

# Mil I Town Messenger

This newsletter is generously funded by McCrillis & Edredge Insurance

Volume 4, Issue 1 — February 2010

## Ebenezer Allen

Larry Cote

You never know where you will find an interesting story about someone from Newport, New Hampshire! On a recent trip to a rare book dealer in Vermont to purchase the 1891 diary of J.W. Parmelee, I was introduced to Ebenezer Allen. I knew nothing about him until the book dealer mentioned he had two documents signed by the Secretary of State of the Country of Texas, Newport native Ebenezer Allen. I purchased the Parmelee Diary for the Museum, drove home, and immediately went to Wheeler's History of Newport to look up Ebenezer Allen. Sure enough, he was right there in the Genealogy section. Ebenezer Allen was born in 1804, the son of David Allen who kept a large farm and hotel on the Goshen Road. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1826, then studied law with Amasa Edes in Newport. Upon being admitted to the bar Ebenezer moved to Orono, Maine to practice law. There he married Sylvia Morse

of Skowhegan, Maine. Some time in the 1830's Ebenezer moved to Texas, where he became active in many areas of this developing territory. In 1844 he became Secretary of State for the Country of Texas under Anson Jones. He assisted Jones in framing the terms of annexation to the United States. In 1848 Ebenezer was instrumental in securing the charter for the Galveston and Red River Railroad Company. In 1850 he promoted and managed the Houston and Texas Central Railway. From 1849 to 1853 he

served as Secretary General under Governor Peter Hansbrough Bell. Ebenezer supported secession and entered the Confederate service at the outbreak of the Civil War. He died in Virginia in 1863.

Even though Ebenezer Allen came from a small New Hampshire town, he played a central role in Texas history: as it became a country, then a state, and its secession from the Union. Ebenezer is just one of several notable people from Newport, New Hampshire who made their mark in US history.



Allen Homestead on Route 10 South

## Pier bridge update

Jackie Cote

The Pier Bridge Preservation Project just took a giant leap forward! On December 28, 2009 the project went out to bid after 2 1/2 years of site visits, engineering studies, and close collaboration among the Town of Newport and six state agencies. At times progress was hampered by changes in

personnel within the six agencies, downsizing, holidays, vacations, sick time, and changes in Federal policy which was retroactive to all ongoing projects involving Federal highway money. The deadline for bid submission was January 27, 2010. Contractor awards will be made by mid-February. Weather per-

mitting, work should begin in March, and the project work is projected to last approximately 16 weeks. Further progress will be reported in subsequent newsletters. Again, our most sincere thanks to everyone who contributed time, money and support to this most worthy project.

Please join us!

## NHS Monthly

### Meetings

Second Monday of the Month

Sugar River Bank Community Room

February 8

March 8

April 12

May 10

June 14

July 12

August 9

September 13

October 11

November 8

December 13

7:00 pm

## The Inside Scoop

- If Walls Could Talk
- Pine West Personalities: Charles Seamans
- Newport's Beginnings
- Newport Notables: Joseph W. Parmelee

## If walls could talk...

Mary Lou McGuire

If the long winter months are getting you down, here's an interesting project to carry you through to spring! Uncover the history of your house by investigating its architecture and its people.

**Architectural History:** When investigating the architectural history of a house, pay attention to the land and outbuildings as well as the main structure. Get to know the different architectural eras, look for technological advancements in building materials, inspect the different parts of your structure, and stand back to take an overall look at the relationship of the land to the structures upon it. When inspecting the interior of your house, you need to note the materials, construction techniques and finishes that were used. Remember that the interior of a house is renovated and updated more frequently than the exterior. In many cases only evidence of early interior construction will be found.

**People History:** Knowing the history of the people who lived in your house can shed light on the building's use and social heritage. Some of the questions to ask are: Who was the original owner? What role did he/she play in the community? Did any historical events take place within the walls

of your home or on the grounds? Often the changes made to a house indicate changing family needs, usually occurring at the time of a marriage, birth or death. Researching the people associated with a property may provide clues for any breaks in the title chain. For many people the social history of a house is more important than the architectural history.

Here's a list of activities to help you begin your exploration:

**Architectural History:**

1. Survey outbuildings and site
2. Survey the exterior for foundations, chimneys, roof, walls, doors, windows (placement, styles, sashes, panes)
3. Survey the interior: floors, walls, ceilings, trim, doors, hardware, fireplaces, stairs, cabinets, closets, heating, plumbing, electrical, lighting

**People History:**

1. Trace the chain of title
2. Talk to past owners, neighbors, and older residents of town
3. Research probate records
4. Investigate family genealogies
5. Consult census records: people, agricultural and manufacturing schedules
6. Research newspapers, business directo-

ries, maps, photographs and postcards, published histories, church, funeral home and cemetery records.

Go to our website

(<http://www.newportnhhistory.org/>) to access the complete Guide to Discovering the History of Your House and click on Research & Genealogy. You will find more detailed information to help you through the steps listed here as well as state, local, and online resources. You may also contact the NHS (863-1294; newports1761@gmail.com) for assistance. Happy Hunting!



Sources: Green, Betsy J. Discovering the History of Your House and Your Neighborhood. Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2002. House History Checklist. Kansas Historical Society. <http://www.kshs.org/genealogists/househistorychecklist.pdf> Light, Sally. House Histories: A Guide to Tracing the Genealogy of Your Home. McAlester, Virginia. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Knopf, 1984.

## Pine West Personalities: Charles Seamans

brenda curtis

Charles Seamans was the son of Rev. Job Seamans of New London. He was a much loved school teacher and talented carpenter, and came to Newport at the age of 19 to help build the first meeting house. During its construction Charles slipped from the roof, fell 27 feet and landed on his head. He died shortly thereafter on June 26, 1793. Rev. Seamans never completely recovered from the loss of his son. Although Charles is buried in Newport's Pine Street West cemetery, the rest of his family is buried in the Old Main Street Burial Ground in New London. Reverend Job Seamans was a Baptist minister and moved his family to New London from Attleboro, MA in July of 1788, when Charles was 14. The inhabitants of the small village offered Rev. Seamans three

pounds cash and thirty seven pounds in labor and grain and other produce plus moving expenses if he would come to New Hampshire and serve their community. He was known as 'a minister of the Gospel' and served as Pastor in New London for thirty nine years.



## Inscription

In Memory of Mr Charles  
Son of the Revd Job  
Seamans of Newlondon  
and Mrs Sarah his Wife  
Who on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June  
1793 fell from the Plate  
of the Meeting houfe and  
expired in 4 hours, aged  
19 Years and 10 Months

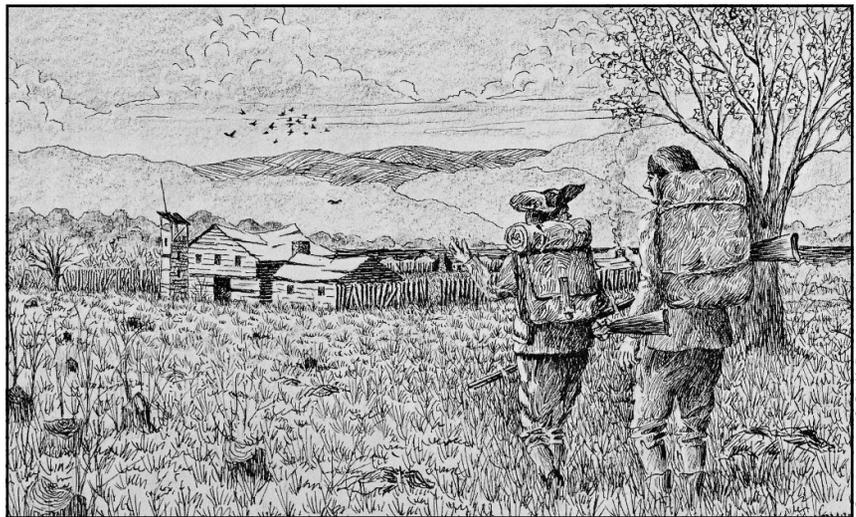
Behold and see as you pass by  
As you are now once was I  
As I am now you on mu tbe  
prepare for death and follow me

# Newport's beginnings

Mary Lou McGuire

The earliest human inhabitants of this part of New Hampshire settled along the banks of the Connecticut River. Although no direct evidence of inhabitation has been found in Newport, historians surmise they passed through this area when using the Sugar River as a direct route of travel between Lake Sunapee and the Connecticut River. Dating to 4000 years ago, documented evidence identifies settlements in Claremont at the mouth of the Connecticut River and on the shores of Lake Sunapee from the Stone Age until after European contact. Over time the earliest hunter-gatherers formed extended family units, which eventually became tribes. At the time of European contact the native people of the Connecticut River Valley were part of the Abenaki Nation. The survival of these native people depended on their ability to adapt to environmental change, and this innate flexibility allowed them to adjust to the influx of European settlers. However, they had no immunity to European diseases, and by the time the earliest settlers came to Newport in 1766, ninety-eight per cent of the native people had died. Many of the remaining native population moved north to Canada after fighting, and losing, with the French during the French and Indian War.

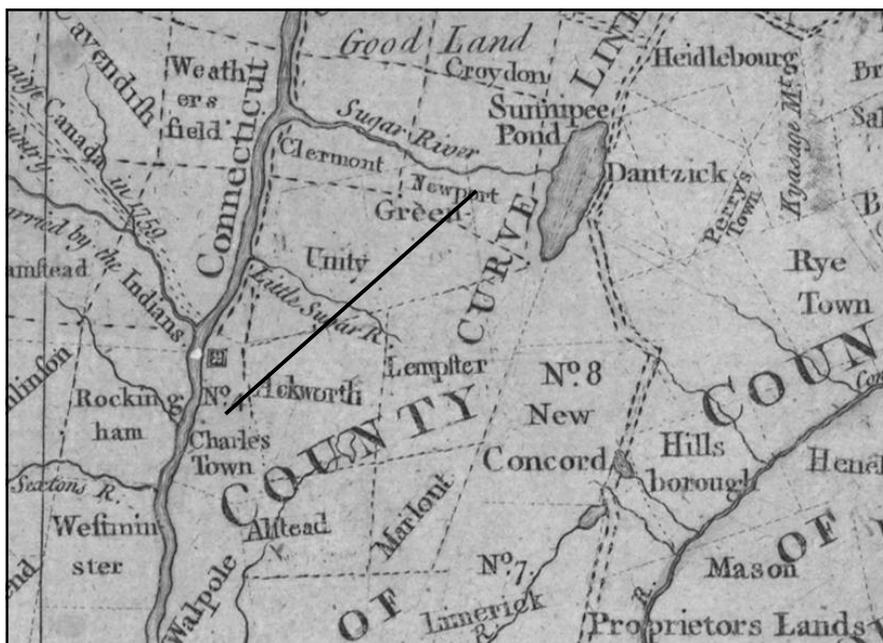
Fort No. 4 at Charlestown, NH was constructed in 1743 to protect settlers during King George's War (1739-1748). Incorporated in 1753, Charlestown remained an outpost until after the Revolutionary War, serving travelers along the Connecticut River from Canada to Connecticut. Fort No. 4 was the supply base for Newport's earliest settlers, providing staples such as salt, flour, tea, coffee and tobacco. A committee appointed by the Proprietors and comprised of Stephen Willcocks, Robert Lane, John Crane and Isaac Kelcey II, met at Fort No. 4 in 1765 to allot the first shares of land, locate a town plot, and plan Newport's future roads. In the fall of that year six men from Killingworth followed a trail from Charlestown approximately twenty miles through untamed woods to start clearing the land. They were Deacon Stephen Wilcox and his sons Phineas and Jesse; brothers Absalom and Jesse Kelsey; and Ezra Parmelee. From Newport, the trail to Charlestown began near today's intersection of Elm and Pine Street, followed Unity Road to Golf Club Road, then turned west at the end to a location near the base of Calls Hill. The trail continued south over Pikes Hill to the Unity line, ran over Weeds Hill in Unity and on to Charlestown. In 1766 it was voted to open a cart road along this trail, which became Newport's first road.



Courtesy of Gail Brown

Max R. Kaufmann illustration from Mission to Fort No. 4

In 1766 it was voted to open a cart road along this trail, which became Newport's first road.



Sources: Ohl, Andrea. "The Peopling of the Upper Connecticut River Valley." The New Hampshire Archaeologist; Caduto, Michael. A Time Before New Hampshire: the Story of a Land and Native Peoples; The History of the Fort at No. 4. The Fort at No. 4 Living History Museum; History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties; Wheeler's History of Newport; New Hampshire Argus and Spectator. 20 June 1902; Newport Town Records. State's Copy Vol. 1, 22; Andler, Kenneth. Mission to Fort No. 4. Hanover, NH: Regional Center for Educational Training, 1975.

## Newport Historical Society Membership Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ New Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address/City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Membership Type:   \_\_\_ Individual (\$15)                   \_\_\_ Family (\$25)                   \_\_\_ Junior (\$1)

Corporate/Business:   \_\_\_ Bronze(\$25)   \_\_\_ Silver (\$50)   \_\_\_ Gold (\$75)   \_\_\_ Platinum(\$100)   \_\_\_ Diamond(\$100+)

Here's my additional donation to the: Museum \$\_\_\_\_\_ Operating \$\_\_\_\_\_ Building\$\_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery \$\_\_\_\_\_

Payment Method:   \_\_\_ Cash   \_\_\_ Check (Newport Historical Society)   Total Enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to:                   Newport Historical Society   PO Box 413                   Newport, NH 03773

The Mill Town Messenger is published quarterly by the Newport Historical Society, P O Box 413, Newport, NH 03773.  
Contributors to this issue: Larry Cote, Brenda Curtis, Jackie Cote, and Mary Lou McGuire, editor.

Newport Notables: joseph Warren parmel ee 1818 - 1892 mary lou mcguire

### EPILOGUE.

Some six-score years ago, where Newport stands,  
A howling wilderness held all the lands;  
The Sugar, pouring from its crystal lake,  
Wild, idle, resolute through bush and brake,  
Chanting or shouting from its rocks and falls  
To echoing hill-sides and lone forest halls;  
And thus had poured and roared since time began  
And "wood or grass had grown or water ran."

At length the men of Killingworth appeared,  
And sound of axe and anvil's ring was heard;  
They builded dams across this rushing stream  
And clack of mills disturbed its ancient dream;  
And next, in old colonial guise appear,  
The preacher, doctor, trader in the rear;  
And thus our civil history began,  
Inspired by water-power and power of man.

How well those hardy yeomen wrought and planned  
In building, sawing, grinding, clearing land,  
How well they plied their trades and with what art  
The women spun and wove and did their part  
In founding homes and making much glad a wild,  
Where, ne'er till then, had gentle woman smiled,  
Though daughters of the wigwam had been there  
In simple vestments and dark, shining hair.

The growth of this our town, as now appears,  
Resolves the progress of a hundred years,  
And of the various interests concerned  
On which a fair prosperity had turned,  
Have we not stated all? It now remains  
To close the record - estimate the gains -  
And bid good speed in unpretentious rhyme,  
The chip now cast upon the stream of time.

Joseph W. Parmelee, grandson of original settlers Captain Ezra Parmelee and Sybil Hill, was born in Southville (Pollards Mills) in 1818. Educated in School District 1, Newport Academy and Kimball Union Academy, he began adult life as a merchant in Newport, moving south to Charlestown, South Carolina in 1847. Forced back north by the Civil War, he lived and worked in New York City until his return to Newport in 1879.

John W. Parmelee married Frances Little, daughter of Newport's first hat maker Amos Little, in 1859. Active in town affairs, he also pursued interests in poetry and history. He died in 1892 and is buried in the Maple Street Cemetery.

A Peek at Newport, New Hampshire 1842-1843, the excerpt from his diary transcribed by Andy Andrews, can be found at the Richards Free Library. It contains interesting comments about life in Newport during those years, and also has the earliest known map of Newport, hand drawn by Parmelee. EPILOGUE, his tribute to the settlement of Newport, can be found in the 1886 publication History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties.



Sources: Wheeler's History of Newport; History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties, NH.