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# NEWBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## Newsletter

### Volume 17, No.1

### Spring, 2020

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### ***The Edmund Burke***

#### THE HARD LUCK SHIP

By Deane Geddes

In 1876 the Woodsum brothers, Frank, Daniel and Elias, moved from Harrison, Maine to Sunapee, New Hampshire and entered the boating business with their newly built *Lady Woodsum*. The *Lady* was 50 feet long and towed a trailer barge for freight. Her crew of three could handle 75 passengers comfortably.

The *Lady's* success and the growing summer population on Lake Sunapee attracted the interest of local entrepreneurs. A Newport/Sunapee syndicate was formed and brought George A. Manson from Massachusetts to build the *Edmund Burke*, named after a prominent Claremont lawyer who had developed the Burkehaven shore on Lake Sunapee.

The original *Edmund Burke* was 87 feet long with a 23 foot beam. It had a double deck and carried 500 passengers. The steamer was the second one on Lake Sunapee and the only important competition for the Woodsum brothers. The syndicate spared no expense in making its maiden voyage memorable. The high point of the launch was to be the firing of an old civil war cannon. As the crew readied to fire a grand salute, the cannon exploded and wounded several of the crew. It was not an auspicious start.

The cannon mishap proved to be an omen for the career of the *Edmund Burke*. When the owners arrived at the waterfront to fit a new propeller,

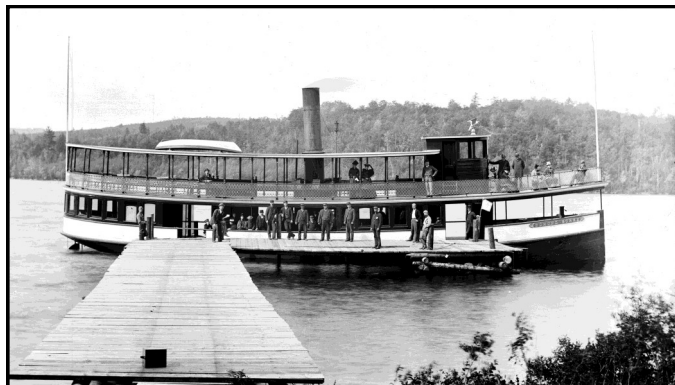
they found their steamship resting on the bottom of the lake. They engaged a salvage crew from Boston to come and raise their vessel, only to find it on the bottom again the very next morning. The entire task was repeated.

During the construction of the *Armenia White* at Lakewood Manor in 1887, the crew of the *Edmund Burke* enjoyed cruising close to shore in order to entertain themselves by shouting cat calls at the men building the new steamship. Their cries of "That old pile of junk will never float!" rang in the air as they drove the *Edmund Burke* squarely onto a submerged boulder.

The ship's troubles continued. In 1891 it went onto a reef at Lakeview. It took the entire crew, the paper company steamer and a group of boys from nearby Camp Sunapee to tow the *Edmund Burke* off the reef to the beach. The steamship was repaired and enlarged to 90 feet. It was later sold to the Ben Mere Hotel before being purchased by George Blodgett.

In an attempt to get rid of the jinx, George re-named the ship *Wenonah* after Hiawatha's mother in Longfellow's poem "The Song of Hiawatha." Still, George was said to complain bitterly about not having enough time to pump out the *Wenonah* twice a day.

The *Wenonah* sank just off Lake Avenue at Blodgett's Landing after a period of neglect during a failing business period. On July 4, 1906 it burned to the waterline. Locals termed the fire suspicious. There she rests today.



## Report of the Board of Directors

The Newbury Historical Society had an interesting and educational series of meetings over the past year, including a morning hike on an abandoned section of the historic Old Province Road, which was the main road in the 1770s between Boscawen/Concord and Fort No. 4 at Charlestown. Using the same road General John Stark and the New Hampshire militia took during the Revolutionary War, we began near the Angel Hawk subdivision at the intersection of Old Province and Nelson Hill and walked west on the now class 6 road passing the cellar hole of the Shaw family and ended at the intersection of Cheney and Old Province Roads.

We conducted a boat tour of the steamboat landings on Lake Sunapee where Deane Geddes talked about summer life on the lake and the role of the railroad, steamboats and grand hotels. We also visited the Twiss, Gillingham and Simons cemeteries.

At our annual program in September, storyteller Jo Radner presented "*Family Stories: How and Why to Remember and Tell Them.*" Participants practiced finding, developing, and telling their own tales. This program was made possible by a grant from the New Hampshire Humanities program.

The Town History Committee continues to explore the feasibility of writing the town's first comprehensive history from the 1700s to the present.

The History Committee meets the second Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the Community Room of the Town Offices. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend -- you don't have to be a member.

Board meetings are currently held the second Thursday of January, March, May, September and November at the town office at 2:30 p.m.

Board of Directors: Paula Falkowski, Ashley Geddes, Deane Geddes, John Lyons, Gay Sheary, Bill Weiler and Margie Weiler

Contact Information:

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A granite marker from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources was placed in front of Sherman Hall last summer to commemorate the three historic buildings being added to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places. The buildings in South Newbury are the Old Town Hall, Sherman Hall and the Sunapee Lake Grange

## Elections in the Past

### *He's Got My Vote*

*By John Lyons*

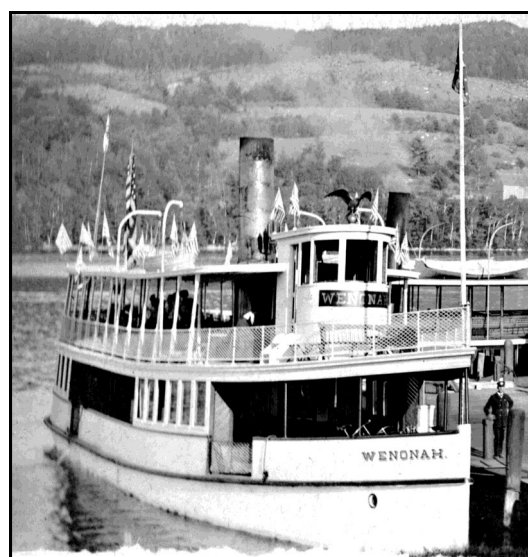
In colonial times, elections happened in person, and may not have included a ballot. Instead, men would travel some distance and often voted by voice votes for the candidates for town, colonial legislatures, etc.

Voting day was a day to celebrate and the candidate who served some rum, beer, or wine often took the prize. George Washington biographer Dennis Pogue, Vice President of Preservation at Washington's home of Mount Vernon, reveals that the father of the nation lost his first campaign in 1755 to the Virginia House of Burgesses largely because he didn't supply the rum as was a common practice called treating the voters.

Washington learned his lesson. When he ran again in 1758, he "treated" and rolled out the booze: 28 gallons of rum, 50 gallons of rum punch, 34 gallons of wine, 46 gallons of beer, and two gallons of cider royal — nearly enough for a half-gallon per voter.

### *He Didn't Get Newbury's Vote*

In 1892, the Newport *Argus* newspaper reported: "Col. Jeremiah Morse who was 90 years of age last Dec., we think deserves passing notice. Mr. Morse has been a carpenter and has framed and help raise between 400 and 500 buildings, among them 12 meeting houses and several mills, also finished six of the meeting houses. He has also held many offices. He was elected one of the selectmen of the town in 1831 and 1833. The reason he was not elected in 1832 was that he did not see fit to treat, which was then against the law."



Enlarged, refurbished and renamed, the *Wenonah* sits at dock at Lake Station.

## Newbury Historical Society Annual Meeting and Program

Sunday, September 16, 2020  
2:00 p.m.

Newbury Town Office

Thomas M. Hardiman, Jr. presents:

### **MONEY, REVOLUTION, AND BOOKS: A multi-generational perspective on the Portsmouth Athenaeum's Library of John Fisher of London**

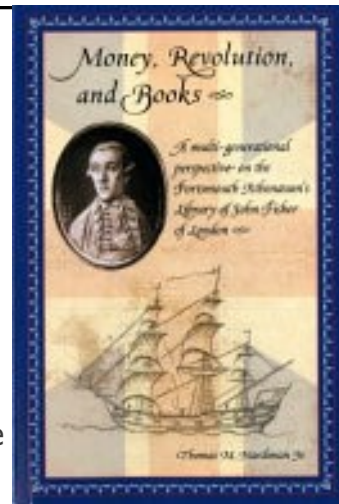
John Fisher's name appears in many history books, but his story is not in any of them; he is only mentioned in passing. His story exists in fragments in hundreds of books and letters like an encrypted message. *Money, Revolution, & Books* recombines those fragments to decode the significant hidden history of the Fisher family.

John Fisher, Sr. was Naval Officer for Portsmouth, Newbury, and York, then Collector of Customs for Salem, and Under Secretary of State for North America near the close of the Revolutionary War. After the war he was a high-ranking bureaucrat in the British Excise Office. More importantly, he was the "fixer" for the Tory Wentworth family, using his unique status as a British official allowed by statute to hold and sell property in New Hampshire to rescue much of the family's wealth and property seized in the war.

Fisher and his son, John, Jr., used family connections to acquire vast wealth and estates on both sides of the Atlantic. His daughter Sarah married the wealthiest merchant in New Hampshire, James Sheafe. Sarah was a major benefactor of the Portsmouth Athenaeum throughout her life, donating valuable books and paintings, and arranging for the gift of her brother's important library in 1829. Her son, John Fisher Sheafe, married millionaire heiress Mary Lenox of New York and helped his brother-in-law build one of the world's greatest libraries.

The Fisher name figures prominently in the Town of Newbury's history. In 1772, Governor John Wentworth renewed a land grant under the name *Fishersfield*, for his brother-in-law, John Fisher.

Thomas Hardiman Jr., Keeper of the Portsmouth Athenaeum, has more than 30 years of experience in the museum, library, and historic preservation fields. He has been Athenaeum keeper since 2000 and was previously curator of the Saco Museum. In addition to museum administration, Mr. Hardiman has significant experience with the management, exhibition, and conservation of art and artifact collections and with the sensitive conservation of historic buildings.



**ALL...ABOARD!**

MUSE 2020  
EXHIBITS & PROGRAMS  
NHMUSE.ORG

## The Newbury Cut

by John Lyons

July 21, 2020 @ 10:00 a.m.  
Bradford Historical Society's Tin Shop  
West Main Street, Bradford NH



John Lyons, a member of the Newbury Historical Society, will present a slide show about the Concord to Claremont Railroad line. The Bradford Depot was the last Concord stop from 1850 to 1870 while the Newbury Cut was being blasted. The climb of 100 feet per mile is almost impossible for a train. Ten thousand cubic feet of granite rock at the Newbury Summit barred the way for 20 years until 1870. Learn about how the impossible became only difficult.

This presentation is part of the MUSE (Museums Sharing Experiences) collaborative "All Aboard! Economic, Social & Environmental Change During New Hampshire's Railroad Era." Many historical societies that had depots along the railways are participating.



Newbury Historical Society  
P. O. Box 176  
Newbury, NH 03255

**Test your knowledge of Newbury and New Hampshire history with these puzzlers.**

1. At the time of Newbury's founding, who was the Governor of NH?  
a. John Fisher                      b. John Adams  
c. John Wentworth                d. John Hay
2. The current fire/police station or Safety Services building was built in 1985. What happened to the previous one?  
a. It was moved to South Newbury  
b. It was moved to Blodgett's Landing  
c. It was dismantled  
d. It burned
3. What is the oldest building in town still standing?  
a. South Newbury Church  
b. Cilley Tavern  
c. Center Meeting House  
d. Schroeder Farm on Gillingham Dr.
4. When the Bly Hill development was done in the 1990's, what building was demolished?  
a. Knollwood Inn                    b. Cilley Tavern  
c. Lakewood manor                d. Pine Cliff Inn
5. The Concord & Claremont Railroad reached Bradford in 1850. When did it reach Newbury?  
a. 1855      b. 1861      c. 1867      d. 1871

6. The development of highways and motor transport contributed to the railroad decline. What year was the track to Newbury removed?  
a. 1964    b. 1974    c. 1934    d. 1954
7. In the years before motor transport, Newbury had schoolhouses in many districts. How many schoolhouses were there in 1878?  
a. 5            b. 9            c. 13            d. 2
8. John Hay was a famous summer resident of Newbury. What was his occupation?  
a. Abraham Lincoln's secretary  
b. Ambassador to great Britain  
c. Secretary of State  
d. All of the above
9. Mt. Sunapee opened for skiing in 1948 with three trails, two rope tows and a chairlift. Which of these areas offered the first lift access skiing?  
a. North Peak                      b. Egg Beater  
c. Province                         d. It's gone now
10. The first road through town connected the Merrimack River and Fort # 4 (now Charlestown) on the Connecticut River. What was it called?  
a. Turnpike # 4                    b. Toll Road # 4  
c. West Road                      d. Province Road