

# MHS Newsletter

*The Marlow Historical Society's Mission is to preserve and illuminate Marlow's History*

Winter 2015



## The Immigrant Experience in Marlow by Joe Feuer

As the nation struggles with the current dilemma of illegal immigrants, it might be interesting to consider another wave of immigration which occurred several generations ago and is unfamiliar to many of us today. Long term impacts of significant events are often difficult to gauge without the benefit of retrospect.

In the final decades of the 19th century and the period leading up to World War I a rumor spread throughout Eastern Europe: "The streets of America are paved with gold!" It was born out of a young generation that saw no future for itself in its poverty stricken, hopeless and often repressive surroundings. The desire for a better life, a new beginning, knew no national boundaries. Fueled by hope, a decade long mass migration to America began.

Families pooled their resources to buy the oldest son a steamer ticket to America and the means to reach the nearest seaport. Some walked many miles to port cities like Bremerhaven or Antwerp to embark. And the passage across the Atlantic, which took several weeks, was no picnic either. Cramped quarters in the hold, meager poor quality rations, lack of adequate sanitary facilities, sea sickness, poor ventilation below decks, and foul weather, all made for a voyage that was far from first class. While there were fatalities and burials at sea, most made it to the ports of entry which were mainly Galveston and New York. In New York the processing center for immigration was Ellis Island located in the harbor. Here new arrivals were held in quarantine to determine if they were healthy and fit and would not become burdens on society. There were medical exams and interviews to determine one's value to the new homeland. There were screenings for glaucoma and other contagious or debilitating diseases. Criminals and the unfit were rejected and sent back to Europe. The whole process might last a week or more. Illegal immigration was discouraged; one could not just walk in and stay.

Whenever possible it was determined who one's sponsor was. Immigrants needed to have some friend or relative who was expecting them, would provide them shelter, help them find a job and acclimate to their new surroundings so they would not end up on the streets. Only then did the new arrivals receive green cards and passage by ferry to the city. Transplanted to America, Eastern Europeans did not speak English when they arrived. With a roof over his head and gainfully employed, the immigrant needed to enroll in night school to learn the new language and

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*We dedicate this issue to a long time friend of the Society, Joseph Norman Feuer (1940-2015). Joe dedicated much of his life to community service through his leadership roles with the Marlow Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, School District, Town Meetings, and in the N.H. House as a representative of Cheshire County District 2. He belonged to a number of civic organizations including the American Legion, having served in the armed forces.*

*His stories were sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant, and always insightful. We are fortunate that several of his recollections of growing up in Marlow are preserved for future generations in our newsletter archives:*

- *Winter 2015: The Immigration Experience in Marlow*
- *Autumn 2014: When It's Haying Time in New Hampshire*
- *Spring 2014: In the Company of Patriots*
- *Winter 2014: Life on a Marlow Dairy Farm*
- *Autumn 2013: A Child's Christmas in Marlow*
- *Fall 2012: A Tinker Tale*



HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR  
MARLOW  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP  
YET??

WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

DO IT TODAY!!



*Marlow Receives LChip Grant at State Meeting in Concord: L/R: Maria Baril, Vice President of the Marlow Historical Society; Doug Cole, Chair of LCHIP Committee; Dijit Taylor, Executive Director of LCHIP; Ed Thomas, Marlow Selectman; Jacqui Fay, Marlow Town Administrator*

## Marlow Recieves Important LCHIP Grant

The Town was informed on December 4 that it had received a grant from the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) of up to \$7,430 to complete a Jones Hall planning study. The purpose of the study is to develop a road map outlining the next steps in the building's rehabilitation, including priorities and preliminary cost estimates for the most urgent, short term needs, addressing building code issues and creating handicapped access in accordance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA).

This project is the first phase of a larger project to fully utilize Jones Hall and preserve it for future generations. It is anticipated that the Town will apply for further grants once the next steps in the building's rehabilitation have been identified.

The Town was one of thirty-six successful applicants throughout the State. In writing the grant, I was able to draw from extensive research on Jones Hall put together by Loisanne Foster.

We are required to raise \$1.00 for each dollar received through LCHIP in cash or in-kind services. For this phase of the project we anticipate this coming from a combination of funds from the Government Building Capital Reserve Fund and community fundraising.

Jacqui Fay, Town Administrator

*From Cold River Journal, Sat. July 14, 1900:*

*"The first automobile ever seen in town put in its appearance on Saturday last. It was built, owned and run by George M. and Charles L. Tinker of Waltham, Mass., who came on a visit to their uncle, Lucian D. Tinker. The automobile was a fine looking vehicle, weighing about 850 pounds, is run by steam, generated by gasoline. It attracted much attention, in fact it was a curiosity. It was on exhibition Saturday afternoon and Monday. Everybody was invited to ride by the genial owner, and very many accepted the invitation and all were highly pleased with their ride, and with the novelty of riding in a horseless carriage."*

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## Murray Hall Progress

Work continues unabated at our Murray Hall. The Board hired Alex Chase in the fall to begin an electrical upgrade. Since this work began, the front two rooms of the Hall have been thoroughly swept, cleaned out, and spackled in readiness for a new coat of paint this spring. This winter, Joe Baril has been lovingly restoring the two original double front door and it will be better than new! Thank you to members Joe Baril and Ed Thomas, together with Barry Corriveau, one of our new Board members, for spearheading all this work.

In the Spring, the electrical upgrades will be complete, and the front rooms will be ready to receive our archives and office materials. Our goal is to clean and re-arrange the big hall to house our collection, a streamlined book sale and gift shop, as well as a multi-purpose room for our town artists, and others who need a clean well-lit meeting space. We were fortunate to receive a new porta-potty, and the rear of the building will be made accessible to all with a newly constructed handicapped entrance.

"How can we afford this?" you might ask. Well, our wonderful community has supported all the fundraisers of 2014: the awesome Silent Auction in July, the wonderful play performed by The Marlow Players, and the Raffle "It's about Time" in early December, as well as our table at "Christmas on the Pond"---they all helped make our progress possible. Even so, we will need more funds to fully repair and repaint the walls and ceiling of the Hall, which are water tight but visually decrepit.

In order to purchase and install appropriate ceiling fixtures this spring, we are reaching out to you, our Historical Society members and friends. The main hall will need four light fixtures. Each will cost approximately \$200. We would b grateful for donations made specifically to "let there be light" at Murray Hall. These can be given in memoriam or in honor of someone special. There will be a small plaque in the building to publicly thank each donor and honoree. To participate, send your donation marked clearly for "Let There Be Light" to our mailing address: PO Box 12, Marlow, NH 03456. Thank you for your generous support!



Come enjoy "The Gathering Place"  
Marlow's Own "By Donation" Coffee  
Shop!

Every Saturday Morning  
(weather permitting)  
At the Chapel  
9-11:30 a.m.

prepare for citizenship. The city provided free classes; all that was needed was a willingness to learn.

Once settled in and employed, the new arrivals would begin to set aside funds from their meager salaries in order to purchase steamer tickets for other family members still in the homeland waiting to make the trip here to join them. In this manner, over the course of several years, entire immediate and extended families were able to immigrate to America and establish themselves in a new life.

The new immigrants represented a wide cross section of ethnic and national origins, each with their own language, customs and traditions. Most remained in large urban areas, creating enclaves based on country of origin. It gave them a sense of security in new surroundings. But a small number sought more outlying locations, and here my story begins.

My father's two older brothers came first. They arrived in New York from Poland in the first decade of the twentieth century. It would appear that their early endeavor was as furriers. Seeking a location outside of the city where they might procure fresh furs or pelts, they saw a real estate add in a Jewish language newspaper concerning property, including an old farmhouse, in NH. Here, during the winter, they would be able to find trappers, purchase skins and then transport them back to their shop in the city for processing into finished garments. Fur coats and hats were obviously in vogue back then. They came, they saw, they liked, they purchased. In 1908 integration came to Marlow.

In a short time the brothers were able to send for their father who joined them. He was a tinsmith by trade and set up shop in the Lower East Side of New York, which was then predominately Jewish, where they maintained living quarters. Their lifestyle, however, was somewhat different. While most who could afford it took vacations at resorts in the Catskills, they sought the tranquility of their farm in Marlow. In time they managed to finance passage for two more brothers, teenagers actually, to also join them. These two in turn became printers. The Lower Eastside had numerous little printing shops as copiers had not been invented yet. Type was set by hand and these were good entry level jobs for young men who could read Jewish and other European languages. However, they also seemed to be spending much of their spare time in Marlow.

On a warm summer morning in June of 1910, amid the smoke and ashes from a coal burning locomotive, my father descended from a Boston & Maine passenger coach at the Bellows Falls railroad station. He had been part of the final segment of his family to cross the Atlantic, accompanying his mother and 13 year old youngest brother to America. He alone had been reluctant to leave the old country; though only 18 he had employment and was content with his lot. Perhaps he really didn't believe the nonsense about the streets paved with gold. But his mother and her minor child could not travel alone so he consented to escort them here, intending to return home at his first opportunity.

His older brother was expecting him and met the train at the depot (which still exists) with the horse and buggy to carry him to the farm in Marlow. As he rode across the river and what lay ahead, a passing traveler called out "Happy Days" in greeting. Though he spoke no English then he never forgot that greeting.

The Badger farm, which his brothers had recently purchased in Marlow and which had become family headquarters, consisted of the old farmhouse facing a large barn across the road, surrounded by a number of acres comprised of hilly pasture land, some mowing, woodland, swamp and, of course, rocks and boulders. It was traversed by Grassy Brook. It was not prime agricultural land but it could serve as a marginal family farm. And this it did for the next fifty years as various family members tried their hands at farming with limited results, the fur trade and printing endeavors having fallen by the wayside.

My father never returned to his old homeland. While his siblings had been perfectly willing to import him under the circumstances, they felt under no obligation to ship him back. So he worked and waited. The advent of World War I dashed all hopes of ever returning. The Europe of his childhood and youth ceased to exist; there was nothing remaining there. So he stayed, learned English, acquired a trade, eventually becoming a naturalized American citizen in the courthouse in Keene long before I was born. He was very proud of that. In 1916 he and one of his brothers purchased the Flagg farm on Bakers Corner Road directly opposite my current residence; a few years later he transferred his interest in it to another of his brothers. He had tried farming, and then moved on to machine shops and other occupations in other parts of the country.

When I arrived on the scene the brothers were all middle aged men. The two oldest had already moved west and I never saw them except in faded photos kept in dusty trunks. Regarding my father and his three younger brothers, who either lived in or stayed connected with Marlow, their activities and lives were a major part of my childhood and formative years. They were all aware of prejudice which they felt always existed on some level; it had been very real in Europe. It culminated in the Holocaust during the Second World War and they realized that, had they remained in Europe, they would have perished.

But they were in America, in Marlow for the most part, in a far less restrictive, far more open society. They needed and wanted to fit in. So they all learned to speak English, became citizens and voted, attended and participated in town meetings with their neighbors, joined the Grange, raised and sold their farm produce, had families, grew old, and eventually moved away and died elsewhere. But they never really assimilated; never completely abandoned the culture of their youth and first homeland. None of the brothers are buried in Marlow. Still one, to commemorate his time here, donated some of his property as a state forest so his name would be noted by future generations as a living memorial to himself, his wife and his time here.

Had the brothers remained in New York, in their ethnic neighborhoods, they would have been undistinguishable. Their mother lived for over thirty years in those surroundings without ever learning English. She saw no need. But in Marlow they stood out. Their accents alone made them noticeable as being of foreign origin, though I never noticed it. Sometimes they resorted to their native language to communicate privately in front of company including myself. Though rude, this was a common trait of their generation and background. Their lives were hard but really not so different than their neighbors.

In the evenings they sat around their kitchen tables in the light of smoky kerosene lamps listening to the news on their battery powered radios as the world descended into darkness and another war far more tragic than the previous one.

The brothers lived through a transition period in America, the era between the two World Wars and beyond. Their sons attended the local schools, including Vilas and eventually UNH. With the outbreak of World War II some served in the armed forces and returned home as full participants in the fabric of America; children of immigrants but native Americans.

The farmhouses the brothers had occupied, the fields they plowed, their joys and sorrows, their very lives here are gone and passed into almost forgotten memory. But for me giants from another land once trod the earth in Marlow.





**Marlow Historical Society  
2014-2015**

**Officers:**

*President:* Joanne Thomas  
*Vice President:* Maria Baril  
*Treasurer:* Liz Thayer  
*Secretary:* Erin Handy

**Directors:**

Joe Baril  
Barry Corriveau  
Carol Reardon

**Our web email:**

[mhsnewhampshire@gmail.com](mailto:mhsnewhampshire@gmail.com)

**Our current website:**

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

## Meet Our New Board Members

We are happy to have four new Board members this year! Carol Reardon is serving as a Director. She recently moved to Sand Pond from Walpole with her husband Ed. In Walpole she served as Treasurer of the Walpole Historical Society, while working as a tax accountant. Now that she is retired, Carol is "pleased to have the opportunity to be involved with Marlow's history!"

Barry Corriveau, our next new Director, recently retired from UNH in the field of clinical laboratory medicine and pathology, lives here with his wife Barbara. He has many history-related interests, including crafting reproducing 18th and 19th century furniture, and he is also a member-at-large.

Liz Thayer, another relatively recent resident of Marlow, is our new Treasurer. She "wants to give back to Marlow" by serving the Society, and looks forward to learning more about our "lovely village".

Joe Baril, active in Marlow community life for many, many years, has stepped down as Treasurer, and now is serving as a Director. We thank him for his faithful service!j

Erin Handy is serving as our new Secretary. Erin moved to Marlow a year ago, and she and her family agree they are "Marlow Lifers!" She describes herself as "an artist of many mediums" and as having a "passion for anything old and forgotten."

We are indeed most fortunate to have such talented, dedicated, and enthusiastic people on our leadership team. Thank you for your willingness to serve!



### What Is It?

*This item was commonly used in New England homes from the late 1600's to the mid 1800's.  
(submitted by Barry Corriveau)*

**Send us a Postcard with the answer and win an Odd Fellows Breakfast on us!!!**