



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2020
Facebook: Westminster Historical Socie-

This pandemic that we—and the rest of the world—are enduring, has changed us forever. Never again will we take for granted our ability to visit family and friends, to find and eat the foods we love, and to take the trips we want by car or plane.

How has this virus affected you and your family? We ask you to take a few minutes to send us your thoughts. You can use the questionnaire within this newsletter or just email us. This is our most recent history, and we believe it's important to record what we can about it.

Can something like this happen again? It sure could. It already has! One hundred and one years ago, the world was inundated by another influenza pandemic. It's been mentioned in the news, but have you wondered how it affected people in Westminster?

Meet Edith Stanbridge. She grew up at 65 Main Street, at the corner of Main Street and Nichols Street. She was the daughter of Francis and Sophia Nichols of the family that built the Nichols Chair Manufacturing plant across Main Street behind what is now Cumberland Farms.

She was one of twins born June 8, 1871; her twin brother died on the day they were born. When she married William Stanbridge on June 26,



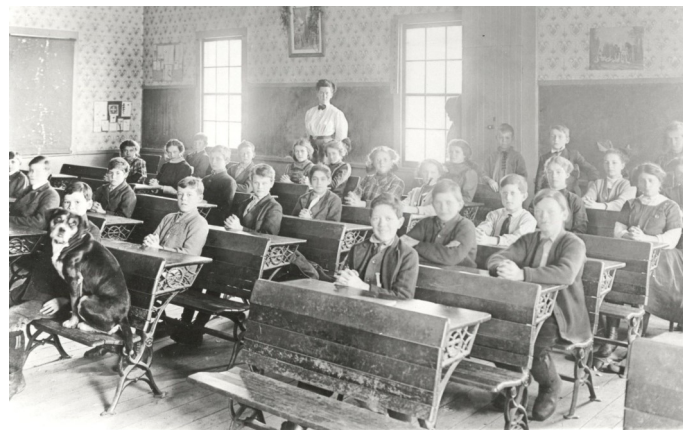
The Nichols house at 65 Main Street.

1894, she and her husband lived in the same house she grew up in. They had two children, Virginia, born in 1895 and Richard, born in 1900.

The children attended school in the center of town. They would have walked down Main Street's dirt road with the trolley tracks running down the north side, past the old Brick Store and the Cracker Factory to the Center School on the left at the foot of Academy Hill, and then later, the Upton School farther up the hill on the right.



Virginia Stanbridge is the 7th student from the left in the second row in this photo taken at the old Center School.



Edith's son Richard is pictured here in the new Upton School, sitting in the front row with his dog Wink!

Continued on p. 3

**2019-2020
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<i>Newsletter</i>	Betsy Hannula
<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 9:30-11 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

June 28, 2020

Dear Members,

Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. No sickness or disability has ever been able to prevent me from fulfilling my responsibilities.

Until now. This pandemic has actually changed most everything. We were advised NOT to go anywhere! There was no option but to cancel meetings, cancel get-togethers with friends, cancel gatherings with family. It took a while to get used to it. But pretty rapidly, I did.

I began to think differently about my time. Not being able to leave the house—even to get materials that I needed—left me with what was in my house.

What could I do to create a long term benefit to me and my family? I started with going through all my photo albums, enjoying a long trip down memory lane while reminiscing about the people in the photos. Then I took out all the photos that would mean something for others. I ended up creating 42 packets of photos to send to friends and family members who would have a good time looking at them. (And then, it was their choice what to do with them afterwards!)

Now there will be a lighter load of items that my children will have to look through before throwing them out—as most of our children will eventually do.

I have to admit, this is on my mind more frequently as I look back at more years than I can look forward to. It makes me feel good to know that the parts of history I've participated in will be preserved at the Historical Society. And I feel good that my family's history is preserved for those who will come after me and those who will ask the questions that I have asked and tried to answer.

I hope that you've found some time to gather your family photos—and label them for the next generations. Start collecting your family's history. Surely someone after you will want to know it!

Sincerely,

Betsy Hannula
President

The Westminster Historical Society is collecting history being made today.

Please tell us how the corona virus has affected you and send this sheet to the Historical Society. Thank you.

MY LIFE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC – SPRING 2020

When did you first realize this new virus could be really devastating to you and your family?

Where did you find out about the corona virus and how it might affect you?

What have you done to protect yourself and your family during these times?

How have you gotten food these past few months?

How have you been supplied with household necessities the past few months?

How have you kept in touch with other family members and friends?

(If you have children) How have the lives of your children changed?

What has been the most difficult thing to deal with your children?

(If you were employed) How has your employment changed?

How have you dealt with the changes in your employment?

Can you describe any other situation in your family's history that was similar to this?

What has been the most difficult situation for you and your family?

What do you worry about the most?

What is the most important change you wish for?

Do you see any good coming out of this dire situation we've been in? If so, what is it?

Please send this along to the Historical Society. **Thank you for taking part in collecting our history!**

Similarities are striking. Hospitals were overwhelmed. Doctors and nurses became sick. Trolleys were understaffed. Soda fountains were asked to close. Places of higher concentration of people were inundated with influenzas cases, in particular Camp Devens and cities. Libraries had to close. Schools had to close. Sports were cancelled.

September 18, 1918

City Officials Consider Emergency Hospital for Victims of Spanish Influenza Here.

The establishment of a temporary hospital for the treatment of patients suffering with Spanish influenza which has gained considerable foothold here, will be discussed at a meeting this afternoon of city officials. The conference follows a meeting at which plans to check the disease were considered.

There are no facilities for the care of the epidemic cases at Burbank hospital as admittance of the patients would necessitate placing the entire institution under strict quarantine. Two cases have been refused admittance already but there is one case, a nurse, now at the institution.

Dr. Baker said today that the hospital trustees have been talking the matter over since Tuesday evening when a physician made application to have a patient admitted to the institution for treatment. It was decided that to admit the man would endanger other patients, place the hospital under quarantine rules and prevent treatment of accidents and other emergency operative cases so the man was not admitted. He is being treated at his lodging house.

Several new cases of the disease have been reported by physicians this morning and the rainy weather today is expected to result in many more.

Dr. Baker said that unless more new cases developed today it is possible that it may not be necessary to establish the hospital as the disease runs its course in a few days and can be treated at home with considerable success.

Physicians generally seem to favor hospital treatment especially as there are many men working in the city who have simply a room in lodging houses and who would have no one to give them special care if stricken.

If the hospital is established it is thought likely that nurses will be detailed from Burbank to care for the patients, or else volunteers called for among the nurses of the city. There is a shortage of help at the hospital now and there are not many nurses that would be available for this work although a few might be spared.

September 23, 1918

65 DIE AT DEVENS IN PAST 24 HOURS

Between 5,000 and 6,000 Cases of Influenza Reported There;

September 25, 1918

INFLUENZA NOT YET CONTROLLED

From 50,000 to 75,000 Cases in Eastern New England; Prompt Measures Taken.

Report of Superintendent of Schools

To our own schools as well as to all others of the Commonwealth and to the community at large the past year has been one of peculiar hardship. A week's postponement at the beginning of the year by order of the State Fuel Committee, an enforced vacation of four weeks in the fall because of the influenza epidemic, and the unusual severity of the weather last winter, have all tended greatly to interfere with the work of the schools. Some of the time lost has been already made up during vacations, and plans have been formulated, with the approval of the State Board of Education, for making up two more weeks by the grades and one week by the High School, as shown in the calendar for the coming year. This substitution is but partial and unsatisfactory, and nothing can restore the lost impetus of sustained and concentrated effort; yet it seems the best that can be done under the circumstances. We may well congratulate ourselves that we have not had to bear the extremity of misfortune that has come to some communities.

Report of Librarian

To the Trustees of the Forbush Memorial Library:

The report for the year ending December 31, 1918, is herewith submitted.

The circulation for the year has been large, although the library was closed during the month of October, owing to the prevailing epidemic.

PROGRAMS

Our programs were cut short because of the “stay-at-home” orders for everyone this spring. We missed seeing everyone!

Thankfully we were able to have two programs in March before we knew the full extent of the virus.

The **Legend of Lucy Keyes** was a treat for everyone who saw it on March 10. We were fortunate to have an excellent digital copy of the original feature film made by John Stimpson. We asked him how it came about that the film was made. He said his family moved to Princeton and learned about the strange occurrences following Lucy’s disappearance near Wachusett Mountain. The movie was eerie! Lucy had gone blueberrying with her sister in 1755 and disappeared. It was believed that Lucy was taken by Indians but was never proven. For as long as people can remember some have been able to hear her mother still calling for her.



This was a video presentation made of sights connected to this story and familiar to residents in Princeton and Westminster. It was interesting to see the local places in the movie!

The **maple syrup** was running bountifully this spring! The weather has to be just right, below freezing at night and above freezing during the day, so the sap can “run” from the base of the tree to the top every day. Adam and Sheri Bean were kind enough to host the public at their Sugar Shack again this spring, and visitors enjoyed the vanilla ice cream with fresh maple syrup—a really special treat!

The Bean family is using new equipment to boil the sap so it will make syrup., acquired through a farm grant. There’s a lot of boiling and evaporation involved. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup!



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.

*Tom Torrans: History of King Philip’s War
Priscilla Bridgman: family history, photos and info on 140 Worcester Road, and the Mitchell and Page families in Westminster
Harold Aho: Boy Scout Uniform Troop 33, and Leavenworth Dairy milk bottle*



UPCOMING PROGRAMS

We wish we could predict what programs we can conduct this fall, but there is no certainty that we can hold events in a safe manner.

Therefore, we urge you to keep in touch by email or get onto our website, if you have a question. And, don’t forget that you can purchase items from our Gift Shop on line! If you have become involved in researching your family history take a look at our list of books about Westminster history.

Meanwhile, if we get back to a new normal by the end of the year, we hope to welcome you to our Christmas Open House and Flea Market.

ATTIC TREASURES SALE

We guess you’ve been cleaning out this spring! Save those things you no longer want in your house. We will hold our Sale as soon as possible. You can leave them in the barn any time you wish. THANKS!

UPDATE ON THE UPTON SCHOOL

Without meetings at the Historical Society our work on the Upton School has been at a standstill.

We are acutely aware that our society has faced some 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.

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.
- Helping with newsletters and brochures.

WISH LIST

If you know of someone able to donate one of these, please let us know. Thanks!

- Computer with Windows 10
- Snowblower



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 Westminster. 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 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	4.00
<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
Map of Westminster 1855.	6.00
<i>Downtown Westminster 1831</i> by Peckham	30.00
Postcards50
Children's books	4.95
Westminster Tapestry wall hanging	35.00
Soup Mug with Spoon	10.00
Westminster Reflections booklet.	4.00

It's easy to think that Edith and her husband had an idyllic life. They had a beautiful house in a lovely neighborhood. but it was not so. First of all, the business her husband and his five brothers started—the Nichols Chair Company—had a disastrous fire, and they made the decision to move to Gardner, where the Nichols and Stone Furniture Company thrived for decades.

And then disaster struck closer to home. Edith became sick and suddenly died in October 1918. She was only 47 years old. She became a victim of a new influenza which was ravaging the country—and indeed, the world.



Fitchburg Sentinel news articles and Westminster Town Reports describe the effects of the pandemic. (*We are grateful to Mary Lyons for her substantial research on this topic!*)

It's surprising to see the similarities between the pandemic in 1918 and the one we're enduring now. This article on August 23, 1918 reveals that reporters were not sure that the influenza was for real. The port they are referring to is New York.

Ignore Influenza.

Refusing to get excited over the steady strain of stories about Spanish influenza, the people of this port are giving little thought to this latest subject of rumor. With the health officers prewarned and a wartime vigilance spread over every incoming vessel no one seems to worry over any epidemic that does not directly hamper our war making. Outside of rooting for our boys abroad, New Yorkers appear to find little worth thinking about these days.

MEAD.

Our nation was of course in the middle of fighting in World War I and the war effort took all the headlines in the newspapers. So, it was probably a natural reaction to play down the seriousness of the influenza. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for the United States to realize this new influenza HAD to be taken seriously

September 16, 1918

DR. LEEN DIES.

Chief Physician at Carney Hospital Victim of Grip; Cared for Ill Naval Men.

BOSTON, Sept 16—Dr Thomas F. Leen, chief physician at the Carney hospital, died today of pneumonia, resulting from an attack of influenza. He had devoted much time recently to caring for naval men, among whom influenza is prevalent

September 18, 1918

SPANISH GRIPPE REPORTED HERE

Fifty Influenza Cases Treated in City by Physicians; Ogden a Victim.

Spanish influenza which is sweeping through army and navy camps and taking a toll of lives has struck this city and it was estimated today by physicians that there are now 50 active cases. Every effort is being made to prevent the epidemic from spreading farther.

Chief Electrician Roy M. Ogden, in charge of the naval recruiting station, is ill with what has been diagnosed as the influenza, an entire family on Myrtle avenue is down with it and there are scattered cases throughout the city. Almost every physician has several cases. Advice of physicians is to spray the nose and throat daily and if taken ill with the disease go to bed at once and start treatment.

Fitchburg Daily Sentinel.
 VOL. XLVI. NO. 129. FITCHBURG, MASS., WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1918.—TEN PAGES. TWO CENTS.
BULGARIAN ARMIES ARE DIVIDED INFLUENZA SPREADS; SCHOOLS CLOSE

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Read more inside about
the Influenza pandemic
101 years ago!

**Fitchburg Sentinel
September 30, 1918 1918**

Hospital Train Arrives.

BOSTON, Sept. 30.—A special hospital train fully equipped with 40 beds for the care of influenza patients arrived at the East Braintree station, near here, early today and will be put into immediate service under the direction of the state department of health. The train was sent out from Baltimore by the state of Maryland, acting upon a request from the United States public health service. It was expected that the train would be assigned to the city of Quincy, where thousands of persons are ill with the disease.

The train was said to be the first to come into the commonwealth on a public health mission from outside the state. Before entering the Massachusetts state line, the train was boarded at several points by mayors and local health officials who urged that it stop to care for urgent cases. The physicians in charge, however, replied that they had orders to proceed toward Boston and await instructions from the health department.

Other help was expected today to fight the epidemic which now has 85,000 victims in this state.

Fitchburg Sentinel October 4, 1918

HOW TO AVOID INFLUENZA

So high has become the death toll of Spanish influenza in the army and navy and citizenry of this country that the surgeon general of the army has issued rules to observe in avoiding the disease.

President Wilson urges that the directions be distributed widely throughout the country. The President will later order the directions placarded and posted in all government departments and army and navy posts.

The directions follow:

"How to Strengthen Our Arsenal Defense Against Spanish Influenza.

- "1—Avoid needless crowding—influenza is a crowd disease.
- "2—Smother your coughs and sneezes—others do not want the germs which you would throw away.
- "3—Your nose, not your mouth, was made to breathe through—get the habit.
- "4—Remember the three "C's"—a clean mouth, clean skin, and clean clothes.
- "5—Try to keep cool when you walk, and warm when you ride and sleep.
- "6—Open the windows—always at home at night; at the office when practicable.
- "7—Food will win the war, if you give it a chance—help by choosing and chewing your food well.
- "8—Your fate may be in your own hands—wash your hands before eating.
- "9—Don't let the waste product of digestion accumulate—drink a glass or two of water on getting up.
- "10—Don't use a napkin, towel, spoon, fork, glass, or cup which has been used by another person and not washed.
- "11—Avoid tight clothes, tight shoes, tight gloves—seek to make nature your ally, not your prisoner.
- "12—When the air is pure, breathe all of it you can—breathe deeply."