



Washington Historical Society Newsletter

FALL 2000 EDITION

President's Message

This has been another busy summer for our members in Washington. Many visitors came to our museum and School House No. 5. The Museum Committee put together another great display. The Program Committee arranged some interesting programs attracting an average attendance of about 50.

With the help of a generous donation we have purchased a new computer and the necessary software to start re-cataloging all the artifacts in our museum. Gwen Gaskell, our archivist, has made a good start on this and promises to work on it all winter long. It will take several years to complete the project, but it will be a great improvement when it's done.

For the third year many of our members worked on a fundraiser at a local farm called Mirage Alpacas, owned by our members Bill and Audrey Rhoades. For two days during the Columbus Day weekend we cooked and served food to people visiting the farm during the Wool Arts Tour. We were billed as the Washington Historical Society's "Sidewalk Café". The earnings from this venture have been increasing every year with this year's earnings being \$946. Many thanks to all who provided pastries, made soups, did the shopping, cooked and served the food all weekend long, and to the Rhodes for providing space and the meat of two lambs.

There were a few changes in the Society's leadership this year. After many years of working for the Society in various capacities, the most recent that of Vice President, Jim Walsh decided to take a well-deserved rest. Frank Musmanno was elected to replace Jim, and Bob Fraser replaced Frank on the Board of Directors. My thanks to Jim for his years of service and to Frank and Bob for their willingness to serve.

Thanks to Phil Budne for creating a website (you're there): www.wnhhs.org for us. It is also linked to the town website www.washingtonnh.org. When you get there, just click on historical society.

I continue to be thankful for all the willing workers of the Washington Historical Society and the financial support we receive.

Wishing you all the best for the holidays.

Al Krygeris

Museum Committee Report

The topic for the summer was the Twentieth Century. The museum was open from July 4th to September 30th. More than one hundred and seventy people visited. Before the formal opening of the Museum, the committee did a great deal of work. As usually happens, the newest member of the committee got the weirdest job: stuffing a coffin, which was on display (it only opened one-third of the way across the top) with tons of boxes of jigsaw puzzles depicting the picturesque center of town. The puzzles were among the many items for sale in the gift shop including tote bags and a number of items made by members of the society. It might be noted that sales were brisk.

As might be expected, many of the exhibits were from the first half of the twentieth century: ladies wool bathing suits, a narrow wooden traverse (a long sled) with a steering wheel, other clothing of the period, military uniforms, a sewing machine, tools and a cheese press which fascinated many people as they could not figure out what it was.

Our local schoolchildren visited twice and wrote letters of appreciation after both visits. The following is part of one such letter. ``Thank you for inviting us to the Washington Historical Society. You have lots of really cool stuff there... you guys sure do know a lot of stuff about the WHS. Probably because you were there back in the olden days."`

There will be totally new displays next summer as well as new and interesting items in the gift shop.

For the Committee:

Vivian Hunter
Mary Krygeris
Sue Horner
Sue Hofstetter
Shirley Siciliano, Chairperson



School Kids at Museum, Oct 2000

DISTRICT #5 SCHOOLHOUSE

This past summer was a busy one for our school, as we had over one hundred people sign our guest register. There were others, but they either forgot or did not care to sign.

The first event was a field trip of Mrs. Webber's class from the Washington Elementary School. Mrs. Cobb, who portrayed an "old school marm", greeted the children complete with long dress, shawl and granny glasses. When the bell was rung, the children had to line up (shortest to tallest) outside the school with the girls on one side and the boys on the other. They proceeded into the school with each group using the proper door. The flag was saluted, "America" was sung and then the lessons begun. The children learned about Readin', Writin' and `Rithmetic as they were taught in the olden days. Many of the customs of the past were discussed. They were a delightful and well-behaved group of children.

Late in June, we were fortunate to have Ed Weldon paint the inside of the school. He did an excellent job. The last time the inside of the school was painted was back in 1966, so it was badly needed. He patched and fixed the bad spots. The colors remained the same as they had been.



Sue Bermudez in East Washington School

In August, Sue Bermudez hosted a "Harry Potter Day" with about forty adults and children. A discussion was led by Sue of the four Harry Potter books. Professor Prunilla (Joan) Phipps was introduced as an instructor for the Hogwarts School of Witches and Wizards. She brought a basket of common plants and she explained the uses of each. She also had a packet of marigold seeds for each child. Refreshments were served after the event. The brave of heart enjoyed spider cookies made by Debbie Cascio, bags of candied worms and Waterbug melon. An enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

The school was open every Saturday from 1-3 PM during July and August and by request. If you would like to see the school, please call Charlene Cobb at 495-3209. We hope to see you next summer.

Washington Stores

By Gwen Gaskell



Old Washington Store

This large set of buildings stood where the old post office building (the small white building beside the general store) is today. Between 1872 and 1893 there was a store in this building operated by N.A. and F.A. Lull. Interestingly, people by the same last name own the property beside it today. From 1893 to 1897 the Lull brothers owned the property and store. There were scales in the yard to weigh loads of hay, grain, lumber or whatever needed to be weighed. In 1897 Frank and Charles Lull sold to A.B. Davison, the father of Hugh and Harry whom some of us remember. Their initials are carved into the end of the step at the old post office building - they must have had spare time on their hands! The Davisons operated the business until 1918. I'm uncertain about the use of the building from then until 1928, when Walter Johnson purchased the property and operated it as an inn and tearoom until 1940. This is where my Mom had a job and met my Dad. The building was removed in 1945.



Brick Store

The "Brick Store", now the home of the Gilberts in the center of town, was operated by Muzzey and Gilmore from 1864 to 1870. Benjamin Muzzey was proprietor from 1870 to 1895. In 1897 he sold to W. D. Brockway, who had been operating a store and barber shop in the red house just west of our museum. He moved up to "Main Street" and ran the store until 1909 when he moved again, taking the store and post office with him, to his home beside the monument. He carried on business until 1915. Sumner Ball purchased the brick building and leased it to Harry Newman who did business from 1917 to 1919, when Pearl Young leased it. Pearl saw the use of automobiles growing and had gasoline pumps installed. Some of us remember the sign with the "flying red horse". Pearl and Mary Young operated a successful a store and post office for 30 years and then found the town in a very quiet period and themselves ready to enjoy some old age. The building then became the business and home of their daughter, Red, and her husband, Bob Millen. In a few years they sold to Homer and Rachel Chase who had a tearoom in their home for a few years. They sold and it has been a private residence ever since.



Log Store

During the "quiet period" of Washington there was still a need for a store in town. Abner and Marjorie Barker lived on Half Moon Pond Road in a large home with a big front porch and a growing family which could use some supplemental income. In 1948 Abner closed in half of the front porch and stocked some basics. Soon more basics were required, and the family dining room was given up for store space. Marjorie took care of customers and family needs, while Abner made maple syrup, cut wood, worked on roads for development or state projects, and did the haying to feed the cows to meet the needs of milk and meat for the family. The older children helped with the younger ones - a total of 7: 4 girls, then 3 boys. They all had chores to do as soon as they were big enough and all "grew up" in the store learning to deal with the public. In 1951 they bought the Fred Ball property on Main Street across from the "Brick Store". Abner, with the help of Andrew Sargent and his helper, built a cedar 24' X 30' pre-cut log cabin on a full foundation. The week before Christmas the store was moved into the new building, and the family moved into the home across the driveway. Texaco gas was now available and there was room for more groceries. In 1964 the town voted to allow the sale of beer and wine. That made for better business especially during the spring and summer months. Barker's Variety Store served the community until 1968, when Abner and Marjorie decided to retire from that business and start delivering mail on the rural route from Hillsboro to Washington. The store and home beside it were leased - first to the Howells, who had a young family, but lacked the means to properly stock the store with supplies - and then a couple of years later to a "Doc Corey", who had government help with rent and stocking, but left in a hurry one night, never to be seen again - as far as we know.



Gaskell's General Store.

Gaskell's Store

The Barkers traveled to Alaska during the summer of 1970, so daughter Gwen and her husband, Jim Gaskell, decided to see what they could do with the store. Because the children were still young, they were open split hours, closing the store in October to return to Concord where Jim taught at Rundlett Jr. High. The sign on the door read: "See You in April". The store was well stocked, and Jim, Gwen, Don, Larry and Heidi moved from Concord to Washington. A second generation started to "grow up" in the store - helping, meeting and dealing with the public. In 1974 more space was needed, and Jim had the foresight and courage to put on a 30' X 30' addition. The volume of business continued to grow as the Island Pond, Washington Lake Estates development grew and then the Lake Ashuelot Estates. Business was good and more and more items were added and large gas tanks were put in to accommodate travel and recreational needs. Jim again had the courage to add on, this time for a 24' X 24' hardware room out the back. Now there wasn't much left of the original log cabin! At this point the slogan seemed to be "If you don't find it here now, we'll have it in a few days". There were fresh fruit and vegetables; fresh ground hamburger; steak cut to whatever thickness you wanted; well-stocked shelves of canned and dry goods; a freezer with a good supply of vegetables, T.V. dinners and ice cream; sweatshirts, hunting socks, gloves, hats, vests, jackets, long johns and boots. In the spring, winter leftovers got put away to make room for fishing poles, hooks, lures, weights and all the other items fishermen might want including waders and boat and motor rentals. The General Store was once again a place where people would check to see what was happening when they came for the weekend or on vacation. Posters for anything were posted on the bulletin board or windows. The children worked and grew up, then summer help had to be hired, but Jim or Gwen was nearly always there.

On December 13, 1989, the Gaskells sold their home and business to Bill Logren. He added a lunch counter at the store and a very modern kitchen in the house as well as other modernizing. A few years later Jim and Nancy Curran bought the property and are currently operating the business.

Jim and Gwen retired to 90 Wild Acres Drive on Smith Pond. Abner and Marjorie went west for 30+ years and are now back in Washington living with daughter Vivian. P.O. Box 11 is theirs.

THE DOOR-TO-DOOR SALESMAN

By Charlene Cobb

When electricity was finally installed in our town, labor saving devices were available to the housewife. Gone were the days of heating a flatiron on the wood stove in order to do the inevitable ironing. Washday was easier than the hours of backbreaking labor of bending over a washtub. Refrigerators replaced the icebox with its melting ice and trips to the icehouse. Also, the vacuum cleaner came along.

During the 40's, we had in town a commercial artist by the name of Bob Porter. Now, there was not a big call for this type of work, so Bob decided to sell the Electrolux vacuum cleaner. Though expensive for the time, it was a mighty machine that was a real workhorse.

Bob would go from door to door selling his vacuum cleaners. He had the use of one to demonstrate. One of the techniques that he used was to dump a bag of dirt on a rug, and then proceed to vacuum it up to show the effectiveness of his product. Families were impressed with the efficiency of the machine. (In fact, one is still in use at the Grange Hall in East Washington.)

At one of the houses, he was met with a little resistance, but being a good salesman, persisted and was allowed into the house. He gave his speech, and then dumped the dirt on the living room rug. He asked where the outlet was, and was told that they had not had electricity installed, as it was too dangerous and apt to cause fires. The lady of the house promptly handed him a broom and dustpan and told him to clean up the dirt! After that, he always checked to see if there were electric lines going to the house before he stopped for a sale.