



Washington Historical Society Newsletter

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FALL 2023 EDITION

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President's Message

It has been another very successful year for the Society, with many visitors to our museums, fun demonstrations of pottery making and spinning, as well as a wonderful exhibit of Washingtoniana collected by Stephen Crain. Archivist Gwen Gaskell did a superb job portraying three generations of the Hurd family. Our continued presence at our booth during the Saturday morning Farmer's Market brings attention to our mission and museums.

We have happily resumed meeting in person for fascinating presentations and reinvigorated our pre-program pot luck suppers. One result of the pandemic has been the incorporation of many more Zoom programs which reach a wider audience, allowing seasonal members to participate when they return home. We will continue this development as you'll find a listing of our tantalizing programs planned for 2024 in this newsletter.

It can't go without mention that this past summer was one of our wettest on record; the 3-inch deluge on July 10 caused our July program to be postponed for 2 weeks!

Next year promises a focus on the District No. 5 One Room Schoolhouse in East Washington where we hope to have a reenactment of a typical school day. We hope everyone has a blessed winter and we can hardly wait for the coming year!

Many thanks to our volunteers of the past season and we are pleased to have our men that took wonderful care of our grounds this past summer already volunteering to do it again in the coming season. Jon and Mark; we DO thank you!

Patience paid off as the new windows in the museum did not get in as early as hoped, but they are installed and look GREAT.

Call Ellen if you have suggestions for displays as I am out of State for an extended period of time helping my daughter, Heidi. I am pleased to have my nephew and his wife living in my home while I am away.

Best wishes to all for a healthy winter.

Gwen

Recollections on change and thoughts on life on Millen Lake in Washington, NH
by Steve Yusko

After 71 years of living off-and-on on Millen Pond Road it is always a pleasure to recollect how the lake makes Washington New Hampshire so special. It is a place that has remained the same yet has also changed with the times. First, Millen Pond Road itself. Created in 1910, it remains (thankfully) unpaved. I recall a wooden bridge that traversed the creek adjacent to what is now named the Millstone cottage. Gradual expansion of the road's width has been minimal, and it retains its original charm as well as its well-maintained functionality by the Town.

While Camp Morgan started out as an overnight YMCA camp for boys it has been transformed into a wonderful park for both residents and visitors (with the proper authority). I recall many families on the Lake sent their kids to the Camp in the 1950's. And the Town still maintains a day camp during the summer, continuing the long tradition. The State Boat Landing has allowed Town residents and out-of-towners to enjoy fishing and boating on the Lake. The beauty of the lake and its fauna are being preserved by the State-sponsored Lake Host Program, which raises awareness of invasive plant species that could infect Millen. And over 50 years ago the Millen Lake Association was formed, allowing lake families to continue monitoring and preserving the Lake's pristine qualities with regular water testing, dam management, and, certainly, most of all, camaraderie of its members via annual meetings, road cleanups, golf tournaments, and the annual picnic in August which in the past included a sailing regatta.

While perusing the Jager's 'Portrait of a Hill Town' I encountered something astonishing: "George A. Safford put a steamboat, complete with steam whistle and paddle wheel, on Millen Pond sometime during the 1880s, and for many summers thereafter he provided rides around the lake for tourists.¹ Apparently Long Pond also had a steamer which was in service through 1932. Contrast this with today's mode of watery perambulation: many lakeside families have motorized floating docks which serve as a perfect way to enjoy the lake's beauty, especially when it's calm.

My parents first settled on Millen Pond Road in 1952 when Waldo Farnsworth wrote a short note to my mother concerning the availability of the Lee property adjacent to the Rochfords. And, if memory serves, my childhood dentist in Braintree, Mass., Raymond Holmes, extolled the beauties of Millen to my parents, igniting their interest. But times have changed. There are over a dozen cottages that have been razed and rebuilt or refurbished since 1980. Only a handful of these summer cottages remain in their original form. And I know of about half a dozen homes on Millen Pond Road now capable of sustaining life in the winter.

Specific unrelated memories include Waldo Farnsworth playing his musical saw in the 1950s on the lake in the evening, his cows quietly munching behind barbed wire in the ferns behind Camp Columbia. There were the fireflies, other assorted insects (!) and the occasional leech, fresh water clam, or tadpole. A surreal memory: around 1960 Millen Lake was almost completely drained to facilitate a major dam reconstruction. I recall some sort of chasm/channel in the center and wished I'd taken photos.

But to end on another poignant recollection: when I was standing over the kitchen sink looking out the window into the back yard's forest on June 30, 2022, I witnessed a titanic old maple tree topple over and crash to the ground with a huge thud. The same tree that Waldo's cows had been serenely wandering about. Change can be gradual or suddenly dramatic.

1. Jager, Ronald and Grace Jager. Portrait of a Hill Town: a History of Washington, New Hampshire 1876-1976. Washington, N.H.: Town of Washington, New Hampshire, c1977, p. 241.

Memories of the Lake

I was just there yesterday, try to visit maybe two, three times a year. Having spent all my childhood there, and twenty years vacationing, I find a lot of changes, yet so much has remained the same. Sat down by the waterfront eating my lunch in the drizzle, remembering when the Lodge, Wigwam, and other buildings were there and part of a very active Camp, the Camp Bell, the Bugle in the morning and in the evening echoing down the lake. Remembering sitting in Bob Onela's (spelling?) lap while he made the Ball Field on his Bull Dozer and him letting me pull the levers, with his help, maybe I was about five years old, couldn't reach the pedals, but I tried. Water skiing behind the Drew Brother's boat, was a beautiful wooden boat, unlike today's boats, believe 35 HP. We had a large group of us who all enjoyed the lake as children. The ride to "Barker's" General Store, in Waldo's old pick-up, after milking the Cow's every night, and delivering the milk. Playing in the Hay Loft on rainy days. Later years taking my Grand Children to Eccart's farm to listen to the cow bells, and feeding the various other animals. So many good memories. The lake is as clear as ever, and as cold. Seems like more year-round folks living there now, a different generation, and a lot more expensive for sure. I just hope they appreciate it as much as we did. The town itself is so nice, the buildings still look as nice as when I was a child, again a new generation, but the pride is still there. There are so many memories, it's different now for sure, but still remains the same for me. Thank You for keeping my memories alive.

Alan G Perry



Photos of Washington

Seen on FaceBook:

On the left by

Kimberly Holt Stumpf

On the right by

Rebecca-and-Dan Persechino



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Gwen

Jim Crandall's Memories of the Lake

I was honored to be asked to write about my memories of Washington This is my 86th summer in Washington which means I must be getting old. But fortunately, the old are still living.

I will try to do this chronologically starting with the background of my family's presence in Washington I am related to the Farnsworth's which were among the founders of the Town. My father's mother was a Ball, related to the Millen family. She was born in the red house on Faxon Hill Road now owned by the Michaels. She married a Farnsworth. The land which I now occupy was purchased from Elgin Farnsworth in 1927. Our first house was built in 1928. It was small, and required a tent for sleeping. There was not even a road to Millen Pond. It was later used as an Ice house and woodshed. The bridge was built in 1929 and our current house in 1930. My father's family lived at What Cheer, now the Snyder's and my mother's family lived at the Spruces, now Carolyn Mugar's.

I remember when electricity was brought to our house in 1943 so that we could have a refrigerator rather than an ice box and our own water pump rather than a hand operated pump from my aunt's house next-door.

I have several memories of World War II. I remember a victory garden which the family had in the field just this side of the bridge. The property is now owned by my niece, Martha Robertson. The garden produced many vegetables, which my mother canned and we stored and used them through the winter at our house in Braintree Massachusetts. We also stored potatoes which we purchased from Waldo Farnsworth. Of course, Braintree has a long connection with the town of Washington including the current Faxon house, which was built by general Sylvanus Thayer, who lived in Braintree. He founded West Point and also Thayer Academy in Braintree which I attended. Also, the Penniman school, which stood until recently on Marlow Road, was named for a family from Braintree. Back to World War II. I have several memories. My sister was a plane spotter at the small building on Cross Street. She and the others involved were to spot invading German planes. I also distinctly remember the final victory over Japan in August 1945 because of the large victory celebration that day at Town Hall. I remember it because I was allowed to ring the bell at Town Hall, but no one told me that if you didn't let go of the rope, it would just bring you to the ceiling.

My fondest memories I have of my youth was the interaction with Waldo Farnsworth, who owned the farm on property purchased by the Brighton's in 1962. We often played hide and seek in his hay barn before we would help deliver milk and ice for ice boxes along Millen Pond and through the town center. At the town center one of the highlights was visiting the store in the brick house now occupied by the Gibson's. The store was owned by Pearly and Mary Young. We would buy ice cream cones and sit on the front porch with some of the old timers such as Alfred Tandy, Sleepy Crane, and Elewen Young. We also would stop at the Rolfe's house, now opposite the fire station and owned by Carolyn Mugar, to get hamburgers or hotdogs. Some of us also would play basketball on a court beside the church. The best of the players were the Drew twins, Teddy and Buster. They lived at the farm then owned by Hazel and Stan Drew and now occupied by Geoff Iadonisi.

In June 1952 my sister was married at the Congregational Church and I remember that day well because it was a beautiful summer day, and I really wanted to be at the beach swimming in Millen Pond. Later in 1952 Pearly Young held a sale at the Lovell house and I was able to buy an historic sign advertising various businesses in the area, including the stage coaches to Hillsboro and Newport That sign was from about 1875.

In 1966, Judge Kenneth Brighton invited a number of Millen Lake people to his field to discuss forming Millen Lake Association. Judy Brockway Kavanaugh and I are the only still living original signers creating MLA . Several years later MLA purchased the water rights to Millen Pond, in order to protect the lake. It was purchased from Faulkner & Colony Mills who had the right to drain water from the lake to operate their mills in Keene

In 1970 the Delackner family sold all the acreage which now forms Lake Ashuelot Estates, Formed in 1971 They retained the now empty house, just below the dam and the cinderblock building, which was built to manufacture airplane parts, but never was used.

As for the properties around Millen Pond, most are still owned by the same families, but have been gradually turned into year-round homes. The number of those people now claiming residence in Washington has grown dramatically in the last 10 years.



Waldo Farnsworth and the gang on his milk truck.

Stubby and Jim in a boat on Millen Pond



During July and August of this summer, there was work done to repair and make our church steeple in the center of town beautiful once again. If anyone took time to watch the workers, I know they found it interesting to see the "Steeplekeepers" a Co. from Maine, climbing up and down the ladders and walking up the roof with parts of the steeple on their shoulders.

(Photos by Bill Mulcahy)



Calendar of upcoming meetings

- November 13, 2023 Glenn Knoblock: The History of the Kancamagus Highway [tentative]
ZOOM ONLY
- January 8, 2024 Alan Rumrill: Ponds, Power, and People: A History of Highland Lake
ZOOM ONLY
- February 12, 2024 Inez McDermott: The Old Man of the Mountain: His Life and Legacy
[tentative]
ZOOM ONLY
- March 11, 2024 Damian Costello: Maple, New Hampshire's Medicine of Connection
[tentative]
ZOOM ONLY
- April 8, 2024 Mary Kronenwetter: Corbin's Animal Garden: the 22,000 acre
Wildlife game preserve in Newport, NH [tentative]
ZOOM ONLY
- May 2024 Event at the District No. 5 One-Room Schoolhouse in East
Washington. Planning a re-enactment of a typical school day.
Exact date to be determined.
IN PERSON ONLY
- June 10, 2024 David Mann: Boundaries, First Proprietors & Roads: an explanation
of the Lot and Range system that laid out many colonial frontier
towns.
IN PERSON ONLY
- July 8, 2024 Steve Taylor: Late in Arriving, How Electricity Changed Rural New
Hampshire Life.
IN PERSON ONLY

AUGUST -NOVEMBER TO BE ANNOUNCED

Please send suggestions for programs you might be interested in.
Updates and information always available at Wnhhs.org

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: _____

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