

# Henniker's Boston Post Cane



In what started out as a gimmick to attract readership, the Boston Post newspaper initiated one of New England's favorite traditions. In 1909 the Boston Post, established in 1836, sent out a specially manufactured cane to 700 towns in New England, including Henniker. They requested that the Town Selectmen present the cane to the Oldest Citizen of the Town. Upon the death of the recipient the cane was to be passed to the next Oldest Citizen, remaining always in the possession of whoever was the Oldest Citizen.

In the early years the Citizen's name was printed in the Boston Post along with a picture of the recipient and the selectmen. The Boston Post ceased business in 1956, but the tradition of awarding a Boston Post Cane has continued in Henniker and in at least 500 other towns. Henniker Selectman determined that in addition to being the Oldest Citizen, the recipient must have resided in Henniker for at least 5 years, must remain in residence for more than 6 months in any one calendar year but did not need to own property. While the original Boston Post Cane was designated for men, in 1947 women were eligible.

Henniker's original cane is kept in the town vault. Today a replica is awarded and one that the recipient is allowed to keep. The Henniker Historical Society is charged with identifying the oldest citizen and presenting the nomination to the Board of Selectman. As of 2020, 29 Henniker citizens have held the Boston Post Cane, including 15 men and 14 women. The longest the cane has been held by one citizen is Ethel M. Searles who was the Oldest Citizen in Henniker for nearly 13 years when she died at the age of 103.

The present holder, Lois Lorraine Nutting Fitch was born on May 21, 1918 in Gilford, New Hampshire. Lois married Clarence Fitch in 1940 and they lived at the top of Depot Hill in Henniker. They relocated to the "Fitch House" on Bridge Street in 1945 and in 1970 to Hall Avenue. Clarence was the 23<sup>rd</sup> Henniker recipient of the Boston Post Cane in December 2007. Lois currently lives with her son on Rush Road. Lois was presented with the cane on May 21, 2019, her birthday, at the age of 101!



Lois Lorraine Nuttig Fitch, current holder of Henniker Boston Post Cane with Peter Flynn (l) representing Henniker Board of Selectman and Kristen McLean (r) President of the Henniker Historical Society; May 21, 2019.

### **Henniker's Boston Post Cane Recipients**

*(name, age at death, date of death)*

1. Wyer Gove, age 95, August 10, 1909 to March 9, 1910
2. Nahum Newton, age 90, to September 26, 1910
3. Moses D. Perry, age 94, to July 14, 1917

4. Ira Whittier, age 96, to March 27, 1923
5. Heman A. Patterson, age 88, to January 29, 1924
6. Henry A. Emerson, age 86, to April 28, 1924
7. Henry W. Blaisdell, age 89 to December 5, 1927
8. Kendall H. Thomas, age 92, to January 26, 1935
9. Newell Durgin, age 99, to October 31, 1945
10. George Edward Jones, age 92 to December 10, 1946
11. Kate M. Childs, age 92, to April 15, 1948
12. Sewell C. Huntington, age 93, to May 6, 1949
13. Anna J. Garland, age 100, to Aril 16, 1959
14. John H. Fellows, age 101, to December 10, 1962
15. James W. Neagle, age 93, to March 31, 1967
16. Ethel M. Searles, age 103, to March 18, 1980
17. Paula Rice, age 101, to April 7, 1989
18. Helen C. Doon, age 96, to September 24, 1992
19. Della Trottier, age 100, to March 10, 1993
20. Alice Savage, age 103, to November 14, 2001
21. Elena Kalvaitis, age 99, to Aril 10, 2005
22. Odetta Hardy, age 98, to September 14, 2007
23. Clarence Fitch, age 96, to April 25, 2009
24. Mildred Presby O'Leary, age 96, to August 9, 2009
25. Leslie Bradford, age 99, to March 6, 2013
26. Lillian Fortier, age 104, to December 8, 2016
27. Janice Mae Walsh, age 102, to August 2, 2018
28. Ruth Jarvis, age 101, to March 5, 2019
29. Lois N. Fitch