
HENNIKER HISTORIAN

DECEMBER 2017 NUMBER 70

NEWSLETTER OF THE HENNIKER HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Officers 2017-18

President: Kristen MacLean

Vice President: Diane Carpenter

Treasurer: Ron Taylor

Secretary: Ellen Reed

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our small group of dedicated volunteers for all the hard work you have done this past year. This fall has been especially busy with preparing and carrying out the giving campaign; a special program; the holiday sales events and this December newsletter

During foliage season the society has more visitors as people are out for leisurely rides or walking around town. On occasion, people from out of town include a stop at the historical society in their travel plans. Typically, they are looking for genealogy information to fill a gap in their family tree by reviewing vital statistics, looking at family photos or perusing some arcane file hoping to learn something interesting about a long-gone family member. Many times, we are able to direct them to the location where their ancestors lived. If time allows, I will drive a descendant to the family homestead. I love to describe subsistence farming in colonial New England and what the landscape would have looked like in Henniker. It is very gratifying to watch someone look out over acreage, peer into an old cellar hole or have a photo taken standing next to the home of a relative.

Thank you to all the local residents and businesses who contribute to informing visitors about the history of Henniker. It has been expressed to me that your hospitality makes for a pleasant stay and contributes to an experience that exceeds a visitor's expectations. Finally, thank you to everyone who has contributed to this year's giving campaign. Our town wide mailing has yielded several new members and reinforces to us that the community continues to be supportive of preserving Henniker history as the town enters its 250th year.

~Kristen MacLean

OPEN HOUSE A BIG SUCCESS



Bidders looking over the banks being auctioned

On October 22nd, the Henniker Historical Society and Museum held a very successful open house and silent auction. We had numerous visitors, many who had either never been to the museum before or hadn't visited for a long time and all were impressed with the newly cleaned museum as well as some of the new displays. Featured was a collection of some of the items recently received from the late Angie Robinson.

The auction was very successful raising over \$2000 which will go towards improvements to the Martha C. Taylor research room. We have already arranged for a fresh coat of paint and have replaced the old window blinds.

Acquisitions

Recently, we were contacted by Siri Rainone, a descendent of Ocean Born Mary, who possesses two items said to belong to Mary, including a bead necklace (supposedly another gift from the pirate) and a pewter plate. Although we have not yet acquired these items, we are hoping she will be interested in donating them to our Ocean-Born Mary Collection.



MEET OUR NEC STUDENTS



Jade Henley is a freshman from Rhode Island, currently undeclared. She likes Henniker because it reminds her of "her Gram's neighborhood". Christian Gonzalez is a sophomore from Connecticut and majoring in Fine Arts. Both have been invaluable helping around the Museum and we've been ecstatic to have them!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The Historical Society is always in need of volunteers to help us in our mission to preserve Henniker history. No experience is needed! New board members are also needed. So, if you have some spare time you'd like to donate, please contact Deb Dow at 491-6686.

VISIT US ON THE WEB:

www.hennikerhistory.org

email: society@mettelecom.com

Facebook

VISIT US AT ACADEMY HALL

51 Maple St

Henniker, NH 03242

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Monthly board meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 9 am in Academy Hall. Members and prospective members are invited to attend.

MEMBERSHIP

Your membership expiration is noted on your mailing list, if yours is about to expire please renew to continue to receive the newsletter and support us as we preserve Henniker history.

To renew, send \$5.00 (checks can be made out to Henniker Historical Society) along with your name and address to:

Henniker Historical Society
PO Box 674
Henniker, NH 03242

SAVE THE DATE!

**Henniker 250th Anniversary Celebration
August 3rd, 4th and 5th 2018**

A Brief History of Ocean Born Mary

Much of this information came from *Ocean-Born Mary: The Truth Behind the Legend* by Jeremy D'Etremont

Many people in NH know the story of Ocean Born Mary. In 1720, a ship bearing Scottish immigrants was stopped by pirates. The pirate captain, however, took pity on a mother and her new born daughter and promised to leave the ship unmolested if the mother agreed to name her baby, Mary, after his own mother. Of course, she agreed. The pirate and his crew departed, but not before leaving behind a bolt of green silk to be used for Mary's wedding dress. That little girl was Mary Wilson.

Mary's father, James Wilson died shortly after they arrived in Boston, but Mary and her mother, Elizabeth, moved to Londonderry, NH where James had a share in a land grant. In 1722, Elizabeth married Deacon James Clark but died in 1732. Mary lived with her stepfather helping to raise her five siblings. In 1742, Mary married James Wallace, who was eight years her senior, supposedly in a dress made from the pirate's gift. Mary was described as being tall with ivory skin and blue eyes.

Mary and James went on to have eight children, only five of which lived to adulthood. Son, Richard Wallace, was the most prominent of the children and he and his wife, Jeanette Moore, moved to Henniker in 1776 where they built an elegant home (which still stands on Bear Hill Rd.). Robert was a lawyer, land speculator, and raised livestock. The Wallace's third son, William also moved to Henniker where he built a home a little less than a mile from his brother.

Mary's husband, James, died at the age of seventy-nine on October 30, 1791. In 1798, Mary moved to Henniker to live with her son, William until she passed away in 1814. She is buried in the cemetery near the town hall.

But that's only half of the story...

In 1916, Louis Maurice Auguste Roy, more commonly known as "Gussie", heard about the deteriorating Robert Wallace mansion and purchased it. Gussie Roy was a photographer as well as something of an expert on antiques and historical crafts. After he moved into the old Wallace house, he came up with an entirely new idea: marketing his house as being haunted by the spirit of Ocean-Born Mary, claiming that Mary's spirit had reached out to him to restore the old mansion. By 1928, there were reports of an ethereal carriage driving up the old Wallace mansion, where a ghostly spirit would then get out of the carriage, look into the well, then disappear. By the end of the 1920's, despite that fact that Marry Wallace had never lived in Robert's home (William's home burned down), Roy convinced most people that she had and that her spirit roamed the home causing all sorts of ghostly events.

By the Depression, Roy was creating even taller tales of hauntings and including hidden pirate treasure on the property. Roy claimed to have found a mysterious box of papers which mentioned jewels, doubloons and pieces of eight. For a small fee, he provided treasure hunters shovels to use to dig in his orchard. People flocked to the home to dig and tour the house. In 1934, he said he'd found three bloody boot prints on his front porch. It was also around this time that Roy started putting out the story that the pirate had built the house himself and allowed Mary and her husband to live there. The pirate was supposedly killed by an old adversary looking for the missing treasure. This story was even mentioned in *Ghosts of New England* by famed ghost hunter, Hans Holzer

The stories of hauntings have continued to this day (Roy died in 1965) despite the fact no stories of ghosts were heard prior to Gussie Roy's tenure in the house and the fact Mary never lived there. But it will always have a place in Henniker history! Come by the Museum to see a piece of her dress!

Henniker Historian

Henniker Historical Society
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

COOKIE AND GIFT SALE

The annual Cookie and Gift sale is coming up and you don't want to miss it! This is a perfect opportunity to stock up on some delicious Christmas goodies as well as some great gifts! Be sure to get our newest Cat's Meows: Intervale Pancake house and White Birch!

DATE: Saturday December 9, 2017

The Grange Hall, 21 Western Ave.

TIME: 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

