

Hollis Historical Society

Wheeler House
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Winter 2018

“Do not grow old, no matter how long you live. Never cease to stand like curious children before the Great Mystery into which we were born.” Albert Einstein

Dear Members,

We hope you had a wonderful holiday season. We wish you and your family only the best in this new year of 2018...and never cease to be curious.

Now, grab a cup of something hot, sit back, and read about what’s been happening at your Hollis Historical Society.

Cub Scout Tour

In December, we had the pleasure of showing **Hollis Cub Scout Pack 12, the Bear Den**, around the Always Ready Engine House and the Wheeler House. **Anna Birch**

and I assembled a variety of artifacts in order to play “What’s It?” with the group. The group was so engaged and enthusiastic! They had wonderful guesses and answers. It was a true delight to work with these boys, leaders **Tanya Tenkarian** and **Brooke Tamposi**, and attending parents. Also, a big thank you to **Anna Birch** for conducting this tour. We hope they’ll all come back and visit us again.



Hollis Cub Scout Pack 12
Bear Den

Conservation Project

Well, it finally happened! We had three of our samplers conserved at **Museum Textile Services** in Andover, MA. **Debbe Shipman** and I took them to the Andover facility and had a fascinating tour while we were there. And **Becky Crowther** picked them up in Andover and delivered them home to us. (Thank you, **Debbe** and **Becky**!) The samplers look wonderful and they will now be saved for many future generations to enjoy. Please come in to the Wheeler House and see what your efforts have accomplished. Without *your donations to, and purchases at*, Attic Treasures, we wouldn’t have had the funds to accomplish this. So give yourselves a big pat on the back! THANK YOU!!!

On a Sad Note

We lost three members in late 2017:

- **Frank Ballou**, member and past President of the Hollis Historical Society,
- **Randy Prozeller**, member and past Treasurer of the Hollis Historical Society, and
- **Dick Drisko**, long-time member.

They will be greatly missed. Our condolences to their families.

Wanted ****IMPORTANT****

There will be several officers’ positions open, to be filled at our May business meeting. We welcome and greatly encourage interested volunteers to come forward to fill them.

Regulations governing non-profits in New Hampshire require that all officer positions be filled to continue as a non-profit organization.

Our Board meets once a month (except in December) at 3pm on the second Wednesday of the month. We’re a fun group -- please consider joining us.

Attic Treasures

Attic Treasures will start again the first Saturday in June (1st and 3rd Saturdays, 9am to 1pm, June through October). If you have any items to donate, we can start accepting them in late April. Also, if you’d like to help us on sale days, please call.... we’d love the help!!

Programs

We have some great programs coming up starting in March with **Stories of Hollis Past**. **PLEASE NOTE**, our March meeting will be on a different date, **Thursday, MARCH 29th**.

Pine Hill School House

Sharon Howe will open her Pine Hill School House again this year, the first Sunday of the month, from 1pm to 4pm, June through October.



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This newsletter is published three times a year by the Hollis Historical Society, 20 Main Street, Hollis, New Hampshire 03049, (603-465-3935). The Hollis Historical Society is a private, non-profit organization incorporated in the state of New Hampshire.

The mission is to provide an opportunity for all ages to connect with the history and heritage of the Town of Hollis and its residents to gain knowledge and perspective from the past and to find inspiration and purpose for the future. We do this by:

- Acquiring, preserving, and making available to the public, memorabilia and historical materials significant to the Town
- Conduct research and make available historical and genealogical information to interested persons and organizations
- Present educational and informative programs and exhibits for our members and the community
- Maintain the structure and collections of the Ruth Wheeler House and the Always Ready Engine House

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What's Going On *(continued from page 1)*

Fundraisers:

- **Debbe Shipman** and **Lynn Schur** headed up our dish towel fundraiser. These two ladies, with help from several other volunteers, made gorgeous dish towels for us to sell. There were three different designs, featuring apples, corn, and strawberries, plus the words "Hollis, NH." We SOLD OUT! Hopefully we'll be making more.
- We currently also have a raffle for a set of six (6) Shaker style stackable boxes, hand made and donated by member **Tom Worcester**. You may purchase raffle tickets for these desirable and valuable oval wooden boxes. They may be seen now at the Wheeler House and at our programs. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity. Tickets are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. Drawing will be at our November meeting.
- We're working on the possibility of another **HOUSE TOUR** this fall! And we'll need docents! So please consider helping.....and stay tuned for details.



Research

We've been working with several researchers over the past year:

- A research volunteer from the **Museum of Fine Arts Boston** has been working with us researching information on the **Tenney Farm (Nichols/Husk)** weathervane. The museum owns this handsome rooster vane. Member **Ann Porter** was kind enough to give us a framed photo of the farm showing the vane on the barn. The information the MFA is trying to gather is: what company made the weathervane, was it purchased directly from the manufacturer or a vendor, when was it mounted on the barn, and photos of the vane in situ.
- A PhD archeology student, **Kelly Goldberg**, approached us about a possible project. She spoke to the Board about seeking to develop the preliminary framework for a PhD research project exploring the colonial era occupation of Hollis, NH. It could include a specific focus on education in early America, investigating schoolhouse buildings of the town; politics of land division; an exploration of slavery in rural New Hamp-

shire; etc. She'd be very interested in questions from any interested organization.

- Another Ph.D. student, attending the University of Vermont is doing a paper on Silver Lake. She is trying to find out whatever information she can about the lake. She is especially interested in what is causing the algae blooms in the lake. We have a fairly large file on Silver Lake which she went through. It includes old maps showing the lake, early photos of Wallace's Grove featuring a golf area, water slide, dance hall, etc., as well as old State Park photos and numerous stories that took place around the lake.
- Genealogy research on the Parker family in Hollis: **Sharon Howe** and I have been helping **Jim Kelly** from California on **Parker** family information. Jim has done a lot of research and has sent us a copy of some of his work.

Project

Jill Arabas, radio show host and educator, is working on a project called **BACK IN TIME** for the Hollis Historical Society with the help of **Sue Birch**. Jill is interviewing some long-time Hollis residents, and those recordings will become part of our archives.

Jill will then use excerpts from the interviews to produce a series of mini-documentaries looking back at Hollis and its place in the world. Subjects may include the town's evolution from a farming community to more of a bedroom community, the changing role of women in society, conservation, Vietnam, music, and any other subjects the participants think are important.

Jill hopes that these documentaries will illustrate how Hollis has evolved through the years and the challenges still to come. Actually hearing someone's voice makes history more personal and breathes life into past events in a way that a book or an artifact cannot.

Optimistically, the mini-documentaries will be produced by next fall, and we are really looking forward to them. We owe a huge THANK YOU to Jill Arabas, Sue Birch, and all the participants!

In parting, we invite you to visit the Wheeler House and see our newly conserved samplers. And don't forget to join us for our upcoming programs starting in March.

Enjoy the winter and stay well!

Best regards,

Fredricka Olson

Fredricka Olson, Curator

Historical Tidbits

A collection of short, old Hollis stories that were found in our files. We don't know when these stories were written, and, in many cases, don't know who wrote them. They are being presented as found.

Mrs. Benjamin Emerson. More than 150 years ago, Mrs. Benjamin Emerson kept store in the northeast room of the old parsonage (the one that was on Main Street). Among other things, she kept West India rum, which she sometimes sold by the cent's worth. She was an honest woman, strictly just if not generous. In weighing out peppermints, she would bite one in two and put in half to make the correct weight.

The Big Blue Boat. About 1845, there was a big blue boat on Long Pond (now called Silver Lake), that would carry thirty or forty passengers. This was made of two boats with a paddlewheel in between and it took three men to run it, two of them at the paddlewheel. The boat was built by a syndicate, Steven Price and William Bradstreet among them. Something came up that made them angry and they sunk the boat near where Dr. Blaylock Atherton's cottage stood, and there, as far as anyone knows, it is today.

The Fletchers. An old man (Mr. Fletcher), and his wife, once lived in a house not far from the Isaac Rideout place, and they did not get on very pleasantly together, and had frequent quarrels. The quarrels were due, in the old man's opinion, to the fiery temper and inflammatory speech of his wife. One day, the minister called, and the old man was relating to him some of his grievance from his wife's constant inclination to make trouble by "throwing fire," as he called it. The minister tried to give him a wise word of counsel and said: "Now when your wife gets excited and begins to throw at fire, you must throw water to quench it." "Well," the old man said, "I did throw a pail full of swill over her head the other day, and it didn't do a bit of good."

Monson. "The Lost Town," was a township for about twenty-six years. The names and occupations of some of the men who lived there were: Abijah Gould, clock maker and pound keeper. Mr. Gould's clocks became quite well known and are sought after today. Benjamin Nevins, butcher; David Duncklee, plowmaker; Howe, shoemaker; Blunt, maker of fur hats; while the Fosters were carpenters.

Small pox. There was small pox raid in Hollis during the time of the Revolutionary War. It was scattered by a woman named Simonds, who belonged to a Tory family living near the home of John P. Howe of Nashua. Tradition has it that family stole the suit of a soldier who had died with small pox, took it home and kept it wrapped up in a blanket for several days. Then the woman, putting this blanket around her shoulders, went from house to house with some she wished to show, her evident desire being to get the people to come near her that they might become sick with the disease. At one place she was foiled in her purpose as a polecat had preceded her and so tainted the air that no small pox resulted from her visit. Mr. Daniel Moore and a daughter died from the disease to which she had exposed them. Then Mrs. Simonds herself contracted the disease and died, being buried on the farm. Mr. Simonds was made a prisoner on his own farm by his neighbors telling him that if he was ever seen outside of it they would shoot him down like a dog. When he died he was buried on the farm, face down to indicate disgrace and contempt. William Cummings, who lived where John Colburn does, had an infected handkerchief put in his possession to scatter the contagion, but he never used it, saying it seemed too much like deliberate murder. About one hundred and fifty people had the disease, eight or nine dying. They were cared for at two pest houses, one being on the farm now occupied by George W. Hardy and the other not far from the old Bowditch place. It was thought to be necessary to keep a small pox patient very cool and those who were able were obliged to walk for just so long a time outdoors in the snow ev-

ery day, and then every night the matron in charge would go around and take off any extra clothing the patient may have smuggled on in the vain attempt to keep warm. (Written by Walter Stickney in 1920)

The Dark Day of 1780. One of the strangest and most wonderful phenomena that has ever occurred in the history of any age occurred in the northern part of America during the latter part of the 18th century, and will always be referred to as the wonderful dark day of May 19, 1780. It stands almost if not altogether alone as the most mysterious and unexplainable phenomenon of its kind in Nature's diversified range of events.

The Northern states were wrapped in a dense, black vapor for 15 hours. The darkness was the greatest in Essex County, Mass., and in the lower part of the State of N.H., and in the portion of what was then the province of Maine. So suddenly did the darkness fall that it might well bring dismay to the hearts of the peoples of the time.

The sun was shining brightly, and all Nature seemed glad and in a joyous mood, when all at once a little cloud seemed to pass over the sun, hardly noticeable at first, but the light gradually began to fade away. Slowly the sun passed from view, settling more and more into the twilight, causing wonder and alarm, until at last in only a few hours time, impenetrable darkness covered all the land.

The herds on the hillsides looked in wonder as this strange occurrence, started on their homeward way, and were soon looking at the barns for admittance to their stalls. Even the fowls sought their roosts, and the birds sang their evening song at noonday and retired to the branches which sheltered them at night. The thick vapor which enveloped the earth caused thousands of birds to suffocate and died.

The blackness of the sky was relieved by a fringe of dull red along the horizon. At frequent intervals, loud peals of thunder added to the terror of the great darkness. Still more remarkable was the appearance of the sun, which looked like a ball of fire. The peoples, terrified, betook themselves to religious devotions. Many believed that the darkness was sent as a token of God's indignation upon the sins of the age, and as an omen of some future destruction, that might overwhelm the land. All labor was suspended as the difficulty in attending to business made this necessary. Lamps were lighted in all the homes, and the ordinary works, if completed at all, was done by the aid of them. Little rest was taken on that eventful night, as all waited anxiously for the slow hours to pass. Men conversed in groups over this wonderful phenomenon. Another one of the marked features was the appearance of the waters, whose surface seemed to be coated by a thin coating of oil.

The moon like the sun appeared as a ball of fire. The Conn. Legislature was in session at the time of the dark day and the law makers shared the common belief that the day of judgment had come. One of them moved to lay aside the pending question, a fishery law, and to adjourn. "It is doubtless the great and terrible day of the Lord," he said tremblingly, "and no time for earthly business." Then, in the rapidly fading light, the tall form of Abraham Davenport of Stamford could be seen as he rose to address the chair: "whether or not it is the day of God, I know not" his voice rang out through the gloom, "but this much I know, that He has given me a duty to do here, and has bid me occupy till He comes. Let candles be brought in." And they brought them in. The darkness faded away, but Davenport's speech remained. Simple man though he was, he is before us today as an example of one who did his duty at all times and under circumstances which made most men desert their posts. We cannot all expect to be heroes in life, or do some great deed for which the world will bless us, but we may be found doing our duty, and by so doing inspire our fellowmen.

Programs - March through May 2018

7:30 PM at the Lawrence Barn

Bring your friends and family! All our programs are open to the public....
and we have some great refreshments too!

March 29, 2018 **Stories of Hollis Past (*Note date change*)**

In our first program of 2018, a panel of long-time Hollis residents will speak about their memories of Hollis about 20th century events and social conditions that they experienced in their earlier lives. Come with your questions about old-time Hollis.

April 19, 2018 **Colonial Stories: The Tangled Lives of Native Americans & English Settlers - Jo Radner**

In this presentation, storyteller/historian **Jo Radner** contrasts Native American oral traditions and stories told by her own New England ancestors to reveal a complex colonial "middle ground" in which English settlers and Native peoples saw one another as defenders and trespassers, kind neighbors and ruthless destroyers.

Storyteller **Jo Radner** received her PhD from Harvard University. Before returning to her family home in western Maine as a freelance storyteller and oral historian, she spent 31 years as professor at American University in Washington, D.C., teaching literature, folklore, American studies, Celtic studies, and storytelling. She has published books and articles in all those fields, and is now writing a book titled **Performing the Paper: Rural Self-Improvement in Northern New England**, about a 19th-century village tradition of creating and performing handwritten literary newspapers. She is past president of the American Folklore Society and the National Storytelling Network.

May 17, 2018 **Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner 7 PM; Program at 8 PM** **Global Banjar: International Voices in Antebellum Banjo Music**

The Hardtacks (Marek Bennett and Woody Pringle) deliver an engaging overview of global politics prior to the American Civil War through early banjo music. Between 1820 and 1860, the banjo migrated from a slave instrument found only on Southern plantations to an international phenomenon: songs and playing techniques carried far and wide in the emerging global economy, from the streets of New York's Five Points slum to the gold fields of California and the elite drawing rooms of London, from the battlegrounds of Nicaragua to official diplomatic receptions in Japan. How did this African-derived, slave-borne folk instrument come to symbolize all the best and worst of a young United States of America? The Hardtacks received a 2016 "Best of NH" award from NH Magazine.

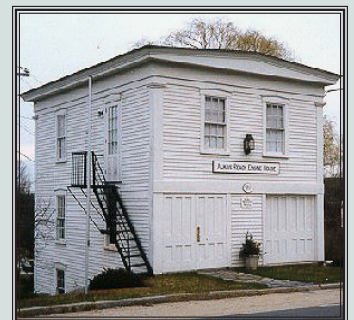
Marek Bennett holds an M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction from Keene State College, and is a rostered teaching artist with the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. His work includes the graphic novel **The Civil War Diary of Freeman Colby** and the NH history webcomic **Live Free and Draw**.

Woody Pringle is both a musician and educator teaching at many NH colleges and organizations. His credentials include a BA in Social Science from Johnson State College and an MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. His music is often aired on NH Public Radio's Folk Show and many radio stations throughout the country.



The Wheeler House is open Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 1PM to 4PM, year round, as well as the 1st & 3rd Sundays of the month, June through October.

The Always Ready Engine House will be open the 1st & 3rd Sundays of the month, June through October, from 1 PM to 4 PM.



Both museums are available for tours at other times, by special arrangement, by calling (603) 465-3935.