

# NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# MILL TOWN MESSENGER

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## *From the President's Pen . . .*



by Cathryn Baird

*"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." ~Winston Churchill*



Jim Lantz

March 2014 marked the passing of two Lifetime Members of the Newport Historical Society, **Jim Lantz** and **Andy Andrews**. Both men served their community with passion on many divergent levels but a common bond was their love of Newport and its heritage. Both men were true patriots not only as delineated by their military service and ethnic pride but also their allegiance to Newport.

Through many years of quiet and humble service they helped to bring positive changes to the preservation of community history. Jim was a strong supporter of the creation of the Newport Historical Society Museum and the publication of the 250<sup>th</sup> book "Celebrating Community". Andy was instrumental in raising public awareness and funds for the rebuilding of the Corbin Covered Bridge in 1994. The publication "A Peek at Newport NH 1842-1843" is one of several books of local interest which he transcribed.

The Newport Historical Society is proud to honor and remember Jim Lantz and Andy Andrews. Both men gave generously to preserve the history of Newport and to achieve a greater good for "the Sunshine Town" through their selfless efforts to "make a life by what we give". If each of us can emulate even a small measure of their kindness, the sun will keep shining in Newport.



Andy Andrews

## 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. May 12**

**Mon. Jun 9**

**Mon. Jul 14**

### **PROGRAMS**

**Tues. May 14, Business After Hours with the Newport Chamber of Commerce.**

5-7 PM at the Nettleton House Museum

**Tues. June 10, Rediscovering Newport.,** with Dean Stetson, 5-7 PM, Richards Library Ballroom

**Tues. July 8, TBA.** Watch the newspapers and posters on town bulletin boards for the topic.

## **THE DAR'S LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE OPEN IN JULY AND AUGUST**



The Little Red School House (LRSH) is located on the corner of Route 10 and Pollards Mill Rd. in Newport, NH. The school was built in 1835 with Josiah Stevens as the first schoolmaster, and closed as a school in 1885. The school district of Newport leases the LRSH to the Reprisal Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) of Newport. The Chapter maintains the building, while the town of



Newport maintains the surrounding property. On May 2, 1979 the LRSH was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

During July and August, the Little Red Schoolhouse is open to the public on Saturday afternoons, from 1-4 PM, with Reprisal Chapter members acting as hostesses. A visit to the LRSH affords Newport's school children an opportunity to see what school was like in "the olden days" when modes of travel necessitated many small schools to serve the needs of the growing town of Newport.

# NEWPORT NOTABLE: BILLY B. VAN

**Vaudevillian, Dairy Farmer, Entrepreneur, and Honorary Mayor of Newport**



## **BILLY B. VAN, THE MONOLOGUE COMEDIAN with and without traditional minstrel makeup**

Born William Webster Van DeGrift in 1870 in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, he changed his name to Billy B Van early in life. He built a life on the stage with minstrel shows, vaudeville, burlesque and silent pictures.

The first time that Billy B Van was in Newport was in 1907. We know that on Tuesday, August 15, 1911, as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Newport Town Charter that, "in the vaudeville tent at 8 o'clock, Billy B Van and the Beaumont Sisters performed in "Props". (1)

He contracted tuberculosis and being unable to afford a trip to the southwest, he moved to New Hampshire on the advice of a friend. Billy B Van moved from Georges Mills to Newport in 1918 having purchased the 65-acre Cutting farm on



One of Van's Pine Tree Products buildings on Spring St. in Newport.

Spring Street. He raised Guernsey cattle and kept them in the large gray barn that now houses B & P Collectables. He added on a wing for the cattle and a small building on the east side of the main barn for a dairy. He lived in the brick home next door that is now owned by Dale Flewelling. The area where McDonalds and the shopping center are now located were his fields. He later built the gambrel home that is now the residence of the owners of the Hilltop Motel.

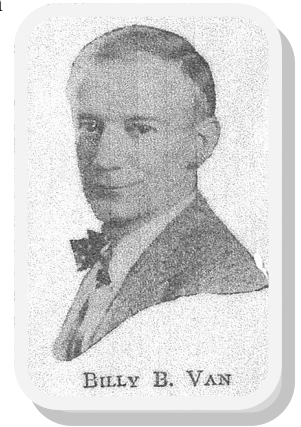
Billy B Van is credited with giving Newport its nickname, "the Sunshine Town, where the sun shines on both sides of the highway at the same time". At the Museum we have a town proclamation making Billy B Van the "honorary Mayor of Newport".

Around 1927 Billy B Van decided to make pine soap and the Pine Tree Products Company was founded in Newport NH. In addition to making the pine tree bar soap, they made liquid soap, soap chips, tooth paste, hair dressing, bath tablets, liquid shampoo, shaving cream and several other products. By this time Billy must have given up raising cattle; because, the addition on the east end of the barn on Spring Street was converted to the factory. At some point he produced wooden bowls and burned his name in the bottom of the bowl. We have examples of the soap and bowls at the Museum.

During World War II, Billy B Van toured the country as a motivational speaker and never missed the opportunity to speak well of Newport. He died at the Carrie F Wright Memorial Hospital located on Maple Street in Newport NH on November 17, 1950, at the age of 80. He is buried in the Pine Grove Cemetery and his grave is marked by a very simple flat marker. One of our valued members, Paul Rheingold of Sunapee NH and Rye, NY, has been a tireless advocate in an effort to provide a more fitting grave marker for a very accomplished man, Billy B Van.

There is so much more to the life of this man. Most of this information came from newspaper articles located in Scrap Book III in the Newport Historical Society Museum. In 2007 Soo-Nipi Magazine published a great article covering his days in Georges Mills, NH.

(1) Data taken from the program of the 150<sup>th</sup> Town Charter celebration



**Stop by the Museum to see the display of memorabilia from Billy B. Van's life and career.**

## Nettleton House Museum Report

By Larry Cote, Museum Director

When the Economic Committee of Newport (ECON) generously offered the Nettleton House to the Newport Historical Society as a new home for its Museum, at a very affordable price, the condition of the building was carefully considered. There were issues with the roof; and, the bricks in front of the building required pointing and some replacement. The windows were sealed and drafty. But, on the plus side, the building had two handicapped entrances, restrooms on all three floors, heating and air conditioning. The positives certainly outweighed the negatives! We purchased the Nettleton House on May 17, 2011 and in one more year we will pay off the mortgage from ECON. Thank you ECON and NHS members.

During the first year, anticipated operating expenses were verified. Then, attention was focused on building maintenance. This past year roof shingles were replaced by MacIntyre & Son, who did a great job at a reasonable price. They ensured that the roof decking wouldn't become an issue again and added rain gutters on both the front and rear of the building to stop brick erosion on the front of the building. This spring, David Kittredge is repairing the bricks and pointing them (filling in grouting) to the top of the windows on the first floor. This will occur on three sides and a section on the back that needs repair. This was accomplished through the generous support of our membership. The window replacement will occur in another year or two, following planned fundraising for that purpose.

The NHS membership should be proud of what has been accomplished by Newport's Historical Society. The Museum is a reality through dues; contributions of time, money and artifacts; and sales of diverse fundraising items. A special thank-you goes to Igor Blake for his generous contributions and interest in historic preservation.

Take time to visit your museum. It is free and open to the public every Sunday from 10 AM until 2 PM except on holiday weekends. Special visitation times can be arranged by calling (603) 863-1294. The displays change in mid-September for the October 6 birthday of the Town. We hope to see you at the Museum often this year.

## The Treasurer's Desk

by Jackie Cote, Treasurer

Our membership drive was a rousing success with a current total of 228 members. There are still a few 2013 members who have not renewed. We hope that you will give our Society serious consideration with your membership as we strive to reach our goal of 250 members. An application form can be found in this newsletter. Membership includes a mailed copy of this newsletter. Thanks again to all of you for supporting our continuing efforts to preserve the history of Newport.

Your loyal support of the Museum and Historical Society activities through purchases of our useful gift and keepsake sales items is greatly appreciated. We are pleased to announce several new additions to our NHS gift shop. New for 2014 are two ornaments, numbers 16 & 17, with the image of the **Eagle Block** (current home of Salt Hill Pub) and our own **Nettleton House**, home of Newport's Museum. Proof images are shown



with this article. As a reminder, 2014 is the last year that the South Church and Sarah J. Hale ornaments will be available.

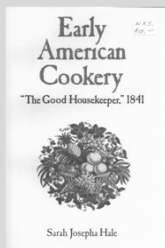
Also new will be our camp mug with the etched Nettleton House image available not only in cobalt but also green and burgundy. Another new offering will be a 14-oz heavy bottom drinking glass with the etched Opera House image (same image as our previous camp mugs).



From Salmon Falls Stoneware, comes our new Town Crock, quart size as before, with a beautiful elderberry vine and hand painted inscription "Newport NH" at the top and "1761" under the vine. Salmon Falls no longer offers the quart size Town Cocks with the heart design. We are also adding a pint Town Crock with the same design as the quart size.

Since our last note card assortment, Set B, we have 5 new ornament proofs for more note cards, Set C, featuring the Depot, Firehouse, Parlin Field, Newport Tiger mascot and Sarah J. Hale. Lastly, we are assembling a new 12 card set of Newport Vintage Post Cards. These items may be purchased at the Museum on Sunday from 10am to 2pm, at the Farmers Market beginning Fridays from May 30 to October 10, Chamber Day on the common on June 14, Apple Pie Craft Fair on August 23.





## SARAH JOSEPHA HALE'S HEART CAKES

### From p. 101, "The Good Housekeeper," 1841

### Early American Cookery



These little cakes are a small version of a traditional pound cake: 1lb butter, 1lb sugar, 1lb flour, 12 eggs. This type of recipe is found in many of the old cook-books. Bake them in cupcake pans, antique tart tins, or use Reynolds inexpensive little foil pans, in heart and egg shapes. The following is for half a recipe, which makes 12-18 cakes, depending on the size of your molds. Ingredients:

- 2 sticks of unsalted butter = ½ lb
- 1C+2TB Sugar = ½ lb
- 5-6 eggs, depending on size = ½ lb
- 1 2/3 C of all purpose flour = ½ lb (depending on your flour)
- ½ tsp. rosewater, or almond extract
- ¼ C currants (optional), soaked in hot water and drained
- Sugar for sprinkling on top. Large crystals are nice.

Butter or spray your individual cups and place on a cookie sheet with a lip. Preheat oven to 350°. Cream the butter with a mixer, add sugar and beat together. Add eggs and flavoring and beat very well. Add flour and mix gently until combined. Add currants, if using. Fill molds to one half to two-thirds full (a quarter-cup scoop is wonderful here.) Sprinkle tops with sugar, or wait until baked to decorate.



Decorated or plain, they are tasty!

Bake for about 20 minutes, using a toothpick to test cakes to see if done. They will pull away from the edges of the mold a bit when done. Cool on a rack for about 15 minutes, then turn out of the molds. The foil pans will not be reusable. Decorate if desired, or just eat them plain!

**'Next issue:** Biscuit Tortoni from the T. Roosevelt program.

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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, Larry Cote, Pris Hagebusch, Pat McCabe & Susan Swan (DAR)

### 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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please mail to:

**Newport Historical Society, PO Box 413, Newport, NH 03773**