

# NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# MILL TOWN MESSENGER

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April, 2012

## *From the President's Pen*



by Cathryn Baird

***"When the past no longer illuminates the future, the spirit walks in darkness." ~ Alexis de Tocqueville***

Serving my sixth term as president of the Newport Historical Society, I continue to be honored to serve the community and work with a dedicated group of historic-minded individuals who wish to preserve and highlight local history. In this newsletter we wish to pay tribute to the centennial anniversary of the Fire Station, the semi-centennial anniversary of LaValley's Building Supply and the first anniversary of the Nettleton House Museum, home of the Newport Historical Society. Please push pause and reflect on these structures and the inhabitants. Their dedication in no small way contributes to our daily life and the preservation of Newport's heritage. Share your respect and admiration with the individuals who have served our town well by paying a goodwill visit and saying "Happy Anniversary!" Your recognition of the past will illuminate the future.



### Newport Historical Society Museum FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION NIGHT

Monday, May 14, 2012, 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Nettleton House at 20 Central Street, Newport NH,



- \*\* **CELEBRATE** the presentation of 2nd mortgage payment to ECON at 5:15 PM
- \*\* **TOUR** the museum before exhibits rotate
- \*\* **SEE** the magnificent recycled new draperies and cornices
- \*\* **INDULGE** in appetizers, sweet perfections, light beverages

### Thank you to our January thru March volunteers!

Staffing the museum, book sales and newsletter distribution has been made possible due to the generous gift of time from the following members: Rita James, Pris Hagebusch, Gordon & Jackie Bell, Michelle Hamilton, Susan Ordway, Virginia & Peter Irwin, Cindy Hogarty, and Stan Sweeney. The Newport Historical Society Executive Board is most appreciative of your volunteer contributions.

**Contact Christina O'Brian to join these volunteers 603-863-6905**

### 2012 Lecture Series

#### Meeting Times:

Executive Committee Meeting, 6 PM

General Membership Meeting, 6:30 PM

#### **Programs, 7 to 8 PM**

#### **Monday, May 14**

First Anniversary Party  
4-7 PM, Nettleton House  
(No Executive Committee meeting)

#### **Monday, June 11**

The LaValley Story  
Richards Library Ballroom

#### **Monday, July 9**

TBA

### **The Inside Scoop**

- *Newport Fire Department's Engine House 100-year Anniversary.*
- *LaValley's 50th Birthday Story*
- *It's "Curtains" for the Nettleton House!*
- *HS President Cathryn Baird Honored by Newport Annual Report*
- *Treasurer's Desk: New Gift Shop Items for 2012*

# The Newport Fire Department's Engine House 100th Anniversary of its Construction

By Larry Cote

From the Republican-Champion, December 1912:



OLD Firehouse, pre-1912

"The new headquarters of the Newport fire department were dedicated Monday evening, Dec. 23, 1912, with a ball in the Opera House. The attendance was not large, but those who were present were afforded an excellent time. Previous to the

concert and ball, an opportunity was given the public to inspect the new building, and a large number availed themselves of the opportunity. Nelson's orchestra furnished music (for the ball and) in the engine house during the inspection.

The new building is a two story brick structure with basement, 75x32 feet. The basement is equipped with a sink and dry racks for washing hose, and here also is located the battery room for the electric fire alarm system, heating apparatus, etc. On the ground floor is the room for the accommodation of the steamer, hook and ladder truck, hose wagon, etc. in the reach of which is located the stable with two stalls already built, and room for two more if they should be needed in the future. The stalls are equipped with modern sanitary devices, and the doors in front open automatically. On the upper floor are three sleeping rooms, locker room, wash room and toilet conveniences and a shower bath, also a commodious assembly room for the use of the company in the transaction of its business. The electric lighting equipment throughout the building is complete and so arranged as to make it possible to get away with the least possible delay.

The building was authorized by vote of the town at the annual town meeting in March of the present year, and the sum of \$14,500 was appropriated for that purpose. The cost of the building fortunately will not exceed the appropriation.

Newport's fire department has always been a source of pride to the town, and a perusal of the early records shows that men prominent in all the affairs of the town



New Firehouse - 1912

have been with it from the first. The oldest living person who was ever a member of the department, is "Uncle" William Nourse, Newport's "grand old man," who proudly swings the Boston Post cane. The oldest living ex-fireman in point of service, is Clarence F. Pike, who retired from the department a few years since, and now rests upon his laurels, and takes pleasure in relating his experiences in the Service."

**Excerpt from an article written by a long-time firefighter, F. O. Chellis:**

"..You can hardly imagine what a source of comfort, pleasure and satisfaction the station will be to our fireman.

A dollar per month and fifty cents per hour for actual service at fires, with the attendant danger and hardships, has little to attract competent men into the service, but a condition that will be materially improved by the attractive accommodations we have now provided for their use. Fire service to be efficient requires the best that is to be found among our young men, courage, strength, intelligence and a public spirit that is always ready to give more than it receives by way of compensation in dollars and cents..... Newport has made no mistake in adding this splendid building to its existing public utilities which are so essential to the life and prosperity of the community. Full, adequate and efficient fire protection is never to be regarded as extravagance, but always a necessity to the safety of life and property."

**The following entry appears in the report of the Fire Department in the 1913 Town Report:**

*"The department is now fully located in its new quarters, which the citizens have so generously provided them with, and it is safe to say that there is no town in the state that has better quarters."*

With a number of modifications and the additional bay added to the East side, the engine house has serviced the town of Newport these last **one hundred years**. We would agree with Mr. Chellis that the \$14,500 expended in 1912 was well spent.



Firehouse, 1939



## LAVALLEY BUILDING SUPPLY CELEBRATING 50TH ANNIVERSARY

**LaValley Building Supply, which began with founder Harold LaValley, his wife and one employee, and today employs nearly 500 people in 10 communities, is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2012. A special birthday celebration will take place in June.**

On April 17, 1962, Harold LaValley started his company at 351 Sunapee Street, Newport. Harold and his first employee, Wilfred Belisle, spent that first week of business chasing after materials while McGray & Nichols remodeled an old 800-square foot sawmill shed that went with the property into a facility from which the business could operate. In the absence of an office and other basic necessities, all bookkeeping functions were carried on by Mr. LaValley's wife, Gerry, in the bedroom of their Claremont home which was shared with the youngest of the four LaValley children, who was then six months old.

Despite modest beginnings, Harold LaValley was convinced that by serving the building industry with lower prices and a range of services, the company could prosper.

Mr. LaValley's imagination and hard work enabled the company to prosper and grow, and after only five years in business, LaValley Building Supply had become the largest privately-owned lumber yard in the Twin State Region. By the mid-1970s, it had become one of the top 50 single lumber yard operations in terms of dollar sales in the country.

Manufacturing has always been a key part of the LaValley business philosophy because of Mr. LaValley's recognition of how difficult the building business was to be profitable for builders. Weather-related delays, skilled labor fluctuations, and volatility of prices in commodity lumber pricing were only a few of the challenges the industry faced. Therefore, Harold LaValley and his associates determined,

the more services that could be performed in a controlled environment, the greater consistency, predictability, reliability and, ultimately, profitability, for all.

Cabinets, countertops, pre-hung windows and doors, and pre-built trusses and wall panels were all part of daily operations since LaValley Building Supply's earliest days. Today, the company's manufacturing capacities also include a state-of-the-art saw mill, DiPrizio Pine, in Middleton, N.H., as well as a modular home division, Preferred Building Systems, in Claremont, N.H.

As LaValley Building Supply has grown throughout its 50-year history, it has measured its success by its ability to give back to the communities that it serves. "We try to do our part as a company for the towns and communities we're in," says Harold LaValley. "Of particular interest are programs for the young people, athletics, arts, theater... anything for the enjoyment of the people in the community."

In 2003, LaValley Building Supply was honored with a national Business in the Arts Award from *Forbes* magazine for its outstanding support of the arts through financial support, time, and in-kind donations of materials where asked.

LaValley Building Supply has stores in Newport, Claremont, Walpole, West Lebanon, N.H., and Rutland and Ludlow, Vt. It is the parent company of Middleton Building Supply, with stores in Middleton, Dover, Hampton and Meredith, N.H.

## NHS NEWS ALERT

**On May 2, NHS members Larry & Jackie Cote traveled to Belfast, Maine, to accept the incredible donation of the family bible of Austin Corbin II, builder of the Corbin mansion and Corbin Covered Bridge, from Ellen (Edgell) Simmons.**

**Thank you so much to Ellen, Jahnna and Elizabeth, Edgell sisters, for bringing this wonderful artifact and other family items back to Newport.**

**BE SURE TO JOIN US ON MAY 14 TO VIEW THIS WONDERFUL CORBIN FAMILY BIBLE.**



## IT'S "CURTAINS" FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S NETTLETON HOUSE!

When you move into a new house, it just does not look like HOME until the curtains go up! As fortunate as the Historical Society was to get the Nettleton House in such wonderful shape, the windows only had plain white roller shades. The windows are very long, and looked cold and stark. But having draperies made to soften the look of these big windows could be prohibitively expensive.

Rising to the challenge, Historical Society volunteers, Pris and Jerry Hagebusch, called upon their own work history, which involved selling custom draperies about 30 years ago. Using some high quality drapery fabric pieces found at the Newport Thrift Shoppe, and a bag of fabrics which had been donated to the Historical Society, they began making custom fitted draperies and valences for the Nettleton house. Bed sheets, again purchased from the Thrift Shoppe, were used for linings and valence backings.



**Jerry and Pris Hagebusch check the Newport Room's draperies one more time.**

Pris cuts and sews and Jerry is the installer of the rods and draperies. The Newport Quilters Workshop also helped by making some needed matching fabrics available at affordable prices to help complete the project. Cathryn Baird donated some personal draperies she had had stored in a trunk for over 25 years.

The results are now on display in the rooms of the Nettleton House. It looks like a real home, where we share the historic treasures the society has collected over time. Our many volunteers have arranged the displays so the general impression is a real historic home/schoolroom/office.



**Chintz draw drapes with soft cornices**

On Monday, May 14, the Nettleton House is celebrating its first Anniversary, with an Open House. Come and witness the second mortgage payment being made to ECON. See the room displays which have been up for this past year, before they are changed. See what we have done with donated and Thrift Shoppe materials and draperies. Enjoy some light refreshments and meet other Historical Society members.



**Bubble Valence and lace sheers in the Kitchen.**

### YOUR DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED AT THE NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

**Do you have something old, historical, or of Newport Town interest? Donate it to the Historical Society, where it will be looked after and shared with future generations. Donations are tax deductible and leave a lasting legacy .**



## Cathryn Baird honored by Town Report Dedication

*For her outstanding service to the town and people of Newport, and her dedication to the preservation of Newport's proud history and its strong spirit of community, the 2011 Town of Newport Annual Report is dedicated to Cathryn Baird.*

In an interview for the Town Report story, Steve Gunnerson, administrator of Summercrest Senior Living Community (where Cathryn is the director of Health Services, in charge of the Seasons unit for individuals dealing with memory loss and dementia,) commented that Cathryn "is a great liaison to the Newport community," a sentiment also expressed by Jacqueline Cote of the **Newport Historical Society**, of which Cathryn has been a part of since 2006. In 2007, Cathryn became the Society's President. According to Cote, "Cathryn's big contribution is that she knows a lot of people in the community, and she has been most helpful in growing the membership from less than 20 members to the more than 200 that we have today. She worked in collaboration with Andrea Thorpe to develop a joint historical program venture with the Richards Library." As a board member of **Newport Community Television** (NCTV) and an active supporter of the **Library Arts Center** and other cultural institutions, Cathryn is involved in many of Newport's events!

In 2010, Cathryn's negotiations with the Economic Corporation of Newport (ECON) resulted in the Newport Historical Society's purchase of the **Nettleton House**, the historic brick building on Central Street that became the Society's new museum and headquarters. In order to help fund this venture, Cathryn promoted the idea of a book that would be published in 2011, in honor of the town of Newport's 250th anniversary. The comprehensive historical volume, *Celebrating Community: Newport, N.H., 1761-2011*, is the result of that idea.

### Celebrating Community for the 250th Birthday of Newport

Cathryn's tireless efforts to ensure that Newport celebrated its 250th Birthday in grand style utilized her many connections with other groups and leaders in the Newport community. Newport celebrated **New Year's Eve** with an event at the Opera House, moving on to the luminaries-lit Common for the firing of the cannon, tolling of bells and fireworks. Her ideas and efforts for Charter week, October 1-9, 2011, made the town's birthday memorable. The kickoff for the Celebrating Community book's release, Historical Society Museum's Grand Opening, Charter Day, with a speech by Governor Lynch, birthday cakes galore, and contra dancing on the Common., a performance of a Military Brass Band on the Common, and finally, a Heritage Ball at the Opera House, were all planned and orchestrated by Cathryn, with her cadre of volunteers.

The Historical Society and the town of Newport are lucky to have Cathryn's attentions, energies, organizational abilities and storehouse of great ideas working for us. Has she gotten you to volunteer for something yet?

(Excerpted from the story in the 2011 Newport Town Annual Report, written by Jayna Huot Hooper)

### Volunteer Opportunities with the Newport Historical Society

*I would like to be contacted to volunteer in the following area(s):*

Docent at the Nettleton House (open Sundays 10-2PM and by appointment) \_\_\_\_\_ *Docent training provided!*

Working at the Historical Society's Sales table at various public venues throughout the year \_\_\_\_\_

Bringing refreshments for monthly meetings \_\_\_\_\_ Writing/suggesting articles for the Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

Providing/suggesting a meeting program (topic: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_

Research projects at the museum, working with Museum holdings \_\_\_\_\_

## FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK: BY JACKIE COTE

### Two New Christmas Ornaments and New Books

We are excited about our two new Christmas ornaments for 2012. By coincidence, one of the ornaments will be the Newport Engine House with the "Dexter" pumper positioned out front. Last fall when the Fundraising Committee chose the fire station as one of the 2012 ornaments, we were unaware that 2012 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the firehouse building!

The second ornament will be the Depot with a train and stagecoach out front showcasing our Depot building that is still standing today and two eras of transportation. They should be available for June 1 opening of the 2012 season of the Farmers Market where NHS will have a booth.

We are also carrying the Opera House book of past theatre performances for \$20.

We will soon be offering three new history-oriented publications.

*The Book of Old Newport* - a reprint of the originally compiled book published in 1909 by Marcia and Samuel Edes—is 51 pages with text and lots of old prints for \$20.00.

*A Peek at Newport NH – 1842 to 1843*, is the journal of Joseph Warren Parmelee on life in Newport at the time. It is 76 pages at \$15.00.

*The Finns in Newport, NH*, by Ollie Turpeinen for \$25.00. These books will be available for our May 14 Nettleton House anniversary celebration.

The Gift Shop is open at the Nettleton House every Sunday, from 10 AM to 2 PM.



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**Contributors to this issue:** Cathryn Baird, Jayna Huot Hooper, Pris Hagebusch, Jackie & Larry Cote

### 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