
HENNIKER HISTORIAN

MARCH 2018 NUMBER 71

NEWSLETTER OF THE HENNIKER HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Officers 2017-18

President: Kristen MacLean

Vice President: Diane Carpenter

Treasurer: Ron Taylor

Secretary/Newletter: Ellen Reed

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 2018 town meeting is over and the annual report will soon be filed on the shelves at the Academy Hall. This year residents approved the proposal to reroute a section of Quaker Street. It appears that a change is coming to the Quaker District after 250 years.

I know the area well primarily because I have spent time perusing a lifetime of diaries written by Sewell Huntington. The collection of small leather-bound diaries are full of farmer's notes and neighborhood observations that provide a wonderful glimpse into life in that area in the late 1800's.

We know details about livestock and what was grown and where on the property. We also know who cut hair, pulled teeth and repaired shoes. Census data from the time tells us where people lived and because virtually every structure is still standing, we can determine where these activities happened. Thanks to Sewell's notes we even know the name of the census taker and the exact day it was taken!

Sewell was born and raised in the big house next to the cemetery. He lived there with his father and together they worked the farm. In addition to their own personal work, they were responsible for lighting the fire in the schoolhouse every day and maintenance on the roads. My guess is that the most irksome aspect of the country roads would have been mud season and removing rocks in the spring, not the twists and turns. Times have changed.....

Thanks to everyone for your continued support. Think Spring!

~Kristen MacLean

SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL MEETING IN JUNE



On June 20th, we will be holding our annual meeting and potluck at the Congregational Church Parish Hall at 5:30 pm. There will be a presentation by the Mt. Kearsarge Indian Museum. The presenter will be discussing artifacts from the museum, especially from the Northeast region. This should be a fascinating program, so don't miss it! All members of the Henniker Historical Society are invited to attend. All we ask is you bring some food to share. We encourage all our members to become more involved in the Society!

COMPUTER HELP NEEDED

One of our members is in need of help with Microsoft Publisher. Martha Taylor is working on an updated book of Henniker history but having issues with the program. If anyone can help her, that would be great. Just contact Martha directly or leave a message at the Academy at 603-428-6267

We are also looking for a volunteer knowledgeable in computers to help us as we begin to move more towards digitizing our photos and records. If you can help or know of someone, please contact us!



Costume Contest!

Next August, during Henniker's 250th Celebration, HHS will be sponsoring an 18th Century Costume contest. It is open to all, including children, and the only requirement is that it be an outfit typical of the 1700's, whether it be a frontiersman, lady of the manor, farmer or milkmaid, we'd love to see what you can come up with!



WWI Display at Town Hall

In honor of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, we have put together a display of artifacts and information on Henniker's contribution to the war effort.



German Pickelhaube helmet on display at the Town Hall.

We try to change out the display in the Town Hall about every six months to help bring more of our artifacts and history to the attention of members of the community. Be sure and stop by to learn more about our town's history!

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

603-428-6267

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

Terrible Murder

In Henniker.

THE STORY OF HENNIKER'S FIRST MURDER

It was a cool night on August 15, 1894, when livery owner, Fitz H. Courser was awakened by the sound of a wagon entering his yard. It was 2:30 in the morning – an unlikely time for someone to arrive. A few moments later, he heard the vehicle rapidly depart. Curious, Mr. Courser hurried outside only to find the body of a young girl lying on her side just four feet from the corner of his house. Thinking there had been a horrible accident, Courser hurried to find the local physician, Dr. Sanborn. The doctor quickly arrived and turning the girl over, immediately realized she had been shot several times in the head. This was no accident. Fourteen-year-old Nettie Belle Douglass had been murdered. The alarm was sounded and the search for the murderer begun.

Several men went in search of the missing horse and carriage, finding it south of the river. The upholstery and left side of the carriage were covered in blood, leading investigators to believe Nettie must have been lying partially outside of the carriage when the horse took off. Others followed the obvious blood trail from Courser's livery to just past the cemetery, approximately three quarters of a mile from the village center on the Concord Road. They eventually found a pool of blood where it appeared the murder had occurred. They spoke with George Sargent who reported hearing a series of four pistol shots at approximately 2:25 a.m. near his home not far from where the blood was discovered.

Early the next morning, Miss Eva Barnes was returning home from the Henniker depot where she had delivered some milk, when she spotted a man lying face-down in a field off the Warner Road. Thinking he might be the murderer, she quickly drove to the home of her uncle, Fred Barnes. He hurried to the spot and identified the man as Arthur McLean. Since McLean was so still and did not respond to Barnes' calls, Barnes thought he might be dead and went to Henniker to return with Dr. Sanborn and the selectmen. Dr. Sanborn turned the man over and quickly discerned McLean was very much alive, although complaining of a severe headache.

McLean was immediately taken to town and after turning over his wet and blood-stained clothing, was locked in a room in the Henniker Hotel. He was taken into custody by Sheriff Fellows. McLean was willing to speak to investigators about anything except the murder. That afternoon, Fellows formally arrested McLean and took him to jail in Concord. For days after the murder, curious thrill-seekers visited the site of the murder and where the victim's body had been found. This was the first murder in the town of Henniker, and needless to say, it generated high interest for some time.

The murderer had been captured and poor Nettie was buried a few days after her murder, yet many questions remained. Why exactly had Arthur McLean killed Nettie? Initially, McLean entered a not guilty plea, but by the time the trial began on November 19, he changed his plea to guilty, believing that leaving his fate in the hands of two judges as opposed to a jury, his odds of avoiding the gallows might improve.



The trial generated standing room only crowds as the public yearned to hear the whole story of the horrible murder. Many witnesses were called, including Nettie's parents and a number of character witnesses for the defense, and over the course of the trial, the tragic story unfolded.

Twenty-one-year-old Arthur McLean met fourteen-year-old Nettie Belle Douglass at a Henniker social event in June, 1894. It wasn't long before McLean was making regular visits to the Douglass home, often staying as late as 10:00 p.m. With her parents' permission, he took her for carriage rides twice before the fateful night. During one of their meetings, they exchanged rings and Mrs. Douglass remarked she noticed her daughter wearing a strange ring, although after a short visit by McLean on August 11, Nettie was now wearing her own ring once more.

A day before the murder, McLean hired a revolver from William A. Brown from his store. Brown reported during the trial that McLean had frequently borrowed guns in the past as he enjoyed target shooting and usually took a gun with him on carriage rides in the country.

Fitz Courser testified that McLean had rented carriages from him a number of times and felt he was a fine young man. Although he knew young McLean had a temper, Courser had no reason to suspect Nettie might be in any danger.

At 7:30 p.m. on August 15th, McLean called at the Douglass home to pick up Nettie. Her father saw them leave, and he then went to bed around 8:30, only to awakened sometime after 2:30 a.m. when Nettie's body was found. Her body was brought to the Douglass home shortly afterwards where the autopsy later took place.

When Arthur McLean finally testified on November 23rd, the last pieces of the puzzle were put in place. Here is his testimony:

"Am 22, parents live in Henniker; worked in a shoe factory; first met Nettie Belle Douglass at a social in Henniker; first walked home with her from a surprise party the latter part of June; called on her on the invitation of her mother and self. Had her ring and she mine several times (*ring produced*). Nettie and I got to like each other; some nights before going home, she put her arm around my neck and kissed me; got attached to her. She told me of receiving a letter from a married man, in which directions were given her for leaving town to avoid suspicion; Have used firearms of all kinds as long as I can remember; when not owned by me, hired or borrowed them; it was my practice for years to carry a revolver when driving; drove to East Deering with Nettie on Sunday the latter part of July; returned at 11 that night; had a revolver borrowed from George Wakefield. Later became engaged to Nettie; she had my ring and I hers; spent Saturday evening August 11, at home of Nettie; she said she was obliged to break our engagement; I asked for my ring, she gave it, and I returned hers; while sitting on the sofa, she put her arms around my neck and kissed me and said she was sorry she had to break the engagement; before leaving at her request, I promised to continue calls; took her to drive Sunday evening.

I laid up nothing against her for breaking the engagement because of what she told me; at that time, I was out of work and concluded to seek employment elsewhere; told Nettie my intention before the engagement was broken; met Mrs. Douglass on 'Shoe Factory' road Monday evening, August 13, and saw Nettie afterwards and she accepted my invitation to ride the following evening; engaged a revolver of Mr. Brown the same Monday evening because of my prospective drive; my custom is to carry a revolver full loaded, for that reason I bought cartridges at Preston Brothers, Tuesday evening; I had no malice then against Nettie; later I got the team and took Nettie to drive; went beyond Contoocook and turned for home. When we got to Henniker Village the ride was continued by common consent towards North Weare;

**Murderer McLean Alleges That His Sweetheart
Called Him a Liar.**

Nettie complained of being cold; we got out of the carriage and walked on the road; when we got into the carriage, I wound the lap-robe around her; had no malice against her then; each had kiss the other several times; while near Mr. Sargent's house on Concord road I asked her to tell me who stood between us and caused the breaking of the engagement; she declined; then I asked if I could win over the person who stood between us if she would renew it; she said not under any circumstances; she said she would never marry a man who used her cowardly and mean, that I had written a letter asking her to go to an excursion and foot the bills. I said I had not; she said, 'You lie, and you know you did; a friend of mine told me you did.' I said you are foolish to talk that way; she turned and struck at me and spat in my face; I then fired and shot her; I don't know how many shots I fired; saw the girl lie back in the carriage; I got out of the carriage and all I remember is I ran and fell; received a hard jar when I had fallen; next I knew somebody said wake up; quick temper caused me to shoot the girl, for the spat in my face; have done many things in my life that I regret and this is one of them. I love Nettie still."

After the testimony and closings, Judges Doe and Clark declared Arthur McLean guilty of murder in the second degree and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, nine years later, McLean was pardoned and died of tuberculosis at his father's home on April 4, 1904. He was thirty-one.

HE SHOT HER BECAUSE SHE SPAT IN HIS FACE.



YOUNG McLEAN STANDING AND TELLING OF HIS TERRIBLE CRIME

FRIDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 23 1894.
I LOVE NETTIE STILL SAID ARHTUR.

Henniker Historian

Henniker Historical Society
PO Box 674
Henniker, NH 03242

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
HENNIKER, NH
PERMIT NO. 35

March 2018
Newsletter
Issue No. 71

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

QUILT RAFFLE

The Henniker Historical Society will be raffling off two lap-sized quilts made by local quiltmaker, Peggy Gendreau. Tickets will be available at Academy Hall, \$4 each or 5 for \$15. Drawing will be on June 20th during the Annual Meeting. Don't miss out!



A: 47x64"



B: 56x71"