

MILL TOWN MESSENGER

Volume 16 Issue 1

January 2022

From the President's Pen: by Arthur Walsh

Of Longing to Know the Stories of Lives Long Ago:

History is not merely collecting artifacts and documents of days gone by, whether ancient or from recent decades. History can be studied for academic purposes: to give lessons in how governments work or did not, how economic policies brought success or failure, and what led to wars and their aftermath. It seems to me, however, that most of us find history to be fascinating and absorbing, even thrilling, through its connection across time to human lives. It can provide us feelings, perspective, even appreciation for our own lives. What is often so very enriching are the stories which it can bring us... stories of how people lived with their families, how they went about their daily doings, from obtaining food and what they ate, to their clothes and where they slept, how they dealt with the cold of winter, what it was like to try to farm or work in a mill, what were their joys and sorrows.

In this issue, Priscilla Hagebusch has researched and revealed the names and brief histories, possibly all that is known, about some black residents of Newport over 2 centuries ago. This information, new to me, includes names, brief sketches of these people, some of whom served our country in the Revolutionary war, a bit on their property transfers, and how they moved on- it makes me long to know what their individual stories were.

This is something like researching my own family history. The marvels of computer searching of huge databases of census, birth, marriage, and death records gives an abundant crop of such records, but the only insight into these peoples' lives comes through family accounts.

Sadly, with those families having moved on to unknown parts so very long ago, I will never know the pains they suffered if their crops failed, a beloved child died of illness, or the joys they felt on a beautiful early summer day when one of their kin was married, the local fields green and the flowers in bloom.

Meeting Times

Business Meetings:

Feb. 14, 7 PM, Museum

Mar. 14, 7 PM Museum

No programs at the present time

**From Larry Cote, Museum Director
Newport Historical Society**

The Newport Historical Society has decided that with the Covid-19 and its variants ramping up around the country and locally in New Hampshire, we would do our part by temporarily closing the Newport Historical Society Museum starting January 10, 2022, and will reevaluate conditions on March 1, 2022.

We will still open the Museum on a one-on-one basis upon request. Please call 1-603-863-1294 or Email us at newporths1761@Gmail.com and leave a message and we will get back to you and arrange a day and time for you to visit the Museum.

**BOREAS: THE PURPLE-WINGED GREEK GOD OF THE NORTH WIND,
HERE IN AUGUST, 1848, AND JANUARY, 2022!**



As we await the 1/29/22 "Nor'easter," we can compare notes from the **Argus & Spectator, August 4, 1848!** This story documents a summer tornado and its impact:

"The tornado, which passed over this region on Thursday, seemed to have left its card at various points. Fences were razed to the ground, trees blown over, corn fields were torn to pieces, barns unroofed, chimneys thrown down, windows broken, etc. In this village [*Newport*] it seemed disposed to respect private property more than usual in similar cases and gave no attention to anything short of public buildings. Accordingly, it hurled bricks from the chimney of the jail, walked into the Universalist Chapel (Johnson's store) [*now Newport Fitness*] through a window, entered the County Safe (*municipal building*) in like manner and finished the exploit by carrying away the scales from the cupola of the Court House [*Old Courthouse Restaurant Building*]*—thus sparing the throne of Justice while demolishing its emblem. We perceive the wooden cannon atop the gun house (about where Towle School now stands) has been dismantled and Boreas (as the tornado) took it along with him. With the emblems of war and justice in each hand he doubtless pursued his journey with 'impunity and great boldness.'*" (*Italics indicate our insertion to show today's locations*)

We were hoping "Boreas" would be more gentle with Newport this time (1/29/22). As it turned out, he was more inter-

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN NEWPORT

By Priscilla Hagebusch

Coit View Road? Yes, I know of Coit Mountain, and the "first" black resident of Newport, who settled on top, named COIT. **But nothing else!** When did he come there; and leave; was he the only one? Given the attention that the black community is having today, why don't I know more about the early Newport Black Community? Soooo.....

P.H.

In 1790, New Hampshire had less than 1,000 black inhabitants. Exeter had become a center of the free black society, partly due to the many black Revolutionary War veterans who settled there. The status of slavery in NH after the New Hampshire Declaration of Rights in 1788, was not clear. Emancipation in NH was a gradual process but moved more rapidly in Exeter. The black veterans were respected and welcomed in the years after the Revolutionary War. Many had gained their freedom by fighting in that war. But as generations grew, and the Civil War approached, the black families found their positions not as favorable and many moved on, as new spaces opened up to the west.

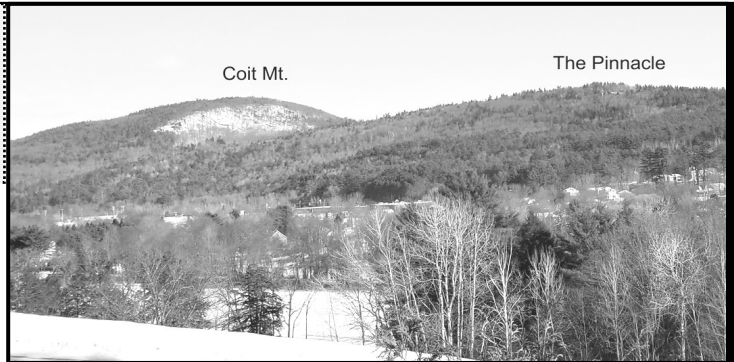
Newport, Croydon, and Goshen have records, though somewhat scant, of black families who settled here after the Revolutionary War. The best known of these is Richard (or Vance?) Coit, who, in the late 1700's, settled on the hill that became known as Coit Mountain. This area around Coit Mountain was gradually settled by other black families, some who moved here from Connecticut, as many of Newport's founders did, and others, from Dunbarton, Concord, and Warner. The latter group were mostly Revolutionary War veterans. And remember, that many of the last names blacks carried were of the families who had owned them. If they had been sold, their last name changed to that of the new owners. Remember, too, that the area around Coit Mountain includes Newport, and Croydon; Goshen, was not even chartered in these early days.

Richard (Vance?) Coit, arrived between 1775 and 1790. He and his wife were listed as Croydon residents, but their deed shows that their house was on the Newport side. They left sometime before 1803.

Thomas Billings, was another black resident in the Coit Mountain area. In 1797, he married Mary Kempton, of Croydon. In 1810, Billings was living in Hyde Park, VT, with his wife.

John Robert Nott, lived northeast of Coit Mountain in Croydon. He appeared on tax rolls in 1796 and sold a 25-acre land parcel in 1800. Nott was not listed in the 1790 or 1800 census records of Croydon. But, as the status of blacks was still unsettled, that may not be accurate.

John Reed, owned land in Croydon, adjacent to Nott.



Coit Mountain and the Pinnacle, seen from high point on Pine. St.

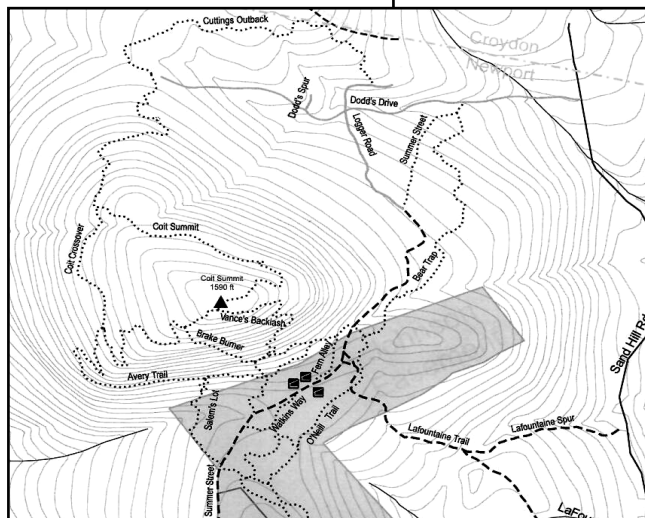
He enlisted in the New Hampshire Militia and served from 1776 until 1784. He lived in Warner until he purchased 50 acres near Coit Mountain in 1784. He married Dinah Hoyt in 1785. They sold this property in 1794 and left Croydon.

Salem (Sol) Colby, born a slave in Massachusetts in 1750's, was sold to Lot Colby of Concord, NH. Salem enlisted in First New Hampshire Regiment in 1780. Colby freed him after his service, in which he was disabled. He married Katherine Blodgett of Goffstown in 1786 and lived in Concord thru 1790. Between 1790 and 1803, he bought 3 parcels of land in Newport and Croydon, including the Coit Homestead. In 1798, he bought 25 acres next to Robert Nott's property. He then sold it when Nott left, in 1800. By 1818 Colby had remarried and was farming in West Fairlee, VT, dying there in 1834.

Scipio Page was a slave of Captain Caleb Page and had enlisted in the Revolutionary War service. He settled in Dunbarton after the war, marrying Dinah Colby in 1783. In 1788, Dunbarton residents were granted rights in common land. Page sold his land in 1791 and moved to Croydon, where he first appears on the tax lists next to Salem Colby and Robert Nott. Though not listed in the 1800 census, it is possible he and his wife and child were listed with the Whipple homestead.

Simon and Susanna Drock came to the Newport area from Connecticut, where Simon's father, Guy, was a blacksmith.

He was trained, then freed, by his blacksmith owner. Guy, therefore, had earned a good living. After the death of his father, Simon purchased land in the northwest corner of Newport in 1788, from Isaac Tracy, relative by marriage of Guy Drock's former owners. In 1790, The Drocks bought land in the east part of Newport, which became Goshen when that town was created in 1791. They moved to Goshen and had 3 more children there. The Drock family last appeared in the 1820 census. Simon, Susanna, and their children then gradually moved westward. (Continued on page 4)



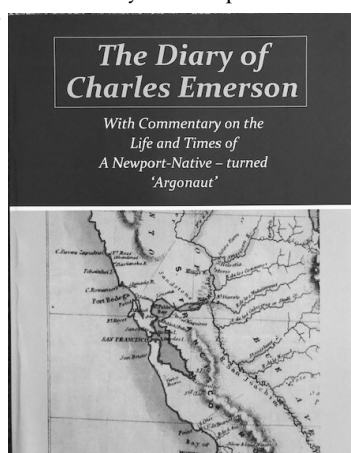
BORED? TRY READING A BOOK ON OUR LOCAL HISTORY!

By Larry Cote, Museum Director

While the Museum is closed to the general public, it is open to special requests. Call 1-603-863-1294, leave a message and we will get back to you. While the pandemic is keeping us close to home, you may find yourself with time on your hands. What a great time to purchase an interesting book on Newport History from the Museum and support the Museum at the same time. We have a shelf-full of great reading.

We feature books by Newport's author, Jayna Huot Hooper. Jayna has written six books on Newport and Newport History. We still have a limited quantity of Jayna's book; "*Celebrating Community Newport NH 1761-2011*". This is an incredibly comprehensive book on the history of Newport.

Her latest book, may be her best work yet, apart from "Celebrating Community...". That book is "*The Diary of Charles Emerson*", written by Newport native Charles Emerson. He took a clipper ship from Boston in 1852 and sailed to San Francisco to the gold fields. The magic of Jayna's book is in the footnotes that explain the why in what Mr. Emerson saw and did. Her research is top notch and really gives the reader a



greater understanding of the times.

The following are several of Jayna's books which would provide you with interesting reading:

"*Billy B Van the Sunshine Peddler*," may well be the most complete story of a pioneer in the silent movie era who moved to Newport in 1920 and stayed the remainder of his life. He often said that in Newport the "Sun shone" on both sides of the street, giving us the name of "The Sunshine Town".

Newport Police Department, is an outline of the history of the Newport police. This book is in very limited supply.

"*Journal of Matter and Things in General*" is Jacob Wheeler's journal written in 1847. Jacob Wheeler worked at the Argus newspaper. Austin Corbin Jr. would drop in and they would walk around. The Journal describes what they did or saw. It gives one a peek at what life in 1847 was like in Newport.

"*Nor All Your Tears*" is a diary of Hope Johnson Miller, a local woman who was taken prisoner by the Japanese while in Manila, Philippines at the start of WWII.

We have several other great books "*The 19 Covered Bridges of Newport, N.H.*" by Jacqueline Cote, "*A Peek at Newport, N.H. 1842/43*" a Journal of Joseph W. Parmelee, "*The Greeks of Newport, N.H.*", "*The Finns in Newport, N.H.*" and many other books and collectibles. Call to make an appointment or email us at newports1761@gmail.com. If you live out of town or cannot get to the museum to make a purchase, we will mail the book(s) to you. All books are mailed USPS media rate.

THE FABULOUS STAMP COLLECTION OF HAROLD PERKINS

By Priscilla Hagebusch

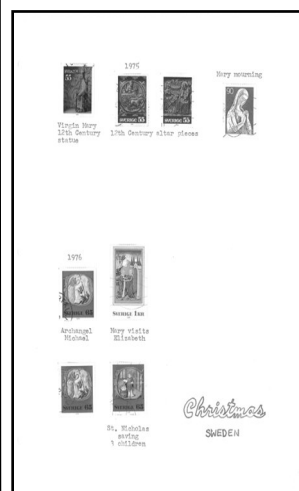


Harold Perkins was born in Newport in 1931. He was a founding member of the Newport Historical Society in 1997 after retiring from a long teaching career at several colleges, and in Christian education. Harold was known to the Historical Society for his meticulous genealogical history of Newport and seven surrounding towns. He also was an ardent philatelist as this story demonstrates.

These stamps come from Harold's huge stamp collection. After his passing, his family donated his collection, which numbers in the thousands of stamps, mounted and explained in 29, 3-ring binders, to the Newport Historical Society. Each page has some stamps, arranged by the category of the book and page, and short descriptions of the stamps, their date and origin.

We have had a few selections from the Christmas stamp pages (which number about 180 stamps dating from 1969 to 1989!) professionally scanned, and placed them above.

"Christmas" was one of the many categories into which he chose to sort and organize the stamps. Professional scanning did an incredible job of capturing the color and details of each stamp without damaging the delicate stamps, but is rather expensive.



This huge collection would be too unwieldy to offer for public viewing, so we hope to scan all the pages and create a website for searching and viewing. We would welcome donations to help preserve this collection.

The page on the left is one of the Christmas stamp pages, showing how Harold arranged his collection. This format allowed him to add stamps as he acquired them and add pertinent information about them on the page. He included historical information on the countries represented by the stamps.

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Jackie Cote

We appreciate all of our renewing and new members. You will continue to receive a copy of this newsletter in the mail. For those who have not yet renewed, this will be the last newsletter mailed directly to you.

As you know, because of highly active Covid cases in the area, we have closed the museum and will reevaluate in March. Until then, if there is an item(s) that you would like to purchase, we can accommodate you for pick up at the museum by appointment or mail directly to you. Please call 603-863-1294 (Museum phone) and leave a message or email us at newportnh1761@gmail.com. Larry checks that email daily. Stay well; spring will arrive soon!!!

MUSEUM REPORT

By Larry Cote

The number of winter visitors to the museum is usually low and the pandemic has not helped that number either. Our plan to close the Museum through March except for special-request personal visits should not impact our visitor totals much this winter.

We have received a donation of a book by William Spanos on his experience as a WWII POW in Germany. We also purchased a book on N.E. Ski Jumping as it has 2 pages on Newport's Ski Jumps.

We have formed a committee for the repair and eventual display of the "Smith" clock, which now resides on the museum's lower floor. We have had a prominent clockmaker review the clock and set up a plan for its repair and ultimate functional display in an outdoor setting in Newport. We are working with the town to plan and execute this project. We are looking for donors, as neither the repair or mounting will be inexpensive.

Stories of Coit Mountain Residents:

Continued from page 2

Charles Hall escaped slavery in Georgia in 1837 by rowing out (rumored to have been in a barrel!) to a north-bound lumber ship. The ship's captain, a Mr. Knowlton, directed Hall to his brother-in-law, Deacon Jonathan Cutting, in Newport, NH. Cutting owned a sawmill and gave Hall work there. But Hall was not just a sawmill worker. He was a fiddler, banjo player, and dancer. His lively character was captured in poems by George Bancroft Griffith and Joseph Parmalee. Hall lived and worked in New-



Photo of Charlie Hall by Mrs. Fred W. Cheney

port until his death in 1893. While there were still a few blacks living in Newport in the mid and later 1800's, they were mostly servants of wealthier citizens. The free, landowning blacks, who had been veterans of the Revolutionary War, and their offspring, had mostly moved on to the open lands in the west.

Refs: Historical New Hampshire, Vol 61, No.1, Spring 2007. Rural Free Black Settlement in Post-Revolutionary New Hampshire: A Study of Five Towns, by Lynn Clark and Rebecca Courser.

Celebrating Community, Newport, New Hampshire, 1761 - 2011, 250 Years and Beyond. By Jayna Huot Hooper

The Book of Old Newport, Marcia J and Samuel H. Eades

The Mill Town Messenger is published quarterly by the
Newport Historical Society
P.O. Box 413, Newport, NH 03773,
Museum phone 603-863-1294

Website www.newportnhhistory.org
Email newporths1761@gmail.com
Facebook [NewportHS1761](https://www.facebook.com/NewportHS1761)

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 \$ _____

Life Membership (\$250 - each person) _____ (Never have to renew again!)

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

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