



WEST WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Bowers Covered Bridge: A History of Ingenuity and Craftsmanship

This is a follow up to our previous issue highlighting Stephen Bodley's efforts to rebuild the Bowers Bridge.



Bowers Covered Bridge being lifted by crane before being placed on its new abutments.

On July 14, at 10:00 AM local residents and friends

congregated on both sides of the Mill Brook to watch as Miller Construction lifted the newly re-constructed bridge off its footings and placed on the new abutments. The historic nature of the bridge helped secure FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) funding, and State funding. The town of West Windsor was responsible for approximately 5% which amounted to roughly \$35,000.

Stephen Bodley noted that the bridge was and is designed to sit on top of the abutments, no nails are required.

FEMA representative, Wendell Davis, has kept a video log of the project since last fall when Tropical Storm Irene first swept Bowers Bridge downstream and deposited it in the Beibel's backyard a few

Calendar of Events

***This Old Town
Fiddle Playing, Poetry
& Potluck***

*Sunday, September 9, 5 PM
Mary Blood Library &
Potluck at the Veterans Park*

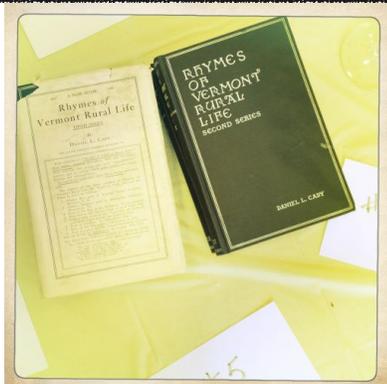
***Art Show
(28+ artists & artisans)***

*Story Memorial Hall
September 28-30
Friday & Saturday
10 AM - 4 PM with lunch
Sunday, 10 AM - 2 PM*

Annual Meeting

*October 19th
6 PM Gather; 6:30 Dinner
Meeting & Presentation by
Stephen Bodley: "Irene and
The Bowers Covered
Bridge" to follow.*

hundred yards away. For those interested in seeing more of the project you can go to: www.fema.gov/photolibrary/ You will find a link to Wendell Davis' work on that page. (Continued on page 3)



Fundraising

We are actively working to develop and maintain a variety of new as well as old fundraisers for our beloved Historical Society. For instance, on Sunday, April 29th, the WWHS hosted a lively *Auction at Story Memorial Hall*. The town hall was well suited for this new fundraiser, which was organized by Director, Tom Kenyon. We averaged over \$30 a bid on each of 82 items.

VERMONT HISTORY EXPO 2012



Tom Kenyon, WWHS Secretary and the Scott McLaughlin, Director of Morristown Society and Noyes House

The West Windsor Historical Society had an exceptionally well-received display at the Expo held in Tunbridge this past June. Thanks to MaryAnn Boyce and Tom Kenyon who headed up the display project. Thanks also go to Jane Stillson for her museum expertise and display guidance. Thanks to our Historic Records office for their great records. Our appreciation also goes to the Mary L. Blood Library for the loan of the Waite Drum from the Civil War.

We look forward to another Expo in Tunbridge in 2014. The theme has not been announced.

The following information was presented in our *Unsung Heroes of West Windsor* and *Not all Drummer Boys were Boys*, displays concerning West Windsor's participation in the Civil War.

Seth Blanchard

Seth was born, raised on a farm, and educated in West Windsor's

public school. He was a carpenter by trade and was the "boss carpenter" on the project to rebuild in 1859 Brownsville's condemned, unsafe Methodist Church. Seth was a master craftsman. He built and donated the pulpit-set, which held the Holy Bible in this church. The pulpit-set is still in use to this date.

He took a very active part in local government. While serving as First Selectman of West Windsor he was called upon to raise the town's quota for the draft of soldiers. He spent several days traveling through the town but was unsuccessful at first.

Then Seth started out one morning with his own name at the top of the enlistment roll and when he returned at night the town's quota had been filled. He was soon mustered into service at the age of forty-four as a private into company D of Ninth Volunteer Infantry. He died one month later in Bern, North Carolina, of Typhoid Fever.

Seth Blanchard was survived by his wife Charlotte, and their five children with their youngest son being only four years old.

We are reminded of the great sacrifices made by the many volunteers of West Windsor.
Source: West Windsor Historical Society's records.

Not all Drummer Boys were Boys

The West Windsor Guards were Company A in the 12th Regiment of the Vermont Volunteer Infantry.

The Company had two musicians (drummers): One, was William A. Waite (actually from Reading). He was born in 1808. He enlisted on August 19, 1862 at the age of 53 and theoretically was too old to serve but he managed to "qualify" as a musician. He was mustered into service on October 4, 1862 and was discharged on April 25, 1863 after serving only six months. He died on December 19, 1880 and is buried in the Sheddsville Cemetery in West Windsor. He commenced serving at the age of 53 and died at the age of 72. His drum is here on display (normally on display at the Mary Blood Library).

The second musician of Company A was Edgar C. Price, also from Reading. He was born in April of 1844. He enlisted on August 25 of 1862 and was mustered in on October 4, 1862. He was mustered out on July 14, 1863 after 9 months of service. He died on July 1, 1864, at the young age of 20 and is buried in the Sheddsville Cemetery in West Windsor.

Yes, one of West Windsor's drummers was an old man and the other never lived long enough to grow to be an old man. Both served and loved their country. They both loved West Windsor.

Source: West Windsor Historical Society's records

✍ Tom Kenyon



Hand-knit children's sweaters.

**Autumn Art Show:
September 28-30.**

This year we are looking forward to another spectacular show with regional artists and artisans. We have secured roughly 28 vendors who have exceptional gifts for the upcoming holiday season. Lunch will be available on Friday and Saturday with show hours 10-4 PM, and on Sunday, 10 AM - 2 PM.



Hand-crafted jewelry.



Ribbon Cutting by James Bowers and Stephen Bodley

On Saturday, August, 4 at 6:00 PM the town gathered once more at the Mill Brook, but this time on the covered bridge, to re-dedicate the restoration with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Town Selectmen, Tom Kenyon and Eric Boedtkher, were present while First Selectman, Glenn Seward highlighted the historical significance of the bridge as well as the commitment of all the local people, and State and National contributors.

State Senator, Alice Nitka and local state Representative, John Bartholomew, were also in attendance. James Bowers, the grandson and nephew of the two Bowers brothers who originally built the covered bridge in 1884, joined with his wife, Phyllis to share in the ribbon cutting. Local television reporter, Marselis Parsons from WCAX, reported on the event. In the broadcast,



Phyllis and James Bowers of Hartland, VT.



Residents and Friends gather after the ceremony.

Stephen Bodley commented on the nature of his work, *"The whole cover was replaced. I did repair work underneath, which was replacement timbers, but that all qualifies as part of a restoration. The actual historic part of this are the two arches, the cords of the arches they are attached to, two large scissor braces underneath, which keep the whole frame from racking, similar to those you see above... and some of the floor joists are the original ones."*



Jim Bertrand is the first cyclist to cross the bridge.



Stephen Bodley and James Bowers celebrate the re-dedication.

T-shirts with the image of the bridge and entitled, *Bridging the Community -- Bowers Bridge build 1884 - restored 2012* are being sold to commemorate the event and to benefit the July 4th Fund. For more information, or to order, please call: 802-484-9286.

West Windsor's Bowers Covered Bridge is now the first covered bridge to be completely restored and put back in service. The commitment made by local craftsman, Steve Bodley, and the coordinated efforts of many people and a variety of organizations, has no doubt demonstrated not only the perseverance of a variety of local and regional and national people and organizations, but also the importance of preserving other covered bridges which represent an important part of our heritage -- the Vermont Covered Bridge.

JK Bodnar



Bill Fenn and Jay Bodnar exchange greetings and recorded by FEMA.



Mary Fenn congratulates Eleanor on her birthday.

ELEANOR HANNAH CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

Friends and family joined Eleanor on Saturday, May 19th at the Grange Hall to celebrate her 100th birthday. Eleanor Hannah is the oldest native resident in West

Windsor. Born May 19, 1912, in Sheddsville to Robert and Margaret Thomas, she was the oldest child and had four younger brothers – David, Loren, Edmund and Robert. They lived on the farm just west of the Sheddsville Cemetery, later owned by Harriet Hilts and then Gary and Sandra Vezzoli. Margaret and Rob Thomas first lived in the brown house one-quarter mile down the hill from the Thomas Farm. They later moved up to the farmhouse belonging to Rob’s parents. One of the reasons they moved there was so the children would be in the Brownsville school district. When asked what she did for fun, Eleanor said she used to drive the horse and buggy to dances at the town hall in Brownsville. Music was provided by Charlie Gibson, playing the violin, and Belle Dunn at the piano. Eleanor also enjoyed going to the Whist card parties at the Grange Hall.

Eleanor did very well in grade school and started high school in Windsor. She lived with a family in Windsor for a while. Unhappy with her living arrangement, she eventually dropped out of school and returned home.

On September 19, 1931, Eleanor married Andrew Hannah, ten years her senior, in the church parsonage. They first met at the creamery and he

would often help her unload the milk cans. They lived with Andrew’s parents in the Eastman Place (about one mile west of Brownsville on Route 44) for six years and later bought the Herbert Dunn farm in 1937 for \$10,000. They owned over 200 acres, including what is now called Mile Long Field. The property was bordered by the Scott Mower Farm, and lands belonging to Ray Blanchard and Ernest Lemire. Eleanor and Andrew had one daughter, Margaret, born February 10, 1938. In 1946, they sold the farm and lived in Ascutney for nine months. They came back to Brownsville in 1947 and bought the brick house (now owned by Wayne and Ellen Lemire) and the adjoining yellow farm house and barn (the former Eastman place) They lived in the yellow house and farmed for several years before selling it to Harriet Hilts in the sixties, reserving some land where they built a small ranch style house. Eleanor and Margaret live there now. Andrew died in 1995.

Eleanor is able to get around with a cane in familiar surroundings but her eyesight and hearing are poor. Perhaps Eleanor’s longevity is due to good genes and living an active life, helping Andrew with the farm chores as well as keeping an immaculate house. Eleanor said she used to help Andrew fell trees with a cross-cut saw so they would have enough firewood for the winter. She is an amazing cook and still gets meals with Margaret’s help. She greatly enjoyed sewing and dearly loved a good card game. There’s always a puzzle in progress on the dining room table. Eleanor’s sense of humor and humility is inspiring.

MaryJane Wentworth



Edson preps the siding of his house.

SEEN AROUND TOWN: Edson Pierce has been enjoying the summer painting his home, the home he grew up in, as well as the Mary Blood Library -- a building he spent many a day helping his mom, who was the librarian. He has been painting since he was a young boy. He recently shared with me that when he was 13 he was hired to paint his aunt and uncle’s house across the street. The *Vermont Journal* was having a photography contest, and so she snapped a picture of him hanging out of the diagonal window and it won a prize!

JK Bodnar



Edson paints a lovely new sage and white trim at the library.

Fundraising...

Continued from page 1



MacKenzie Yates assists Mark Isenberg during the auction.

Special thanks go to Mark Isenberg for sharing his auctioneering talents and to Bill Stillson for donating the use of his truck and trailer to assist in moving the heavier items. Special thanks also go to Genevieve Lemire for her assistance in organizing the items for auction and volunteer Cathy Archibald for keeping excellent records of the bids and collecting funds from the winning bidders.

Our gratitude is extended to everyone who donated and to those who came to bid. We anticipate such a fundraiser would be successful in a few years.

Jane Stillson is heading up some additional fundraising projects that are on-going and can

be taken advantage of at any time. She recently had images from the Frank Lather photography collection made into notecards to be sold at the Grange. The Grange museum hours are now Saturday 11 AM - 4 PM and Sunday, 1 - 3 PM.

Additional items for sale include Daniel Cady DVDs of Frank Lather's slide shows (\$10), Parish and Town, by Mary Fenn (\$15); The Heritage of West Windsor, by Erla Scull (\$10);



WWHS, Frank Lather Notecard collection now

selected Frank Lather Prints, 8" x 10" (\$10); Bean Supper Cookbook, (\$4); and Postcards, (.50 cents). These are great gift ideas for the upcoming holiday season.

On Saturday, July 7th, the WWHS collaborated with SCIP once again for the Annual Bean Supper. The Fireworks lit up the sky on July 3, and the Parade followed on Wednesday the Fourth.



Diners enjoying the ham and bean supper and tasty pies too!

Attendance was down as families headed out for summer excursions, but the volunteers were plentiful and cheerful, and as usual the food delicious. Local families and friends attended 3 different seatings while students from Albert Bridge School helped set tables and serve. SCIP Parents and WWHS members helped coordinate the efforts in the dining hall and in the kitchen.



A big hand to all those incredible dishwashers!

✦ *Tom Kenyon, JK Bodnar*

George Swallow Photographs



The Vermont Historical Society continues to scan and upload images to Flickr from two separate George Swallow collections. You may view the photos at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/vermonthistory/collections/72157627447074443/>. As a way to celebrate the work of our local photographer, George Swallow (1864-1951), while also preserving the history of our town, the WWHS is beginning to plan a series of events, which will allow local community members to help identify and add anecdotes to the references catalogued by the Vermont Historical Society. Feel free to submit your notes prior to these events to: jkbodnar@comcast.net or mail to PO Box 12, Brownsville, VT 05037.

We look forward to hearing from you, as well as seeing you at these events. More information is available online at the West Windsor Town Website. www.westwindsorvt.govoffice2.com/ Look under "News."

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Student (Age 17 or under)... \$5

Senior (Age 65 or older)..... \$5

Regular:

- Individual..... \$10
- Couple..... \$15
- Family..... \$20

Sustaining:

- Individual.....\$25
- Family..... \$50

Patron:

- Individual..... \$100
- Family \$200

Life Member

- Individual \$250
- Family..... \$400

Photographs By:

Jennifer Knight Bodnar

VERMONT JOURNAL, MAY 13, 1865

Why is chess a more exemplary occupation than playing cards?

Because you play at chess with 2 bishops and at cards with 2 knaves.

Spring Newsletter Sponsors

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In memory of the many members who have passed away.

Mary Fenn

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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED