200-page book** (8 1/2" x 11") is a comprehensive biography of his life, supplemented with **over 80 exhibits and illustrations** that provide insight into the period in which the artist lived and worked, along with a portfolio of **over 150 high resolution color images of his art work**, the majority of which have never been exhibited or shared with the general public.



Follow his life story from his childhood years in Westminster, Massachusetts, to his early days in Northfield, his travels throughout the Connecticut Valley, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and the Western Territories. Learn of his travels abroad to Pont-Aven, France, and subsequent years living and painting in Boston among the elite artists of the day. View his seascapes of summers in Manchester-by-the-Sea and his paintings of Lookout Mountain while wintering in Tennessee. Finally, return with him to Princeton, Massachusetts where he lived the last forty years of his life capturing local scenes, including those of his favorite subject, Mt. Wachusett.

CURATOR'S CORNER

In our pursuit to collect and preserve the history of Westminster, we have been pleased to receive the following items from those who are interested in helping us achieve this goal. They will be integral to understanding the people who lived in this town.

Attic Treasure Sale: vintage electric toaster and 11 antique glass ink wells

Tom Torrans: Brookside Dairy quart bottle

Roger Smith: log measuring tool

Brent MacAloney: rug hooking frame, one-man crosscut saw

Betsy Hannula: Viganotti brochure for summer boarders, Westminster Grange certificates

WISH LIST

If you know of someone able to donate a snowblower to the Historical Society, please let us know.

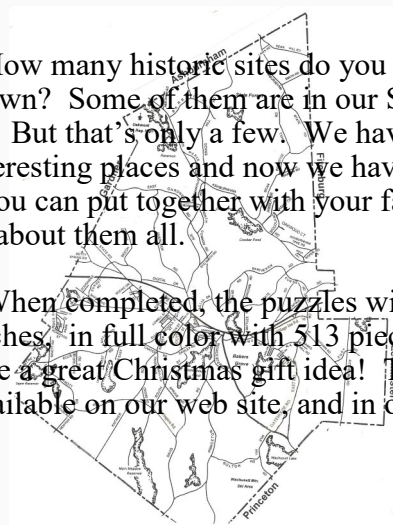


Thanks!

NEW ITEM IN GIFT SHOP A PUZZLE OF WESTMINSTER!

How many historic sites do you know in our town? Some of them are in our Scavenger Hunt. But that's only a few. We have dozens of interesting places and now we have a puzzle that you can put together with your family and learn about them all.

When completed, the puzzles will be 16 x 20 inches, in full color with 513 pieces. This will be a great Christmas gift idea! They will be available on our web site, and in our Gift Shop.



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WESTMINSTER TOWN COMMITTEES

However, persons can also actively participate in county, state and national politics through Town Committees that can be established according to state law. In case you don't know how these work here's how, just in case you want to get involved.

The number of persons on a Town Committee is determined by the community, with a minimum of three, up to a maximum of thirty five people. This number is set by the Secretary of State. Persons are nominated to be on the committee and the names of those nominees are sent to the state where they are elected every four years – in the year of the primaries for the national elections. If there are vacancies or resignations before the next scheduled elections, the Committee may choose persons to fill those positions. The names of the members of each Town Committee are recorded in the Westminster Town Reports through the years.

Another factor which makes the work of Town Committees interesting is the fact that the political districts change according to how the state legislators divide up the districts. Through the years Westminster has been included in districts including Gardner, Holden, Princeton, Hubbardston, and even one ward of the city of Fitchburg.

Since the formation of the major parties in national politics, Westminster has had support for both major parties – Republicans and Democrats. There has also been support for candidates from less well known parties. In recent years, for example, the Green Rainbow party has had significant activity in town. However, state law establishes if and how candidates for other parties can get on the ballot. It is based upon the percentage of persons who voted for each party in the last state elections.

Throughout the early 1900s until the 1950s the Republican Party was dominant in Westminster. The Democratic Party was revived in the 1950s and became stronger every decade. Over the past several years political contests have not favored one party over another.

DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE

The Democratic Town Committee in Westminster became active again through the

efforts of Paul F. O'Leary, who moved to town in 1953. There was no Democratic Town Committee at the time, but that soon changed. Paul wanted to be a delegate to the next Massachusetts Democratic Convention so he could nominate a Democrat - John Hurley - for governor from the convention floor. The family says that with at least three Democrats needed to start a town committee, Paul volunteered to be the chair and his wife Eleanor agreed to be secretary/treasurer. They found a "farmer," who was a registered Democrat, willing to be the third member.

Austin Carroll remembers a similar scenario. He moved to Westminster with his family in 1950. He had been active in Democratic politics in Worcester and came to a town that was almost entirely Republican, and therefore wanted to help re-establish the Democratic Town Committee. He soon became the chairman, and during his tenure, the Democratic Town Committee held many old fashioned rallies, usually at the Westminster Country Club, where they would fill the hall and the outside porches. Anyone running for a county or state position was invited to come to the rally. Austin was in charge of making sure each candidate used only the agreed upon five minutes at the microphone for his message. Following that, a committee member introduced the candidate to persons in the hall.



Women on the Democratic Town Committee standing with the chairman were (1st Row) Lucille Fitzgerald, Betty Aveni, Catherine Pizaruk, Sylvia Niemi, and Edith Testa, (2nd Row): June Johnson, Mrs. John McCormick, Austin Carroll, and Lillian O'Hearn.

Austin reflected that the remarkable thing about the Town Committee was that the politicians running for positions in county and state government actually *came* to small towns such as Westminster in the first place. A second achievement was that townspeople got to personally know

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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. Or, you can now become a member by getting onto our website! 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	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.

UPDATE ON THE UPTON SCHOOL

Without meetings at the Historical Society our work on the Upton School has been at a standstill. Like other non profit organizations, we are acutely aware that our society is facing serious challenges. In the midst of the upheavals in our lives, the Board of Directors here has been engaged in strategic planning for the future. We must ensure that our plans will meet our critical needs so that we can serve the public as we continue to fulfill our mission—to save and share our town's history. We will keep you informed as progress is made.

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 may find the perfect gift for the person who loves Westminister. Members receive a 10% discount on all purchases. **You can now order items from the Gift Shop ONLINE!** Just go to our website WestminsterHistoricalSociety.org. Sales tax and shipping costs will apply. The Gift Shop is open on Mondays 7-9pm, Wednesdays 9:30-11am, Fridays 9-Noon, during programs, and other times by appointment

Books

<u>Cemetery Inscriptions</u>	35.00
<u>History of Westminister, 1832</u> by Hudson	5.00
<u>History of Westminister, 1893</u> by Heywood.	96.00
<u>History of Westminister 2008</u> by WHS	75.00
<u>History of Westminister, 1961</u> , by Tolman	20.00
<u>Homestead Heritage of Westminister</u> , by WHS	50.00
<u>Images of America</u> , by WHS	20.00
<u>Olin Warner, Sculptor</u> , by Hyson	4.00
<u>200th Anniversary of Westminister</u> ,	5.00
<u>Vintage Views of a New England Village—A</u>	
<u>Postcard Tour of Westminister, 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
Map of Westminister 1855.	6.00
<i>Downtown Westminister 1831</i> by Peckham	30.00
Postcards50
Children's books	4.95
Westminister Tapestry wall hanging	35.00
Soup Mug with Spoon	10.00
Westminister Reflections booklet.	4.00

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people who then could make a difference in state government. Local people were then more comfortable calling upon these elected politicians to meet their community needs. The Democratic Town Committee became stronger during those years and eventually more Democrats won elections both in the county and statewide, due to the efforts of people in small towns like Westminster.

In the mid-1960s, Elizabeth Aveni was elected chair. She presided over a very active committee, whose women members became renowned for wearing matching, handmade red-white-and-blue dresses to campaign rallies. During Betty's tenure, the committee had its headquarters in the Brick Store on Main Street and held an annual yard sale to raise funds.

Ralph Swanson Jr. served as chair in the early 1990s. During his tenure, the committee worked more closely with the Ashburnham Democratic Committee. Ralph Meager and Phil Burgess served as chairmen until November 2006 when Kimberly Caisse was elected chair. The current chairman is Ken Marien.

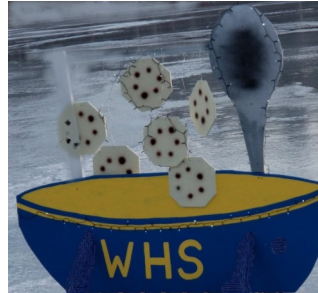
REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Republican Town Committee in Westminster is to inform local residents of candidates running for county and state offices. In the beginning most meetings were held in private homes, but in more recent years, meetings have taken place in the American Legion Hall on Main Street. The primary activities of the Republican Committee are to raise funds to give to Republican candidates to use for their campaigns for offices and raise awareness of the candidates' qualifications for office.

Although political activism has been healthy in Westminster there does not appear to have been any bitter battles between Democrats and Republicans in town. Austin Carroll related the story that when he was chairman of the Democratic Town Committee his good friend Jacob Maki was chairman of the Republican Committee and their daughters were the same age and were good friends as well. A model for our time!

ICE OUT CONTEST IS ON FOR THE WINTER!

Yes, we're expecting Round Meadow Pond to freeze again this winter and you will see the soup bowl and spoon with Westminster Crackers falling into it in the middle of the pond!



Whoever guesses the closest date and time that the ice melts enough for this structure to fall into the water will win \$300. Anyone can enter this contest, so no matter where you live you can go to our website and purchase a guess— \$5 for one guess, or \$20 for five guesses. Use a credit card or PayPal. It's easy!

Winters can be long and we think this is a fun way to make some of the time pass, and is a cool fundraiser for the Historical Society.

All entries must be submitted by March 15,

ATTIC TREASURES SALE HELD!



We set up our new donated tent and held our sale with Covid precautions in place.

We were lucky to have a gorgeous day, and very pleased to have the help of Oakmont student volunteers from the National Honor Society and Peer Leaders!

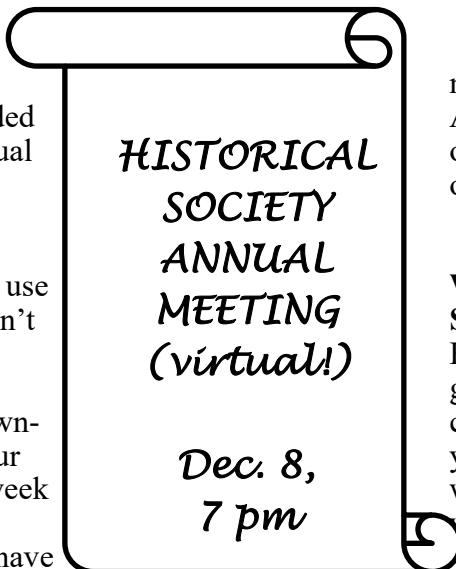


Westminster Historical Society
110 Main St., P.O. Box 177
Westminster, MA 01473

**Sat. Dec. 5, Christmas
Flea Market
Tues. Dec. 8, Annual
Meeting on ZOOM!
ICE OUT CONTEST
THIS WINTER!**

Yes, we're having an Annual Meeting! As an incorporation, we are required to hold an official annual meeting of all members every year, with the date, according to our bylaws, to be determined by the Historical Society Board of Directors. Because of the pandemic we have decided to utilize Zoom to hold a "virtual" Annual Meeting. **Please join us on Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 7 pm.**

If you can join us, you will need to use a computer or a smart phone. If you don't have either, please go visit a friend or neighbor who is in your safe "bubble" during these times. On a computer, download Zoom from the internet. Or on your phone, download the Zoom app. The week before we will send out an email with a LINK to the Zoom meeting, so all you have to do is click on the link, and you will be



connected. Check that your audio and/or video is working, and you're all set!

There will be a very short business meeting with minutes of the last Annual Meeting and a presentation of the list of board members and officers. And then, the program!

We will present the results of the **WESTMINSTER HISTORIC SITES SCAVENGER HUNT**. Have you tried it yet? If you haven't get on line and download it! You can enjoy thinking about the answers you would have given, and then watch the answers unfold—complete with photos.

We hope to see you!