

Grantham Historical Society

www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org



Winter 2008-2009

NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

This is our only newsletter for 2008 so a few words of appreciation to people who have worked and given of time and money, and some words of speculation about activities in 2009.

First, thanks to all members, officers and Board of Directors for their work in 2008, particularly all who helped to make the dedication of the Ella B. Reney Room a success. Ella was the founder and most energetic member of our Society until her untimely end.

I can't name everyone who made our year a success but I must give credit to:

- the late Jeremy Brown who left us almost \$125,000 – a fine financial cushion for us;
- Phyllis Forest, our treasurer, for her skillful work maintaining our records;
- our partner in the building, Town Archivist Lea Frey, for her advice and patience;
- Ken Story for all the time and effort he has given the Society and his leadership of the village walking tours;
- Bob Champagne for his volunteer work and for getting the building power-washed;
- * our secretary, Pat Andrews, for all she has done in keeping records, setting agendas, doing

- physical work (with others) of cleaning and organizing;
- Kathi Osgood for seeking out the best buys to be found;
- Bob Osgood for keeping an eye on the building and being always available in an emergency;
- Renee Gustafson, our greatest thanks for many things – landscaping, photography, displays, research, cellar hole excavations and leading the Four Corners tour;
- to her sidekick, Diane Shagoury; without these two ladies, our Society would be so much the less;
- Barbara Mutney who works mainly with Lea Frey but is always ready to give information and help the Society in any way possible; and
- thanks to all who loaned or donated artifacts this year.



Allen Walker, president of the Grantham Historical Society, leads the way on an outing to the Four Corners cemetery in September 2008.

What's up for next year? Nothing is set in stone but we are thinking of more walking tours, lectures on Grantham historical events and we must get started on a revised, improved history of Grantham. We need volunteers to research and write about various events and eras in Grantham history. Please stop in at the Historical Society any Friday afternoon and we will be happy to talk to you about your interest.

—Allen W. Walker, *President*

A WISH FULFILLED

It is probably the unspoken wish of every small historical society that a letter will arrive out of the blue, informing them of a windfall – a bequest from a known or unknown benefactor – that will insure their financial future. For the Grantham Historical Society, this happened in April 2008. A bequest of almost \$125,000 from the Jeremy Brown trust came to us as a complete surprise as Mr. Brown was, at the time, not known to us. We later learned that he was a professor at Castleton State College in Vermont, lived in Eastman several years after his retirement and was a member of the Historical Society during that time. He died in 1993.

The Executive Board, recognizing the huge responsibility for managing the funds that we received, spent several meetings generating a “wish list” and discussing possible investments. The receipt of the bequest was announced to the membership

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A WISH FULFILLED *Continued from page 1*

and their input sought on ways to constructively and wisely spend some of the money. Ultimately, most of the bequest was invested and the remainder used for projects at the Historical Society Building and for purchases to support our activities.

If you have driven down Dunbar Hill Road, you will see impressive changes to the exterior of the building. In keeping with our dark green sign on the corner of the building, we have installed new dark green doors and shutters. Joe Newcomb has provided us with a very nice granite step for the old Selectmen's entrance door. New plantings are in progress along side of the building to complement the impressive garden developed by Renee Gustafson and Dick Hocker across the parking lot. After clearing brush and small trees, plantings were completed with consultation from Spring Ledge Farm in New London. The granite bench is also thanks to Joe Newcomb. The building was power-washed over the summer, the old police antennae were removed and the trim painted. Our thanks go to the Grantham Garden Club members who repaired and maintained our flower bed under the flag pole and the window boxes that added so much to our appearance during the warmer months.

The interior has also benefited from our enhanced resources. The Town of Grantham has paid for sanding and refinishing the hardwood floors in both large rooms with removal of the old heat registers which were no longer in use. The walls had been painted earlier, also thanks to the Town. The use of the two rooms was divided between the Town Archives (north room and vault) and the Historical Society (south room and back hall). Alterations to the back hall to allow for office and storage space are planned. After the floors were done, shades that reduce 95% of the UV light coming through the windows were installed by New England Fabrics of Keene, NH. Regular cleaning will be provided by the Town; we purchased a new vacuum cleaner as well as a fan for hot summer days.

To ease and improve the work and activities of the Historical Society, several purchases have been or will be made. Thanks to Christina McKahan who has begun recording oral histories from Grantham residents, we have replaced our primitive recording machines with the latest digital equipment that will allow for one-to-one recorded conversations as well as

new stationery using a hand-drawn sketch of our building done by Colleen Sawitsky of Hopkinton, NH as the logo and, more recently, for the layout and production of this newsletter. We are grateful that we can return to printed newsletters in place of e-mail transmissions.

The members of the GHS executive board



Dick Hocker and Bob Champagne appreciate the new "Chair" in the GHS Garden, thanks to Joe Newcomb, road agent.

group discussions. And now that speakers sometimes use PowerPoint presentations during their talks, we are replacing our old screen with a permanent installation that can be pulled down from the ceiling. A small refrigerator has been purchased as has an attractive brochure holder to contain information on local sites, maps, local magazines and other materials. Archival storage materials have also been obtained to store our collection items as they are donated.

The services of Susie Janicki, owner of SmartWoman & Co., a graphic designer in Bradford, NH, have been secured. Her first task was overseeing production of

are not embarrassed to say that modern technology, especially related to our computers, is beyond our capabilities to maintain in working order. A most useful expenditure is a contract with NH Computer Specialists of New London who will provide assistance at any time and will, no doubt, save many hours of frustration for us.

We hope that our members will feel that we have spent wisely to make the building more comfortable and functional and to facilitate our events and activities throughout the year. We welcome comments and ideas from members about other ways in which we can enhance the use of our new resources.

BOOK REVIEW

The Sea Captain's Wife: A True Story of Love, Race and War in the Nineteenth Century

by Martha Hodes W.W. Norton & Co., 2006, 384 pages, \$24.95.

With locales ranging from Vermont to Grand Cayman Island in the Caribbean, this story of an unassuming New England woman brings attention to the forces that influenced people's behavior during the Victorian period in America, especially during and after the Civil War. Eunice Richardson Stone Connolly, born in Massachusetts, moved with her family to Manchester, New Hampshire in 1845. While the story has a familiar ring to those who follow media exposure today of unfortunate people whose circumstances are beyond their control, abandonment by her father and stepfather, the need to work to support herself and family members, marriage to a man of limited means, uprooting to move south to look for a more secure economic future, and the start of the Civil War remind us how vulnerable families were in mid-19th century America if not born into the upper social classes. Eunice's first husband enlisted in the Confederate Army; she moved back to New England with her two children and did not know of his death in an Atlanta hospital until three years later when the war was over. The chapters describing Eunice's decline into poverty, her exhausting days as a washerwoman for families in Claremont, NH (her husband's hometown), the rejection she suffered from not having a suitable hat to wear to church, having to "farm out" her son as a day-laborer – all serve to remind us of the challenges facing a woman without a husband in those days. Based on letters from a family collection, Eunice appears to have been

an intelligent, educated young woman whose only outlet for her emotional needs was her letters to family members who she rarely saw. The section describing her life in Claremont and later in Northern Vermont is most memorable.



With better days ahead when she marries a black sea captain from Grand Cayman Island, Eunice no longer has to work and has her children about her but still writes to her family seeking contact- and perhaps approval- for the new life that she chose. The vagaries of an informal postal system between her new and old homes result in very rare exchanges of letters; the events of her life in the Caribbean are unknown to her immediate family until some time after her death.

Eunice's letters are part of an archive at Duke University. What was of more interest to me was the resourcefulness of the author in contacting local historical societies in New Hampshire and Vermont to obtain details about her life in the north. Photos of her letters as well as of relatives and local historical sites add to the interest of her story. The book is well-documented with extensive notes, an essay on sources and an index.

This biography reveals how local history in the hands of an accomplished author can be engaging and reflect the larger social, political and cultural issues of an era.

—Pat Andrews

It is better to give.

Your membership fees and end-of-year donations will help the Grantham Historical Society develop programs, exhibits and educational materials for anyone interested in the history of Grantham. All donations are tax-deductible and include receipt of our newsletter.

Please mail to:
 Grantham Historical Society
 P.O. Box 540
 Grantham, NH 03753

Thank you for your support.

Membership and Annual Dues Form Grantham Historical Society

Name _____

Mailing address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

New member Annual renewal

Annual dues: (check one)

Individual (\$10.)

Family (\$25.)

Patron/business/institution (\$50.)

Extra contribution _____

Total check amount _____

A Simple Poem from a Local Poet about the 1887 Grantham & Springfield Fair

A summer yard sale in Newport yielded a book of poetry called "Then and Now". Privately printed in 1895 by Barton & Wheelers, Printers of Newport, the collection of poems was written by Joseph Warren Parmelee (b. 1818) and published by his daughter. Mr. Parmelee attended the District No. 1 school and Academy in Newport as well as Kimball Union Academy. He worked in Newport until 1847 when he moved to Charleston, NC. The Civil War disrupted his business; in 1863, he moved to New York City where he worked in a dr

THE GRANTHAM AND SPRINGFIELD FAIR

Grantham and Springfield, sister towns of note
(Whose charters date when George the Third was King.)

Where stalwart yeomen live, and love, and vote,

Have lately held their annual autumn "Fair,"

And all live people of these towns were there.

They came from homesteads on the hillside green,

And hamlets in the sunny vales between.

The northern branch of the Sugar has its source

Among their granite knobs, and in its course,

Of glints through verdure in fair rural scene,

Or from the charming drive its face is seen,

Fretted by dams while turning at a mill,

Or tumbling onward at its own sweet will.

We hail the harvest season of the year,

When summer glories wane and frosts appear.

When mountain, vale, and gorgeous forest seem

Let down from heaven's deep space, a mid-day dream;

When barns are packed with hay, a gen'rous yield,

And stooks (1) of corn stand curing in the field;

When "Patrons" meet in council to arrange

The program for the huskings by the grange,

Or plan and institute with zealous care,

The details various, of the annual fair.

The "Campus" of this Fair Association

Deserves a more than passing observation.

The Architect of Nature had in view

This fair ground when the world was new;

When Grantham was arranged it took its place

To wait the advent of the human race,

And be discovered by some forest ranger;

And hence become the precinct of the granger;

All ready for the "plant" and the reception

Of articles for show, and their protection.

Results of industry, great source of wealth,

A mean of happiness and generous health.

Arranged in order in the rooms were seen

Samples of grains, and tubers, Boston bean,

The wealth of orchards, clusters from the vine,

Squashes immense, and cabbages in line,

With other products from the ground and trees,

And flowers that yielded nectar to the bees.

The ladies "fair" of this Association,

Presented articles for approbation,

And came themselves, with words and smiles to cheer

The exposition of the waning year.

We looked at butter, cheese, preserves in pickle,

Which aid digestion and the palate tickle,

We saw drawn rugs, darned lace and pillow shows –

The shams were all for pillows we suppose!

Much knitted work – we hope no chap will dare

To get those mittens ere another fair!

And quilts of many pieces, handsome spreads,

From which may peer bright eyes and curly heads!

Of works artistic we recall a scene –

(Green Lake, the view) out west it must have been –

Some dogs in crayon, Kensington designs,

A work on satin, plaques and other things,

Enough to show some interest on the part

Of fair contributors, in works of art.

We turn from these and proper space assign

To speak of horses, oxen, sheep and kine (2),

The pig and porker grunting in their pen,

The Hamburg rooster and the Leghorn hen,

The Andalusian, Plymouth Rock and mates,

All these, and colts and calves were quartered round

In small enclosures on the open ground,

And late inventions in machines were found.

The bovines in procession first appeared,

Full four score yoke and four, well-trained and geared,

And marched to music by the Springfield band,

Round the arena, past the judges' stand.

The educated steers, so aptly drilled,

Were introduced unyoked, and "backed and filled,"

And hawed and geed, and see-sawed on a plank,

And seemed to feel they'd played a merry prank.

Then came the equine scene, and horses, mares,

And colts in single harness and in pairs,

Were shown, inspected, trotted round the course,

And made the subject of much wise discourse.

A horse trot then ensued – "best two to three,"

All three that entered won in some degree.

Then athletes strove within a stated ring,

To measure strength in bouts of wrestling.

Some entered on a foot-race round the course,

For glory, or to win a tempting purse.

From seats and standings on the hillside green,

These exhibitions were by thousands seen.

Duly announced, the speakers stand became

A point of interest. Here the people came –

Parker of Lempster, gave them plain statistics,

And Elder Howard of more grave theistics (3),

Then L.P. Cooper, Croydon's honored sage,

In flowing locks and venerable age,

Besought the sons to honor as their guide

The ruts their fathers made, nor hobbies ride;

To keep those ruts wide open to the church,

And raze the mullens(4) from around its porch;

To keep those ruts wide open to the school,

That good intelligence may have the rule;

To drink of honest water, cool and clear,

From out the fountains in these scenes so dear,

And save their ancient towns in time to come,

From moral darkness and the vice of rum.

To Charles McDaniel, president and all

In agricultural life, in field, and stall,

And home, we tender due congratulation,

On grand results from this Association.

(1) shocks of corn

(2) archaic plural of "cow"

(3) belief in existence of a god or gods

(4) fall herb/weed found in unmowed areas

RESOURCES AT THE GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society does not maintain a formal library; however, we have a number of resources that might be useful to the general public.

Newspaper clippings from local newspapers— pre-1950 to the present which include property transfers, births, marriages and obituaries.

Magazines:

- Eastman Living Oct/Nov 1975 to the present
- Kearsarge Magazine Summer/Fall 2005 to the present
- Upper Valley Life Sept/Oct 2006 to the present

Journals:

- NH Archeologist (NH Archeological Society)—Selected issues
- Historical New Hampshire (NH Historical Society)—Selected issues

Newsletters:

- NH Archeological Society—Spring 2005 to the present
- NH Historical Society (printed newsletter)—Summer 2005-Fall 2006; Winter 2008
- NH Historical Society (Online newsletter)—April 2006-October 2006; April 2008
- Association of Historical Societies of NH (“The Associate”)—2004 to the present
- NH Old Graveyard Association (“Rubbings”)—2004 to the present
- NH Preservation Alliance—Spring 2007 to the present
- NH Humanities Council;—Current monthly issues

Grantham Town Reports

Scripts of plays put on by the Community House



Winter logging, North Grantham, early 20th century

NEWS FROM THE TOWN ARCHIVES

Lea Frey, Town Archivist, reports that the space for the Town Archives has recently been expanded. New shelves provide storage space for both the Town Archives and the Historical Society. The floors have been refinished and a new computer donated by Kristina Burgard displays our Grantham photographs with the “Ken Burns” effect. The Archives are open every Friday afternoon from 1:00 to 4:00 PM and Lea and Barbara Mutney are available to help with research.

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In addition to the work that has been done inside and outside the Historical Society building, the following activities took place in 2008:

Sponsored events:

- Dedication of the Ella B. Reney Room in May
- Village walking tour, June 21
- Four Corners walking tour, September 20
- Talk on Corbin Park by Mary Kronnenwetter, October 16

Workshops attended:

- Governmental resources, sponsored by Congressman Paul Hodes in Concord
- Oral History, sponsored by NH Humanities Council and Newport HS

Historical Society Organizations joined:

- American Association for State and Local History
- NH Preservation Alliance

Major purchases:

- Laptop computer and printer

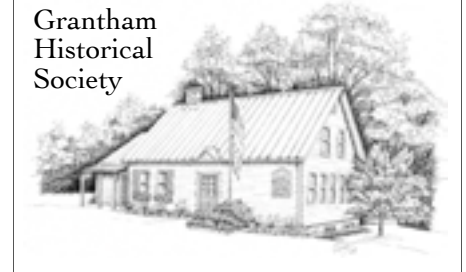
Fund-raising items:

- 2008 Christmas ball with militia flag motif
- Historical Society building note cards

Other:

- Laurajean Whitcomb elected honorary member
- Application submitted for building to NH Historical Register office

Grantham
Historical
Society



**HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
NOTECARDS**
\$8 for 8 cards per packet

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2008-09

GRANTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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www.granthamhistoricalsociety.org

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*The Grantham Historical Society and Town
Archives are open on Friday afternoons
from 1:00–4:00 PM or by appointment.*

*The building is located at
34 Dunbar Hill Road.*

The telephone number is 603-863-9701.

2009 CALENDAR

The following dates are somewhat tentative. Watch our website and announcements around town for changes.

Thursday, May 21

Annual meeting, potluck supper and program

Saturday, June 27

Walking tour of Grantham Village led by Ken Story
(rain date 6/28)

Saturday, July 4

Old Home Day (GHS open)

Saturday, July 25

Summer program, to be determined

Thursday, October 15

Fall meeting

GRANTHAM RESIDENTS! Stop before you throw anything old away! Has it been around for a long time in your attic or barn? Does it have some significance for town history, past residents or historical activities? The Grantham Historical Society collects objects, photographs, personal papers and other items that will add to our formal Collection. If you are not sure about whether we would be interested, call us at 863-9701 first – before you throw it away!



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Grantham, NH 03753

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