



# Merrimack Historical Society

Summer 2011

News From the Schoolhouse

## Merrimack's Boston Post Cane Holder: Madeline Bennett

Merrimack has the tradition of honoring its oldest resident, who has lived in Merrimack at least 25 years, with the Boston Post Cane. The current holder, Madeline Bennett, led our town's Independence Day parade as Grand Marshall. She was accompanied by several of the other cane applicants. They all rode in a Conestoga Wagon at the head of the parade.

The cane was one of the 410 distributed in 1909 by the editor of the *Boston Post* newspaper. It is made of ebony with a gold head and was handmade, intended to be presented to the oldest residents of the many towns in the *Boston Post's* readership area.

After being missing for many years, Merrimack's cane resurfaced in 1996. The cane recipient now receives a replica, and the original is kept in a display case in the Town Hall. Mrs. Bennett will be the speaker at the November meeting of the Merrimack Historical Society.

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Merrimack Historical Society  
 520 Boston Post Road,  
 PO Box 1525  
 Merrimack, NH 03054  
 603-880-4343  
[www.merrimackhistory.org](http://www.merrimackhistory.org)

### Officers & Assignments for 2011-2012:

- President – Anita Creager
- Vice President – Debra Bult
- Treasurer – Nancy Pease
- Corresponding Secretaries – Ruth Liberty & Barbara Watson
- Recording Secretary – Cynthia Memmen
- Membership – Lynda Tomasian
- Facilities – Phyllis Heaney
- Research – Janice Brown
- Consultant – Lexi Keef

### Meetings:

The Merrimack Historical Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the society building at 420 Boston Post Road. During the winter, meetings are at the Merrimack Library (see schedule next page).

### Membership:

Membership is on a yearly basis. Dues are collected in October for the coming year.

- Individual - \$15
- Family (two persons from same household) - \$25
- Seniors (age 60+) or Youth (under 16) – \$10
- Life Membership - \$100 (for Seniors), or \$150 (for those less than 60 yrs old).
- Business/Professional Membership - \$50.00 (includes an advertisement in each of the quarterly newsletters and recognition in our membership lists).

## Who Was Abbie Griffin?



On Saturday, July 23, our own author, Ruth Liberty, held a book signing for her new book, "Who Was Abbie Griffin?" at the Merrimack Public Library. Many people in Merrimack have asked

who Abbie was. Ruth, having been prominent in the creation of Abbie Griffin Park, performed a great deal of research, then published this booklet. These biographical publications are on sale at the Historical Society for \$3.00.

## Recent Society Activity

Our headquarters building is open from 9-12 AM each Tuesday and Wednesday, and 6:30-8:30 Tuesday evenings. There is no charge for members, or for the general public, who come to tour, perform research or just reminisce. There is plenty of work to do for anyone with time available. Our regular hours will be held until Thanksgiving, when we close for the winter months. Our monthly meetings will then be held in the Merrimack Public Library.

We've had a lot of volunteer work done in the past year. Eagle Scout, Jason Downing built a storage shed, made to look like an outhouse, and a faux-well in our front yard. Eagle candidate, Nathan Pelsinski is replacing our signs, landscaping the area and re-installing our flagpole (that fell during Hurricane Irene). Tom Creager is scraping, priming and painting the exterior of the building. Brian Bradish provides free plumbing services to turn on and off our water for the winter season.

## President's Corner

We've had a busy summer without formal monthly meetings. In June we held our traditional program planning night with pizza and drinks. In July we hosted Madeline Bennett in the Fourth of July parade. In August we visited the Hudson Historical Society in the Hills House. What a place! We envy them. We were open three times a week all summer, and had many visitors.

Thanks to our volunteer, Cathy Walter, we have begun entering our books and artifacts into our new database, which was provided by Lexi Keef. Janice Brown is designing our new website, so we are entering the modern age with our past history.

### Fall-Winter Presentation Schedule

On *September 20* we will host Dwight Damon at our monthly meeting. He will speak of his "Merrimack Memories."

On *October 18* we host the editor of Yankee Publishing, who will speak about the "Old Farmer's Almanac."

On *November 15*, Madeline Bennett will present "As I Remember Merrimack."

On *December 20*, we'll hold our Holiday Party at a local restaurant. Suggestions on location, etc. are welcomed.

During the winter we will meet at the Merrimack Library, with Janice Brown speaking about Genealogy, Steve Wood presenting "A Talk with Abe Lincoln," Glenn Knoblick on "Brewing in NH," George May presenting a talk on the "Souhegan River Watershed," and Chuck Mower speaking on "Merrimack River Canals and Locks." February and March will be hosted by the Library with grants from the NH Humanities Council.

## Should You Care About Women's History?

by Janice Webster Brown

*"An old New Yorker cartoon depicts a group of prehistoric women painting images on the wall of a cave. One of the women suddenly pauses in her work and asks: "Does it strike anyone as weird that none of the great painters have ever been men?" This, of course is a parody of the long-held assumption that all prehistoric art was created by men. Why should we assume this, when we don't even know why this art was created, much less by whom?" [Website: Women, Art and Gender: A History by Jeannie Shubitz]*

I recently read that "even today, in one typical sixth grade history book, only 7 out of 631 pages talk about women." Doesn't the absence of women's history in our text books, and in our lives, send the same misinformed subliminal message about who painted that cave art?

If we focus solely on women, giving them special treatment, we always take the chance that by doing so we simply reinforce negative attitudes. Some will question that the accomplishments of women probably are not significant if we have to research so hard to discover them. How can we possibly reinforce that the story of women is an integral part of both national and local history when the current text books, and historical presentations, continue to focus mainly on the achievements of men?

We don't have to beat the "why history was written that way" question like a dead horse. It is established that traditional historians excluded women because their lives mostly focused on home and family—topics that they did not consider to be important. Another reason for the exclusion was based on the status of women. They had few or no rights—to vote, to own property, to decide their own futures. The bottom line is that history was written

primarily by men within cultures that deemed women's contributions less or insignificant than their own.

Anne Firor Scott, a pioneer historian of American women at Duke University said that *women's history changes the definition of achievement*. Today interpretations of the same history need to focus more on the contributions of women, which are sometimes very different than those made by men. This new focus provides us with a greater and more inclusive view of history.

We know, for example, that during America's wars, despite great hardships, women kept their families together, fed their children, and protected their homes. Their struggles and challenges were different than those faced by many of the men, but were similarly dangerous and challenging. Few of their stories are well known.

As long as we undervalue the contributions of women, we support the absence of women in the history books. By ignoring the problem, we insure that women's current contributions will be ignored into the future.

We have a wonderful opportunity to be inclusive with Merrimack's history—sharing stories of remarkable people of both genders. We cannot honor Merrimack's past without telling the complete story. Then we can take what we learn from both, and continue the journey. Let us make the invisible woman visible.

If you know of a woman who was born or lived in Merrimack, who contributed in her own way to our history, please contact me at the Merrimack Historical Society, send an email to me at [janicebr@earthlink.net](mailto:janicebr@earthlink.net), or call me at home at 603-420-8733. I look forward to hearing from you.

## Society Wish List!

Everyone has one—for Christmas, a birthday, or just to be nice. We are no exception.

### Some items on our wish list include:

- Town Histories of Milford, Hudson and Hollis. (We now have Bedford and Amherst. Many of the local town histories have residents and families who overlap into Merrimack's).
- A projector to work with a computer for presentations, and to show DVDs.
- Donation of internet service for our office, and to assist with research.
- Old photographs and scrap books from the past. Don't throw them out when Grandma dies or your business closes. We often have requests to search such places as the China Village Restaurant, the Merrimack Airport, or the Drive-In Theater. We'd love to get photographs of Ayer's Hall or the Odd Fellows Building. Would you like to add your 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandfather's photo to our genealogy files?
- We welcome the receipt of memorabilia from Merrimack of old; Menu's from old restaurants; certificates and awards from sports teams; veterans; graduating classes and yearbooks; material about major fires or weather-related events; clubs and organizations such as the Fish & Game Club, Odd Fellows and Grange.



**WE NEED  
YOU!**



YOUR AD COULD HAVE BEEN HERE!  
BECOME A BUSINESS MEMBER OF THE  
MERRIMACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

## Did You See Our Resident Foxes?

This Spring we had a family of grey foxes living under our society building. We spotted three kits and their parents. They appear to have gone on to greener pastures now. We checked with the Fish & Game Dept. who recommended that we leave them at the time. Their presence would prevent infestation by mice, squirrels, chipmunks and other rodents.

## Comings And Goings

Do we just sit here waiting for visitors? Not on your life. We have a long list of projects ongoing including:

Volume II of the *History of Merrimack* is in process. Sandy Russell is heading this major project. Many chapters are complete, but a few still need writers. Soon the proof readers will review what has already been finished. Can you write? Can you read? Consider how you can help us.

## Comings And Goings (cont'd)

Anita Creager has been working on Merrimack's "Old Homes" books for five years. She has compiled the "Blue Books" that list all buildings built in Merrimack before 1950, with data on past owners, deeds and descriptions. She is also collecting photos of these buildings, whether standing or not. It is a never-ending project, as new information is continually surfacing.

Research on Selectmen (before the Town Council) by Ruth Liberty; Boston Post Cane holders by Ruth Liberty; Taverns, Hotels and Restaurants by Anita Creager; Physicians of the Past by Anita Creager.

Obituaries are collected by Nancy Pease. We still need a volunteer to index these. Indexing the scrapbooks, listing of duplicate town reports by Lea LeBaron.

Janice Brown has re-designed our new web site. You can visit it at the former web url: [www.merrimackhistory.org](http://www.merrimackhistory.org), or at our free web space located at [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nhmhs](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nhmhs). Be sure to visit and see what is being added daily. Janice is an experience web designer of many sites including her own about Merrimack that she has hosted for 10 years. Now that she is again living in our town, she is also performing genealogical research for us. Thanks to Lexi Keef for providing and paying for the first year of our new domain.

We will be filling the new display case located near the conference room at Town Hall. The first exhibit will feature *Merrimack Home Front During World War II.*

Do you have ration coupons, Victory bond record books, photos of a Victory garden, an Air Raid warden's helmet or armband (or other similarly themed artifacts) that you will loan or donate? Ideas and help with collections are needed for future displays.

We will be at the Merrimack Expo on September 30-October 1, 2011. We will also be at the Knights of Columbus Craft Fair in November. We need help at the booths both times. Contact Anita if you can be there!

We need a volunteer to perform deed research at the County Courthouse. Much is done online, but some needs actual hands-on in Nashua NH.

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### Overheard at the World Volunteer Conference

In response to the observation that volunteers are too often seen as amateurs: *"Just remember: Noah's Ark was built by amateurs. The Titanic was built by professionals."*

Submitted by Susan J. Ellis, President, Energize, Inc.

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