

# MHS Newsletter

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

## "Madcap May" Yohe, the Hope Diamond, and Marlow

I have learned many things about Marlow since moving here a little over a year ago. One of the most fascinating is the story of May Yohe, which I first heard after joining the Marlow Historical Society. I wonder how many people know of the link between our town and the famous "Hope diamond," or blue diamond" now on display at the Smithsonian. The link is May Yohe, a famous stage star of the "Gay Nineties." (continued pg. 3)

Spring/Summer 2015



Main Street and Murray Hall, Marlow, N. H.

### Important Meeting June 28th!

Join us at Murray Hall on Sunday June 28th at 4 p.m. for a Finger Food Potluck Meeting, where we will vote to approve the updated by-laws enclosed with this newsletter. You can also check out the newly re-plastered and painted "office" area in the front of the Hall, and the soon-to-be installed light fixtures that we have purchased.

After dinner, and voting on the by-laws, we will discuss the next steps in our Murray Hall renovations.

The society will provide beverages, plates, napkins, and silverware. You should bring a finger food to share, plus a folding chair (our supply is limited).

As you will see by reading the updated by-laws, the changes are quite minor, and designed to simply update according to our current practices. If you have any substantive questions about the changes, please contact one of the Board Members at least two weeks before our meeting.

You All Surely Have Read the Fascinating Life Story  
**"THE HOPE DIAMOND MYSTERY"**  
IN THE SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER  
RETIRED BY MISS YOHE  
COME AND SEE HER IN PERSON  
**EXTRAORDINARY**  
THE WORLD'S RENOWNED JEWEL COMPANY TALK OF  
THE HOPE DIAMOND  
**Miss May Yohe**  
(HERSELF)  
FORMERLY  
**LADY FRANCIS HOPE**  
RETIRED BY MISS YOHE  
**"IN SILK ATTIRE"**  
and Produced by May Yohe  
ENGAGEMENTS: FEBRUARY 28-29  
**STRAND THEATRE**  
For 1 Night Only  
Wednesday  
February 28  
In Conjunction With the Special Feature  
**William S. Hart**  
—IN—  
**"John Petticoats"**



## Gathering Place A Success!

Marlow's very own coffee shop, "The Gathering Place," held every Saturday morning in the historic Chapel on Forest Road in the Village center has proven to be a boon to the community.

Although it is the brainchild of the Marlow United Methodist Church, all community organizations have been sharing this great opportunity to meet fellow Marlowites. Each week it is hosted by a different community group and the proceeds are dedicated to that group's worthy cause. For our Historical Society, that means our work in Murray Hall, among other great projects. We will be sponsoring The Gathering Place every 4th Saturday, and we need the help of every interested member! You can bake, you can take a turn making the coffee and serving, and you certainly should come out for a "cuppa" and a morning nosh.

## Fact or Fiction?



Although the Curator of Circus History at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota has not been able to offer anything definitive to confirm them, rumors have persisted through the decades that an elephant is buried on Marlow Hill. In the late 1980's

Don Landroche mentioned to Tracy Messer that longtime Marlow resident Joe Feuer once said there was indeed an elephant buried up there. Could it be true? Stories handed down suggest that such a thing could actually be possible....

This is an excerpt from Cal Cameron's story "Triumphal Days of Marlow Hill," which was part of his bicentennial publication, *Marlow, NH 1761-1961*:

*Between musters, the great field was used for traveling carnival events. Years later, an old Alsteaad resident told how, as a boy, somewhere around 1840, he went with his family to Marlow Hill to see Lady Betsey, an elephant which was exhibited there. In those days such a thing was a great curiosity. Their trainers drove them from one village to another and people came from miles to see them.*

*People took their fun much rougher than they do now. The old man recalls how, for a modest fee, the trainer let us many clamber on the great beast's back as he could find the space to cling there.*

*"Now," said the trainer, "show the folks how the ship rolled when you came from Calcutta." According to the old man, Lady Betsey slowly swayed from side to side, rolling and rocking back and forth more and more till she had toppled them all off. It was considered great fun by all those who got bumped, nursed their bruises without thought of bringing damage suits for injuries they sustained.*



## Murray Hall Project Updates

Members of the Marlow Historical Society have begun renovating Murray Hall. Last year the building foundation was repaired and new electrical wiring installed. The front of the building was also painted by members Ed Thomas and Joe Baril.

Currently Ed and member Barry Corriveau are repairing plaster and painting in the building foyer and the small side room, while Joe is restoring and installing the original double front door. The foyer will be used as an area to display some of the Society's collection, while the small room to the right will be used as our new office.

Plans for the next phase include:

1. Installing mid-late 1800's reproduction hanging chandelier lights in the main hall, reproduction lanterns of the front of the building on either side of the front door and other lights as needed in the building to meet safety codes. These have been purchased.
2. Repairing and painting the balcony above the entry foyer. This will be used to house additional Historical Society items.
3. Restoring and hanging outside shutters. We have ten of the original shutters for the large windows on the two sides of the building. Barry restore these and hand craft six additional matching shutters.

Long-term renovation projects that will require major fundraising are those for the repair and painting of the main room's plaster ceilings and walls. This will be a significant and expensive restoration. Bids are being requested from individuals experienced in historic building plaster so we can have accurate cost estimates.

## "Madcap May" Yohe, the Hope Diamond, and Marlow (continued from page one)

The Marlow Book Club recently selected the biography "Madcap May: Mistress of Myth, Men & Hope," by Richard Kurin as their April reading selection. The book mentioned little about May's time in Marlow--six sentences on page 201 to be exact. Kurin states as follows:

*In 1923, they [May and current husband John Smuts] opened an inn in Marlow, New Hampshire called "The Blue Diamond," catering to tourists visiting the White Mountains. [sic] The place included a modest house for the couple and an inn on 600 acres of farmland wooded with sugar maples. Smuts did the cooking, offering South African dishes quite rarely sampled in the United States. May was the hostess and manager. But, as if to prove the bad luck of the Hope diamond, after which it was named, the inn burned down the following November. Arson was suspected; the fire was thought to have been set to cover up a burglary.*

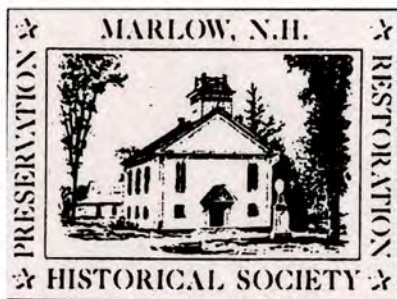
Though the book is limited in its coverage of May's time in Marlow, it does provide an interesting snapshot into this period in history, the theatre world at the time, the story of the Hope diamond and the complicated person who was May Yohe. In her younger years, her singing and acting skills were highly praised and she rubbed shoulders with most of the stage stars of her time. She had a larger than life personality, spoke her thoughts with a generous amount of profanity, and was a favorite target of the gossip columnists. She was married a few times--it is unclear just how many--shot one husband, faced maternity claims and escaped from an insane asylum to which she had been sent. During tough times she helped run a chicken farm in Los Angeles and during the Depression she scrubbed floors in Seattle. Though not always a likeable person, by the end of the book the reader likely develops a certain respect for her ability to survive while holding her head up high.

Because now you're probably asking "so what the heck did she have to do with the Hope diamond?" I'll give away that part of the book. In 1892 May met Lord Francis Hope of England. He took an interest in May and her career, providing her with considerable support and a bit of the good life enjoyed at that time by the titled British. They married in 1894 as her career was thriving on both continents. After a series of legal battles, Lord Francis had inherited the famous diamond, which May, as the prospective Duchess of Newcastle, claimed to have worn on several occasions. Later in life she had a replica made, and she did wear this in performances as part of an attempt to resurrect her career. Lord Francis continually lived beyond his means and he ultimately lost both May and the diamond. For the story of what happened to the Lord and the rock, well, I guess you'll just need to read the book. It will soon be available at the Marlow Library.

Carol Reardon



left to right: May Yohe at the height of her career around the time of her first marriage to Lord Hope; May in the beginning of her stage career; May on stage during the 1920's during one of her many "comebacks" to raise funds. Images from flickr, wiki, and lafayette.org.uk



Marlow Historical Society  
2014-2015

**Officers:**

*President:* Joanne Thomas  
*Vice President:* Maria Baril  
*Treasurer:* Liz Thayer  
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Who *were* these gentlemen ?  
Another Marlow Mystery from our archives....