

MHS Newsletter

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

Spring/Summer 2018



How "Tin Shop Pond" Got Its Name

In this edition of the MHS newsletter we are happy to feature the work of Tracy Messer, prominent local historian and expert on all things "Marlow", writing on our beloved Tin Shop Pond.

Perhaps there's no more iconic view of small-town New England than the reflection of the Odd Fellows Hall, Methodist Church and Jones Hall on the surface of Tin Shop Pond. Though the namesake building is long-gone, the products and the people who made them are well-worth remembering.

The Tin Shop was built in 1855 for Orville Franklin Mack (1829-1888), and stood on the water's edge adjacent to the present-day Methodist Chapel. The "Stove & Tin Shop, O.F. Mack" appears on the 1858 village map. Later that year Mack sold the business to James Harvey Fisher (1829-1894), who, according to the town history, "did an extensive and profitable business during the Civil War."

In 1869, Perley Edmund Fox (1833-1929)[pictured above] purchased the tin shop from Fisher and operated it for nearly fifty years along with a succession of business partners and leasing agreements. The 1877 village map shows that the tin shop was owned by P.E. Fox and occupied by Lyman Cram (1842-1891) and Edmund Henry Sargent (1849-1933) for some years. According to Cheshire County historian Alan Rumrill, "In 1880 the company had four employees who worked nine and one-half hours a day and produced \$3,000 worth of products." The "P.E. Fox Tin Shop" appears on the 1892 village map, the same year Fox sold the business to Clarence E. Morrison (1867-1934). Clarence was an enterprising young man who grew up in Marlow and was the younger brother of Frank E. Morrison (1865-1949), whom the New York Times hailed as the "Dean of New York 'Ad' Men." Drawing upon the marketing expertise of his brother, Clarence sought to expand the regional business to a nationwide clientele.

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"Talking Machines" in Marlow

When Brandon Little says "I just collect record players"...don't you believe it!

On a cold, grey January afternoon last year, Ed and I had the delightful experience of a walk back in time, courtesy of Brandon and his fascinating collection of early "talking machines" – phonographs that speak of a simpler time. Brandon is one of those special people who have a passion to collect and tinker—in the best sense of the word. A modest man, you may be more familiar with his machine shop on Forrest Road in the village, or with his lovely cows that produce the delicious raw milk that many of us relish. But Brandon is an avid collector, and Ed and I had the pleasure of seeing and hearing the fruits of his many years of finding and restoring these important machines.

Can you imagine the stir which the first phonograph caused in Marlow? We don't know who brought one to town, but we do know that it might have been in the 1890's, when the first machines had beeswax cylinders. You would be able to record your own music, and with some special shavers, you would be able to re-record on the same cylinder, until you literally ran out of wax. It seems most likely that by the turn of the last century, Marlowites would have had what we think of today as one of the classic "morning glory horns" machines. Neighbors from far and wide certainly would have come into the parlor to hear this marvelous new invention, a "machine that talks." Brandon has many many examples of this type of machine, which he has collected and restored over the years.

(continued on insert)

Brandon Little and one of his many "Talking Machines"



TALES FROM THE MUSEUM

The Phelps of Marlow

Located at the junction of Baine Road and Cross Street, Phelps Pond has huge historical significance for the town of Marlow. A storm in the summer of 1995 badly damaged the dam and considerably reduced the pond's size and depth. Since neither the present owners nor the town could afford to replace the dam to meet state standards, the lovely body of water where townspeople used to fish and ice skate is now, sadly, only wetland. In the early nineteenth century, however, the pond and surrounding area were bustling with activity. The original dam was built in 1815 to provide power for a fulling mill, and became intimately connected to the Phelps family, woodworkers for three generations.

The clan descends from Luther Phelps, who came from Leominster MA around 1796, and settled in Stoddard's Leominster Corner, at "#1 Grassy Brook". His son Calvin, (1798-1861), who became the most prominent, married Sally Fox of Fox Hill and they had seven children. Through the years various members of the family settled in Marlow in the area around the pond, which became known as Phelps Circle or Phelps Square. The brook, pond and hill were named after them as well. Calvin was a skilled cabinetmaker and his sons Elbridge and Freeman joined the family business. A major Phelps industry later on was the manufacture of wooden hand rakes, which was carried on for at least two generations.

Elbridge Phelps, (1836-1914), served the town of Marlow as deacon of the Christian Church, and town officer. He was perhaps the last of the clan to operate the hand rake shop, which sat on the pond that powered his mill. Another one of Calvin's sons, George (1825 -1904), lived in the house that his father built in 1848, at 24 Cross St., across from the pond. George was a carpenter, served as Marlow Selectman, and was Marlow's representative to the State Legislature in 1892. His children, Henry and Mary, attended the Marlow Academy.

The younger Phelps generations showed the same dedication to the town of Marlow as their forebears. Henry married Clara Agnes Grant, and it was Agnes who, in her will dated Feb. 14, 1927, bequeathed to the town of Marlow the funds to build the Soldier's Monument which stands in front of Jones Hall.*

Mary married Frank Gilman (James Burnap's nephew) and went to live in Medford, MA. Their daughter Audrey (Gilman) Benson became an accomplished dancer and dance instructor. When she retired from teaching she and her husband Cecil moved to Marlow, to live in the same house where her mother had been born and raised. Audrey became an active and popular member of the Marlow community, playing the organ in church, and putting on shows for Old Home Days and other occasions. A program for a Red Cross flood relief fundraiser held in Keene on August 31, 1955, in which Marlow personalities reprised their Old Home Days variety show, names Audrey Benson as having "conceived and staged" the dances.

Sara Phelps, one of Elbridge's daughters, was a Marlow school teacher for many years. She became blind later on, but was known to knit mittens for the children in town every winter. Sara Phelps lived at 26 Baine Rd, which was then called Phelps Hill. Calvin, Sally, Elbridge, Mary, Sara and other family members are buried in the Marlow Village Cemetery. The Phelps name itself is now gone from Marlow, but as David Proper wrote for the Sentinel in 1971: "*People who know and respect Yankee ingenuity and craftsmanship remember and appreciate the talented, industrious family that helped make of Marlow a source for fine furniture and useful household tools.*"

The Marlow Historical Society is fortunate to have in our museum several important items from the Phelps family, most of them donated by Mrs. Ruth Huse of Keene, great-granddaughter of Elbridge and Harriet Phelps.

Among others:

- Hay rake stamped F. {Freeman} Phelps.
- Spinning wheel made by Calvin Phelps c. 1840. It is stamped C. Phelps Marlow. The wheel went on loan from the Society to be part of a Handmade Cheshire County Furniture exhibition organized by the Historical Society of Cheshire County in 1996.
- Chest of drawers, plank seat rocking chair, and other items that belonged to the family.
- Several miniature photos of members of the family.
- Photos of Mary Phelps, George's daughter, with her dog Prince (Prinny) and her horse Nellie. We even have the silver collar that Prinny wore, and Nellie's stirrup and bit!

**See our Winter 2014 newsletter.*

Below: George S. Phelps and his wife, Mary Jane Applin Phelps in their garden;
At the bottom of the page: the Phelps Rake factory with unknown woman



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The Marlow Historical Society also has several related objects on display in its museum, Murray Hall, including photographs, catalogs, and one of the tin shop's signature product, the Granite State Evaporator. This was a stove, designed and patented by Perley Fox, that was used for processing maple products. Much of what we know about the business comes from an 1897 illustrated catalogue of sugar makers' supplies. The Granite State Evaporator Company was established 1875. (See photo of the building to the right, on the left of the white Temperance Hall).



Frank E. Morrison served as the company's president, and C.E. Morrison, as vice president. While the factory was located in Marlow, Cheshire County, the main office listed was, no doubt, the same address as Morrison's advertising agency: 500-504 Temple Court, New York City. The thirty-three-page publication listed prices for various sizes of the steel arch cooking stoves as well as for dozens of sugar-making accessories: evaporating pans made from tin, copper or galvanized steel; thermometers; syrup cans; sugar pails; skimmers; scoops; sap spouts, buckets and covers; storage tanks and smoke stacks. Additionally, the catalog provided useful information regarding the design and construction of a sugar house and tips on "Practical Maple Sugar Making" written by Marlow historian, Elgin Alonzo Jones (1852-1939). Over 50 testimonials were contributed by customers from New England and beyond including New York, West Virginia, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Indiana. The Granite State Evaporator was well-received in the town of Plymouth, Vermont where it could have been used by the future 30th President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, who was an accomplished sugar-maker himself.

Under the management of the Morrison family, the prospects for expanding the Granite State Evaporator Company seemed sweet. In 1896, Clarence Morrison mortgaged the tin shop property to Col. George Albin Petts (1840-1923), who owned the neighboring Forest House hotel. Two years later, Clarence and his wife moved to Albany, New York, much to the dismay of Marlow residents. Business was booming in the spring of 1898 when it reported: "'We have just received an order for five hundred galvanize seamless steel coal baskets for the United States Navy. We will, no doubt, receive orders later on for many thousands, as they are to be used on board naval vessels for coaling purposes.' This is as high an endorsement as a company can receive, as the government does not experiment with goods that are not first class." In his absence, Morrison placed Arthur Merton Davis (1870-1943) in charge of the factory, a position he held until 1903. Then, for some unknown reason, fortunes changed. Perhaps, upon the end of the Spanish-American War in August 1898, the federal contract came to an end as well. In 1905, Col. Petts acquired the Tin Shop property through foreclosure. Three years later, he resold the property to Perley Fox and Herbert Nelson Flagg (1881-1920), and, in 1915, Flagg sold his interest in the business to Fox, who by then was 82 years old.

In the end, the Granite State Evaporator Company went up in smoke, figuratively and literally. The tin shop was completely destroyed on August 20, 1916 in a devastating fire that burned the entire north side of Main Street. The building was valued at \$500 and the contents at \$1,200. Regrettably, there was no insurance. Though the tin shop is long gone, it is not forgotten.

The art and business of sugar-making continues in Marlow to this day. Among those who are keeping up the tradition are: Guy and Becky Elliott, Grassy Brook Maple Products; Gary Levesque and Dave Davis, Old Barn Sugaring; and Karen Asseng, Ruffled Feathers Farm. If any readers may have, or may still be using products manufactured by the Granite State Evaporator Company, please let us know.

Become a Sponsor!

The Society is fortunate to have a growing number of documents, pictures and artifacts in our collection at Murray Hall. Unfortunately, the significance of any one of these items is often lost. Without a story, priceless objects may regrettably be deemed worthless. Reclaiming a story requires detective work - asking the right questions in order to find the right answers. Only then can gathered facts be crafted into a story through writing, fact-checking and editing.

It can take the equivalent of an entire day to write a single article although, once written, a story lasts forever. Putting the STORY into HISTORY requires time and expertise. That's why we are seeking sponsors to support our "Tales from the Museum" column.

Our first sponsor, Attorney Pamela Little, has been a Marlow resident since 2002, and has her own law office in Keene. She has been a member of the Historical Society for many years, and served on its board. She is currently a member of Keene Kiwanis and has long been active in community service. Pam and her husband, Dr. Jason Little, are both interested in history and historical artifacts. She tells us: "I look forward to the articles and wonderful stories in each issue of the Historical Society newsletter, and congratulate the Society for all its efforts in preserving Marlow history."

If you are interested in sponsoring an article, or becoming a contributing writer, please contact us.



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Ed and I learned that it didn't take too long for the technology of the phonograph to change from the earliest models. Soon, the large trumpet speaker was replaced by an internal speaker, 'tho one could control the sound of the early models by inserting a cotton ball into a speaker to modulate the volume. Wealthy customers soon had dozens of models to choose from, and many makers, such as the familiar Edison, but also the Victrola and various European models.

There's a lot to know about the early models. We learned that one had to change the needle every time one used a record-player! Edison tried to find a solution to this problem, and created a system with a diamond stylus, and 1/4" thick records. Of course, this phonography was prohibitively expensive. Commonly, phonographs were much simpler. They consisted of components that could be switched out, and eventually, phonographs became either large, decorative furniture-type pieces, or small portable models that one could take from room to room, or pack along for summer vacation.

The mechanical aspects of these machines, fascinating as they are, don't even compare to the SOUND of these players. Brandon played us a record by Helen Kayne, the original "Bette Boop" girl. The song, "I Want to Be Loved by You" was astonishingly clear, and highly entertaining! We spent a whole afternoon, cozy by the wood stove, enjoying the sights and sounds of record players that our grandparents would have grown up with. The fruits of Brandon's lifetime of collecting are wonderful to experience. If you ever run into Brandon in town, ask him about his collection! Who knows, someday we might persuade him to demonstrate his machines for the Society!

Joanne Thomas

THANK YOU, LCHIP!!

Marlow has been awarded a \$102,253 grant from the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) to support its efforts to rehabilitate and preserve Jones Hall. The first step was a Historic Building Assessment report that was completed in July 2016 with the aid of LCHIP funding. With the new grant, the town aims to bring Jones Hall up to modern day building code requirements, and also address structural and moisture issues.

The project will focus on fire and safety matters; ADA deficiencies; and structural issues, such as upgrading the second floor joists, verifying and repairing steeple lean and wall settlement, and addressing thermal and moisture recommendations that include sill repairs.

The NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program awarded \$3,600,000 this year. The forty-two recipients are spread all across the state, from Littleton to Nashua and Westmoreland to Star Island. Thirty-five very different communities will benefit, from tiny Langdon (population 689) to Nashua (population 87,551). LCHIP's \$3.6 million will be matched by more than \$11 million in funds from other sources. Grant amounts range from under \$4,000 to \$390,000.

Grant recipients include twenty-nine historic resource projects for buildings representing nearly two centuries of New Hampshire history, from 1769 to 1967. They include two rare remaining railroad buildings and the first monument in the country dedicated to women's service in both military and civilian roles. The thirteen natural resource projects selected for grants will ensure permanent protection of 2,100 acres. Seven farms will be protected and available for current and future food production. Other parcels increase the protected acreage on the sides of popular Mount Kearsarge and Crotched Mountain.

We are very appreciative of LCHIP's investment in Jones Hall. With this award the town will be able to fully open the Hall for public use and reinstate it as Marlow's cultural center. Jones Hall is at the center of the Marlow Historic District and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.





A BIT OF MEMORY

The year was 1948 and there was an auction at the Henry Mosher place. I was 11 years old and I went to the auction with my mother. I had over a dollar with me that I had saved from my allowances, and I was a serious bidder. I liked tools and gadgets and had put together a kid's workshop in our barn. I won the bid on a box of odds and ends (junk) including a large drill bit.

I still have the bit and owe it much for the many holes it has made and the memories it serves me with.

Towards the end of the auction they auctioned off the house, and there were two main bidders: Charlie Strickland and another man whom I did not know. Charlie was newly married to Frances Perham and he won the bid. There was applause when he won, and that said so much. Marlow wanted the Stricklands to live there. And they did live there, raising three boys.... and Charlie still lives there.

I'm old now and sometimes can't remember things. But each time I use that drill bit I am reminded of the auction when Charlie bought his house.

Don Winham



**This is the 1988 Baseball Team sponsored by PC Connection, which in those days was headquartered right here in Marlow. Left to right: Back Row: Sarah Avery, Joy ?, Lisa Raynes, Jennifer Avery, Tanya Berge
Middle Row: Jason Candello, Nate Maslowski, Ronald Karvosky Jr., Eric Draper, Gary Kenyon, Jason Peate, Jeremy Hamilton, Richard Knight
Bottom Row: Zach Cline, Shawn Berge, Richard Champney, Tim Candello, Seth Sharon, Jeremiah Pratt, Josh Conley**



**Marlow Historical Society
2017-2018**

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From Charlie Strickland comes this story:

On a chilly fall days two fellows were walking over the old wooden bridge in town, which was later replaced by the steel and concrete one across the Ashuelot on Route 10. One fellow was carelessly tossing a hammer into the air and catching it. At one point his hand slipped and he accidentally tipped his hammer into the water below - where the youngsters still dive from the bridge on hot summer days.

“I’ll give you fifty cents”, he said to his companion, “if you jump down there and fetch my hammer.” In those days fifty cents was worth having so the other fellow stripped off his shirt and dove into the chilly water. After coming up empty- handed several times, he finally crawled up on the bank with the hammer.

“Now”, he said, “I’d like my fifty cents.”

“Aw, I was only kidding about the fifty cents,” said the other.

“All right, then. You can get your own hammer,” said the diver, as he flung the hammer back into the Ashuelot.”