
HENNIKER HISTORIAN

OCTOBER 2020 NUMBER 81

NEWSLETTER OF THE HENNIKER HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Henniker Historical Society Board 2020-21

President: Marc McMurphy

Vice President/Newsletter: Ellen Reed

Treasurer: Ron Taylor

Secretary: Sue Fetzer

Members: Susan Adams, Diane Carpenter, Deb Dow, Kristen MacLean, Yolande Nicknair, Martha Taylor

Garage Sale Success

Covid has forced us to look for new ways to generate income to help support all the things we do at the Henniker Historical Society and Museum. Recently, we decided to clean house and hold a yard sale. Over time, we find we have acquired duplicates of some items or objects that really have no connection to Henniker. Since our storage space is limited, we decided to sell some of these items. It was a beautiful day and we had a steady stream of customers. Thanks to everyone who stopped by!



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Everyone,

I want to thank Kristen MacLean for her leadership at the Henniker Historical Society. Even though her Presidency has now ended, she continues to put many hours into the Historical Society as do Kristen, Ellen Reed, Sue Fetzer, Martha Taylor, Ron Taylor, Diane Carpenter, Susan Adams, and Deb Dow. It's great to see such dedication and all of Henniker's citizens are the beneficiaries. Here are a few ways we benefit from their work.

Did you know that Ellen Reed just published a book about the first murder in Henniker and that the Henniker Historical Society has a bus tour available about that murder? What about Sue Fetzer's cemetery tour – you would be surprised at the depth and breadth of past Henniker resident's lives. Henniker, at one point had 5 different train stations at the same time. Take a look at the partial exhibit the next time you are in Town Hall. Is your house older than you are? The Historical Society can help research the original building date of your home and you can place an official "circa" plaque on your home noting the date. Mine was built in 1860 – I'm kind of proud of that.

The Historical Society is open Thursdays 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM and the 2nd, as well as the 4th, Saturdays of the month from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Or contact us by email for an appointment requests for information are also accepted. If you are out on a walk, or grabbing lunch downtown, stop by.

Remember, what's past is present at the Henniker Historical Society.

Sincerely, Marc McMurphy

Did You Know?

In 1788, the town voted for the electors of president, vice president and members of Congress for the first time. There were 131 votes. Electors favorable to George Washington received the most votes.

Thanks to everyone who took the time to vote for our 2020-21 board members!

GIVING CAMPAIGN

Every year, we send out letters asking for donations to help keep the Henniker Historical Society and Museum up and running. The Giving Campaign is our primary source of income for the year and is vital to our success.

Just what do we do with your generous donations? We use them to keep the lights and heat on in the building so people can come and research their family history or learn more about the town in our museum. We use them to occasionally purchase pieces of Henniker history that we can't obtain via donation. The funds helped when we had to repair our cupola, and when we had our furnace blowback. An old building is in constant need of repair and upkeep! Your donations are also allowing us to move into the 21st century world of technology by purchasing computers and software so we can digitize our collection of photos and ephemera, organize our data on people, documents and objects, all of which we hope will eventually be available for searching online.

So much of our history disappears over time. People die, taking with them information and stories no else knows. Old buildings are torn down and new ones take their place. Photos get thrown away. It is our job to make sure all that history is not lost. We hope that if you haven't yet donated, that you will consider helping us now with our continuing job to keep Henniker's history alive!



Emails Needed

When you send in your donation, please include your email address. You can also send it to us at hennikerhistoricalsociety@tds.net. We are hoping to eventually make our newsletter digital giving us more flexibility to include even more stories about Henniker and its history. Thanks!

VISIT US ON THE WEB:

www.hennikerhistory.org

email: hennikerhistoricalsociety@tds.net

Facebook

VISIT US AT ACADEMY HALL

51 Maple St

Henniker, NH 03242

603-428-6267

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Monthly board meetings are held the 2nd Thursday of each month at 9:00 am in Academy Hall. Members and prospective members are invited to attend. **(Currently being held via Zoom)**

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



Items from the Museum

WWII “Bom Pail”



The Bom Bucket was designed by the State of New Hampshire for use in air raids and manufactured under the state’s supervision. Wider than average pails, the bucket could hold types of incendiary bombs in use during WWII. State officials pointed out that the wooden pail had the advantage over metal pails as receptacles for sand used in combating bombs because the wood would draw out the dampness collected by the sand, thus keeping the sand dry. Use of wood conserved metal and permitted of employment of over-age men unfit for military service. The bucket carried the slogan “Remember Pearl Harbor” as well as instructions for use.

Needs Assessment Research

The society welcomes newcomer, James Kilgo. James is a graduate student at UMASS - Lowell and will be applying what he has learned toward his degree in Community Social Psychology. James will be conducting a community assessment needs and program evaluation of our non-profit organization over the 2020-21 academic year. Kristen MacLean is serving as project supervisor with assistance from “non-profit manager extraordinaire”, Marc McMurphy.



James Kilgo and Kristen MacLean

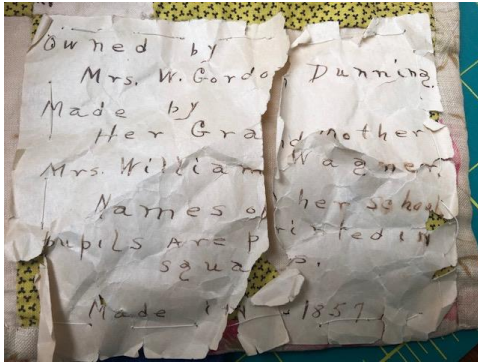
Website Update

Sue Fetzer has been working hard to update our new website at <https://www.hennikerhistory.org/>. There you will find information on our hours, events, research, contact info and more! If you would like to order items from our website, such as Cat’s Meows or any of our wonderful publications, we can do that too! Be sure and stop by for all your holiday gift needs!



A Quilt Goes Home

Recently, Henniker resident, Lorraine Edmunds, donated an antique quilt to the Society, and unlike most quilts, this one came with some hints as to its origin. In one corner of the quilt was a tattered piece of paper with the inscription: "Owned by Mrs. W. Gordon Dunning. Made by her Grandmother, Mrs. William Wagner. Names of her school pupils are printed in the squares. Made in 1857". In many of the quilt blocks were carefully penned names with the date: October 23, 1857.



Using Ancestry.com, we first tried to connect the names to Henniker. When that didn't work, we moved on to New Hampshire in general then Vermont. Eventually, we chose a couple of the more unusual student names and doing a much broader search, finally traced them to Kingwood, Hunterdon Co., New Jersey. During this process, we had the quilt examined by local appraiser, Gerald Roy. Mr. Roy confirmed that the fabrics used in the blocks were correct for the 1850's, but that the blue sashing strips and backing were more likely from the 1870s or '80s. The quilt was constructed using both piecing and applique techniques with parts of the quilt sewn by hand and others by machine. The strong, vibrant colors and clear ink indicated it had never been washed, unusual for a quilt of its age.

We contacted the Hunterdon County Historical Society in New Jersey to see if they would be interested in taking the quilt, since it had no real connection to Henniker. Director David Harding wrote back: "You made Christmas come early for the members of the Collection Committee! We would be thrilled and honored to accept the quilt. Our Kingwood area historian recognized the names and was quite excited about the quilt." Thus reassured the quilt was going to the right place, we carefully boxed it up and sent it to NJ. We hope they will eventually send us photos of the quilt in its new home. This is a perfect example of why it is so important to label and identify those precious items (especially photos) that we leave behind.



Donor, Lorraine Edmunds



Ellen Reed, Kristen MacLean, Susan Fetzer



Backing of quilt and front

Henniker Notable: Francis Lane Childs



When attempting any genealogical research in Henniker, whether at the Historical Society or online, you will come across the name of Francis Lane Childs. Childs ranks among one of the most notable, educated and industrious natives of the town.

Born in 1884 to farmer Richard and Kate (Gutterson) Childs, he was their third child, with two older sisters and a younger brother. He was educated in Henniker including the Henniker Academy and by the age of 16 was himself teaching in one of the country schools. Not yet 18 he was admitted to Dartmouth and graduated in the Class of 1906 with honors in English, French and French Literature. As a summa cum laude graduate, he was the class commencement speaker. He stayed at Dartmouth and a year later obtained a Master's degree and was hired to teach English at the College. Three years later in 1911, he had received a PHD from Harvard.

His professorship at Dartmouth lasted for 45 years during which time he published and presented a large number of papers, and was the recipient of numerous awards. In 1920 he contracted tuberculosis, the same disease that killed his father eleven years earlier, and was sent to Saranac, New York, site of the famous sanatorium for the "cure". He returned to Dartmouth in 1926 and in 1929 married Lella Kelsey, a teacher from Nebraska. They would make Hanover, New Hampshire their home, though his ties with Henniker remained.

An older Henniker resident, Leander Cogswell, instilled in Childs an interest in history, particularly genealogy. Childs became active in the New Hampshire Historical Society, serving a term as president. Upon his retirement in 1954 he searched cemeteries, interviewed residents and placed ads in newspapers seeking information about Henniker history. He compiled his findings including "Gravestone inscriptions of Henniker", "Gravestone inscriptions of Weare" as well as publications for the towns of Bradford, Newbury and Deering. At the 1958 convocation of New England College his speech was "The Story of Henniker" with a printed copy available through the Historical Society.

In 1961 he received honorary doctorates from Dartmouth as well as from his home town New England College. During the award ceremony the speaker noted "we are acutely aware of our mounting debt to you as an historian at large and at heart, and yet we are most mindful that except for the grace of lives such as yours there would be little to celebrate at any time."

Francis Childs celebrated his 88th birthday in grand style with friends and family, including his wife Lella and older sister Anna. He died 8 months later and was buried in the New Henniker Cemetery. His legacy to Henniker is in the possession of the Henniker Historical Society and includes typed and handwritten genealogical notes and anecdotes going back to the original settlers of the town.



Henniker Historian

Henniker Historical Society
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HENNIKER CEMETERY TOUR

Ever wondered about the denizens of our local cemeteries? Now is your chance to learn about some of the most notable citizens buried in Henniker's Old Cemetery! Come hear the stories of people like Ocean Born Mary, who was born at sea and spared by pirates or Edna Dean Proctor, Henniker's famous writer, not to mention tales of murder, the Revolutionary and Civil wars, and much more! Don't miss it this great opportunity to experience Henniker history!

Date: Sunday, October 25, 2020

Time: 4-6 pm

Place: Old/Center Cemetery behind Town Hall

Cost: \$10 for adults, Children under 12 free