

Conway Historical Society

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The President's Corner

As February winds to a close I can't say that I want to see much more snow. As we look forward to a new season it is also good to look back and see what your Board and Curator have been up to during the last few months.

Like always with a new year, we have gone over our financials and have developed a budget for 2020. With the continued presence of Robert Frost Charter School leasing the Salyards, and Upper Saco Valley Land Trust renting some office space in the Old Firehouse, the rental income allows us to address some of the required renovation issues in the Eastman Lord House. Last year we started the process and had Pope Security install a new fire detections system, and this year we are working on creating two new exits and addressing some staircase issues that were previously identified as problem areas by the Fire Chief.

To prepare for that work we'll be moving some de-accessioned items to our space in the Old Firehouse, getting ready for a sale of those items. What is a 'de-accessioned item' you ask? We've been developing policy on what to keep, and what to remove from our collections in storage at the ELH, and it is really pretty simple: we want to keep items and artifacts that relate to Conway in some way - be they a painting of Diana's Baths, or a sketch of the Moats, to the first table that we think was brought to Conway many years ago (David Emerson acquired and labeled this item a long time ago.) We are also keeping the hat collection (remember that the ELH once housed a millinery shop), many photos by Bob Duncan and Dick Smith, among many other artifacts - like the arrowheads found around Pequawket Pond. But we don't really have the space necessary to store other items that we can't identify as being 'Conway relevant'. Curator Bob Cottrell and Volunteer Diana Levy have been working over the winter months cataloging many clothing items that were stashed into closets and corners of the ELH. And we are finishing the improvements to the floor in the attic space to create added storage to hold items that we wish to keep for future displays and educational purposes.

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Conway Village Fire District Meeting

As we noted in previous newsletters, and our membership meetings, Mountain Top Music Center has moved from the Old Firehouse as of the end of September. We only have a temporary lease with Upper Saco Valley Land Trust at this time due to our legal arrangement with the Conway Village Fire District (CVFD). The wording of a permanent lease was approved at the Budget Hearing for the 2020 Warrant of the CVFD which took place on February 11th. We are encouraging all Historical Society members who are part of the Conway Village Fire District to vote at the CVFD Annual Meeting on March 10th at 7:00 P.M. at the Fire Department to assure that the article will pass. This will be article #18 on the ballot.

Upcoming Programs

April 9 - 7:00 P.M.

**Mt. Washington Auto Road and Glen House Hotels
Presented by Howard Wemyss**

May 12 - 7:00 P.M.

**Tour of Conway and Old Photographs
Ken Rancourt and Brian Wiggin**

June 9 - 7:00 P.M.

TBD

Save the dates

Conway Historical Society monthly program is the second Tuesday of each month. Meetings and presentations are held at the Old Firehouse beginning at 7:00 P.M. and are open to the public. Parking is available next to the building.

There will be no monthly meetings in January, February, and March. We will resume in April.

If anyone has an idea for an upcoming program that would be of interest to you, please contact Ken Rancourt. If you know of someone who would be willing to present a program, also please contact Ken Rancourt.

The President's Corner (Continued)

Looking forward to the next few months, we've invited Howie Wemyss to present a program on the history of the Glen Houses at the base of Mount Washington in April. And looking farther into the future we are thinking of having a special August Picnic event right at the Old Firehouse. With Pequawket Pond close by, and a nice green park in front, what a nice place to have a game of croquet!

So, get ready for a very interesting summer season with lots going on. And if you can help with some moving, or cataloging, or even helping to identify photos of people or of Conway buildings (that will actually be one of our programs this summer) just give us a ring. Many hands make light work!

April Program

The history of the Mount Washington Auto Road and Glen House hotels interpreted by long time General Manager, Howie Wemyss. This 45 minute presentation, using historic images and stories, relates the account of America's oldest man-made attraction and the famous grand hotels at the base. From 1852 when the first Glen House appeared in The Glen through to the fifth iteration just opened in September 2018, along with the evolution of the Carriage Road into the Auto Road, come and learn the fascinating and intertwined history of one of New England's iconic attractions.

Howard M. "Howie" Wemyss ("weemz") was born in Cambridge, Mass. and raised in Biddeford, Maine. He attended Colorado State University, honorably discharged from the US Army in 1971, NH resident since 1971. Since 1987 he has been employed by the Mount Washington Summit Road Co. as General Manager of the historic Mt Washington Auto Road and Great Glen Trails Outdoor Center. Wemyss presently serves as a trustee of the Mount Washington Observatory, board member of White Mountains Attractions and the Mount Washington Commission. Howie and his wife Sue live in Randolph, N.H., where they enjoy cross country skiing, mountain biking, birding, photography and travel. Howie has a daughter Cory, who is a licensed Massage Therapist in the Conway area.

Pot Luck Dinners

It is the consensus of the Board of Directors that we limit the number of pot luck dinners to two per year. One of these dinners will be our Annual Members' Picnic, to be held August 11th. This year we will be able to hold it at our new meeting place, the Old Firehouse.

Our second pot luck dinner will be our Annual Christmas Party and Yankee Swap. This will be held on December 8th, again at the Old Firehouse.

As in the past, our Annual Meeting will be the second Tuesday of October, this year October 13th.

Recent Donation

We have recently received a donation of papers from the Maine and New Hampshire Granite Company. These include payroll records, transportation receipts, receipts for office supplies, and cutting records. They were generously donated by Sara Scaletti of Maryland.

We have also received a deed dated 1848 from the Oxford County Register of Deeds. This is for land which was originally conveyed to Benjamin Coffin, lot number 38.

Scholarship

In June 2019, our \$1000 scholarship was awarded to Rebecca Consaul. She is currently in her second semester at Boston College. We recently received a thank you note from Rebecca in which she says: In the fall I joined the Women's Club Frisbee team, found a wonderful job tutoring in an integrated classroom and taking challenging courses. Academically, Boston College has provided me with many opportunities, but my favorite part so far has been, 'How Democracies Die', which was a history class about fluctuation in world governments and sovereignty. I know that this scholarship will help me grow and learn even more this upcoming semester, and I can't wait to bring these experiences back home to Conway in May. Your help has greatly effected my time here.

In The Historical Corner

There is likely no family name more important in the history of the Conways than KENNETT. For generations they have contributed vastly to the culture and industry of our town. Also, they are right at the top for the initial success of the Congregational Church. This month we will concentrate on the most known of the clan - A. Crosby Kennett.

A great local trivia question would be, "What was A. Crosby Kennett's first name?" Old timers such as Maurice Lovejoy, who Kennett took under his wing as a kid, said he hated the name and therefore went by the middle name. The answer: Alpheus. Mr. Lovejoy also relayed that whenever Stone's Drug Store came out with a new flavor of ice cream, A. Crosby would take him there to try it out. "That probably did not help his health at all as he loved ice cream," Maurice related.

The Kennetts were of Scottish origin. They came to America in 1741 and settled in Kittery. They then moved to Wolfeboro and finally Eaton, which is now in Madison. Crosby was the oldest child of William and Sarah (Russell). He was born in Madison on July 27, 1859. He attended the New Hampton Literary Institute. As a young man, he drove a stage for his father between Madison and Ossipee and demonstrated "a remarkable capacity for work." He became interested in telegraphy and was put in charge of the station in South Berwick, later Salmon Falls, and ultimately West Ossipee. In 1888, he bought the Henry Metcalf Spool Mill in Conway (which became the largest in the world), extending into every part of the nation and Canada. He added a planing mill and a box factory, eventually becoming the Conway Company. At one time he ran eleven portable sawmills. He owned as much as 70,000 acres in all of the local towns and the State of Maine. In 1904 he became manager of the B.F. Sturtevant Company's shoe peg mill. He was instrumental in bringing the Lumber Company to Conway.

Mr. Kennett was once the President of the Conway National Bank, a director of the Ossipee Valley Telephone Company, and treasurer of the Memorial Hospital. In politics, he was a staunch Republican and was elected to the State House in 1893 and the Senate in 1897. He was a member of the Governor's Council and served with the rank of Colonel. As a member he secured the passage of a bill which prohibited the throwing of sawdust by mills into streams. He also secured passage of the State library law.

In local affairs, Kennett gave of his time freely. He was a town moderator and always interested in the development of educational opportunities. Therefore, in 1923, his widow and sons, erected and gave to the town the A. Crosby Kennett High School where it was dedicated on September 15th. It was then one of the most complete and up-to-date educational institutes in the state and some said the finest looking structure. He was also a member of the Masons, Palestine Commandery, Knights Templar of Rochester and the Veterans Association. His religious devotion was always to the Congregationalists. He was the chief financial contributor to the edifice of the Second Congregational Church in 1906 on what was heretofore Kennett property. As most of you likely know, the Kennett barn stood where the Catholic Church was erected in 1952, which is now Salyards. At that time all of the land on both sides of the tracks, where the elementary and middle schools now stand, were level Kennett fields. The Kennetts served tirelessly on many committees as have succeeding generations.

A. Crosby Kennett's first wife was Carrie B. Gerrish of South Berwick, whom he married in 1884. She died the very next year. In 1888, he married Lora Ferren of Madison. They were the parents of two children: Frank Edison and Robert Harmon. When Mr. Kennett died on December 5, 1917, there had never been such a gathering of locals and dignitaries attend a funeral. Known nationwide, he was beloved by friends and family as well - a great counselor, collaborator and industrialist had gone on "to higher levels."

Contributed by Brian P. Wiggin

(Much of this information is from Hobart Pillsbury's, "New Hampshire: A History" by the Lewis Historical Publishing Company of New York. 1927.)

Collections Management and Preservation

The Conway Historical Society has a large collection of maps, prints, posters and other works on paper. Ultraviolet light (normal sunshine) as well as extreme temperature variations can cause irreparable harm to these items on a long term basis. Over the years, many of the items have been rolled up for storage or curled on their own.

Recently they have been brought in small groups into the bathroom, put on wire shelving racks and been given a “spa day,” in which hot water is run into the tub but not allowed to touch the items. This allows the paper to become slowly humidified and relaxed so the items can be unrolled carefully. Smaller items, such as curled up photos, can be humidified in a large Tupperware type container. They are carefully rolled out flat on a table, and paperweights are used to hold them in place (coffee cups work nicely). We then put them “to bed” literally. A traditional rope bed provides a great support for the larger items that don’t fit on a table to slowly dry and flatten out. The items are put into large well-labeled file folders, and eventually into a map case.



Like our art and paper collection, textiles are particularly susceptible to ultraviolet light. They are also very attractive to certain pests, rodents, bugs, etc. While the museum is closed we are taking advantage of the time to research, catalog and properly store our collection. New Volunteer Diana Levy has been removing the items from the walls. She records each item with a number and places it in a box. In a way, this is actually continuing a project that was started a number of years ago. We have been working on putting photos on the outside of boxes for hats, ceramics and other items to help with quick identification of what is inside.

Recently we have also started taking all of the artwork off the walls and facing them away from the sunlight. The next step will be to pack them away in boxes by size. The point is to keep them in the dark. Each artwork has been accessioned and cataloged, with 136 paintings and 57 prints.



Would you like to help with any of these projects? It would involve researching items in our collections. If you are able to help, please contact Bob Cottrell at chinook1618@gmail.com or call the Historical Society at 447-5551.

Officers and Directors

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Ken Rancourt
447-2720

Vice President
Brian Wiggin
447-3426

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447-2720

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447-5014

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Curator
Bob Cottrell
323-3359

**Lawn and Garden
Committee**
Laraine Cormack and
Mike Tamulis

Newsletter and Office
Judy Williams
447-5551

Programs
Open

Membership
Jane Rancourt
447-2720

Car Pools

Do you wish you could attend the Historical Society meetings but don't feel comfortable driving at night? We would like to set up a car pool for our members. If you would like to participate, either as a driver or passenger, please let us know at 447-5551 or conwayhistoricalsociety@gmail.com We will do our best to match up members in the same neighborhood.

As a private 501(c)3
non-profit, we rely on your
support.

Donations are tax-deductible
to the amount allowable by
law.

Please consider donating
today and
remember to renew your
membership.

Tag Sale

Due to space limitations, we have
been forced to de-accession items
that do not pertain to Conway. We
are hoping to have a tag sale this
spring to sell some of these items. A
specific date has not been set.

Many hands will be needed to move
these items from the Eastman Lord
House to the Old Firehouse. If you
would like to help, either at the sale
or moving items, please contact Mike
Tamulis.

We will also be moving some of the
collections to the Old Firehouse in
preparation of opening the Eastman
Lord House to the public. Again, if
you would like to help with this
project, please contact Mike Tamulis.

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Annual Christmas Party

Our Annual Christmas Party and
Yankee Swap was held December 10th.
The pot luck dinner was enjoyed by all.
Mike and Laraine donated a Christmas
tree. It was decided that only old-
fashioned ornaments will be placed on
the tree. Each ornament has a story
which will be told when put on the tree
for the first time. It was a fun evening
full of laughs and good times.

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CHS Newsletter

Phone: 603-447-5551

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A significant percentage of our income is generated through membership.

Please pass your newsletter along to a friend when you are finished with it. Recycle and help the society to grow.

Membership Dues are payable in October and run through December of the following year.

Our \$5 student membership level
is a great gift to give

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