

Washington Historical Society Newsletter

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SPRING 2022 EDITION

Washington Historical Society Officers

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President's Message

Dear Friends and Neighbors, Happy Spring!

I am looking out my window onto Island Pond as I write. The loons are back, the snow is (mostly!) gone and the temperatures are not forecasted to be below freezing for at least the next 10 days. All sure signs of spring in Washington! Oh wait, there is one more sign...our spring newsletter!

While most people think our organization hibernates in the winter, we have, in fact, been quite busy! Winter is our time to re-group, re-evaluate and create! I hope that you have been enjoying the Zoom programming that we host each month thanks to support from the NH Humanities-to-Go program. Our Board member Steve Yusko has done a lot of work to organize the speakers, starting last fall and continues even now getting the lineup scheduled for next fall!

We have also been organizing some exciting new activities for this summer that you can read more about in this newsletter. Additionally, the Board of Directors and the voting membership have elected to make a few changes to our membership levels. Watch your mailboxes and email inboxes in May for Membership renewals. We are planning to spruce up the museum this spring with some new lighting and new exhibits in time for the July opening! And, if that isn't enough activity, Board members Ellen Hofford and Steve Yusko have attended an online training class offered by the NH Historical Society. We want to stay current with collection preservation practices.

We can't wait to share all the news and activities with you in person this summer!

Susan Fairchild

Special Art Exhibit at the WHS Museum this Summer!!

By Bill Mulcahy



Nathaniel C. Burwash
(1906 – 2000).

With thanks to Sam Rothman through Barbara (Rothman) Bergeron.

We are very excited to announce that we will be holding a summer-long exhibit of work by Washington's own W.P.A. artist, Nathaniel C. Burwash (1906-2000). Burwash was a painter from the 1920s through 1946 and then, at age 40, made a permanent switch to sculpting. We have been working closely with the New Hampshire State Library (NHSL) to arrange for the loan of six of Nat's beautiful watercolor paintings, and Washington seasonal resident Alan J. Rom is generously loaning us several of Nat's sculptures and sketches.

Most of the works chosen for this exhibit have strong connections to the local area, with paintings depicting people and locations from Washington and Hillsborough, NH, and several sculptures carved from wood sourced in Washington.

We first introduced you to Nat and his wife Ida (Brass) Burwash in an article lovingly written by their close friend Alan J. Rom in the [Fall 2020 issue](#) of this newsletter, which you can still read on our website at www.wnhhs.org.

When Nat and Ida came to Washington in 1934, the Great Depression was still raging across America and unemployment remained high. Nat found work with the New Hampshire Federal Arts Project (NHFAP), which was part of President Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.).

From 1936 through 1941, working from the rustic log camp that he and Ida built with their own hands in a wooded area off Bailey Road then known locally as "Hobo Ranch," Nat created hundreds of watercolors, over 120 of which are now in the NHSL's W.P.A. collection. He earned about \$20 a week from his paintings, which he supplemented by working as a laborer on local farms.

With his straightforward style and warm vibrant colors that appeal to the eye, many of Burwash's paintings lovingly capture the people and places of the Washington of the 1930s/1940s.

These were turning point years for Washington.

Horses still powered much of the transportation in the area and pulled the plows and wagons on many of the farms but were steadily being replaced by increasing numbers of cars and tractors. And, championed by Perley Crane, whose farm is featured in two of the Burwash paintings, publicly accessible electric power finally reached Washington on March 2, 1939.

When you visit the exhibit this summer, you'll see these changes happening "before your eyes" by comparing two particular paintings. In "Sunday Morning," from 1938, you'll see life as it had been



Sunday Morning – 1939. Credit to NHSL and Alan J. Rom

for much of the previous 100 years as a team of horses carry a farmer and his hay rake past the Common, with its three historic buildings and Soldiers' Monument, and people walk towards the Congregational Church. While in sharp contrast, in "Village," from 1938, people are seen bustling about downtown Hillsborough, near Henniker and Depot streets, where the modern Socony service station has center focus, with the Capitol movie theater visible to the right, and telephone poles and powerlines make a prominent appearance.

In 1941, with the onset of WW2 and the W.P.A nearing the end of its existence, Nat and Ida moved to Cambridge, MA, though they continued to own their beloved Washington camp and returned frequently until Nat reluctantly sold it in 1980 to raise much-needed funds for Ida's medical expenses.

Nat set down his brush permanently in 1946 and made the transition from painter to sculptor. He continued to work as a sculptor for the remainder of his life, and his works reflect a variety of styles. This comes from his organic approach to carving. He told an interviewer from the Hillsborough Messenger in 1987 that "...the quality and feel of a piece of wood often determines the form it becomes. Nothing is preconceived, although the grain can have a strong influence." In other words, Nat often studied a piece of wood he found interesting, and then decided what he would carve from it, not the other way around.

This philosophy of the organic evolution of a sculpture from source wood to finished form will come to life for you as you compare a rough and uncompleted work of Nat's (generously donated to the WHS by Beth and Joe Lampron) with "Family Group" (on loan from Alan J. Rom), whose finished form of smoothly shaped curves has been artfully released from its Washington grown wood.

A unique opportunity in conjunction with the exhibit will be a chance to tour the remains of the Burwash camp on Bailey Road. From 10 am – 2 pm on July 23 and again on August 20, current owners Beth and Joe Lampron will welcome you for a tour of the camp and talk about their plans for restoring it in hopes of one day having it used for an artist-in-residence program, as Nat always dreamed of.

Please don't miss the opportunity provided by this wonderful summer-long exhibit to rediscover the wonderful work of Washington's only W.P.A. artist. Come in, sit down on a comfortable bench, and let the beauty wash over you as we bring Nat's amazing work back to Washington.



Family Group On loan from Alan J Rom.

Upcoming Activities

May

May 9, 7pm via Zoom

Bearing Witness and the Endurance of Voice.

Lucy Terry Prince was born in Africa, where she was kidnapped by slave traders and transported to Rhode Island. While still enslaved in 1746, she wrote “Bars Fight”, the oldest known poem in the United States written by an African American. Prince later regained her freedom and moved to Vermont with her husband Abijah Prince, and fought for her family’s land rights all the way to the highest court in Vermont.

In this presentation, Shanta Lee Gander illustrates Prince’s importance as a poet and orator, and as one unafraid to fight for her rights within the landscape of early Vermont, New England, and America. Gander will also perform Lucy’s only surviving poem, “Bars Fight.”

June

June 1

New Membership Year begins

June 13, 7pm, in person at the Town Hall

Digging Into Native History in New Hampshire

Abenaki history has been reduced to near invisibility as a result of conquest, a conquering culture that placed little value on the the Indian experience, and a strategy of self-preservation that required many Abenaki to go “underground”, concealing their true identities for generations to avoid discrimination and persecution.

Robert Goodby reveals archaeological evidence that shows their deep presence here, inches below the earth’s surface

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED (all ages)!

On Saturdays, July - Labor Day, 10-12 or 12-2 schedule flexible

Can you help this summer to update our cemetery records?

Be an ambassador at the Farmers Market?

Help with kids activities at the Museum buildings?

Be a Greeter at the Museum, Barn or Schoolhouse?

Please email WashingtonHistoricalSociety@wnhhs.org to get more information about volunteering.

Upcoming Activities

July

July 2, 16, 30

Farmers Market activity

Date TBD, Museum

Help with Genealogical Searches with Bill Mulcahy

July 11, 7pm, Henry Baldwin Hall at Fox Forest in Hillsboro

Joint meeting with Abenaki Trails Project and Hillsborough Historical Society.

Sherry Gould from the Abenaki Trails Project will be sharing with us what they have learned so far about the proof of the native Abenaki presence in our two towns. Feel free to bring pictures of any potential signs of Indians with you. Sherry and Daryl are members of the Nulhegan band of Abenaki, and Sherry is the tribal genealogist.

For further questions, contact Marian Baker 478-5650

July 23, 10 am—2 pm, Tours of Nat Burwash Studio

August

August 6, 20

Farmers Market activities

August 8, 7pm in person, Town Hall

Annual Meeting

Date/Time TBD, in person, WHS Museum

Concert

August 20, 10 am—2 pm, Tours of Nat Burwash studio

September

September 3 (Labor Day Weekend)

Final Farmers Market activity

An excerpt from “*Portrait of a Hill Town*” by Ron & Grace Jager

“The practice of voluntary service to the community as a whole is a closely allied ideal. Certainly this is a “surviving institution,” and it is probably at least as healthy during this last quarter century as at any time in the town’s history. The voluntary spirit may, after all, be the main ingredient that makes a town a community: without it a town may be a political entity, a piece of geography, but little more. And without it there is not an appealing image to contrast with the imperial life of the city or suburb—a contrast forever important to the town. (In the city, it is felt here, there would be no real community to do anything *for*: everything is a business proposition.) The ideals of self-sufficiency and voluntary service are related approximately like this: the town as a whole is stingy with respect to actions that might bring advantage to individuals; but individuals (most of them) are not stingy with respect to actions that might bring advantages to the community. The two ideals thus make a one-way street, and this is the way it is felt that it ought to be—the only way to a worthy future for the town.

Thus many Washington people give time and effort, chair and man committees, labor in the background, find volunteers, hope, grow discouraged, try once more—and year by year, though few miracles happen, examples do accumulate and shine. The grounds get cleared, the school gets painted, the Land Use Ordinance gets drafted, buildings get repaired, the fire stations are put up, Old Home Day celebrated, the work gets done. Sometimes such effort is recognized and is plain to see, some gets recorded or at least favorably alluded to in the *Town Reports*, but much is invisible and has to be given in faith and fun, knowing it will be taken for granted and have to be its own reward—a community reward. (As an old Washington saying goes: “You can do anything for the town as long as it don’t cost the town anything.”)

It is a vital thing and also very fragile. Generosity spurned may shatter into resentments that fester for decades. And the memory of the people has a burning candor. The slightest lapse while in the voluntary service of the community may seem to be remembered longer than the service itself. But even the visible brooding over old scars calls for the tolerance of others—adding layers to the psychic life of the town. A town is a community of ideals and memory and pride, and of its own kind of tolerance.

It takes time and the winds of change to blow away the chaff from the record—time for what is absurd or exasperating or maudlin in day-to-day life to fade and allow the longer meaning to stand out. And that may be why the institutions and practices of yesterday sometimes seem more interesting than the surviving institutions of today; and why some institutions, such as the ideals of self-sufficiency and voluntary service, are easier to take for granted than to discuss as contemporary history.”

This was taken from the chapter “An Age of Growth 1950-1976” pages 384-386

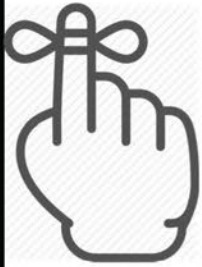
To me, it says a lot about our little town and the people who choose to come here, or stay here, and get involved, in whatever way, and make us a community.

-Editor

Membership News



The results of the Membership Level Changes Ballot that was sent out for vote in March to current members is that the changes are approved. Thank you to those who participated in the vote!



Don't Forget! Our membership year will now be from **June 1 to May 31**. There will be a separate mailing for renewing and new members alike. There are now more membership levels intended to engage with a larger part of our community. Look for your renewal to come in the mail in May.

As members send in their renewals, we will be updating and cleaning up our member database. We know that many of our members are in Washington seasonally. When you provide your mailing address to us, we use that address to mail out the newsletter, which comes out in the Spring and Fall and we will also use that address to send out the new membership renewal letter in May. Please be sure the address you provide is where you are at that time of year. The rest of the year we communicate with email about upcoming presentations, etc. If you would like to receive updates about events, be sure to include your email address when you renew.

Please send any updates to your contact information as needed to washingtonhistoricalsociety@wnhhs.org or by mail to WHS, PO Box 90, Washington, NH 03280.

The Board is sad to report that we received the following resignation.

Dear Friends,

It is with deep regret that I must resign as Archivist for the Washington NH Historical Society at this time due to the declining health of Jim and my injury of a broken back as a result of trying to care for him.

I sincerely wanted to "catch up" on all of the unfinished duties of the past few years before taking this action but at this time I find it impossible to do that and also find all of the new changes with computers and ideas impossible to wrap this old head around. Our comfortable small town society seems to be taking on a new face which I do not recognize but I will try to be a consultant if asked and wish all the new people success in their endeavors.

Best wishes to all.

Gwen Gaskell.

In Honor of Gwen

How can we even begin to acknowledge Gwen's invaluable contributions to the Washington Historical Society? She is one of the founders and for 40 years she has done yeoman's work to keep the museum open, and the collection organized, preserved and available. But that is not all. She recruited, trained and scheduled volunteers for years. Her fundraising was enviable: fudge sales, quilt making (one of the town buildings and one of the town barns), community dinners (organizing, cooking, cleaning up), pie sales, making her famous donuts for events, and the list goes on! Her commitment to maintaining the history of Washington is incomparable. Even as she steps down from the organization, she is willing to continue to share her deep knowledge of the town.

We plan to have a formal recognition with Gwen this summer, and hope that many will be able to attend and express their thanks for her dedication.

Washington Historical Society
PO Box 90
Washington, NH 03280

ANNUAL MEMEBERSHIP LEVELS are changing. If you are already a member, you will be receiving a notice to renew in the mail or via email. If you would like to join, you can join on-line and pay by credit card, or visit the museum.

Donations can be made online using a credit card or by check to WNHHS, PO Box 90, Washington, NH 03280

PLEASE NOTE: As a non-profit historical society, we qualify with many companies for matching grants provided the company you work for, or are retired from, supports such benefits.

Please accept my donation of \$ _____ to help WNHHS continue its work.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email: _____