

# Newsletter

of

## The Lunenburg Historical Society, Inc.

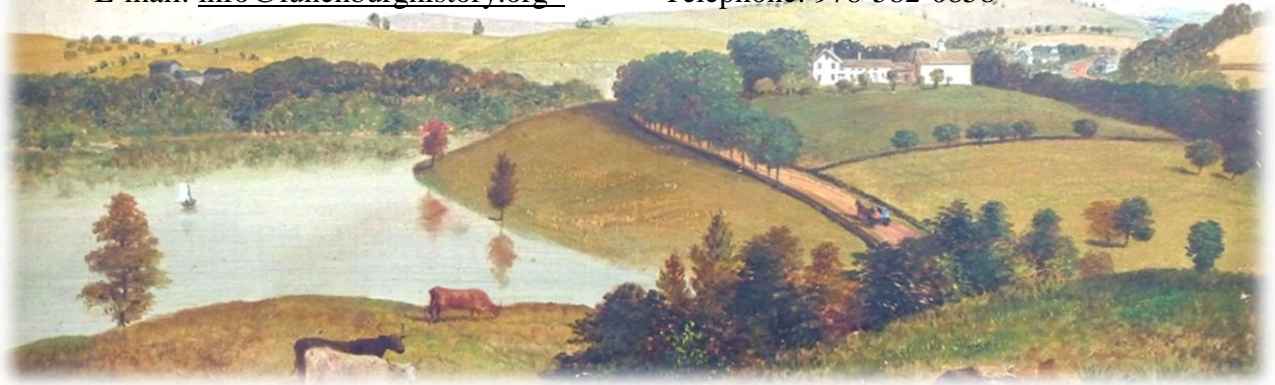
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December, 2017

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### Outstanding November Program

Members were treated to a very entertaining, educational presentation November 2, when Eric M. Howe, Ph.D. took on the character of the Reverend Ebenezer Kinnersley as he presented a reenactment of Kinnersley's 1751 presentation at Faneuil Hall, Boston, exploring the effects of what was then referred to as the "Electrical Fire" produced by an electrostatic generator.



Using an electrostatic generator he crafted, Dr. Howe demonstrated the effects of static electricity with a number of devices he has reproduced, causing hanging leaves to rise up; paper figures to dance and levitate; using a glass rod to pick up scraps of paper; causing a circle of attendees with joined hands to suddenly react simultaneously from a static shock, and later, causing a lady's hair to stand.

Our own electrostatic generator was on display. Since it was a different style of machine, Dr. Howe explained its operation. He confirmed, from the design of its discharge tools, that it had been originally used for medical purposes by a doctor prior to its use in Lunenburg's schools from 1906 to 1912.

## Message from Our President

I hope that you are all doing well as winter and the holidays approach.

Your Lunenburg Historical Society has been keeping busy since the last newsletter was published. In particular, I want to let you know about some of the activities that we have done in collaboration with other local organizations.

In October, we held a joint event with the Lunenburg Agricultural Commission. This event coincided with the Farmer's Market and included craft and yard sale vendors, live music, free hay rides and an antique tool display. The weather was not fully cooperative, to state it gently, but it was still a fun day.



In November, Cub Scouts from Lunenburg's Pack 1728 visited the Historical Society. The emphasis of their visit was on our tool and map collections.

Kevin, a high school volunteer, is working on a project to produce a show for Lunenburg's Public Access Channel. The show will revolve around the Peabody shoemaker's bench that was discussed in the previous newsletter. Kevin is doing background research on the use of such a bench which will be a great help in properly displaying it.

We recently acquired some wonderful pieces as a generous gift from the estate of Nancy Bigelow. Among the pieces was a beautiful mirror with a back-painted image of the Kendall Tavern in Leominster. We offered this piece to the Leominster Historical Society. They were very pleased to receive it. When I brought the mirror to them, I had a great tour of their building. We discussed the possibility of events involving both Historical Societies.

I feel very strongly about the importance of continuing to work with other organizations in the area. Such projects, in fact all projects, require planning and preparation. As a small volunteer-only organization, we are always looking for more help. If you would like to become more involved in your Historical Society, please let us know. We would be very happy to have more members share their interests and talents with us.

Chuck Venezia

# A Cattle Show in the 1880's

As remembered by Edna Adams

From Curator Jennifer Sanderson's forthcoming Cabinet of Curiosities



“An early start was necessary if one wished to take in all the features of the old cattle show. A half hour and sometimes much more was consumed driving a farm horse from the far side of the town to the center where the cattle show was held each year under the direction of the Lunenburg Farmers' Club.

“As the village was neared, belated farmers were passed; some driving carts containing calves, pigs, sheep, or poultry; others leading uninterested, or very reluctant cows.

“Early comers drove to the horse sheds in the rear of the Congregational or Methodist Church; later arrivals, or those not owning sheds left their horses at the Revere House or Eagle House stables, or in the barn of some accommodating citizens nearby.

“In the square, fences or pens had been erected. Later, each pen would contain a horse, colt, pony, sheep, pigs, cows or a bull. The poultry, pets, sometimes a guinea pig, sometimes a fox, raccoon or porcupine were exhibited in cages arranged in tiers against the north end of the pens.

“The pens were made of squares lumber, and were very strong. The rails fitted into slots in the heavy posts. These provided excellent footing for children who wanted to climb for a better view of the animals inside and were willing to risk a pig or calf nibbling the toes of their shoes.

“The first feature of the morning was the plowing match held in some fertile field not too far from the village; to start at 9 am.

“The Marshall of the day was James Hildreth II, riding a large black horse, he led the way to and from the events. Next came the Lunenburg Cornet Band with director Steve Tyler. The band, playing as it approached and left the field, was followed by the contestants and spectators.

“After this, a drawing match was held in the street near the square, then a tug of war. A ball game was played in the field off two rod road.

“The band played at intervals during the day. Some years a concert was given in the Congregational Church, followed by a speaker.

“A horse race was held in the afternoon; the contestants being farm horses, and the course the road from the town hall to the other end of Main Street.

“The lawn of the Congregational Church was taken up with tents and stands where sandwiches, doughnuts, coffee, and lemonade were sold, also hot roasted peanuts; from a booth bags of popcorn were sold- a prize in every package. This booth also displayed pins, bracelets, and the most fascinating strings of beads.

“An express wagon would be driven onto the lawn; the horse removed from the shafts and tied under a tree for the day while the owner, with the wagon as a platform, harangued his audience to buy six 'fine linen' handkerchiefs for only a half dollar, some cooking utensils, or a cleaner and polisher that would clean about anything in the house with an extra surprise thrown in as a special inducement.

“Candy and fancy gadgets were sold at a stand where the purchaser who held the right number would receive a wax doll. Vendors of balloons and small whips followed the crowd; whips with a whistle in the handle, and balloons that oft escaped from the hands of their new owners and rose to the clouds. Vendors also disposed of long horsewhips, shiny black, maroon, or yellow. These were smart looking enough to adorn any Concord buggy, Democrat wagon, or top carriage.

“For the exhibit in the upper hall, long tables were filled with plates of beautiful apples, pears, peaches, plums, grapes, and fine vegetables. Larger vegetables, such as squash, pumpkins, and melons were on benches on the sides of the hall. Other tables held a great variety of canned goods and home cooking, while others held fancy hand works. Around the sides of the hall were hung many beautiful quilts and crocheted bedspreads.

“At noon dinner was served to the hungry in the lower town hall, or sometimes in the church vestry; a boiled dinner with baked beans. Those less hungry might be satisfied with a lunch at one of the booths on the lawn, or buy from a baker's cart- gingerbread, raisin buns, doughnuts and cookies were plentiful.

“The cattle show ended only when it became time for the cows to be returned to their stables for milking, and their owners to begin their evening chores.”

As told by Miss Edna Adams. A delightful recollection of our town in the 1880's.

## Treasurer Reports “We’re in the Black.”

We recently finalized the financial reports for the fiscal year ending 6/30/17 and they were presented to the Board of Directors at our last meeting.



In summary: At the beginning of calendar 2017 we had a solid cash position and made the decision to invest some of our funds through the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts. The CFNCM prides itself on being a "trusted steward of ...charitable assets" and we have so far been very pleased with the decision to seek out a more forward thinking option. The return was much healthier than the Workers Credit Union CD we have traditionally utilized.

We were also able to leverage a very generous grant from the George R. Wallace Foundation to invest directly in the building and purchase some badly needed replacement windows. Our main meeting room has been converted

into resource room and bookcases added to house some of the archives in a more user-friendly space.

We presented well attended quarterly meetings at the Lunenburg Library, offered our annual 3rd grade tour, participated in the Town Stroll and hosted a 50th Anniversary celebration in July 2016, all at minimal cost. Overall operating expenses came in 3% over budget but were offset by recurring support 10% over expectations. Copies of the report are available upon request.

The Lunenburg Historical Society appreciates the generosity that allowed us to make the FY2017 very successful. We look forward to continuing our mission of providing a place to preserve our shared history and interesting programs to disseminate the information we have gathered. Please stop by or email any time, the Society belongs to all of us and feedback is welcome!

Kimberly Maki, CPA, M

## What's New

By Bill Tyler, Acquisitions Chair

### BEAM FROM LUNENBURG'S FIRST TOWN HALL

Lunenburg's first Town Hall was built in 1839 by Franklin S. Francis, Great Grandfather of Margaret Harley and Edith Proctor. It was located where Peterson's Market was, between the current Post Office and Lunenburg Village. When the current Town Hall was moved to its present position in 1867, the former Town Hall was sold to Major Ephraim Jones.

Ephraim Jones was a Major in the Militia and also a Selectman in 1830, 1834, 1859 and 1860. He moved the former Town Hall to his property on Main St. to use as a barn. The Jones House as it is called is still standing, but the barn there is probably not the original. The Jones house is located between the Teen Center and the former Methodist Church.

Another famous and interesting fact about the property is that Luther Burbank purchased 17 acres of land from Major Ephraim Jones in 1871. His mother and sister moved here from Lancaster at the same time. Luther spent several years in Lunenburg, conducting experiments which resulted in the development of the world famous, Burbank russet potato. He then moved to California where he could successfully carry on further experiments. In 1877, his mother and sister sold the house and lot to George Ephraim Jones, the Major's son and also moved to California.




Needless to say, we were very excited when a hand- hewn beam from Lunenburg's first Town Hall was donated to the Society. It is available for all to see as you enter our building. Simply look up over the set of doors entering from the vestibule.

*Within this season of Holy days for all religions and the entry of another new year, our staff wishes everyone a merry and happy Christmas or your special Holy day, should it be other, and a healthy, happy 2018.*



*We thank our sponsors for their contributions to help defray the costs of producing this newsletter. Please consider them for products and services you are contemplating purchasing.*



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