

Washington Historical Society Newsletter

SPRING 2004 EDITION

President's Message

Here we go again! Off to another season of the Washington Historical Society and this season looks like it's going to be quite a ride. The Program Committee as usual, has lined up a great program of events. Word has it that some of the contributors to the Pot Luck have sharpened their skills. Is it possible to have tastier Pot Lucks? Come and judge for yourself. There have been some unusual and fascinating additions to the museum as in the form of a very old diary of a 19th century Washington resident. To top this array, the recent gift of the barn next to the museum has been most promising. A contract has been set for work to start this spring to help preserve the basic structure. The recently formed Barn Preservation Committee has been doing an outstanding job. They have given us tremendous insight into the possibilities it offers us. These range from barn dances to farming demonstrations. We were overwhelmed at a recent board meeting as to extent of these possibilities. There is one last item that is a "sine qua non" for an outstanding season. We need your help in the form of volunteering and perhaps financial assistance. Above all, we would love to have you enjoy yourselves and feel that you are an essential part of the Washington Historical Society.

Thank you,
Marcellus Liotta, President

Barn Preservation Fund

Tom Talpey, Treasurer

As announced in last Fall's Newsletter, the Bruen family has given to the Society the antique red barn next to the Museum. It was also mentioned last fall that an anonymous donation of \$10,000 was given to the Society to serve as the basis of a matching grant for the preservation of this barn. I am happy to report that we have already received over \$1000 in donations towards this goal. To date we have spent \$1249 for needed materials, insurance and other expenses. An extensive account of the history of the barn is given in this Newsletter in an article by Gwen Gaskell, who researched its history and has added some interesting facts learned by living near the barn while growing up.

Barn Preservation Report

By Richard Crane

We are pleased to report that the project is moving forward at a good pace. A contractor has been chosen, Richard M. Thompson (Sunrise Woodworks) of Cornish, NH, and the selection has been approved by the Board of Directors. He has surveyed the project and has laid out plans to do the work during the month of June. Mr. Thompson has been building new timber frame buildings since 1981 and started restoring old barns in 1985. He is an approved NH Preservation Alliance Restoration Contractor and spends most of his time saving old barns, churches and covered bridges. He says he will welcome any additional volunteer help from Historical Society members, so come to the April meeting (see Program Schedule), learn about old barns and sign up! Donations towards the project are also welcomed, as we try to match the \$10,000 grant mentioned above. Yes your donations are tax deductible!

This Season at the Museum

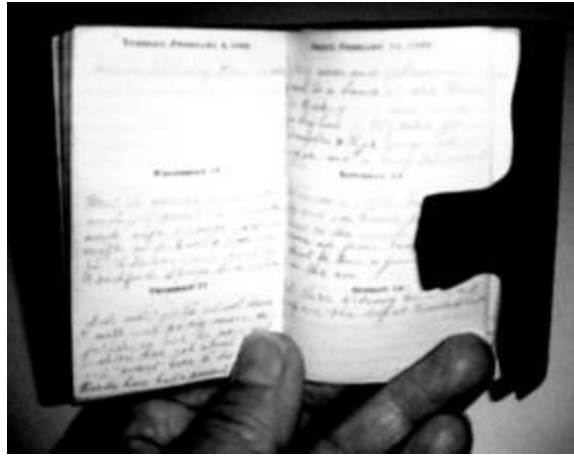
From the Museum Committee

Many of us have heard the names of residents that lived here in Washington in years gone by and some of them even had amusing nicknames. This season we are going to take the opportunity to introduce you, by pictures, to many of those people and tell you some of the things they did or were interested in and where they lived. We hope that this will make the names seem more real to you. Because our museum building was originally the home of "Half Moon Antiques" we are going to have a few old items around for display or for sale. If you have any item that you would like to display, give, or put on consignment, any committee member will be glad to hear from you or to accept your item for the display. Think about it - maybe a pretty plate or a cup and saucer, a picture, chair or small table. We are always open to suggestions. The new acquisition case will also have an interesting display of items.

A Peek into the Past

by Charlene F. Cobb

In an antique shop in Florida, Jerry Johnson, an aficionado of post-Civil War history, bought an 1869 diary of a Washington, NH seventeen-year-old girl, Nellie Newman. How it ever got to the antique shop in Florida is anybody's guess, but Jerry started looking into Washington's past. Through our web site (see address elsewhere in this Newsletter) he got in touch with member Phil Budne, the Historical Society's webmaster, who forwarded his inquiries to several of us here in town. From that has developed an active, sometimes almost daily, exchange of information via email between Jerry and Gwen Gaskell, Tom Talpey and myself. Thanks to Jerry's generosity the Museum now has in its collection the original diary, plus scanned images of all the diary pages and several of us have enjoyed deciphering Nellie's handwriting, transcribing the diary and piecing together her story. It gives an intimate and unique peek into her life growing up in 1869 and makes us feel closer to Washington's past. Here are some of the things we have learned about Nellie.



Nellie's 1869 Diary, donated to the Washington Historical Society by Jerry Johnson, who discovered it in an antique mall in Florida and has subsequently taken great interest in Washington as the town where Nellie (Ellen M. Newman) grew up. Photo by Jerry Johnson.

Nellie was born Ellen M. Newman in Washington on March 27, 1852. Her parents were George W. and Maria E. (May) Newman who resided in Washington. George Newman was a carpenter and mechanic. She had two sisters and two brothers - Emma J. (known in the diary as Em), born December 25, 1850; Willis J., born December 28, 1855; Clara M., born April 22, 1857; and Dana G., born April 14, 1859. Nellie died on October 13, 1875 of the "fever". It was a shame for such a lively young lady to have lived so briefly.

Emma later moved to Stoddard and may have married someone from there. According to the old Town History, Willis moved to Fargo, Dakota. Clara married George Morey and moved to Manchester, NH. Dana died August 28, 1881 of a suicide. Father George died on February 5, 1891 of heart disease and Mother Maria died on June 2, 1894 of pneumonia complicated by heart disease. There is some suspicion that Clara and her husband then may have moved back to the family home on Half Moon Pond Road Washington, as she inherited it after her mother died.

Nellie attended the school in the center of town. It was listed as District #1 and is pictured in the old Town History facing page 104. She also may have attended Tubbs Union Academy in the Academy Room (now Town Offices) in the Town Hall. According to the diary, her attendance was sporadic. The school term was for twelve weeks and she had attended for eight weeks. On February 11, she decided not to go on to school as "father is not well and mother has got tired out".

She mentions that her father was sick and "came very near having the congestion of the brain". He appeared to be better some days, then not as good. The last entry on her father's health was March 6 when she states that Father was much better.

Nellie spent many nights "sitting up with Mother". On Saturday, March 6, she says that her Mother was quite sick. She spent most of the month of March sitting up with Mother. She did get out of the house for several social events. On April 20, she states that Mother could work very little, but on May 13, she was able to walk up to the village.

She notes her birthday on March 27th in the diary, but there is no mention of a party or presents, although she did write that she "went to the village" in the evening.



The Crescent Mill, visible at the left of the photo, where Nellie and her sister Emma worked from time to time. It was along Bog Brook, which exits from Half Moon Pond and flows under a bridge at the bottom of Gaudet's Hill on Half Moon Pond Road. The white house in the distance near the center of the picture is known as the Gaudet house. The white house behind the horse may have been that of Deacon Harthorn, who owned the mill. Neither this house nor the mill still stand. The man driving the carriage is Frank P. Newman. To complete the list, the name of the horse was Dolly. Photo from the Washington Historical Society collection.

There were many young people in town at that time. They enjoyed calling on each other, attending dances and going to the Lyceum. On May 7, "Father, Em and myself went to Hillsboro and six others, girls had some pictures taken together". On July 29, Nellie went to a friend's house to have her hair done up. She went to Hillsboro the next day and "sat for some pictures".

Her sister Em went to work for Deacon Levi Harthorn. He had purchased the mill from Deacon Seth Adams & Son. It was called Crescent Woolen Mill and continued the manufacture of woolens. Late in February, Nellie went to this mill to get work, but was evidently not hired at this time.

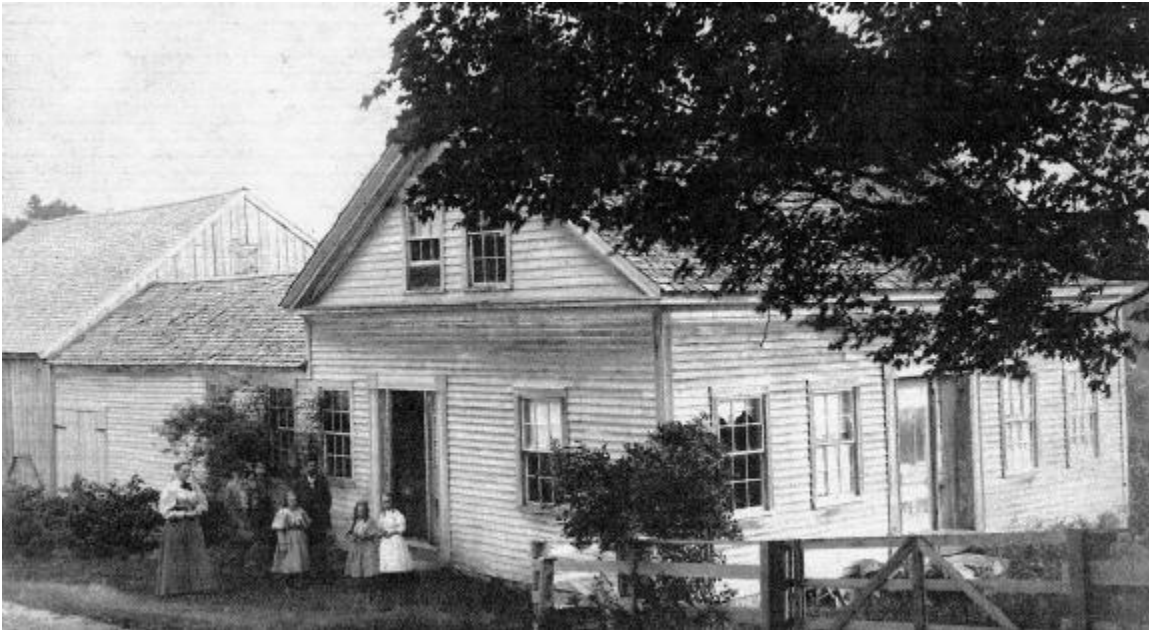
When Seth Adams and his son, Nathan, sold the mill, Nathan and his wife Minerva moved to South Acworth. They were uncle and aunt to Nellie. On May 15, Nellie moved to Acworth to work in her uncle's mill for \$2.50 a week (six days). She admitted that she was homesick. So, on Thursday, July 15, she went home for a visit. They left Acworth at 9:30 in the morning and arrived in Washington at two in the afternoon after going through Marlow. That makes the trip about four and half hours by horse and carriage. She returned to Acworth on Monday, August 2 and went back to work in the mill the next day. On August 18, she states that she ran two looms. She came back to Washington on September 15. October 14, she states "Started for Acworth this morning. Got here about Noon" where she went back to work in the mill. A few days later she commenced to work in the evenings until half past six, "after half an hours warning". Again on October 30, she returned to Washington.

While back at home in Washington, with some experience behind her, she often worked for Deacon Harthorn in the Crescent Woolen Mill. At that time the Gages owned the boarding house for the mills at Cram's Corner, which was a short distance down the road from the Crescent Mill and nearly across the road from George

Newman's house, where Nellie lived. Several of the friends that Nellie mentions may have lived in this boarding house. It was later owned by Wiley's, then Cram, but the building was destroyed by fire in 1983.

There were many seasonal activities in which they participated. Sugaring and sugar parties in the spring, picking strawberries and raspberries in the summer, fishing and boating. Sliding in the winter was an enjoyable sport. The roads were not plowed or sanded and traffic was only minimal. One of the places chosen was May Hill. There is also a mention of sliding on Old Maid's Hill. As far as can be figured out, this is the hill on Half Moon Pond Road starting just above Gaudet's home. If this is true, there would have been a clear ride all the way to Route #31 (Second NH Turnpike).

Another activity that she participated in was the Singing School. Madam Lucas ran the school during the winter months in her home. She built a stage in her living room. Later, Betty Sawyer had the stage removed while she owned the house.



The house where Nellie grew up. The George W. Newman house at the southwest corner of Half Moon Pond Road and Mill Street (Cram's corner) as it looked around 1900, soon after it was inherited by Nellie's younger sister Clara (Mrs. George Morey), with her husband and children, including a neighbor. It is still standing today, although the road nearby has been re-routed slightly. Photo from the Washington Historical Society collection.

During the latter part of the diary, Nellie mentions the books that she has read. She was an avid reader. The Giraffe Hunter by Mayne Reid is the first, mentioned on August 15, when she was in Acworth. On October 30th of 1869, the Shedd Free Library was opened in Washington in the upstairs of the house owned by S. W. Hurd who was the husband of Aunt Clara, a name often mentioned in the diary.

The library was open only on Saturday and only one book per person was to be loaned. This book was to be wrapped in brown paper to keep it clean and undamaged. The first librarian was John Weston. The first day that the library was open, there were 57 books loaned out from the library's collection of 292 volumes. Sarah Shedd had given \$2500 of her savings from working in the Lowell Mills for books for a library. A week later, Nellie took out the book Cast up by the Sea by Samuel W. Baker and stated that it was "very good". Her next selection was "Little Wimmen" Volume 1 (Little Women by Louisa May Alcott) which had just been published in 1868. Odd People by Mayne Reid followed by Neighbor's Wives by John Townsend Trowbridge, then

"Sherman's Great March" (The Story of the Great March by George Ward Nichols) and The Young Lieutenant by Oliver Optic. On December she read the sequel to Little Women, Volume II.

Dances were a popular pastime. Distance did not seem to be a factor. Nellie mentioned dances at Lempster Pond on January 7, and on January 22 she "went to a dancing party to the hall, stayed until one o'clock, had a very good time". It appears that Friday night dances were common as they are often mentioned. Another time, they went to the Bradford Springs to a dance. Imagine it must have been a chilly ride home as the dance was in February. On at least one occasion, apples, cider and a popcorn confection were served for refreshments.

Oyster suppers were popular. She mentions on February 2 that they had quite a crowd but had a very good time. Another oyster party was held in the Academy Room later in the month. Spelling schools (bees) were often held, probably in the Academy Room, though there is a mention of one "down on the turnpike" (possibly the Dole School).

Nellie subscribed for Peterson's Ladies National Magazine, a fashion magazine of that time. She received an apron as a gift for "doing up" a friend's hair. She appeared to enjoy "handiwork" as she mentions making a watchcase, "croched" (crocheted) collars for a friend and herself, knit gloves and made a pair of mittens. Some of her other activities and purchases were:

May 7 bought a sundress - \$1.15

May 13 bought a pair of boots - \$2.50

May 15 bought a shall (shawl) - \$4.50

May 21 bought a hat - \$2.41

June 10 bought a dress and picked it up on June 24th

September 28 bought a shall (Shawl) and dress

October 1 & 2 made herself a dress

October 5 sewed on a dress for Clara (her sister)

October 27 "went over to Addie's. Em and I got some hats."

November 1 sewed in the afternoon

November 9 "stayed at home and sewed"

November 17 sewed on Mother's dress "Em got her furs. Squirrel for \$15.00".

Working on this diary has been an exciting journey into the past. It has opened up many avenues for more research. We have been so fortunate that Jerry has donated the diary to the Historical Society Museum, so Nellie's diary is back in town. It can be seen (with the transcription) at the Museum. My thanks to all who so generously participated in this venture.

Ed. Note: We are trying diligently to find a picture of Nellie. We have several promising leads, but no success yet. Perhaps in our next issue? Also there is a major mystery of whatever happened to Emma after she went to Stoddard. If anyone can help, please contact the author or one of the Board members.

From the 1912 Town Report

The town paid \$242.40 in bounties for hedgehogs -- 1212 unfortunate critters at 20 cents each. Seems like there may have been an invasion, with more hedgehogs than people in town!

From the 1924 Town Report

The town paid \$140 in bounties for bobcats -- 7 dangerous characters at \$20 each. Some members may remember a stuffed one on display in Camp Morgan Lodge some years ago.

Researching "The Barn"

By Gwen Gaskell

I had not researched a piece of property but decided to give it a try, so I volunteered to start with the barn that recently became the property of the Historical Society. Louise Bodak went with me to help, and we spent two mornings in Newport at the Sullivan County Registry of Deeds. I still had a blank area so Grace Jager helped me in the town archives, and we found information, which filled in the blanks. We all learned something.



The antique barn on Half Moon Pond Road, donated by the Bruen family in 2003 to the Washington Historical Society, as it looks today. The Museum building is on the right. Photo by Tom Talpey

The Newport registry is completely computerized so it is easy to find information, and the people there are very helpful. Prior to 1827, Washington was part of Cheshire County, so records were kept there. Jim and I went over to Keene and looked but could find nothing pertaining to this property.

I am beginning the story of this property in 1845 when a deed is recorded in Newport showing that Jonathan Kendall sold a 1/2 acre tract to John Weston for \$300.00. There were also some mortgage arrangements, which involved Kendall, John Weston and William Weston, presumably John's uncle from Hancock. John Weston paid taxes on this same 1/2 acre from Feb. 1845 until his death.

May 1859:

The mortgage was apparently satisfied, as full title was transferred from William to John Weston on this date. This 1/2 acre was consistently shown with a valuation of \$800.00 from 1858 through 1925.

1861:

Town tax records show that he kept a horse and a cow and eventually added one sheep. John and Sophronia Weston's daughter, Juliet, married Ira Brockway. At this time a pasture and the "Kendall lot" were added to the tax roll. A baby was also added to the home: Willie D. Brockway, born in 1862, to Juliet and Ira. Soon another cow and more sheep were also added. Some animals, known as "neat stock" did not have to be recorded so exactly how many other animals there were is not known for sure. It took a large barn to store enough hay to get even 6 animals through a long Washington winter. It makes sense to me that the daughter and her family continued to live with her parents. In those days the families often lived and worked together to help one another.

Aug. 1873:

John's widow, Sophronia Weston, sold the property to Ira Brockway.

1875:

Ira Brockway is listed as the taxpayer. Willie D. married Ida Young of Washington in about 1880, and they had 2 children in that home, Guy b. 1882 and Nellie b. 1885. Some of us remember Nellie Nichols Otterson, a sweet and friendly lady, who later married Bill Otterson, Sr. Now it is possible that four generations are living in one home. John Weston died in 1872 and his wife in 1895. Ira Brockway died in 1904 and Juliet in 1910. Willie D. died in 1930. Apparently the property was passed down to Willie D. without a deed or it did not get recorded.

Sept. 1922:

There is a deed from Willie D. Brockway to Isaac Barrett. The deed shows that "\$10.00 and other considerations" was the amount paid. One can only guess what the other considerations were. Possibly land or a horse and wagon? It could also be stated that way as a matter of privacy.

1923:

Tax records in that year show the same 1/2 acre, the same value and 3 horses.

Oct. 1925:

Isaac Barrett sold to Harry and Dora Newman for \$400.00. They were both from Washington and had been living with her parents, the Heselton's on the Millen Pond road. Harry was the town road agent for 16 or more years, much of that time earning 50 cents an hour. Dora baked and did laundry for many summer people for years. She was particularly well known for her oatmeal bread and lemon meringue pies. She was also the first cook for the Washington Center School hot lunch program. Harry and Dora had one daughter, Hazel who married Stanley Drew and they lived and raised twin boys on the farm that had been her grandparents. Hazel drove the school bus route in her Buick for many years and was the first bus driver when the town got a "real school bus." Harry Newman died in 1955.

Sept. 1958:

Dora Newman and Hazel Drew divided the property and sold the barn to Edward Bruen of long Island, NY. The Bruens also owned the large house across from the monument on Rte.31. Mr. Bruen was interested in old horse drawn carriages and sleighs and wanted a place to store them and make a collection. He was a founder in 1960 of the Carriage Association of America and the barn was named The Washington Carriage Museum.

1972:

Dora Newman and Hazel Drew sold the house to Jim Pratt and Clinton (Steve) Davis. Soon the house was torn down and the first pre-fabricated building in Washington was put up in its place to be an antique shop. Floorboards were saved and reused in the new building.

Oct. 1976:

Alice Read sold 1,364 sq. feet of land to Mr. Bruen to give him more land behind and on the far side of the barn.

1992:

Clinton Davis sold to the Washington Historical Society. It is now the home of the Washington Historical Society Museum.

Nov. 2003:

The Bruen family deeded the barn to the Washington Historical Society as a gift. A few artifacts and many pictures were left with it for our collection. During a recent visit with Hazel Drew, she said that before she met her husband he had driven the stage from Hillsborough to Washington. That was probably when Ike Barrett had

3 horses there. She knew that her dad had kept a cow and pigs under the barn. Her son Ted remembers his granddad keeping pigs in a pen on the main floor as well. He also remembers the men of town working together on the fall slaughter in the barn. I asked Hazel if it seemed possible that 4 generations could live in the home which seemed rather small and she said there were 3 bed rooms upstairs and 2 down and is quite certain that her parents took out a partition to enlarge the living room. That would have made a 6th bedroom, so even though a couple of them were very small, it is possible that four generations could have lived there at once.. There is no proof of exactly how old the barn is as the tax records do not have descriptions except for valuation and the number of certain animals. With the value of the property remaining the same from 1858 through 1925, we assume that there were no major additions of buildings. The oldest pictures we have of the town show this barn. The circular saw came into use in 1850. As of this writing no beams have been found that were cut with an up and down saw. Men of experience with barns who have looked at this barn place it circa 1860.



The home of Harry & Dora Newman as it appeared around 1970. A corner of the antique barn is barely visible at the corner of the picture. The house was torn down about 1972 and the present museum headquarters building was put in its place. The wide pine floorboards were salvaged from the old house and today serve as the Museum's main floor. Photo from the Washington Historical Society collection.

Barn Quilt

The Museum Committee, for the benefit of the barn fund, is starting what we consider a fun project. Would you like to help make a quilt depicting the barns that are left in Washington? We were surprised to be able to list 40 or more barns left in town. Of course, that includes East Washington and counts only one of the many barns at the Eccardt Farm.

Photographs have been taken and several members and friends have already been contacted to see if there would be interest in helping us make a quilt to raffle off to raise money to help with the expenses of fixing the recently acquired barn, to be used to display our growing collection of farm equipment and some other interesting artifacts.

If you are interested in working on this with us, please let one of us know. Our names and telephone numbers are given elsewhere in the newsletter. We will have pictures of the barns at the April meeting. The quilt will be in progress through the summer and will be on display at the monthly meetings, so the development can be viewed.

Tickets for the raffle will be \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00, available from members or at the museum. No date is set at this time for the drawing.

Correspondence from One of the Selectmen

The photo of a horse-trough in your Fall 2003 issue reminded me of something that I had chanced upon recently as I was thumbing through the RSA's. It is RSA 76:18, which mandates the selectmen to abate up to three dollars from your tax if you build a horse-trough and maintain it. So if you happen to have a trough there could be a windfall awaiting you. Perhaps not three dollars, however: *"not exceeding \$3"*.

Could be as little as a dime, since the current selectmen are a miserly lot. Perhaps you shouldn't run out to build a trough. On further reading, however, the plot thickens. In the first sentence "the selectmen *shall* abate", but the last sentence says only "if they deem the same necessary". Forget about that windfall. The complete text of the RSA is attached for anyone wishing to care for the thousands of horses that pass along our roads. I find it incredible that this State law is still on the books; perhaps it's cheaper to leave it there than to pass legislation to delete it.

Rufford Harrison

RSA 76:18 For Water Trough. The selectmen of every town shall abate a sum not exceeding \$3 from the tax of any inhabitant, who shall construct, and during the year keep in repair, a watering trough, well supplied with water, sufficiently elevated and easily accessible for horses attached to carriages, if said selectmen shall deem the same necessary for the convenience of travelers. (Enacted in 1858)



Unusual stone watering trough along the road in West Claremont, near the northern end of the 2nd NH Turnpike. During the process of widening the road, the trough was moved to the grounds of the Claremont Historical Society where it may be seen today. Photo courtesy of Colin Sanborn of the Claremont Historical Society.

Grace Jager has dug up some records in the Town Archives in this regard and reports that in 1884, for example, and for many years thereafter (through 1907), Charles Carley (on the old Croydon Turnpike road) was paid \$3 each year for his watering trough. Further research revealed that Amasa Fairbanks, from whom Carley had purchased the property, had been awarded \$3 each year dating back to at least 1872. Thus there is a record of a watering trough on that same property for at least 35 years. Beginning in 1885, C. W. J. Fletcher (in East Washington, Charlene Cobb's grandfather) was paid \$1.50 for maintaining his. There are records of J. B. Safford (on the old Marlow Road, Richard Cilley's great, great uncle) being paid \$2 for his for a number of years starting in 1884. Some years there were as many as 6 or 7 troughs or tubs in town which qualified, the latest payment noted being in 1927. Grace also found that in 1916, for example, there were 116 horses residing in town! The population at the time was about 300.

As might be expected, it turns out that there were quite a few watering troughs around town in the olden days. There are records of one on the East Washington Road, which qualified for the rebate for over 40 years! With all that watering trough activity in town it seems reasonable that SOMEONE must have taken a photograph of one SOMEWHERE in Washington, but we have been unable to locate a suitable picture for this Newsletter. Research will continue through the summer, however, and we appeal to our readers for any information they may have regarding watering troughs or tubs so that we can publish a more detailed history in our Fall issue. In particular we are looking for photographs, which can be scanned to accompany that proposed article. Meanwhile, we present for your enjoyment the accompanying picture of a horse refreshing itself along the road in West Claremont. If you have material that you think may be of interest, please contact the Historical Society's Archivist, Gwen Gaskell, or your Treasurer, Tom Talpey.



Waiting for the Mail Stage. Photo is actually from a souvenir program for the 1907 Acworth Old Home Day Celebration, but the same scene could just as well have occurred in the center of Washington.