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# HENNIKER HISTORIAN

JANUARY 2020 NUMBER 78

NEWSLETTER OF THE HENNIKER HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

## Henniker Historical Society Board 2019-20

**President:** Kristen MacLean

**Vice President:** Diane Carpenter

**Treasurer:** Ron Taylor

**Secretary/Newsletter:** Ellen Reed

### Members

Susan Adams, Deb Dow, Susan Feltzer

Marc McMurphy, Yolande Nicknair, Martha Taylor

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome 2020

Wishing you all a happy new year and new decade. Quarterly newsletters will now be issued Jan-Apr-Jul-Oct during the calendar year so as not to coincide with the holiday chaos. Our small group of volunteers has been working hard and despite seasonal illness and vacation time, the doors have been open at the Academy Hall.

A great big "thank you" to everyone for making donations to the 2019 giving campaign. We are nearing our proposed goal of \$8500. The holiday cookie and gift sale was festive, successful and made possible by all the wonderful bakers who donated treats!

Best to all~ Kristen



**February 1861:** Walter C Whitney, a native of Henniker, was the railroad conductor of the train the brought Abraham Lincoln from Springfield, IL to Washington, D.C. to assume his duties as president.

## House Histories

Do you live in one of Henniker's historic homes? Have you ever wondered who resided there before you? Then come on down to the Henniker Historical Society and Museum and we may just have the answers!

In our collection, we have a street by street listing of many of the old homes in Henniker documenting some of the previous owners. In some cases, we have more even more detailed histories of historic homes and buildings. Recently, we rediscovered two hand-drawn maps (c.1870s) created by Josiah Childs and Eaton Paige, showing early home ownership in Henniker, which have been reproduced and transcribed with an accompanying key. Could these be the maps Leander Cogswell used when writing *The History of Henniker, New Hampshire*?

These are invaluable resources to those wanting more information about their home's history. Another resource is the following website, A Guide to Researching the History of a House.

<https://www.homeadvisor.com/r/a-guide-to-researching-the-history-of-a-house/>

**We hope all of you history hunters will drop by soon and learn more about the home you live in!**



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## HENNIKER ON TV



On November 22, 2019, Henniker's own Ocean Born Mary was featured on the Travel Channel's new show, *The Holzer Files*, in an episode titled *Legends and Lies*. In the show, the crew revisits a number of places investigated by famed 20<sup>th</sup> century ghost hunter, Hans Holzer. In the 1960's Holzer came and investigated the well-known Henniker landmark, the Ocean Born Mary house that the owners claimed was haunted by Mary Wallace and possibly the pirate who spared her life as a baby. The crew came and interviewed our own HHS president, Kristen McLean (who appears on the show) as they attempted to get to the bottom of the mystery.

The episode itself left a lot to be desired, but Kristen did a terrific job!

## Cookie Sale Success

Thanks to everyone who helped make our 2019 Christmas cookie sale a success! Lots of people kindly consented to bake some delicious cookies of all sorts and plenty of people came by to purchase them as well as some of our gift items, including our newest Cats Meow, Academy Hall (available at the Henniker Historical Society).



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The Historical Society is always in need of volunteers to help us in our mission to preserve Henniker history. No experience is needed! New board members are also needed. So, if you have some spare time you'd like to donate, please contact Deb Dow at 491-6686.

### VISIT US ON THE WEB:

[www.hennikerhistory.org](http://www.hennikerhistory.org)

email: [society@mettelecom.com](mailto:society@mettelecom.com)

### Facebook

### VISIT US AT ACADEMY HALL

51 Maple St

Henniker, NH 03242

603-428-6267

### BUSINESS MEETINGS

Monthly board meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 9:00 am in Academy Hall. Members and prospective members are invited to attend.

### MEMBERSHIP

Your membership expiration is noted on your mailing label. If yours is about to expire please renew to continue to receive the newsletter and support us as we preserve Henniker history.

To renew, send \$5.00 per person (checks can be made out to Henniker Historical Society) along with your name and address to:

**Henniker Historical Society**

**PO Box 674**

**Henniker, NH 03242**

**THANKS TO ALL OUR ANNUAL GIVING  
CAMPAIGN DONORS! YOUR SUPPORT  
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HENNIKER  
HISTORY IS PRICELESS!**

## ITEM FROM THE MUSEUM

### 1914 DOLLHOUSE



In the museum we have a fascinating dollhouse. It is a replica of a typical home of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was constructed entirely by the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students of Miss Lena Merrick.

The students were responsible for creating all the different details both in the construction of the house as well as all the furnishings. The shingles were hand-made, as were the furniture and wallpaper (including a mural in the dining room). The linen sheets and pillowcases were all hemstitched, and the rattan rugs on the floor were handwoven. They even created the pictures on the walls and the books in the bookcases.

Miss Merrick lived in Henniker most of her life and taught in school for many years, including in district schools and Henniker's Central School until she retired in 1917.



Henniker Grade School 7th and 8th grade class Circa 1914. Dollhouse currently on display at the Tucker Library.  
(Row 1) Freda Brown, Margaret Caruso, Evelyn Rowe, Mackenzie Tucker, Mildred Eastman, Dorothy Carland, Deane Morrison  
(Row 2) Guy Hollis, Marjorie Atwood, Roy Lyford  
(Row 3) Cyrus Jones, Florence Parmenter, Margaret Smith, Pearl Sargent, Thelma Whitney, Harry Lyford  
(Standing) Deane Bennett, Lena Merrick (teacher), Howard Savage, Elton Coleman, Harold Tucker.

## ROTARY TAKES MURDER TOUR

The temperature was a balmy 12° F early in the morning of January 23rd as members of the Henniker Rotary club boarded the two small buses, ready to learn about Henniker's first murder on the Historical Society's First Murder Tour. For about 45 minutes, the buses visited various locations around town as Kristen MacLean and Ellen Reed regaled rapt audiences with their tale of the murder of poor Nettie Belle Douglass by Arthur McLean on August 15, 1894. A good time was had by all (except for maybe poor Nettie) and many expressed how much they learned about the history of our small town.

## RAILROAD COMPETITION GETS UGLY

In the 1850's, railroads in the area were being built as fast as possible as people sought to take advantage of open routes. In 1850, the first passenger car of the NH Central RR arrived in Henniker and the route between Manchester and this town became a highly profitable. The Northern and Concord railroads, concerned that if the Central RR extended further to Claremont, NH and to Windsor, VT, it would hurt their route from Bradford to Warner which they also wanted to extend north. Joseph A Gilmore, superintendent of the Concord RR decided to take matters into his own hands to further cripple the business interests of Henniker. According to Leander Cogswell:

*On a bright, beautiful Sabbath morning of October 31, 1858, Mr. Gilmore, with a swarm of hands, appeared in this town and commenced tearing up the rails and track. Before the sun went down, the track from this place (Henniker) to North Weare, a distance of seven miles, was torn up, and one hundred thousand dollars of hard earning of our people was forever lost. This was the most dastardly act ever perpetrated upon citizens of this town. The most damning feature in connection with this affair was, that the very man who had ridden roughshod over the good people of this town, and had taken from them their railroad, was afterwards a candidate for governor of this state and the men whom he had injured felt obliged to give him their votes to elevate him to that position.*



**MUSE** is a multi-group collaboration exploring the impact of the railroad on rural New Hampshire towns and Native American groups across the United States. The goal of this exhibition is for people to look beyond the trains and stations to see the changes in society caused by railroads. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about NH's railroad history, and most of the events are free.

*Receive a free raffle ticket at each event you attend or exhibit you check out and be entered into a drawing to win two free tickets to ride the Cog Railway!!*

Below is a list of the 2020 upcoming events. For more information, check the MUSE website at <https://www.nhmuse.org/current-exhibition.html>

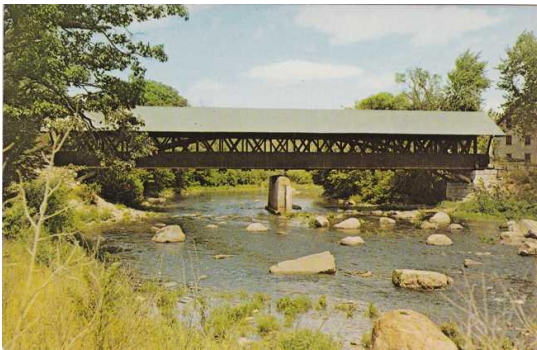
- February 9: **Manchester Locomotive Works**, Penacook Historical Society, 2 pm  
February 21: **Snow Train Talk**, Warner Town Hall, 2 pm  
March 9: **The Flood of 1896 in Boscawen and Fisherville**, 6:30 pm, Boscawen Public Library  
April 9: **Warner's Railroad Stations**: Warner Town Hall, 7 pm  
April 19: **Off the Rails**: Penacook Historical Society, 2 pm  
May 4, **Trains, Commerce and the Mill Yard in Boscawen**, Boscawen Public Library, 6:30 pm  
May 30: **Trunkside Tales: Life on a Circus Train**, Warner Town Hall, 2 pm  
June TBA: **Tour of North Boscawen/Gerrish Area**  
June 4: **Stephen H Long: An Engineer of Rare Talent**, Hopkinton Historical Society, 7 pm  
June 11: **All Aboard: Early Railroads in Henniker**, Henniker Congregational Church, 6:30 pm  
June 11: **Warner's Agricultural and Rural Industries**, Warner Town Hall, 7 pm  
June 21: **The Boston and Maine Railroad Line**, Hopkinton Historical Society, 2 pm  
July TBA: **Canal Fever in New Hampshire and Vermont**, Hopkinton Historical Society  
July 8: **Hopkinton Town Band Railroad themed concert**, Jayne Llewellyn Gazebo, Contoocook, 7 pm  
July 16: **Hotels, Boarding Houses, and Summer Visitors**, Warner Town Hall, 7 pm  
July 23: **The Train Comes to Lake Sunapee**, Sunapee Historical Society, 7 pm  
August 2: **Andover's Old Time Fair**, Potter's Place, 106 Depot St., Andover  
    Lindsey Schust and the Ragged Mountain Band, Andover Fair, 9 am – 2 pm  
    Tommy & Friends Train, 10 am – 2 pm  
August 28: **Running the Railroad – An Insider Explains the Basics**, NH Telephone Museum, 7 pm  
August 30: **Railroad Songs Concert and Sing-a-long**, Lower Warner Meeting House, 1 pm  
September 12: **Davisville Mills Tour**, Davisville, 1 pm  
September 25: **Movie Night at the Telephone Museum** (Murder on the Orient Express, 1974) 7 pm  
October 23: **Warner Railroad History Play**, Warner Town Hall, 7 pm



## HORACE CHILDS, Henniker's Bridge Builder

Horace Childs was one of New England's preeminent covered bridge builders. He was born in Henniker in 1807 and died there in 1900. He began his career as a carpenter and residential house builder until he was convinced by his cousin, Stephen H. Long, to join him in building covered bridges. Long had just patented his covered bridge truss and was impressed by his cousin's carpentry skills. In 1834, Childs undertook his first covered bridge project, constructing a bridge across the Connecticut River between Haverhill, NH and Newbury, VT and using Long's patented truss.

Childs went on to build many bridges, including a bridge over the Contoocook River in West Henniker. Unfortunately, the bridge was lost a few years later in 1852 and replaced by Frederick Whitney, a former employee of Childs. Childs also built the Henniker Lower Bridge in 1843, which burned in 1900, one in Hillsboro in 1844 on the main road between there and Henniker (burned in 1899), and the Rowell Bridge now standing in West Hopkinton, in 1853.



It was during this time that the railroads were spreading throughout New England. With Long's assistance, Childs was able to obtain numerous lucrative contracts to build railroad bridges, and because of the high demand for these rail bridges, road bridges were usually put off until later. In a fifteen year period, Childs built almost all the covered railroad bridges on the Boston and Worcester, the Boston and Providence, and the

Providence and Worcester Railroads as well as all the bridges on the New Hampshire Railroad.

Although he started out using Long's patent, he later branched out using patents of others such as Howard's Spring, Pratts, Burn's, and Town Lattice Patents. He eventually patented his own truss designed to handle heavier rail loads. In 1846, he took on his two brothers to form the firm of H. Childs & Co,

In January 1853, Childs was seriously injured in the same railroad accident that killed Franklin Pierce's eleven-year-old son, Benny. President Pierce, his wife and son were returning to their home in Concord, NH from a funeral in Andover, MA. Shortly after departure, one of the axles fractured, sending the car toppling over a twenty-foot embankment. Pierce and his wife were not injured, but Benny was nearly decapitated and died instantly. Childs was one of several injured passengers. His recovery was very slow, and he never regained the strength to continue bridge work, so he returned to Henniker to live out the remainder of his life and resumed residential building and light farming.

In the Henniker Historical Society and Museum, we have a model of one of Colonel Long's bridges as well as a beautifully engraved business card of the three partners of Childs & Co.

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*Henniker Historian*

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Henniker, NH 03242

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**THE ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN CONTINUES!**



Thank you so much to all of you have donated to our annual Giving Campaign, our one major fundraiser of the year. Your donations are vital to keeping Henniker's history alive. Having visited a fair number of historical societies around the country, I am constantly amazed at how much our small Historical Society and Museum has to offer. From the artifacts in the museum to the thousands of historical photos we are working hard to preserve and digitize, our Historical Society is a goldmine of information. If you haven't visited lately, we urge you to come by Academy Hall and see what we have. In the meantime, if you haven't yet donated, we hope you will show your support in keeping Henniker's history alive with a donation to the Henniker Historical Society and Museum!

*Preserve and Promote Henniker's History*