

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

THIS NEWSLETTER IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A GENEROUS DONOR TO FUND THIS YEAR'S EDITIONS!

Volume 8, Issue 1

January, 2014

From the President's Pen . . .



by Cathryn Baird

"I am of certain convinced that the greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel." ~ Florence Nightingale, Nursing Pioneer

Certainly the world of health care has been whirling like a maddening dreidel in recent months. Does health care and its affordability really need to be so complex and divisive? Back in the 19th century whenever a person was sick or injured regardless of class they were brought to their home or the home of a neighbor. The doctor made a house call and the house became the hospital. How times have changed! Our nation's first hospital was founded in 1751 when Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Thomas Bond established Pennsylvania Hospital "to care for the sick-poor and insane." In 1771 New York Hospital was granted a similar charter, Mass General was established in 1811 and Yale Hospital opened in 1826, all for the purpose of providing care for the entire community. During the late 19th and early 20th century, several hospitals opened in New Hampshire including Newport's Carrie F. Wright Hospital which had its own training school for nurses. **The History of Nursing in Newport** by **Dottie Collins** is the main topic of this newsletter with the hope that readers will gain insight and appreciation of early days of health care in our town and for "... those who do their duty in the daily grind..." of healthcare.

Meeting & Program Times

All members and the public are invited to all meetings and programs.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Held at the museum, 6:30-8 PM

Mon. Feb 10

Mon. Mar 10

Mon. Apr 14

PROGRAMS

Tues. Jan 14, No program

Tues. Feb 11, No program

Tues. Mar 11, 6:30 PM, Richards Library Ballroom. Program: *The Life and Times of a Revolutionary Soldier* by Lance Kozikowski

Tues. Apr 8, 6:30 PM, Richards Library Ballroom. Program: *Colonel Theodore Roosevelt visits Newport*, by Dwight Wilder.

TWO HOSPITALS HAVE SERVED NEWPORT FROM 1909 TO 1990



Photo by A.G. Currier. Carrie Wright Hospital, Newport, N.H.

The Carrie F. Wright Hospital, on Maple Street, operated from 1909 until 1952, and included a nursing school.



The day Carrie Wright closed in 1952, the first operation was performed in the Newport Hospital on Summer Street. This hospital took care of Newport needs until its closing, in 1990. It was built mainly with funds bequeathed to Newport by George B. Wheeler.

HISTORY OF NURSING IN NEWPORT

This speech, in the form of a class lesson, was given by Dorothy (Conrey) Collins at the Business and Professional Women's meeting, April, 1976. This text has been edited for size considerations, but the entire speech is available, free, at the NHS Museum.

(A floor nurse in the late 1800's had the following duties)...In addition to caring for her patients, each nurse had to follow regulations, such as sweep and mop the floors of her ward, maintain even temperature by bring in a scuttle of coal for the day's business, fill kerosene lamps, clean lamp chimneys and trim wicks, and wash windows once a week. Graduate nurses in good standing with the Director of Nurses were given an evening off each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they attended church regularly. But any nurse who smoked, used liquor in any form, had her hair done at a beauty shop, or frequented dance halls, gave the Director of Nurses good reason to suspect her worth, intentions and integrity

In his will of 1907, William H. Wright of Newport bequeathed his dwelling house and lands on the northerly side of Maple St. to named trustees for the purpose of establishing a free public Hospital in the town of Newport, to perpetuate the name and memory of his beloved wife. Thus, the first building to be named for a woman in the town of Newport was the Carrie F. Wright Hospital. Even though the building was not in suitable condition and properly arranged for such a purpose at the time, a slight outlay of money rendered it passable and it was opened under an arrangement whereby a Superintendent and Matron provided board for the patients and employees at a fixed price per week.

During the next few years, individuals, societies and organizations gave money and labor to the hospital. Mrs. Lucy Bradley had volunteered to meet the expense of installing an up-to-date "sterilizing plant" costing about seven hundred dollars. The cost of the operating room equipment, drugs, and surgical appliances was \$1, 224.66. The surgical instrument cabinet listed at \$106.60.

On March 14, 1910, nearly a thousand persons visited the hospital and for the first time realized that Newport possessed one of the best constructed and well equipped cottage Hospitals in the state, with its own training school for nurses.

Mrs. Frank Eagan, Matron, and Mrs. Molly Loverin, head nurse, worked untiringly to make the hospital a success during the first year of its existence. Later, Mrs. Belle Spilfer, a student nurse who had been in training at the hospital since its opening, was given charge of the patients and nurses over a period of weeks until Miss B. Spinney was tendered the permanent position of Head Nurse and Super-

intendent in 1922. Miss Spinney was a graduate of Lawrence General Hospital in 1898, and a post-graduate of the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Boston, in 1900.

At this time, of the seven students or "Pupil" nurses, as they were called, who had entered the school of nursing, only two remained. The wages for nurses totaled \$702.99 for the year. The light and fuel bill was \$80.02 and the telephone bill was \$27.15.

The requirements for admission to the training school were:

- "Applicants must be between the ages of 20 and 30, of sound health, and physically strong.
- Candidates will not be accepted unless they have received what is equivalent to a good common school education and can furnish satisfactory testimonials of good moral character and capabilities.
- Upon the approval of an application, the candidate will be accepted for a period of two months on probation, but without compensation beyond board and lodging. At the end of the period of probation, candidates, on recommendation of the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees, will be admitted and required to sign an agreement to complete the prescribed course of three years and to conform to the rules and regulations of the school."

Students were paid eight dollar a month for the first year, ten the second year, and twelve for the third year. They were required to provide themselves with uniforms, textbooks, white aprons, washable dresses, noiseless shoes and other wearing apparel and articles as may be required by the school authorities. No fixed date was established for the beginning of a school year, and students were admitted as vacancies occurred. This appeared to be about two students per year with a total enrollment of six. They were given three weeks vacation each year and drew their regular salary during two weeks of that period.

In 1912, the number of patients varied from 5 to 12 and with financial resources not sufficient to meet the running expenses and an urgent demand for extra funds for the installation of an elevator, laundry equipment, etc. it was decided to have a "tag day" as one of the money raising projects. On Tag Day, nurses from the hospital, assisted by a corps of young women from the town, solicited contributions from every person they met.

Along with other projects, an "Elevator Fund" of

The History of Nursing in Newport, continued from page 2

\$677.00 was raised and the new elevator was installed. This elevator had two metal ropes. When one was pulled, it started the water wheel and the elevator went up. The other rope was pulled to reverse the direction. This elevator was still creeping up and down between the first and second floors when the building closed in 1952.

Carrie Brennan was the first graduate of the school in 1914. She left Newport to travel to California, but returned after six months. While practicing there, she was paid in gold.

By 1921, Pearl Williams, A Massachusetts General graduate, and the first "factory Nurse" in Newport at the McElwain Shoe Company, had persuaded Miss Eleanor Viola Vaundry to enter the Carrie F. Wright Hospital School of Nursing.

Mrs. Eleanor Vaundry Gilman recalls, "The students wore pinstriped uniforms and white aprons, 4 to 5 inches from the floor, and you'd better not be caught with your galoshes unbuckled in public! We had good obstetrical training in Pediatrics and Obstetrics at the Bellevue in New York. And Surgery – oh yes—one night we travelled by snowmobile to get an old man with a strangulated hernia. Dr. Gile came down from Hanover and met us there. We put an extra leaf in the dining room table to lay him on, and I boiled the instruments in a copper boiler. Dr. Claggett gave the ether and the son held the lantern."

Eleanor Vaundry graduated in September 1924 and received her state registration in January, 1925. She has had a busy nursing career, starting with private duty in Springfield, Mass., industrial nursing at the Pond's Cold Cream plant in Connecticut, Public Health nursing in Conn., and

during the war, because she was a Kenny treatment nurse during the polio epidemic, was classified as IVA.

In 1950, she came to New London where she was Director of the Baird Infirmary at Colby Junior College for eighteen years. In the summer, she was the nurse at Camp Colby, a summer camp for girls run by volunteer students at Colby.

Anna Donavan was the Superintendent of the hospital for about a year, but Public Health was what she wanted and loved. She was not the first Public Health Nurse, "(that title belongs to Bess Fairbanks Heald) she was one of the pioneers in Public Health and worked very hard for a small salary.

Although she never had children of her own, Anna was the "mother" of countless children, babies whom she helped to deliver in the days of home births, and others whom she guided to good health through school years as a school nurse. For 32 years, she was part of almost every home as a lone and veritable "Newport Area Home Health Agency." Her first Public Health car was a Model T Ford, then a Chevrolet stick shift. Her most obese patient had to be weighed on the town scales in Korn Alley, and the calls for the "sick nurse" were left at Kelly's Drug Store.

Anna Donovan Butler retired in November of 1958, and Margaret Grantham took over the position and also served her community at the local hospital.

Dr. B. D. Thorpe was the only practicing physician in Newport who was associated with the hospital during the 1914-1928 period.

A copy of the complete speech may be obtained from the Newport Historical Society Museum on Sundays, 10-2.

The Treasurer's Desk

by Jackie Cote

We have experienced an excellent fundraising season in 2013 with the sale of our Newport books, ornaments, note cards, shirts and other memorabilia. We strive to offer items that will enhance your knowledge of Newport's history while providing useful gifts and keepsakes. Profits from these sales support the Museum operating expenses. Our 2013 ornament subjects were Parlin Field (old hangar and bi-plane) and the Tiger (mascot for Newport athletics). These ornaments will be available for three years ending in December 2015.

In honor of Sarah Josepha Hale's successful efforts in 1864 to make Thanksgiving Day a national holiday and the commemoration of the park in her honor on the corner of Belknap Avenue and North Main Streets, we are offering through 2014, a special, one-year-only ornament bearing her image. In addition, we have note cards with the Sarah Josepha Hale ornament proof image, and a reprint of her cookbook published in 1841.

We currently have 202 paid members resulting from our September membership drive. Your dues support the operating expenses of your Historical Society. We appreciate your continued, enthusiastic support of the Newport Historical Society and Museum through your dues, donations and purchases.

CELEBRATING NEWPORT'S OWN SARAH JOSEPHA HALE



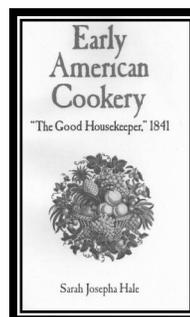
Dick Gassett, Sarah Josepha Hale and Abraham Lincoln

Our November 19 Program, **How Thanksgiving Came to be a National Holiday**, presented in the Richards Library Ballroom, starred Steve and Sharon Wood, noted historical reenactors, playing Abraham Lincoln and Sarah J. Hale. Their beautifully researched and presented scenario of Ms. Hales petitions to

multiple presidents for the nationalization of the Thanksgiving holiday, was enjoyed by a record crowd. Refreshments were cookies and cakes made from Ms. Hale's The Good Housekeeper 1841 cookbook. NHS wishes to thank Dick Gassett, our newest board member, for sponsoring this lovely program. The Woods' presentation kicked off the Thanksgiving festivities surrounding the dedication of the Sarah Josepha Hale Memorial sculpture grouping at the Richards Free Library. Sharon Woods reappeared in her role as Sarah J. Hale at the sculpture dedication.

Sarah Hale's Soft Gingerbread

From "The Good Housekeeper" 1841,
on sale at the NHS Museum



Ingredients

3 cups of all-purpose flour
1½ tsp. baking powder
1½ tsp ginger
2 sticks butter (1 C)
1½ cups molasses
1½ cups cream

Directions

Mix together the flour, baking powder and ginger. Rub the butter into the flour mixture (or use food processor.) Stir molasses and cream in, mix by hand till uniform and pour into a greased 9"x13" baking pan. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 30 minutes, until toothpick inserted in the center comes (almost) clean. Cool and cut into squares. (People say this is just like their grandma used to make!)

The *Mill Town Messenger* is published quarterly by the Newport Historical Society
P.O. Box 413, Newport, NH 03773

Website www.newportnhhistory.org , Email newporths1761@gmail.com

Museum phone number 603-863-1294

Call the Museum number above for appointments to tour the Museum at alternative times

Contributors to this issue:

Cathryn Baird, Jackie Cote, Dorothy Collins and Pris Hagebusch

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 \$_____ Buildings\$_____

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

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