

WHS Newsletter

The Marlow Historical Society's Mission is to preserve and illuminate our community's history

Autumn 2014



When It's Haying Time In New Hampshire" By Joseph Feuer

Progress and automation came slowly to the farms on the Marlow-East Alstead frontier, but it eventually arrived. Horses gave way to tractors, wagons were replaced by trucks, and the old mowing machine and horse drawn hay rake became relics of the past, left to rust behind the barn. Tractors now included mowers; side delivery rakes were more suitable for utilizing truck drawn loaders, which in turn were replaced by balers. And in the old cow barn, now called the "milking parlor", electric milking machines were here to stay. In the mid twentieth century farming was gradually replaced by agribusiness.

But on our little farm automation and progress never arrived at all. Milking was done by hand; hay was cut with a horse drawn mower or with a scythe and raked into windrows with wooden hand rakes. It was then tumbled into hay-cocks and loaded onto an old horse drawn wagon with pitchforks and then, after a slow trip over the road to the hay barn, unloaded again by hand with pitchforks.

Through the fifties I spent my summer vacations helping my uncle haying. Our farm consisted of a few severe, rocky pastures, a small upland hayfield, too small for modern harvesting equipment, and the "Meadows". The meadows are known in Marlow lore as the "Burnap" or "Friend" Meadows in recognition of some previous owners. My family acquired them in 1908. The Meadows were a good distance from the main road and accessible only through a winding, single lane little road through the woods on our property. These meadows, located at the convergence of Grassy and Richardson Brooks, comprised some twenty acres and may at one time have been a shallow lake bottom. There were almost no rocks and the soil was extremely fertile. The hay crop growing there was excellent, but getting it harvested was another story altogether. In hurricanes the meadows flooded; in springtime much of it was spongy at best. Only in late summer was the place dry enough to risk using equipment of any weight. And still we got stuck.
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The Late President's Visit by Tracy Messer

Presidential hopefuls frequently lose their way in New Hampshire, but presidents themselves rarely do. As 1912 was an election year, William Howard Taft had decided to spend his vacation campaigning in the Granite State. His itinerary was planned to the slightest detail, or so it was thought.

On Thursday Oct. 10, President Taft was scheduled to appear in the county seats of Newport and Keene. Getting from one to the other required traveling over thirty winding, unpaved miles that passed through the less consequential town of Marlow. As a precaution, the Division Engineer of the State Highway Department, Clarence M. Brooks, was engaged to ensure that the route was ready.

Educated at West Point, the thirty-one year old engineer carried out his task with military precision. After suspending all current construction, he arranged that "Road Closed" signs be posted to detour local traffic. Special word was then sent to the president's driver to disregard the markers and follow the state road to Keene. Furthermore, he stationed men at each intersection to provide directions.

Having personally inspected the entire road that morning, Clarence was satisfied everything was in order. Looking forward to dinner in Keene, the rotund chief executive left Newport promptly after lunch. Mrs. Taft accompanied her husband in a chauffeur-driven touring car, as did a family friend and a top military aide. They were shadowed by a sedan with four secret service men; servants and reporters followed in a third car. Clarence himself took the liberty of leading the procession.

(Continued, page two)

July's Silent Auction a Winner

The July 6 Silent Auction was a great success in many ways. The event netted \$8015.00, which will enable both the Historical Society and the Odd Fellows to carry out much needed work in their two historic buildings: Murray Hall, and the Odd Fellows Lodge. The generosity of the public, both at home and at large, was extraordinary.

It was also very gratifying to see how the Marlow community came together to help. It truly became everyone's Silent Auction.

For the Historical Society this is only a prelude of things to come. Murray Hall's foundation has been stabilized. Already volunteers have come forward to rebuild the front steps and paint the front of the building.

Much important work remains to be done but we are committed to the full restoration of the future home of the Society.

In our last newsletter we posted a copy of a 114 year old photo we found in the archives. It showed a serious young man, a fishing pole at his side, holding his catch. Who was he?

Research revealed that his name was Lucian Daniel Webster, born in 1881 in Black Brook NY, son of Frederick and Winnie Webster. His grandfather, John Webster, was born in England. Lucian had two brothers, George and Paul, and two sisters, Dora and Gladys. His WWI registration card lists him as medium height, medium build, blue eyes and brown hair. He was then working at L.S. Watson Manufacturing - where Audio Accessories is now located - as a laborer. He never owned a home, never owned a car. He did odd jobs. Throughout the years he boarded with families in town: Emery and Stella Knight, and Gayla Langdon. Charlie Strickland remembers that Lucien was an avid fisherman who gave him many a bamboo fishing pole. He was a lifelong bachelor, a solitary figure walking around town. For a time Lucien worked for Elgin Jones, carrying his surveying equipment. Mr. Jones must have thought highly of him, since his will bequeathed "to Lucian D. Webster one hundred dollars; also my Randolph Surveyor's Compass, pocket compasses, all my surveying tools and drafting tools".

Although Lucian D. Webster did not become prominent like Elgin Jones, we value him as well, for he too is part of the fabric of the Marlow community. He died in 1967 and is buried in the Village Cemetery. (research by Maria Baril, Bob Nichols, Tracy Messer, and Pat Anderson)



Lucian D. Webster

("President" Continued from pg 1)

By mid-afternoon the highway engineer approached Marlow Junction, an idle crossroads at the north end of town. Looking back he noticed that a group of ladies had detained the trailing vehicles. "Could suffragettes have bushwhacked the party?" he likely wondered with a nervous chuckle. Anticipating further delays, and thinking of the multitude of well-wishers and of the treacherous hills beyond, the anxious scout continued onward, believing that he'd be overtaken momentarily by the other automobiles.

However, Clarence wasn't the only one to speed out of sight. Seeing that the lead car had passed the intersection, the assigned lookout fled his post to join the crowd gathered in Marlow Village. Consequently, when the motorcade reached the unattended fork, they didn't know which way to turn.

Without a doubt, President Taft's visit was the biggest event in Marlow since Milan Jones and his see-sawing oxen appeared at the 1878 town fair. In honor of the occasion, townspeople had lined main street with American flags. With their wives and children, Democrats, Republicans and Bull Moosers alike stretched from Jones Hall, past the Ladies Aid Society, to the old tannery site. Many had never seen a horseless carriage, let alone its illustrious passenger. The chugging of an approaching automobile attracted instant attention. Excitement mounted. As he drove through Marlow, Clarence Brooks politely acknowledged the expectant onlookers as he hurried along. Like them, he too thought President Taft couldn't be far behind.

He thought otherwise after reaching Keene. By then he was convinced that an enthusiastic reception in Marlow had caused President Taft to fall behind schedule. Recruiting five men, Clarence returned to the village - but not one of the three vehicles had yet arrived. He rushed to a telephone in a vain effort to obtain information. Word spread that President Taft was missing, turning the crowd's disappointment into distress.

Screeching tires interrupted the commotion. Sprinting from their car the secret service men intercepted the distraught engineer. A frantic exchange of words resulted in joint disbelief: each had assumed that the other could account for the missing president.

The agents explained how the party became separated. Their car had had a flat tire and as there was no room to pass or turn around, the third car was also stuck until repairs could be made. Faced with an indefinite wait, the president's appetite reminded him of the late hours. He and his companions decided to venture on by themselves hoping to find a morsel of good will at a nearby farmhouse. Ironically, no one was at home as everyone was waiting for the president in town.

The hope that the servants and reporters had caught up with the president was dashed when their car arrived on the scene. Having come from South Acworth, they too had no idea where the president could be. Clarence decided to organize a search party. It was up to the people of Marlow to rescue the President of the United States.

By the time the wandering president was retrieved from the maze of backroads, the sun had set over Tin Shop Pond; darkness prevented photographing the biggest moment in Marlow's history. President and Mrs. Taft graciously shook hands with the well-wishers who had waited so long. In a parting remark, the three-hundred point stray quipped "I find that the President of the United States cannot travel incognito in this country, especially when he bears certain marks of identification that I do". Clarence was much relieved to discover that though the president had lost his way he had not lost his sense of humor.

After a brief stop in Gilsum, Clarence finally led the president to the Central Square in Keene, where they were received by hundreds of well-wishers. Though President Taft finally reached Keene, he didn't reach his political destination, for he failed in his bid for reelection the following month. At least he could console himself with the knowledge that his loss at the polls wasn't nearly as embarrassing as his loss in Marlow

Tracy Messer (abridged version)

Sadly, with the demise of our one horse, Jerry, who was never replaced, our power supply was gone. From that point on we were obliged to get by with some help from our neighbors. And therein lies the tale.

The Cheplick farm was located just over the town line a couple of miles up the road. In an old farmhouse, surrounded by barns, outbuildings, and even an ice house, resided brothers Mike and Frank and their elderly mother who, like ourselves, were Eastern Europeans. The Cheplick brothers were hard working dairy farmers who were always ready to help their neighbors, but were also up for a good time when the opportunity presented itself. And in the days when DWI was a way of life and half of East Alstead were their friends, haying was a made to order opportunity. To expedite the operation (and hasten the festivities) my uncle and I would help the Cheplicks in getting in their own hay. Once that was out of the way everybody could focus on ours.

The Cheplicks brought with them their Farmall Cub tractor which they taught me to drive, a second hand soda delivery truck whose racks had been replaced with a plank flat bed hay body, their tow behind hay loader, and an old horse drawn hay rake, which the tractor pulled, for making windrows. They also brought along countless cases of beer. We contributed assorted relatives (of dubious farming value) hanging around our farm during the summer, and more beer. So, accompanied by a host of in-laws, outlaws, and various individuals along for the ride, plus copious quantities of alcoholic lubricant, haying in the meadows got underway.

During the week the operation proceeded normally, weather permitting. Weekends were another story. The Feuer meadows were extremely secluded. Still a steady stream of vehicles found their way down there to "visit". And what went on down there stayed down there. Some remained long after the last load of the day came out, sleeping it off in the bushes until darkness overtook them and they beat a rapid return home. Though the meadows are just overgrown beaver bogs now, I'm sure that buried in the mud there remain countless "empties".

Haying on those long ago summer days was an experience not soon forgotten. It was hard work, long hours, but great camaraderie and part of country growing up. In my mind's eye I can see myself silhouetted against the setting sun, standing high upon the load, pitchfork in hand, building that load as the hay drops steadily from the loader and I build it ever higher. And while somewhere on some overgrown stonewall among the trees an old spring tooth harrow rusts away, and the remains of that old horse rake has been turned into a plant hanger, the farmer and his horse are gone. Yet still in my memory I hear Mike singing: "When it's Haying Time in New Hampshire, All the Women Have to Work". He was obviously a male chauvinist. Who knew?!



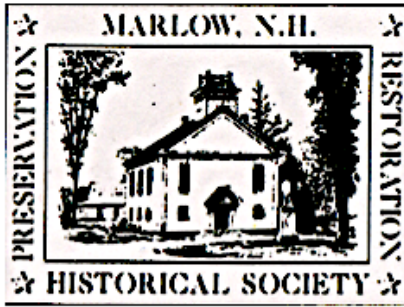
The History of Marlow: October Dinner Meeting

Save the date: on Saturday, October 25th we will have a program meeting at the Odd Fellows Lodge beginning at 5 p.m. with a potluck dinner, followed by a wonderful presentation on the history of Marlow, developed by Tracy Messer with contributions from Loisanne Foster, Mary Blank, and Joanne Thomas. As we eat dessert, we'll review everything from the first settlers on Marlow Hill, to our latest links to the World Wide Web. This program will feature many images from Marlow's past, as well as items from our museum for you to examine. It promises to be a wonderful evening, and you are cordially invited to bring a dish to share, and a neighbor or friend. The Society will provide coffee and tea. If you'd like to be on the set-up committee, please contact Joanne Thomas (446-7421) or Maria Baril (446-2292).



The Marlow Players Return

After an absence of 30+ years, the Marlow Players are back and working on their first production, "Stopped Interrupting". It's a broad British farce and should bring with it laughs and fun! The play is scheduled to be performed on Saturday, November 15th at 7 pm and Sunday, November 16th at 2 pm. Save the date and come! There will be a 50/50 raffle, refreshments, and Marlow Historical Society memorabilia for sale!



Contact Information

Marlow Historical Society Officers 2013-2014

President Joanne Thomas 446-7421
Vice President Maria Baril 446-2292
Secretary Jacqui Fay 446-3602
Treasurer Joe Baril 446-2292

Board Members

Gen Ellis 446-7161
Loisanne Foster 446-7163
Lynne Bailey 446-3450

Board Meetings are often held
the first Thursday evening of the month at
the Methodist Chapel on
Forest Road
all members are welcome!

e-mail: mhsnewhampshire@gmail.com

September Program Meeting at the Chapel

When you drive through East Alstead, you pass a wonderful old mill building perched on the edge of a hill, by a rushing brook, and guarded by an original "gargoyle". Margaret Perry, archivist at the Alstead Historical Society, will present a powerpoint program on "Mill Hollow", as this area is known, and the general history of mills in Alstead, on Saturday, September 27, at 7 p.m. at our Methodist Chapel on Route 123.

After a brief business meeting and our annual Board elections, we will enjoy a dessert potluck, coffee and tea, and Margaret's fascinating look at the history of our next-door-neighbor and its mills and mill workers.

Come out, bring a treat to share, and join your friends and neighbors for an interesting evening!



Members Ed Thomas and Joe Baril are handy with the paintbrushes as they spruce up Murray Hall!