
HENNIKER HISTORIAN

MAY 2020 NUMBER 79

NEWSLETTER OF THE HENNIKER HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Henniker Historical Society Board 2019-20

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Susan Adams, Deb Dow, Susan Fetzer

Marc McMurphy, Yolande Nicknair, Martha Taylor

ANNUAL MEETING AND RAILROAD TALK POSTPONED

Due to the Coronavirus and need for social distancing, the Henniker Historical Society and Museum annual meeting has been postponed until

August 13, 2020 at 6:30 pm.
Congregational Church Hall

Instead of a potluck, we ask attendees to bring just a dessert. The meeting will include the election of officers followed by a fascinating presentation by railroad expert, Dale Russell, on the early railroads of Henniker.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Surprise! You are getting a newsletter from HHS in May! Our organization hit the pause button, along with the rest of the world, this spring because of the COVID -19 outbreak. Recently, we held our first board meeting over ZOOM (Yes- technology can be your friend). The June Annual meeting has been postponed until August (see details inside). We will resume regular open hours following the State of NH guidelines. I figure there should be just enough time for us to clean up the massive photo sorting project that was initiated mid-March. I look forward to seeing people again.

Stay well ~ Kristen



COMING THIS AUGUST:

All Aboard: Early Railroads in Henniker

Join local Railroad expert, Dale Russell as he shares his knowledge of Henniker's colorful railroad history!
August 13, 2020 6:30 pm during the Annual Meeting

Keep a Journal in These Memorable times

We live in some very unusual times. These past months of stay-at-home orders, toilet paper shortages, and economic challenges have shown us that life can change rapidly and in unexpected ways. How will those that come after us learn about how the average person weathered these challenges? By keeping a journal!

The Diary of Anne Frank taught millions of schoolchildren how one young girl lived during WWII. Closer to home, we have *The Civil War Diary of Freeman Colby* by Marek Bennett about an ordinary Henniker man's experiences during the great conflict. These are diaries kept by average people during exceptional times, and we learn so much from them.

We here at the Henniker Historical Society urge you to keep some sort of journal yourself to help people in the future remember what life was like in the turbulent times of the year 2020.





VISIT US ON THE WEB:

www.hennikerhistory.org

email: hennikerhistoricalsociety@tds.net

Facebook

VISIT US AT ACADEMY HALL

51 Maple St

Henniker, NH 03242

603-428-6267

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Monthly board meetings are held the 2nd Thursday of each month at 9:00 am in Academy Hall. Members and prospective members are invited to attend.

MEMBERSHIP

Your membership expiration is noted on your mailing label. 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 per person (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

THANKS TO ALL OUR ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN DONORS! YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HENNIKER HISTORY IS PRICELESS!



The Henniker Historical Society (HHS) is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization with the goal of preserving and recording the history of the town and its inhabitants. Some surrounding towns are fortunate enough to hire paid employees, but we rely on talented and committed volunteers. We are always eager to introduce folks to their town history. You don't need to be an expert to help out.

Can you organize a drawer?

We have files that need to be put in order

Can you read and type a letter?

We have many old hand written letters that need to be transcribed and typed into a word document and saved.

Can you use a copier?

We have documents that need scanning to be preserved.

Can you file?

We have photos and documents to file.

Can you dust?

We have archives that needs some attention.

Can you do artifact research?

We have many artifacts that need to be described and researched.

Can you spare an hour a week or two hours every other week?

We are flexible in assigning projects and tasks.

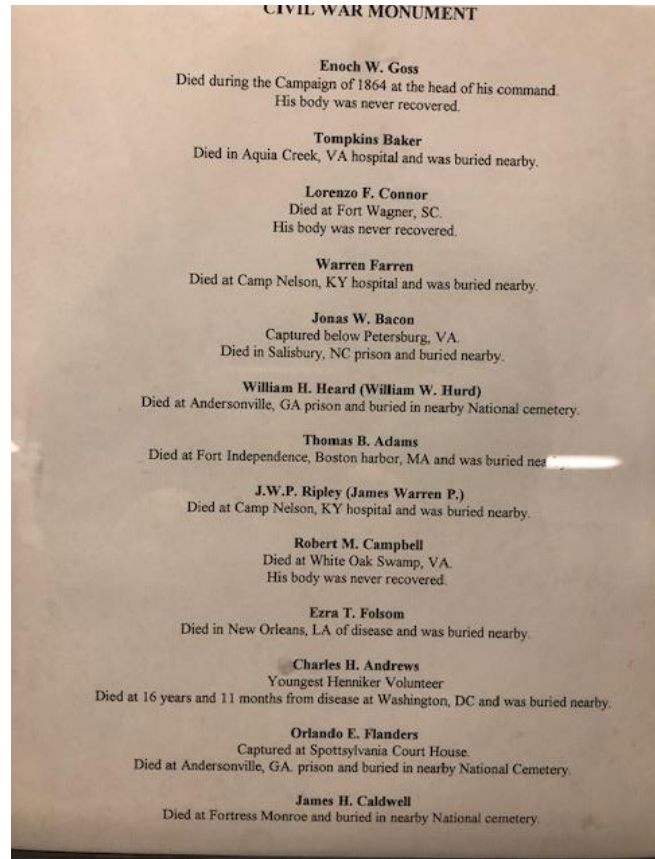
Do you have prior experience?

No experience is needed, only wiliness to learn, enjoy and appreciate the history of Henniker.

Email us at hennikerhistoricalsociety@tds.net – and let us know you are interested! HHS wants you!

ITEM FROM THE MUSEUM

Memorial for Civil War Soldiers



Not all soldiers killed during the Civil War made it back home. During the aftermath of battle, bodies of the deceased were often buried near where they fell. Before the advent of dog tags, soldiers would sometimes pin their names in their uniforms to insure they would be identified if they fell. Many more perished from disease in hospitals and prisons.

Because soldiers died far from home, undertakers began to experiment with embalming techniques to allow families to have the bodies of their loved ones returned home to them. This became a lucrative business. Thomas Holmes, known as the 'Father of Modern Embalming', embalmed over 4000 bodies, charging \$100 each. He even displayed bodies of unknown soldiers in his shops in Washington and Alexandria to advertise his services.

Several of Henniker's soldiers were buried close to where they perished. After the war, a memorial was erected in Henniker to honor those men who never returned. Although it stood in front of the Town Hall for many years, the memorial is now located in the Henniker Historical Society Museum in Academy Hall along with information on where the men were ultimately buried.

Currently, Susan Fetzer, one of our board members, is working on a booklet on the history of the Henniker men who served in the Civil War. We will keep you posted for when it becomes available!

Building with Many Lives

The Towle Building holds down the southeast corner of Proctor Square in downtown Henniker. A building at this corner has existed for over 150 years. A recent fire in January in the second floor gave the owners second thoughts about the repairs. But this was not the first time, the building at the corner of Main and Bridge Streets has burned.

When commerce began in Henniker, a single building offering a variety of shops, was referred to as a "block". Main Street was the home of the Noyes Block, Preston Block, Childs Block, and the Emerson Block. The Noyes Block was the largest in 1880, located west of the Preston Block, and closest to the center of town. Today the Noyes Block is known as the Towle Building.

In 1880 the five story Noyes Block was owned by Oliver Noyes who was in the lumber business. Noyes was also the landlord of the National Hotel (later renamed the Hotel Henniker) and represented Henniker in the state legislature and senate in 1874 and 1877. The Noyes Block housed the Noyes general store with offices, apartment and a 'hall' on the third floor. The general store included groceries, clothing, boots and shoes.

On June 20, 1893 downtown Henniker was ablaze. The fire destroyed the newly renovated Preston Block, Preston's home next door and burned the Noyes block down to the foundation. It also burned Whitney's Market and Skillen's Blacksmith shop located on the east side Bridge Street (where the convenience store is today). The only thing remaining after the fire was a 'cellar hole'. The hole sprouted with bushes and even trees. The cellar hole was the final resting site of the first automobile fatality in Henniker. On December 1913 in the snow, four Contoocook youths lost control of their car coming down Rush Road, crossed Main Street and plunged into the hole.

In 1914 the Preston Brothers purchased the property and began building on the site. The post office moved from what is now the Pharmacy building into the new space, and thus the property was referred to as the post office block. The post office block or building had other tenants including a clothing store, a barbershop in the basement, a plumbing operation and a cobbler. A First National Grocery store occupied the first floor with the sign advertising "Red and White".

In January, 1939 there was a fire that demolished the roof and upper floors of the building. Three stories of the building were repaired. The First National Store continued to operate in the block in the 1940's, as did Edmunds' Department Store until they relocated to Maple Street.

In 1943 the building was damaged by fire once again. The First National Store became Stan's Superette in 1968. The College Pub moved into the basement in 1978. The barber shop moved to the first floor, with a jeweler, Marshall Rowe, moving in behind it after the grocery store moved out.

Wendell Towle acquired the building in 1977 and housed the Davis and Towle Insurance Agency in the western part of the block. Rowe the jeweler carried on in the center part of the building as the longest merchant doing business on Proctor Square. The eastern part of the block was occupied by clothing firms, followed by the New England College Shoppe and Nash's Auto Outlet. A cobbler, Thomas Fisher was in the basement until the 1950's. Other businesses in the building have included Mary Ann's Beauty Shop, Perkins Law Offices, Needle Light Shop, a bookstore and a Family Resource Center selling used clothing and toys to support social services. Wendell Towle renovated the building adding the brick veneer and siding outside, electric heat inside. He remodeled the basement into the Henniker Mini-mall with space for six shops.

Today the three-story Noyes, Post-Office or Towle Building houses the Towle and Davis Insurance Agency, Lewis Chiropractic, and apartments. When fire hit the top floor of the building in January of this year, owners Jeffrey Towle and Ryan Towle, and David Holmes, a contractor with historical building background, decided to bring back some of the original 1914 features of the building. Painter Jon Routon helped to salvage the tin ceilings that were placed in many of the older buildings in Henniker in the early 1900's. The original corner side entry door was brought back, new windows were placed at the original locations, the raised floor of the jewelry

store was removed and outside moldings were replaced with new siding. The Henniker Historical Society commends Mr. Towle, contractor and builders with the desire and attention to bring this building back to its historic roots.



Original tin ceiling



Kevin Towle explains the corner entry way.



The Noyes Building rebuilt in 1914, notice corner entrance door on left.

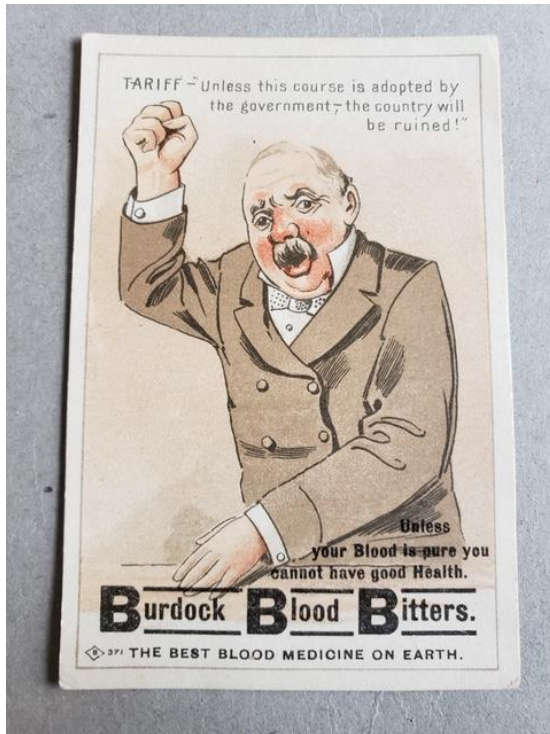


Pre-1896 Noyes Block.

TRADE CARDS

In the late 1800's trade cards were a popular way to advertise. A Henniker collector has several. They range in size from 1 3/4" by 3" to 2 1/2" by 4". Some are round and some advertisements are on postcards. The business would usually buy pre-printed cards and stamp their name in a space provided. Only a few were ordered with the name printed on the card.

The one pictured here is an advertisement highlighting a country-wide discussion on government tariffs. It is also advertising "Burdock Blood Bitters, The best blood medicine on earth." On the back is stamped "F.H. Scribner, Pharmacist, Henniker-----N.H."



The following text describing how to and who should use the bitters is on the back:

INVALID LADIES
THIS IS FOR YOU.

There are thousands of females in America who suffer untold miseries from chronic diseases common to their sex. This is due largely to the peculiar habits of life and fashion, and the improper training of girlhood. Then, too, the physical changes that mark the three eras of womanhood (the maiden, the wife, and the mother), have much to do with their sufferings, most of which is endured in silence, unknown by even the family physician and most intimate friends. To all such whose hollow cheeks, pale faces, sunken eyes and feeble footsteps indicate nervous and general debility bordering on consumption, we would earnestly recommend that grand system-renovating tonic,

BURDOCK BLOOD BITTERS.

It makes pure, healthy, blood, and regulates all the organs to a proper action, cures constipation, liver and kidneys complaints, female weakness, nervous and general debility, and all the distressing miseries from which two-thirds of the women of America are suffering.

ALL INVALID LADIES should send for our SPECIAL CIRCULAR, addressed to LADIES ONLY, which treats on a subject of vital importance.

Address,

Foster, Milburn & Co.,

Buffalo, N.Y.

F.H. SCRIBNER, PHARMACIST

HENNIKER, -----N. H.

A Personal History

What comes to mind when you think of the “History of Henniker, New Hampshire”? Perhaps important founding fathers or names like Ayers, Cogswell, Connor or Flanders. Perhaps you think of roads like Colby Hill, or Quaker Street. Perhaps you think of the Contoocook River, the covered bridge, the stone bridge and the iron bridges. Recently as I was pursuing some of the documents and holdings at the Henniker Historical Society I came across a personal history. A personal history is different than an autobiography. In an autobiography, a person recounts the story of their entire life within the context of outside events. For example, a President relates his thoughts and actions while in the White House. A personal history seeks to provide emotional stories not strictly a historical story.

In 2012, Stanton Morgan Perry titled his personal history “**Looking Back – A lot**”. The history is a fascinating read because Stanton was the younger brother, by 15 minutes, of his twin Winston Beals Perry, born in 1933. The Perry twins were identical, at times even their mother could not tell them apart. Stanton recounts he was usually the “one on the right.” They lived on Hemlock Corner where father Charles Stanton was a farmer, cut lumber, worked in the paper mill and even dug cemetery plots for Mr. Holmes. Mother Gladys Perry was the organist at the Contoocook Baptist Church.

The history begins when the twins are about two, with many anecdotes about their growing up in Henniker, their older siblings Cora and Edmund and their life on the farm. Their activities during WWII, from the perspective of young teens tell the reader about the efforts at home

“During war time we collected all kinds of things-pots, pan, wheels, iron and all sorts of metal and rubber; it was all put in a big pile at the school. We also picked all the milkweed pods we could find – it was used in the making of parachutes. All to support the war effort.”

Throughout the history, Stanton recalls many friends and family of Henniker.

“Walter Connor was a little short man; he was a hard worker. He, Dad and us boys were looking for a cement boundary post that was supposed to be between our two farms-we never did find it. Walter said ‘humph, gosh (he always said that!) Charlie, as long as you and I are around, there will not be any problems-after that, that’s their problem!!’ It was a gentlemen’s agreement. It taught us another lesson.”

Included in Perry’s history are photos of the twins, their family, houses and cars throughout the years. This enjoyable personal history provides a glimpse into the history of Henniker from 1935-1951 when the twins are drafted and serve together. The names, places and experiences of a twin in Henniker is an important addition to understanding Henniker’s culture and taking a “look back.”

Do you have a personal history that includes growing up in Henniker? If so, the HHS would love to own a copy. Why should you write one? It is your story and you should tell it! Everyone deserves to be remembered! Your story will help others and it will be treasured not only by you, but by future generations. It will help people understand a culture that would have been forgotten. The HHS website (hennikerhistoricalsociety.net) offers a list of questions that will help you get started.



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Henniker Historical Society
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May 2020 Newsletter
Issue No. 79

Coronavirus Update



The Henniker Historical Society has been closed this spring due to the pandemic. However, a few stalwart volunteers have been hard at work organizing, filing, and updating our records and photos. We plan to be open for limited hours for those wishing to do research or purchase items such as the Cat's Meow collectibles. If you wish to visit, it would be wise to call first to make sure someone will be available. Thanks to you all for your patience and support!

Preserve and Promote Henniker's History