



WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Winter 2021
Facebook: Westminster Historical Society

This article was written by Leonard A. Haug, who visited the Westminster Historical Society regularly over the last three years to research 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!

The Challenge of the Search

Gamaliel Waldo Beaman was born in 1852 in the Whitmanville section of Westminster at the foot of Bean Porridge Hill Road. His earliest ancestors arrived in the colonies in 1635 and 1638. His mother was Phebe Gates, and his father, Gamaliel Sawyer Beaman, worked in a chair factory. Like other young people at this time, Beaman's formal education was sporadic and most likely ended by the age of fourteen.



The 1892 map of Westminster shows Whitmanville with the District School No. 8 that Gamaliel likely attended, and the Lombard Chair Shop where his father may have worked.

In spite of these circumstances, Beaman became an accomplished landscape painter and achieved significant success and recognition. His painting career extended over sixty years. He established a studio first in Cambridge and then in Boston where he lived and worked amongst the most elite artists of the day. His work was included



An early photo of Beaman in the Forbush Memorial Library collec-

in some of the most prestigious art exhibitions. He traveled and studied abroad. His work brought him in contact with many notable academic, political, and religious leaders of his day.

In consideration of the above, it is surprising that he and his paintings are not better known today. It is for that reason, I was motivated to undertake this research project to find out more about Beaman and ultimately write a 200-page pictorial biography titled *Gamaliel Waldo Beaman – His Life and Art*.

Writing a biography on a person long deceased is often a challenge and I found this to be especially true with my subject. Visits to the Westminster, Princeton, and Northfield Historical Society archives confirmed that few personal or family records existed. What did exist were bits and pieces of information—items collected or donated over the years—photographs, undated art exhibit brochures, art association and museum exhibit catalogues, a letter about the artist from a distant relative, and a magazine article about the artist authored by a family friend decades after the death of the artist.

With limited information, a researcher is forced to become more of a detective using the meager hints and clues available. A reference to a date, a place, a person, an event, all become valuable starting points. Some provide a trail to specific information about the artist. Some lead to dead ends. More often, one clue leads to another clue, another source, another contact to pursue find the next evidence.

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**2020-2021
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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

February 19, 2021

Dear Members,

I hope you have survived this past year and stayed relatively healthy and safe in your stay-at-home “bubble.” The isolation, the lack of friends close by, not being able to eat in a restaurant, all the things we’ve endured will be history eventually, and we’ll have stories to tell for years to come.

I’ve been working at the Historical Society since there’s no one else there. I’m happy to report that there has been a flurry of requests for information about old houses in Town. These are from people who have purchased an old home in Town or are in the process of buying one, and they want to know what the house looked like in years past, who built the house, and what changes were made by previous owners.

This pleases me a great deal because all too often people think that an old house is too difficult or too costly to update. There is so much inaccurate information in the public domain, so I’m grateful to those who love an old house for what it is, a home that has survived for centuries and with care will be around for centuries more, (which is often not the case with newly built houses). These old homes were loved and cared for by generations of Westminster families and can serve future families as well.

One important thing that ALL homeowners can do to save money in maintaining their homes—but especially owners of old homes, is to call MASS SAVE. A representative will examine your house for free and find ways to improve your energy efficiency. Why should we? We are already PAYING for this service! Every electricity user in the Commonwealth PAYS an Energy Efficiency Charge on his monthly electric bill. In my case it’s about \$23 every month! This all goes into the MASS SAVE fund.

So it behooves everyone to utilize the fund that they’re already paying for, but it’s up to you to call and make that appointment. With electricity so costly, it’s to our benefit to have experts examine how we can each save money, and, of course, it’s better for the environment as well. And, by the way, MASS SAVE can add insulation in your attic, give you new LED light bulbs and thermostats, and door and window insulation. This will save you money on your oil or gas bill too. Take advantage!

Sincerely,

Betsy Hannula

NEW ITEMS IN GIFT SHOP!

Our Historic Sites puzzle was a success in our Gift Shop this Christmas! It's an 18"x24" 500 piece puzzle and we've heard from several people that they've enjoyed making it. We've got about a dozen more in the Gift Shop.



Shannen Rhoda and her daughter Annabelle Rhoda were exultant when they finished making the Westminster Historic Sites puzzle!



We were also asked to make it into a poster, so we've now got framed posters of it (in three different sizes)

This is the 21" x 29" size poster now for sale in the Gift Shop.



WESTMINSTER SCAVENGER HUNT



We had fun creating our first annual Westminster Scavenger Hunt this Fall. We had five winning teams, and each team won a collection of books about Westminster.

Here's a sampling of the sites on the Scavenger Hunt. Do you know all the answers?

1. The American Legion Hall used to be a church. What was its name?
2. The Westminster Farmers Cooperative disbanded in 1977 and gave its building to the Town. On what street is it located?
3. What is the date that the Civil War monument was erected?
4. In the beginning of our town, stray animals were captured and gathered together in a stone enclosure, called a Pound, until the owners paid a fee to get their animals back. On what road is this pound located?
5. North Common Road has an unusual man-made structure which now has a historic marker telling its story. What is it called?

How did you do? (Answers below.)

There were five winning teams. (Maybe next year's Scavenger Hunt will have to be more difficult!) Congratulations to the winners!

Charles Arsenault
 The Crane Girls (Sammi Dawley & Candi Hitchcock)
 Corey, Octavia & Buck Feeley
 Priscilla Sullivan
 Roxanne Webb

One of the winning team was the "Crane Girls" and they submitted this photo of Candi's dog at the "Town Pound" on Dawley Road by the Common.



Answers: Universalist Church, 2. Leominster Street, 3. 1879, 4. Dawley Road, 5. Spite Wall.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

PLANT SWAP AND SALE

After this long cold and snowy winter, you may be anxious to get out outside and plant a garden or tend to the flowers that are waiting to spring up! We'll be holding our annual **Swap and Sale** on the front lawn. So, if you're dividing old perennials, be sure to bring some on Sat. May 8 and swap them for someone else's. There will also be lilac bushes, raspberry plants, rhubarb plants, and a whole lot of other plants for sale to get you started this spring!



JUHANNUS CELEBRATION



Juhannus is the Finnish name for St. John's Day, the longest day of the year on June 21st. The Finns always celebrated this day with a special program and refreshments along with a bon fire. We won't be having a bonfire, and we may not even

be able to meet in the Finnish Farmers Camp because of the pandemic, but we will have a program this year. The subject will be the history of the Young People's Cooperative Club in Westminster. We'll be working on making a Power Point Presentation which will be available as a ZOOM meeting or on You Tube. We'll let you know!

TOWN WIDE YARD SALE

If you've been cleaning out your house during the pandemic, you're not alone. If you've got things saved to sell or give away, you can make some money by participating in the Town Wide Yard Sale on June 19. Or, maybe you will be anxious to get out and take advantage of the good weather and some bargains. In that case get your masks on and get outdoors for the bargain hunt!



CURATOR'S CORNER

We are always pleased to receive donations to our collections since they are physical evidence of people and events and places known to many generations in Westminster and they will be carefully preserved here for future generations.

This painting of the Historical Society House by local artist Donna Peck was recently donated to the Society. It is a cheerful remembrance of what our home looked like on Memorial Day, when the parade passed by. Thank you Donna!



NEW IN THE GIFT SHOP

We also have a new item in the Gift Shop, a photo of Wachusett Mountain by Mary Lyons. It captures the Mountain in winter glory. This 5x7 can be yours unframed for \$10, or \$20 framed. Everyone loves scenes of the Mountain, and this can be yours! (Other sizes available by request.)



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As one example, references in the files indicated Beaman had once lived with “a” hermit while traveling and painting in the hills of Northfield Massachusetts. Through database searches and by working with the Northfield Historical Society I was able to identify the “specific” hermit and later was able (by following an unrelated clue) to actually find a pencil sketch book signed and dated by the artist that included drawings of the hermit (John Smith) thereby proving the historical connection between the artist and the specific hermit.

As another example, files indicated that when Beaman was preparing to study abroad, “a” wealthy relative had offered to pay his passage in exchange for escorting his wife and daughter who were traveling to Europe at the same time. Through family ancestral tracing and newspaper searches, I was able to identify the specific family member. I eventually found the passenger list confirming the exact ship, sailing date, departure and destination ports, and the names of party members with whom the artist had traveled.



Beaman's art studio

Slowly but surely, a clearer and more detailed picture of the artist began to unfold. I then turned to other historical records to learn more about Beaman's life and art.

Public records such as town and city annual reports, residential and business directories, and federal census reports helped me locate and build a more complete timeline of where the artist was living and working at each stage of his life. It also enabled me to confirm major life events such as marriages, births, and deaths.

References to the Lowell Institute and several old art exhibit catalogues from the Boston Art Club and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts provided a stepping off point for conducting a com-



Gamaliel sitting with his cat.

prehensive search of all the exhibitions that Beaman may have participated in during his life time. Through that effort, I was able to identify when, where, and what Beaman had exhibited while also identifying the other artists who had exhibited in those same shows.

I then created a spreadsheet to begin to identify many overlapping “touch” points. To this spreadsheet I added the studio locations of those same artists. After reviewing their individual profiles, I was able to identify the artists who were most likely to have known Beaman. I then focused on learning more about those artists. Ultimately I was able to confirm relationships between Beaman and more than six specific artists.

While processing all this fact finding, I continued to learn as much as possible about the period of the late 19th and early 20th century in which Beaman lived and worked. I spent many hours identifying, retrieving, and reviewing candidate books and magazines and viewing microfiche, microfilm and printed newspaper articles. In total, these activities enabled me to find over 200 publications including many old newspaper articles on Beaman and/or on related subjects.

In the end I was able to compile an inventory of close to 400 paintings created by the artist during his lifetime. Then my goal was to find and photograph them; this took me three years! After photographing known Beaman paintings at libraries and historical societies I began to reach out to auction

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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 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

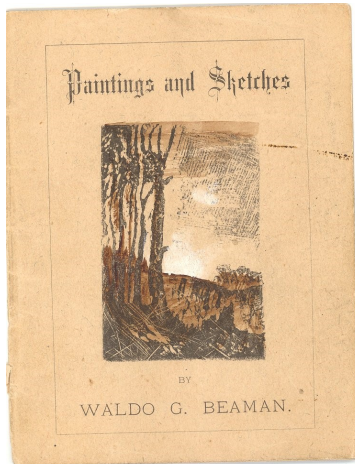
Cemetery Inscriptions \$45.00
History of Westminster, 1832 by Hudson 5.00
History of Westminster, 1893 by Heywood. 96.00
History of Westminster 2008 by WHS 75.00
History of Westminster, 1961, by Tolman 20.00
Homestead Heritage of Westminster, by WHS 50.00
Images of America, by WHS 20.00
Olin Warner, Sculptor, by Hyson 4.00
200th Anniversary of Westminster, 5.00
Vintage Views of a New England Village—A
Postcard Tour of Westminster, Massachusetts. 25.00
Wachusett Gatherings, by Sinclair (hardcover). 30.00
 Westminster Reflections booklet. 4.00

Other

Wachusett Mountain charcoal print 60.00
 Calligraphy sampler 12.00
Cracker Factory print by Dana Vickery, signed 45.00
Map of Westminster 1855. 6.00
Downtown Westminster 1831 by Peckham 30.00
 Postcards50
 Photo of Wachusett Mountain by M. Lyons 10.00
 Westminster Tapestry wall hanging 35.00
 Soup Mug with Spoon 10.00
 Historic Sites Puzzle (18"x24", 500 pieces) 49.00
 Poster of *Historic Sites*, incl. frame (14"x17") 20.00
 Poster of *Historic Sites*, incl. frame (18"x22") 25.00

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houses, antique dealers, and art galleries to request images of Beaman paintings they may have owned and/or sold in the past. I also began to write articles for inclusion in targeted local papers and historical society newsletters throughout New England.



A catalog of some of Beaman's works in the Society.

At the same time, I used online search tools and aids (including ebay) to help find more of his works. I began to contact as many Beaman family members as possible to determine if they owned or knew others who might own Beaman paintings. As the word got out, one Beaman owner often referred me to one or more other Beaman owners. I was very

pleased to be able to find close to 150 paintings by the artist, of which about 50% came from private owners. As paintings were located, I requested owners to provide high resolution images or I hired photographers to capture such paintings. In the end, I found Beaman paintings from coast to coast (in close to 20 states) and I even traveled to the Rocky Mountains to photograph three Beaman paintings in Estes Park, Colorado.

With each new painting, I was able to further integrate his art work into the chronological events of his personal life, and thereby produce a fairly comprehensive pictorial biography of Beaman, the man and the artist.

As a final example of how a single clue can lead to more specific answers, information in various historical files had indicated that Beaman had traveled and studied abroad. However, there was no information regarding where he had studied nor whom he had studied under.

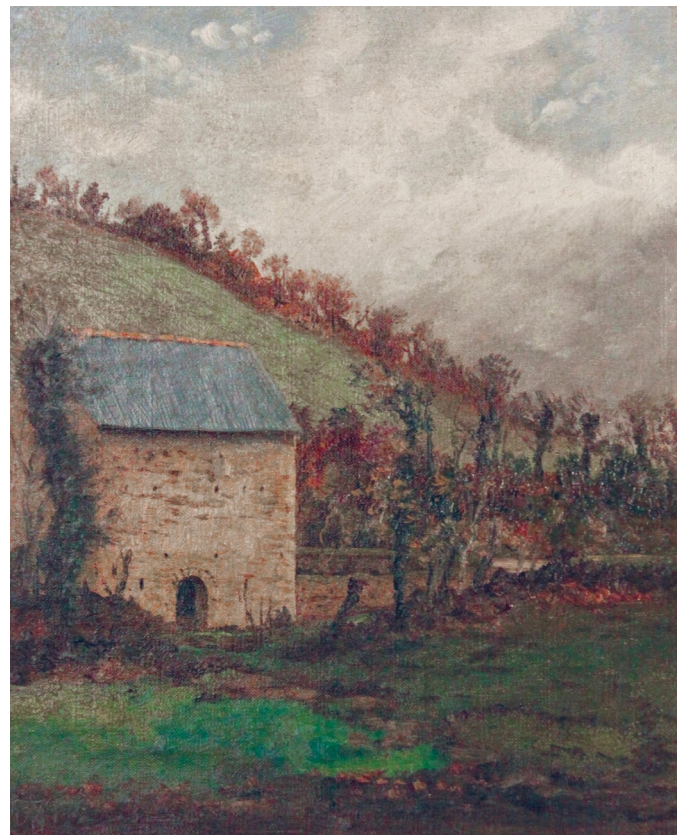
By securing a number of paintings created while abroad, I was able to partially answer some of these open questions. We now know for a fact that the artist was in Paris but more likely spent more time in Pont-Aven, France. While

there he created multiple paintings of Pont-Aven landscapes and had his portrait painted by American artist and Paris Salon medalist and member of the Pont-Aven Art Colony, Burr H. Nicholls. Note: This portrait is part of the Forbush Memorial Library collection.

In summary, historical research has been very rewarding and I am happy to have been able to make a small contribution to our local history, while giving Gamaliel Waldo Beaman some well-deserved recognition.

If you are interested in knowing more about the artist and his art, you are invited to purchase the book by visiting my website at www.lenhaug.com and clicking on "Books."

During this project, I became a collector of Beaman's work including three un-stretched oil on canvas sketches of Pont-Aven signed and dated "GWB 1879." I have donated these paintings to the Westminster Historical Society for their collections.



This is one of the three paintings donated by Leonard Haug to the Westminster Historical Society. We are so pleased to receive this piece of history for our collections.

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

Sat. May 8, Plant Swap and Sale
Sat. June 19, Town Wide Yard Sale—
Plan to join us a participant or as a bargain seeker

ICE OUT CONTEST IS ON FOR THE WINTER!



Yes, Round Meadow Pond has frozen this winter! On the pond you can see the soup bowl with Westminister Crackers falling into it from Rt. 2 and State Road East.

Whoever guesses the closest date and time that the ice melts the bowl falls 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 or Venmo. It's easy!

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

All entries must be submitted by March 31, so don't miss being a part of the fun!