

Washington Historical Society Newsletter

SPRING 2001 EDITION

President's Message

We are ready for another busy summer. The Program Committee has come up with a great list of speakers. The Museum Committee will soon be assembling this year's display "Kitchens and Appliances of Yesteryear". It should be a great year, if the snow ever leaves.

Many of you have commented about the quality of the newsletter. I thank Bob and Sue Hofstetter for improving the looks of our newsletter. Also, my thanks to Gwen Gaskell, Sue Hofstetter and Charlene Cobb for their willingness to research and write articles about past events in Washington. I hope that, in the future, others will be willing to share the stories they know about life in Washington or to contact those who have stories and write them down.

At the end of this fiscal year, in August, I will have served as President for three years. The Nominating Committee will need to find someone else for this office. They should have no trouble in doing that with all the talent we have in the Society. I believe that it is healthy for an organization such as ours to change leadership every few years. I look forward to working for the Society in another capacity after our Annual Meeting in August.

I have learned a lot in these three years and found out that there is a lot that needs to be done and always will be. Many more resources will be needed to do the things that need to be done in the coming years. I have been frustrated that we have no running water or toilet facilities in our museum building because we don't own enough land for a leach field. This does not serve our visitors well or those who volunteer to keep it open. It seems to be a problem without a solution at this point.

The second major problem I see is that our artifacts are stored in the basement. Basement moisture is far from being an ideal environment for storage of such items. We should be doing something to moisture-proof the basement walls. The third problem is that we are running out of room.

The problems I have mentioned are problems of success, not failure. To organize the Washington NH Historical Society and to purchase the museum building were fantastic accomplishments requiring great dedication and generosity of those involved. This dedication and generosity will need to continue to keep this society moving forward. There will always be a need for volunteers and funds.

Have a great summer... Al Krygeris

Early Days of Sugarin'

By Charlene Cobb



Can anyone identify this man?

[Another, very similar photo in the Spring 2002 Newsletter *identifies him as Charles Trow -webmaster*]

The making of maple syrup is one of the few original activities not brought to us from another country. It has been practiced in Canada and the United States for centuries. The actual origins are lost, but many legends persist. One of these stories tells of a North American Native, who, angry for some reason, threw his tomahawk at a tree, which happened to be a sugar maple. Below the gash was a birch bark cooking pot. Naturally the sap dripped into the vessel. The brave's wife, thinking that this was water, used it to cook. The result was a sweet, thick liquid. There are many variations of this legend, but the fact remains that in the late winter/early spring, the wounding of a tree produced a sweet liquid that could be processed into a sweeter product that could be used for many purposes.

The early colonists and settlers lived at a subsistence level. Life revolved around an agricultural operation that provided for the immediate needs of the family. Any extra could be sold or bartered to provide for the things that could not be produced. A pattern soon developed in rhythm with the seasons. Spring was a time to plant, with cultivation of crops during the summer and harvest in the fall. Winter was a time for restocking the woodpile and getting set for spring. The maple season was at a time of year when other farm activities were slowed down.

Refinements have been made to the process of sap collection and evaporation, but the basic process still remains the same. In the late winter when the conditions are right, the sap begins to rise in the trees. Tapping the tree allows the sap to be collected and processed. Native Americans evaporated the sap by placing hot stones in the sap, thereby concentrating the sap. Another method allowed the sap to freeze. Then, the ice was discarded, leaving behind a thick, sweet sugar solution.

Collecting sap from the trees has progressed from the birch bark containers, to wooden buckets, to metal buckets (with covers), to plastic bags, to the modern practice of plastic tubing.



At first, the sap was collected by hand and transported to the boiling site. Pails were suspended from a shoulder yoke. Often, when the snow was deep, this had to be done on snowshoes. Later, oxen or horses with a sled topped with a wooden tub were used to transport the sap to the boiling site. Later developments used pipeline and plastic tubing to transport the sap.

Once the sap was collected, early settlers used large metal kettles to boil it down. The kettles were suspended from a tripod over open fires. As it concentrated, more sap was added. The resulting product was dark and strong flavored. In the mid-1800's, a flat pan was used to increase the surface area. By 1860, the evaporator was invented. Evaporators had sectional dividers, allowing the cold sap to be run in at one end and the finished product to be drawn off at the other.

Originally, sap was boiled down in the open. Soon it was realized that some form of shelter for the sugar maker and product was needed. The first were crude shelters or lean-tos in the woods. Next cabin-like structures were built. These evolved into the present sugarhouses, many of which have electricity and running water.

Sugar makers are a breed of individuals with ingenuity. Though the equipment has improved, there is much hard work and long hours are involved. But each year just about Town Meeting time, out comes the equipment and another year begins.



BE SURE TO VISIT THE MUSEUM THIS SUMMER

By Gwen Gaskell

You won't be sorry when you spend some time at the museum this summer. There will be information and pictures of some of the old homes of Washington and an OLD FASHIONED KITCHEN with lots of pans and "gadgets", as well as other things of interest and possibly a surprise or two. The Museum Gift Shop will offer Washington items such as afghans, bags, pillows and puzzles.

Exhibit photos thanks to Arlene Gaskell 8/2001;



IN THE ARCHIVES

By *Gwen Gaskell*

In the archives at the Washington Historical Society are two sets of old Washington Town Reports. Over the past several years, collections of reports have been given to us, and we sincerely appreciate these gifts, as they enable us to fill in the blank spaces where some were missing.

The best set is safely stored away, and the other set is available to be used for research. The Museum Committee will be making a decision this spring as to what to do with our extras.

We are pleased to report that due to recent gifts, the 1900's are complete up to the present time. The oldest reports we have are from 1872 and 1873. Then we are missing the majority of reports until 1888, where we are again complete to the year 1900. We watch for these at yard sales, flea markets or in attics - and we occasionally get lucky. You may be able to help us. We always need all the help we can get!

Crossword Puzzle

Lakes and Ponds in Washington, NH

by *Marcellus Liotta, Rufford Harrison & Sue Bermudez*



ACROSS

2	Between 13 down and 3 down. See the Town Clerk/Tax Collector.
5	Almost in Windsor. He could beat swords into plowshares.
8	Large, in the South-West. An Indian name for the gathering of waters.
10	Easternmost. One thousandth.
11	Possibly our smallest, behind Borey's. A Flintstone.
13	Between E. Washington and Rte. 31. Temperature does this in winter.
14	Northernmost.
16	At southeast corner of Pillsbury. Mind the amphibians.
17	Where Camp Morgan is.
19	Southwestern most. Sounds like "ferret" with a different beginning.
20	Between 16 across and 6 down. With eggs?
21	Small, on Stoddard line. A wet dirt mess.

22	Northwestern most in Pillsbury. Pertains to an Episcopalian minister.
----	---

DOWN

1	Source of Ashuelot River. No oleo meadow, this.
3	Our longest, partly in Stoddard Lake? Or a mountain.
4	Served by 3 roads from E. Washington Rd ...land?
6	Largest in Pillsbury. Merrie month.
7	North of Cram's Corner. Brightest at night.
9	Going north, second in Pillsbury. European porcupine?
12	Most northeasterly. Part of an oil company.
13	First in Pillsbury. Sounds like the bird, Flicker.
15	At outlet of L. Ashuelot. First with long and short lures.
18	Another name for 3. Part in Stoddard.
19	Reached by a road opposite Dube's pit. In Hubbard End.
20	One of the smallest in Pillsbury. Sounds unclothed.

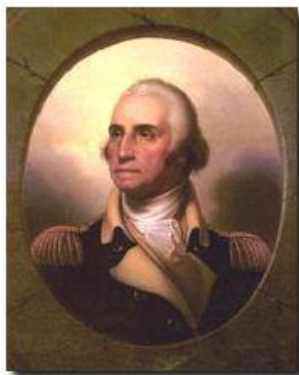
Which One Is First

By Gwen Gaskell

Every few years the question comes up about the many towns named Washington and which one is really the first. Our New Hampshire Teacher of the Year, Suzanne Lull, was recently approached by the Teacher of the Year from Washington, North Carolina with ``*How can we both be first?*'' Mrs. Lull said she would get some answers before their next meeting in April. Some of you heard her ask for help with this homework assignment at the annual school meeting. I said I could help her, so here is my ``report'' with some help from Al Krygeris on his computer Internet resource.

The question boils down to first what? Surveyed? Named? Incorporated? To some of us it comes down to splitting the proverbial hair, but to others of us it is important.

[Washington, New Hampshire](#) claims to be ``The First Town Incorporated Under the Name of George Washington''. The area was granted in 1735 as No. 8, surveyed in 1749, and in 1763 a road was cut from south to north. In 1752 the area was called New Concord and then Camden. The town was established when the first settlers arrived in May of 1768. I wonder how they found the black flies? If the critters were like they are each spring in recent years, it's a wonder the settlers stayed! The first census was taken in 1773 and reported 132 people. In 1830 there were over 1,100 residents; in 1960 we hit a low of 162 and have gradually increased to the 2000 census number of 895.



George Washington 1732-1799
First President 1789-1797

On September 22, 1776 the residents petitioned the General Assembly of NH for incorporation under the name of Washington. The prayer of the petitioners was granted at the next session of the Court on December 9, 1776.

Washington was part of Cheshire County until July 1827 when Sullivan County was incorporated and named in honor of the Honorable John L. Sullivan, who was Governor of NH 1786-1790.

For more details on these facts and the first settlers of Washington read the old town history through page 29.

<p>Washington, Virginia claims ``The First Washington of All''. Surveyed and plotted August 4, 1749; established as a town on December 14, 1796; and incorporated on February 12, 1894. George Washington was but 17 years of age when he surveyed Washington, Virginia with the assistance of chainmen John Lonem and Edward Corder.</p>	 <p>Town Hall (former Library)</p>
<p>Washington, North Carolina claims ``The Original Washington'' and was called ``Forks of Tar River'' prior to 1776. This city was incorporated in 1782; the first attempt in 1771 never gained approval. In 1862 Union forces occupied Washington, and it suffered great destruction throughout the Civil War.</p>	 <p>Old Beaufort County Courthouse</p>
<p>Washington, Georgia was settled in 1773 and was incorporated in 1780. Washington was Georgia's temporary capitol in 1780. In 1890 it was home to 38% of Georgia's population. The first successful cotton gin was perfected and set up by Eli Whitney in Wilkes County in 1795, and the first cotton mill in Georgia was built there in 1811.</p>	 <p>Prebyterian Church</p>

Towns of Washington

	New Hampshire	Virginia	North Carolina	Georgia
Surveyed	1749	Aug 4, 1749	?	?
Established	May 17, 1768	Dec 14, 1796	1772	1773
Incorporated	Dec 9, 1776	Feb 12, 1894	1782	1780

So - there we have it - as near as I can find out, **if** Washington, North Carolina's first attempt at incorporation had been approved, they would have been first. However, as our tablet in the center of town says: ``Washington, New Hampshire **is** the first town INCORPORATED under the name of George Washington... He was only a General at that time.

Crossword Solution

All Lakes and Ponds in Washington New Hampshire

