

# MILL TOWN MESSENGER

Volume 16 Issue 3

July 2022



The Newport Historical Society has put together an engaging bus drive around Newport. While narrators tell of a particular site, the twelve guests each hold a pre-set computer tablet with numbered images of the past to compare with the view outside the window. (No technology skill needed!)

The two-hour ride includes a stretch break with use of facilities. There is no charge, but donations are accepted. History Riders go home with a leaflet about different Newport history-related opportunities locally.

Participants on the initial tours said they were likely to share things they learned and would suggest the tour to others. As a follow-up, the Historical Society plans to have “round table” or cracker-barrel conversations open to local folks as a great way to tell Newport stories about life in past decades.

### History Rider comments:

- *“Tour was so well done! It was a ‘do-not-miss’ experience”.*  
– Diane Rochford
- *“It was really fun. I learned a lot.... I really enjoyed having the slideshow with visuals in front of us. it was cool to compare some of the pictures to present day.”* – Alexis Hurd
- *“That was a magnificent tour, such high professional standards. It so enhanced my appreciation of the everyday things I barely notice – or don’t notice at all – as I drive around Newport. It also made me so curious to learn more....”* – Deborah Stone.

### Dates for Upcoming Newport’s Magical History Tour

**Saturday, July 16, 9 am – 11:30 am**  
**Saturday, July 30, 9 am – 11:30 am**  
**Thursday, August 18, 9 am – 11:30 am**

To book a spot on future tours, please call Historical Society Museum at 603-863-1294, and leave a message, including name, contact info, number of seats to reserve, and preferred date, or, call/text one of the organizers:

**Ann** - 603.504.8340; **Dean**- 603.477.6277; **Pam**- 603.558.2714

Tour begins and ends behind the **Newport Historical Society Museum** at 20 Central St., where there is plenty of parking. We will fill the bus in order of received requests.

*We look forward to having you join us!*

### NHS Meeting Times

Business Meetings:  
 July 11, 7 PM, Museum  
 Aug. 8, 7 PM, Museum  
 Sept. 12, 7 PM, Museum  
 Oct., 10 PM, Museum  
 No programs at the present time  
 Museum Hours; 10AM-2PM Sundays

### *From the President’s Pen:*

**By Arthur Walsh**

Being a Historical Society, our mission is to identify and document noteworthy events in the history of Newport, New Hampshire. These encompass widely varied aspects of the daily life of our citizens, both substantial and seemingly trivial, as well as occurrences which affect the entire town, its businesses and places of worship. It is rare, almost unprecedented, for the Historical Society to not just document history and present it through our publications, public talks, museum and the changing displays there, but to develop a whole new way for our town’s rich history to be presented to our people- **the Magical History Tour!**

The inspiration and hard work of our volunteers has created a means for both newcomers and longtime residents alike to enjoy a narrative and introduction to the extensive and interesting history of this town, and give a new, enriched view of sights which we drive by every day, and even have a glimpse of what was once there.

I encourage everyone to sign up for one of these trips- to learn and to feel swelling pride for our busy New England town!



**NHS Board:** Arthur Walsh, Pres., Jerry Hagebusch, VPres., Pam LaFountain, Sec., Jackie Cote, Treas., Larry Cote, Museum Director, Pris Hagebusch, Newsletter Editor, Arnie Hebert, Laura McCrilliss Kessler, Donna Menard, Dean Stetson, Stan Sweeney.

**NEWPORT'S OWN SARAH JOSEPHA HALE WAS A LEADER IN HER TIME**



Newport has always loved and honored Sarah, one of our own. But we sometimes just think of the silly little poem about Mary's Lamb, as her main achievement! Many of us know that she was the Editor of Godey's Lady's Book, but perhaps, we think of it only as a lady's fashion magazine of its time. The beautiful Sarah Josepha Hale Memorial Park on the lawn of the Richards Library (a generous gift of Roy Malool to Newport in honor of George and Marjorie Dorr) displays symbols of



Bunker Hill Monument



Authored 40+ books



Anti-Slavery work



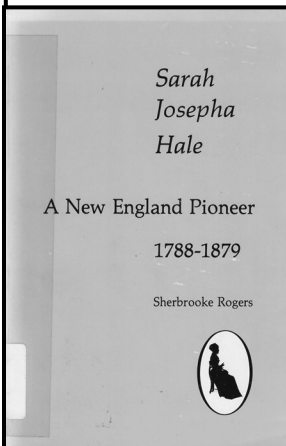
Thanksgiving Holiday



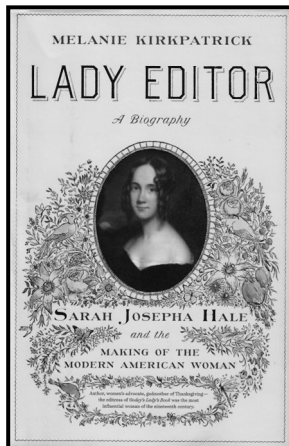
Mary had a Little Lamb

some of her achievements: The books she wrote, the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston, her anti-slavery work, the solidification of Thanksgiving as a national holiday, as well as a small nod to the Mary Had a Little Lamb poem. But Sarah did **SO MUCH MORE!** Many books have offered more extensive views of her life achievements.

**Two books detailing Sarah Josepha Hale's Life**



**Sarah Josepha Hale, A New England Pioneer 1788-1879**, by Sherbrooke Rogers (1985) Most of this article is taken from this book.



**Lady Editor, Sarah Josepha Hale and the making of the Modern American Woman**, by Melanie Kirkpatrick (2021) for sale at our Museum.

In 1828, Sarah became the editor of the "**Ladies' Magazine**", in Boston. Its name was to become the "**American Ladies Magazine**", in 1834. One of its major focus points was the promotion of feminine education. Another focus, novel at the time, was on American writers, especially women writers, and stories about life in America. One of her major editorial missions was to **elevate the status of women and sponsor worthwhile causes**. One cause was the **Fatherless and Widows Society of Boston**, in which well-to-do women in Boston would assist widows and their children in financial distress.

Fashion pages in the magazines of the day were not to Sarah's liking. She encouraged women to wear clothing that was becoming, graceful, and appropriate, regardless of the style of the day. Her ideas on fashion were not as well received as her books on cooking, household care, social improvement and family living.

A favorite subject was promoting the teaching profession for women. She worked to establish the "**Infant School Society of Boston**" in 1828 to teach younger children. She supported Samuel Howe's **Boston School for the Blind** in 1831 and encouraged ladies of Boston to do **Fundraising Fairs** to support it.

While sometimes criticized today for not advocating for voting rights for women, (remember, too, this was 1828) Sarah's goal was to see women gain an equal place beside man, not above him. Women were to provide proper moral direction for their men, and then **THEY** (the men) could do the voting!

Sarah was a friend and supporter of Emma Hart Willard, who founded the **Troy, NY Female Seminary**, in 1821. This was a "Normal" school for females (Normal meant training to become teachers.) Sarah believed women were ideally suited to be teachers and promoted this in her magazines. She sent her own daughter to Willard's school.

The **Bunker Hill Monument** (modelled in our Memorial park) was conceived by the men of Boston on the 50th anniversary of the June 17, 1775 battle of Bunker Hill. They spent \$50,000 and then ran out of money and enthusiasm for the project. Sarah took up the project in 1830, offering to raise the rest of the money. The Press scoffed at her, saying if the men can't raise it, how could a woman! Sarah asked for \$1 from each of her subscribers, the first ever request of its kind. This raised the first \$3,000 for her.

The women's group then put on a huge 6-day fair in Quincy Hall, raising an additional \$30,000. Together with the Mechanics Association's \$20,000, the monument was finally completed by June 17, 1843, with Sarah and the Ladies Group winning recognition that women's contributions were not to be taken lightly!

Sarah helped found the "**Seaman's Aid Society**" to provide aid to widows and orphans of seamen. They ultimately opened a store where sailors wives sewed and sold clothing for their families and the seaman, at much lower prices than the commercial ones called "slop shops". They fought for better lodging and against the grog shops. They founded the "**Mariners House**". Young girls were taught sewing by expert tailors for courses in "domestic science."

## The Continued Story of Sarah Josepha Hale (Continued from page 2)

They then founded a Social Library which became the “**Merchant Marine Library Association**”.

Though Sarah campaigned for **the retention of women’s property rights** in 1836, the effort was not successful. In 1837, she wrote an editorial addressed to the state Legislators on “**The Rights of Married Women**”. But this effort, too, failed.

In 1836, the **American Ladies Magazine** merged with **Godey’s Ladies Book**. The relationship between Sarah and Louis Godey lasted for many years. Sarah moved to Philadelphia and became the editor of what came to be known familiarly as “**The Book**” all across the country.

In the 1850s, Sarah heartily **supported females in the medical profession**, including Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman surgeon in America! She fought a long battle against the male medical professionals, who thought women would “run them out of the profession!” In 1851, Sarah founded the “**Ladies Medical Missionary Society of Philadelphia**”, to train women as medical missionaries to serve in foreign lands. It was 18 more years before the Medical Missionary Board of the Methodist Church would allow an unmarried woman, though professionally certified, to undertake missionary work!

In 1849, Sarah published an illustration in “**The Book**” of a “**Christmas Tree**” surrounded by an adoring family. She put no article with it. The etching was an edited illustration of the English tradition. America had not yet begun this holiday custom. People were so taken by the illustration that within a few years, Christmas Trees were a necessity for holiday festivities. Illustrations of the trees appeared in Godey’s Ladies Book for years.

For the 20th anniversary of “**The Book**” (Godey’s - and Sarah’s,) Sarah was honored with a short biography and a portrait by Chambers. It has become one of our well-recognized portraits of her.



**George Washington’s Virginia home** was in extremely poor shape. Sarah had inquired about its status in 1849, but “**the Book**” did not enter into its restoration battle until 1855. Raising funds was difficult. Sarah again asked women to send in a dollar to the cause, but she cleverly asked the MEN to send \$1,000! This helped the **Mount Vernon Ladies Association** raise the funds to buy Mt. Vernon and restore it. Though final negotiations were lengthy, and the Panic of 1857 delayed donations, “**The Book**” kept up its vigorous support. In March of 1860, Sarah wrote, “Mt. Vernon now belongs to the American Nation”.

**Thanksgiving:** In 1846, after a summer visit to Newport, she began her campaign to have Thanksgiving declared a national holiday in earnest. Every year, in her magazine and in letters to government officials, she urged the declaration of a Thanksgiving Holiday! In 1863, William Seward, Secretary of State, enthusiastically brought the letter to President Lincoln’s attention. After 4 days, Lincoln made the proclamation. But his death, 2 years later, delayed the official establishment of the holiday. Andrew Johnson continued the custom, but no legal steps were taken. Sarah’s last letter about it was to President Grant, and the custom was firmly established. But the legalization, making Thanksgiving a national federal holiday, on the fourth Thursday of November, did not come until 1941, under Roosevelt.!

In the Fall of 1860, Sarah heard that **Vassar College for Women** had been established by Matthew Vassar. “**The Book**” immediately began writing articles about this excellent college opportunity for women. Sarah saw only one flaw: The 1863 outline for the organization saw no female professors employed at the college! Vassar’s President, Milo Jewett, did not believe he could find female professors of adequate rank for the school. Sarah’s son, Horatio Hale, wrote an excellent editorial for “**The Book**” calling for female professors AND a Lady Superintendent, to aid in finding adequately qualified female professors. When Vassar opened its doors in September, 1865, there were 24 women and 8 men making up the teaching staff, and a “Lady Principal”! Having won this round, she then pushed for establishment of courses in “**Domestic Science**”, using the editorial section of “**The Book**” to explain and promote this concept, new to educational institutions.

**Support of Innovations:** Sarah pushed for many labor-saving devices for the home, making women’s work easier. Among these is a double boiler pan for milk, an egg beating device, a washing machine and the sewing machine! She asked for these devices to be invented, and promoted them in “**the Book**” when they appeared. Even for expensive ones, like the sewing machine, she suggested housewives form neighborhood clubs to share cost and machine.

Sarah died at 91, well loved, remembered and eulogized. Let Newporters remember her not just for the few worthy items in her memorial park on the Library grounds, but for all she has done. If we made a memorial of everything she has done, it would probably run from one end of Main Street to the other! **(AND, it has been officially established that SJH IS truly the author of Mary Had a Little Lamb!)**

### THE DEXTER - Newport’s First Fire Pumper!



The Dexter was purchased circa 1832 by public subscription. The Dexter was a hand pumper built by William C. Hunneman, a Blacksmith who apprenticed under Paul Revere. He started his company in 1792 in Boston, Massachusetts. Because it took 8 to 12 men per side making 60 to 80 strokes per minute to work the pumper, the men could work in 10 minute shifts. The Dexter was built in 1815 and later sold to Newport. It was named in honor of Dexter Richards and now resides in the lobby of the Bar Harbor Bank in Newport, N.H. The pumper was drawn to the location of the fire by teams of men, not by horses as in this photo. The Dexter is owned by the Town of Newport and has been maintained for many years by the Firefighters Association of Newport. A similar Hunneman hand pumper was sold at auction in 2014 for \$41,800. In 1851 the fire engine “Newport” was purchased and in 1873 an additional Fire engine the “Rapids” was purchased, both from the Hunneman Company.

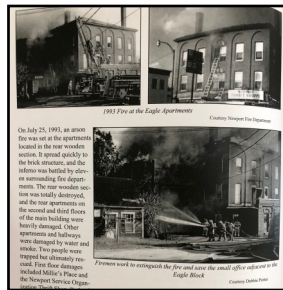
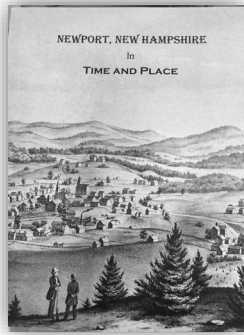
## TREASURER'S REPORT

By Jackie Cote

Now available for purchase at our Museum is a 204 page book written by Mary Lou McGuire and Ray Reid, *Newport, New Hampshire In Time and Place*.

The book chronicles the very early days of our town. Many of the original homesteads are included with photos and a list of all prior owners. In fact, the book is literally filled with photos and is a must read for anyone doing research on Newport's early days or just interested in our town's early history. There was a prior limited printing before Mary Lou gave NHS permission to have it printed again, and for that, we sincerely thank her. The sample page from the book shown here gives one an idea of the contents. The price of the book is \$25.00.

A reminder that our annual membership drive is coming in September. Letters that include membership forms will be mailed to all current members EXCEPT Life Members and those who have paid ahead. If you don't get a letter, it's because you are all set and will continue to receive our quarterly newsletter. As always, we thank you for your support.



## MUSEUM REPORT

By Larry Cote

The Newport Historical Society Museum is open to the public on Sundays from 10 AM until 2 PM, except for holiday weekends, or by appointment. For an appointment call 1-603-863-1294 and leave a message and we will get back to you. Visitation at the Museum has been good, as have donations of artifacts.

I would like to tell you about a recent donation of a Diary. Often a Diary is a weather report with an occasional interesting entry. If the entry is brief, one may not know the context of what the entry is about. The Diary I am referring to is quite unique. It was donated by Ann Smiley from Watskill, N.Y. and is a short four-month diary of Martha Jane Wilmarth Fletcher, a Newport native. She and her husband were living on a farm on Oak Hill that can be accessed from Endicott Road in Kelleyville and/or the Blake farm on the road to North Newport. It was written between January 1, 1860, and April 23, 1860. Martha was married on June 7, 1859 to Charles Franklin Fletcher, and she was pregnant at the time of the writing of the Diary.

The Diary itself isn't remarkable but still very interesting. What is most interesting is how Ann Smiley transcribed the Diary. She typed the Diary entry as written and highlighted it in blue. She then added information that explains what is happening at that time that completes the understanding of the entry. Someone reading the Diary 162 years later can really understand what prompted Martha to write the entry and understand completely what she was saying. Ann includes photographs of Martha's relatives, maps showing the location of the farm and genealogy showing the direct relationship of Martha and her husband, Alfred Brennan Smiley.

If you have a family Diary you may consider transcribing it and adding information to help future readers understand what the circumstances of the day were.

The *Mill Town Messenger* is published quarterly by the  
**Newport Historical Society**  
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Facebook [NewportHS1761](https://www.facebook.com/NewportHS1761)

### Newport Historical Society Membership Form:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ New Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Your annual membership earns you a new or continued, subscription to this newsletter!

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**