

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

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From the President's Pen . . .



by Cathryn Baird

“Year’s end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us. Cheers to a New Year and another chance to get it right.” ~ Oprah Winfrey

Lately I’ve been humming the song “Make new friends but keep the old, one is silver and the other is gold,” a refrain that is heard around the winter holiday season. I just can’t seem to get it out of my head. Perhaps it’s because my New Year started with the gift of wonderful friendships both old and new. New members have joined the Newport Historical Society (NHS) and familiar friends have returned. I’m honored to serve another year as president of the NHS and I’m eager to get to know more of the members as we work together to support common goals. I’ve been reviewing the important work that volunteers have accomplished this past year and I must say it’s very impressive. Since our early days in October 2011 when the Nettleton House was transformed into a “proper” museum, NHS friends keep “going on” to get it right and share the legacy of Newport through wonderful, ageless exhibits.

I hope you are looking forward to the New Year as much as I am and hopefully I’ll see you at the Newport Historical Society Museum where “...one is silver and the other is gold.”

Warm greetings to all for a healthy, happy New Year and another chance to get it right!

~Cathryn

NOTE NEW TIMES & VENUES

2013 Meeting & Program Times

Mon. Feb. 18, 6 PM, NHS Museum

A vote on proposed amendments to the NHS Constitution and By-Laws will be taken. Refer to the NHS website for the proposed revisions.

Tues. Feb 26, 6:30 PM, Richards Library Ballroom.

“The Art & History of Vintage Wallpaper Restoration” by Laura McCoy.

Mon. Mar. 11, 6PM, NHS Museum

Regular Business Meeting

Tues. Mar. 19, 6:30 PM

Program location & subject TBA

Mon. Apr. 8, 6PM, NHS Museum

Regular Business Meeting

All members invited to meetings and programs.

Museum Needs and Wants:

We would like to thank all of the people who have helped us to fill in our collections. We are still looking for the following items and will accept duplicates:

- Winter Carnival Buttons: Need anything before 1941, 1943-1950, 1952-1957 and 1973.
- Newport Annual Town Reports, the oldest one we have is 1883, we need anything before 1883 and 1888 with your help this collection is looking very good!
- Sullivan County Annual Reports, the oldest we have is 1873 we need anything before 1873 and 1878, 1892, 1900, 1991, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2010. Again, with your help this collection is in very good shape!
- Newport School Year Books, it appears that 1940 was the first “year book” as we have come to know them. Some issues of the “Spirit of Towle” are the graduation issue and appear to be what is now known as a Year Book. We are looking for 1950-1953, 1955-1963, 1967, 1969-1975, 1977-1984, 1985-1993, 1996-1998, 2000-2001, 2011
- Newport Business Directories: an important source for when and where a business was in town. We need almost all years. They are usually in the back of a Claremont Business Directory.
- A sturdy, folding step stool, with two steps.



NEWPORT NOTABLES

Austin Corbin, II, By Larry Cote

Austin Corbin II was the grandson of Dr. James Corbin and Lois Kibbie, and the son of Austin Corbin and Mary Chase. He was born in Newport, NH on July 11, 1827. He was educated at local

schools and at Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, NH. After his graduation from KUA in 1846, he moved to Boston and worked as a store clerk for a year before returning to Newport.

At the age of 19 he began the study of law with Edmund L. Cushion of Charlestown and later with Ralph Metcalf of Newport. He completed his study of law at Harvard Law School receiving his degree in 1849. He returned to Newport to practice law with Ralph Metcalf until 1851 when he moved to Davenport, Iowa to practice law.

In 1853 he returned to Newport to marry Hannah M. Wheeler of Croydon, his childhood sweetheart. Returning to Davenport with his wife, Austin became interested in banking. In 1854 he became a partner in the banking firm of Macklot & Corbin. By 1857 there were seven banks in Davenport. During the severe financial troubles of 1857, every bank suspended services except Macklot & Corbin. They met all demands promptly paying depositors in full.

In 1861 he sold his interest in banking. However, *Wheeler's History of Newport 1761/1879* states, "...in 1863, immediately upon the passage of the National Currency Act, Austin Corbin II organized the First National Bank of Davenport, becoming its President, and commenced business on the 29th day of June, 1863, which was two days in advance of any National Bank in the United States".

Looking back on his mother's family name, Mary Chase was from Cornish, N.H. Salmon P. Chase, also born in Cornish NH, was the Secretary of the Treasury in President Lincoln's Cabinet when the National Currency Act was passed to stabilize the currency of the United States. I could not determine their relationship with the data I had available, but it appears that this family connection may have advanced Mr. Corbin's business career.

In 1865 Mr. Corbin sold his interest in the National Bank and his law firm and moved to New York City, going into a banking partnership with Gilman S. Moulton. When

Mr. Moulton retired in 1870, Corbin formed the Corbin Banking Company. Wheeler's History states, "Mr. Corbin was connected with several prominent capitalists but a large part of his lending of money was to farms, having an amount of \$15,000,000 of this character on his books, believed to be the largest of this special class of investment than any other firm in the world".

In 1873 at the advice of his family doctor, Corbin brought his sickly son, Austin William, to Coney Island believing that the salt air would improve his son's health, but sadly Austin William died that same year. While staying at Coney Island most of the summer of 1873, Mr. Corbin noticed that Coney Island was the finest sea-beach on the East coast and only an hour from New York City. He also noticed that the greater portion of the island was wetlands or occupied by "the worst portions of society". He quietly purchased about half of the island giving him control of 2 ½ miles of beach front and formed the Manhattan Beach Improvement Co. He drained the land and erected three of the finest hotels in the country at that time, the Oriental, Argyle and the Manhattan. Seeing the need for quick and easy transportation to get the people from New York City to Coney Island, Mr. Corbin purchased controlling interest in the Long Island Railroad which at that time was in bankruptcy. He ran a spur line, the Manhattan Beach Line, from New York City to the island providing transportation while saving the railroad. Mr. Corbin also assumed the presidency of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroads and brought them back to profitability.

Thinking about retirement, Mr. Corbin turned his attention back to Newport, his home town. He razed his father's home near Corbin Covered Bridge reportedly only saving the room he was born in. Around this saved room, he built his version of a Russian Palace. The family reportedly called it the "Taj Mahal". The Mansion was built without a basement. It is rumored that Hannah Corbin was the builder adding a room or wing to the home whenever he was away.

Following the Civil War, New Hampshire, like many other northeastern states, experienced a migration of many of its people to the western part of the country. This re-

Austin Corbin III, Continued from page 2

sulted in many farms being abandoned. The State of New Hampshire actively recruited people from other states to purchase these farms as summer homes. It was in this climate that Mr. Corbin had his agent, Sid Stockwell, purchase some 60 farms and over 300 deeds encompassing approximately 26,000 acres in five townships (Newport, Croydon, Grantham, Plainfield and Cornish). The smallest section of these 26,000 acres was in the town of Newport and the largest section in Croydon. It was his plan to establish an animal park and stock it with animals that would peacefully co-exist. Several of the animals were: American Bison (Buffalo), several species of deer, wild boar, elk, moose, goats to name but a few. It is believed that at one time Corbin Park or The Blue Mountain Forest and Game Preserve, as it is officially known, had the largest herd of Buffalo and was the largest game park of its type in the country.

Tragically, in 1896, Mr. Corbin was killed in a carriage accident, at the age of 68. He had purchased a team of horses from Lebanon, N.H. that had never been driven without blinders on their harness. When Mr. Corbin opened an umbrella to provide shade for his grandson, Corbin Edgell, the horses were spooked and ran away. As they exited the driveway onto what is now known as Corbin Road, the carriage tipped over and the occupants

were thrown into the stone wall. Mr. Corbin and the driver were killed. His grandson and his grandson's teacher survived the accident.

Austin Corbin II and Hannah Wheeler had five children:

- Mary born 1855, died 1892, married to Rene Champollion born 1847, died 1886
- Isabella born 1858, died 1920, married George S. Edgell born 1847, died 1915
- Anna Wheeler born 1863, died 1930, married H. Alsop Borrowe
- Austin William (sometimes referred to as Austin Corbin III) born 1870, died 1873
- Austin Jr. (also referred to as Austin Corbin III) born 1873, died 1938, never married.

The world lost a visionary, the family lost its patriarch and Newport lost one of its sons who had big plans for the town. One could write several books about Austin II, but these few lines will give the reader a flavor for the man.

Citations:

Edmund Wheeler, The History of Newport, New Hampshire, from 1766 to 1878, (Concord, NH: The Republican Press, 1879), 188-190

Sharon Christie, Spanning Generations – The Homecoming of the Corbin Covered Bridge, October 1994, (Barrett Press)

The Newport Historical Society Executive Board recognizes and thanks these volunteer's for their contribution of time and effort in staffing the museum and the Farmer's Market booth, and newsletter production and distribution : Larry Cote, Dotty Collins, Rita James, Pris Hagebusch, Gordon & Jackie Bell, Michelle Hamilton, Susan Ordway, Virginia & Peter Irwin, Cindy Hogarty, and Stan Sweeney.

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

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 _____

Retyping Museum materials into digital format for publication _____

Assisting with cataloging and preserving Museum holdings _____

Mail to: Newport Historical Society, P. O. Box. 413, Newport, NH 03773

or call Christina O'Brien 603-863-6905

FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK BY JACKIE COTE

It is amazing how fast the quarters of the year float by; and, here we are preparing our January newsletter! Regarding our ongoing fundraising, we had a wonderful Christmas season at **Sugar River Bank** in their foyer with our Newport memorabilia for sale. Many thanks go to the bank for allowing us to use the space and for their many kindnesses to our volunteers who staffed the boutique. Sincere thanks also go to our volunteers—Sue Ordway, Rita James, Marie Bugbee, Laura Kessler, Pris and Jerry Hagebusch, Cathryn Baird, Jackie Bell, Virginia Irwin, Stan Sweeney and Larry Cote. It is wonderful to now have a full complement of volunteers so that customers can see the many “faces” of NHS!

Thanks also must go to the **Library Arts Center** for inviting us again to participate in their *Gallery of Gifts* boutique, selling our hand-painted ornaments. These sales are vital in helping to fund the operating expenses of the Nettleton House Museum. Thank you to all of you reading this newsletter who purchased many of our products for gifts.

We are excited to announce the subjects of our 2013 ornaments. The first is the old Parlin Airport hanger with a bi-plane out front. The second is our school mascot, the Tiger. We are using an air-brushed image of a tiger face by Jim Chrimes of Bacon Graphics, very beautiful and realis-

tic. This ornament will span many generations...young, old and in between!

Our fall membership drive has been very successful. However, we still have some friends who have not renewed. Our next task is to send a reminder to renew their membership. We value all our members, active and passive, and hope that folks who have not yet renewed will do so. Without the support of our members, we could not continue all of the current programs and preservation work currently in process.

The winners of the 2013 membership drawings for the \$25 gift certificates from our local merchants are:

Huberts - Kandy King, Gerry LaValley, Barbara Huff, Peter Lovely

Harringtons - Karen Adams

Debi's Florist - Barbara Kvetcovsky

Violette's - Gina Grantham

Sugar River Pharmacy - George Wachtel

Courthouse Restaurant - Bryan Huot

To all, thank you so much for a wonderful and successful 2012 as we continue our mission to collect, preserve and display objects of historical significance of our great town, Newport, New Hampshire. We wish a happy and healthy 2013 to all!!

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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 \$ _____ Cemetery \$ _____

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

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