



WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER #6 JUNE 2019



Locating Old Homesteads

At the January and February WHS meetings the last three years, members have been documenting present and former homes on many of Washington roads. This road documentation project is intended to continue until all the structures on the town's roads are identified and recorded. Using Google maps, the town tax maps, and 911 numbers, we list present homeowners and then try to add previous owners as information is available. The 1857 map helps us often go back 150 years. As people are reminded and speak up, stories are often shared about the homes and families that lived in them. Sometimes we are lucky enough to have pictures of the homes from years past. Many are no longer standing and have been replaced with newer homes.

To date, our group has documented West Washington Road, Razorville Road, Vanner Road, Young's Hill Road, Mountain Road, Crystal Lake Road, Old County Road, Liberty Road, McDowell Road, and Dorman Road. We plan to continue on with this project next winter when we meet at Gibbs Library. For these sessions, the library's internet, viewing screen, and other services are very helpful. We invite any interested people to join us – to share any knowledge and stories they may have and learn about our town's history. As one person shares an anecdote or recollection, it jogs the memory of another leading to a lively, interesting and fun conversation.

If you have pictures of older Washington homes, we'd love to see them. We have the equipment to scan photos and documents with no harm to the originals and return them to you immediately then add the images to our collection. -Liz Grinnell



Photo courtesy of Ron Luce.

Pictured is the former William Light home located on Liberty Road (aka Lake View Farm) just before the Firs Road. It previously belonged to the Obed Overlock family. Will Light moved there after losing his Light Hotel in the village to fire in 1913. He then remodeled this home (above) into a hotel. Sadly, his bad luck continued and he lost that place to fire a few years later. Some may remember the old dance hall that he built next to the homestead. It is visible far to the left of the homestead.

5th Washington Community Auction

This July the Washington Historical Society will be coordinating the 5th Washington Community Auction. The auction date is Saturday, July 27. The preview starts at 4 p.m. and the live auction starts at 6 o'clock. In approximately two hours, auctioneer Tom Johnston will auction off about 100 items that raise money to benefit eleven Washington organizations. Participating this year are Washington Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary, Gibbs Library, Prescott PTG, Hill & Gully Riders Snowmobile Club, Evening Star Grange, Ladies Guild, Minnie Weaver Scholarship, Washington Community Scholarship, Washington Food Pantry, Washington Historical Society and Village Church. Many additional items will be available to bid on at the silent auction tables that each group offers. Previous auction items have included cords of wood, gift certificates, hand crafted furniture and decorative pieces, food, vacation trips, tools, bikes, books, etc. All auction entries are first rate and there's always something for everyone! – Hazel Kopishke
Check it out here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wcauction>

5th Community Auction

Saturday July 27

Washington Fire Station

Preview 4 p.m.

Live Auction 6 p.m.



WHS Construction Projects

Rehabilitation of the two buildings WHS owns is a slow process. Careful consideration is needed with each step because both structures – Razorville Hall and the Old Town Hall – are more than 175 years old. Still, with the assistance of a few dedicated volunteers, we are making good progress. In 2018, we made a major facelift to the exterior of Razorville Hall – the original town hall – which now houses the WHS museum at 264 Razorville Road. The vinyl siding was removed from the front and east walls and replaced with wooden clapboards. In place of our usual



Heritage Day, WHS organized a “work bee” and a dozen or so members and friends came to paint the new siding. One of our goals for 2019 is to remove of the vinyl siding from the west wall, re-



side it and then paint it to match. Across the road at the Old Meeting House, volunteers removed rickety wooden steps and ramp only to find nearly sixteen feet of rotten sill. WHS contracted with a company that specializes in sill work to fix that. The contractors were able to stabilize the entryway floor assuring that it’s safe to walk on. Next, volunteers patched in the removed clapboards. The society also had the old chimney removed and the roof patched to prevent any leaks into the building.

During this summer of 2019, two minor projects await us in the Old Town Hall before it is fully usable. First, we will replace the front two windows with new windows matching the six that have already been done. That work will complete the window project there. Second, we will build a new set of steps and entrance ramp to the building.

Two major undertakings lie ahead where WHS will need to contract professional assistance. First, because the floor sags in the middle, we may try this summer to get it jacked up and supported from underneath. The second upgrade is that, while the old building is structurally sound, it leans toward the pond. WHS wants to bring it back into plumb and stabilize it so it doesn’t get any worse.

Financially, these last two projects will probably exceed our current funds available, so we will be starting a major fund-raising drive. Besides member and community appeals, WHS will seek grants with which had some success in the past.

WHS is proud of the accomplishments our “construction crew” has been able to achieve. The dedicated members and officers of the historical society hope our townspeople, visitors to the area, and all history buffs will make a stop at Razorville Hall, appreciate what we’ve done and show WHS your encouragement and support. WHS welcome everyone to come to our events, suggest a program, work in the office, volunteer to help out on an activity, or join WHS as a member. Monthly meetings are on the third Tuesday at 7 p.m. In winter, at the Masonic Hall, and in summer at Razorville Hall. – Don Grinnell

Editor’s note: In the summer of 2014, Razorville Hall – the original town hall – was a decrepit sand-and-salt storage shed used by the town road crew. It was cleaned and repaired and the display area was constructed. It went into use in 2015. Today it is an attractive, sturdy, well equipped structure with a remarkable collection of historical artifacts and memorabilia. Nice work, WHS !!

Online resource for genealogy searchers

Out in cyberspace, there’s an ambitious website named Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness: <https://www.raogk.org/>. Their claim is that the site exists help others obtain copies of documents, pictures of tombstones, etc., that cannot be obtained easily by those who do not live in the area of their ancestors. They have Random Acts volunteers in 28 countries. The site leads off with directions on how to get what you want from their site. Depending on your situation, there are various ways to get the best results. This is one of many online resources to check out. Genealogy is *in!*

WHS 2020 Calendars

The Washington Historical Society’s 2020 calendar is in production and will be available at events and local outlets soon. 2020’s theme is *Where in Washington?* and features photos of some of our town’s noteworthy locations. The calendar is a special project of WHS which started as a fund raiser but has become an interesting and fun way to call attention to Washington, its people, and its past. WHS calendars are 11” x 17” as hung with the photo at the top and calendar below. They sell for \$10 and make great gifts as well as for personal use. It will be available this summer at Washington General, Gibbs Library, Linscott’s, Sweet Season Cafe, Blueberry Fields B&B, and at town events. The historical society is very grateful for your patronage.

Tools that last

WHS is fortunate that so many generous people donate precious items into our care. There are so many special objects that reveal “good old-fashioned quality.” Nothing is more revealing of that excellence than in tools. Many of the tools in our collection are well over 100 years old, and still they do the job they always did and do it well. Craftsmen often had one set of tools that lasted their whole working life. WHS has accumulated duplicates of some of the items and our crew will be inventorying and releasing some of them for sale or sharing with another society. Thank you to Norman Casas, Don Grinnell, Frank Campbell and Ron Luce for taking on this project.



Students on annual Historical Society field trip

Prescott Memorial School Fifth Graders are invited each spring to visit Razorville Hall and the nearby Farrar-Ross VFW Post Hall – itself a historic structure. Students spent the morning browsing the museum, observing and discussing items in the collection, and taking part in hands-on activities planned and assisted by WHS members. Then the class made the short walk from Razorville Hall to the Farrar-Ross VFW Hall for lunch. VFW member Howard Good talked with the students about the VFW organization and his experience as a Navy veteran. Judy Goode spoke about her family’s Civil War connections. Rhoda Brann Gamage (in photo) told of being a student there when it was a public one-room schoolhouse prior to the construction of Prescott Memorial. The hall displays many items of local military significance. Using information provided earlier by students, Liz Grinnell helped the youngsters locate regions on a world map where their family veteran(s) had served. The visit to the Razorville neighborhood is an annual event Washington Historical Society presents for Prescott Memorial School 5th Graders.

2018 Maine Community Foundation Grant

In May of last year (2018) WHS received a matching grant of \$1,450 from the Knox County Fund of the Maine Community Foundation. We were able to match the total received with our own funds and with the value of volunteer hours. With that income, we have purchased a laser printer, a photo printer and a scanner. This new equipment enables our society to scan and print documents and photographs. This is especially helpful for people who want to share their possessions but do not want to give them away. This helps us expand our history of the town while families maintain their own histories. We have already reproduced items for display with no loss of or harm to the originals.

Grant money also made it possible to purchase archival sleeves and notebooks of various sizes. Many of our items stored in file folders have been put in sleeves and notebooks so members and visitors can see what we have but not soil or wear the pages. We purchased six archival storage boxes to safely store our clothing and other textiles when they are not on display. Transferring items from the files into sleeves is an ongoing project for our volunteers. If you can help, contact our archivist, Liz Grinnell at 845-2377. The laser printer is particularly useful for printing our cemetery research. Cheryl Swift, a WHS member who grew up in Razorville, has done extensive research on most of the Washington cemeteries and the people interred in them. She created a handsome, detailed scrapbook of several Washington cemeteries. Now, with our new laser printer we have printed her research of (so far) the Marr and Levensaler Cemeteries. This along with Cheryl’s documentation of Maple Grove, Davis-Daggett, McDowell, Pierpont, and Mountain cemeteries, is now in notebooks at the WHS office located in the Masonic Building at 48 Liberty Road. You may call Liz at 845-2377 or Hazel at 845-2760 to schedule a time to review this great source of information. – Liz Grinnell

Coming Events:

Razorville Hall Open July 13 f 9:30 a.m. to noon

WHS Annual Meeting July 16 Razorville Hall 7 p.m.

Community Auction July 27 Fire Station 4 p.m.

Open House & Pie Fest September 7 10 a.m. – 1

The purpose of **Washington Historical Society** is to collect and preserve evidence of the customs and lifestyles of those who established and grew the town of Washington, Knox County, Maine. The Society is open to everyone with an interest in the town's history and residents, past, present and future.

WHS 2018-2019 Leadership

Wendy Powell Carr – President
Charlotte Henderson – V.Pres., Newsletter Editor
Hazel Overlock Kopishke – Secretary
Linda Esancy Luce – Treasurer
Ronald Luce – Director
Nancy Vanner Linscott – Director
Norman Casas – Director
Elizabeth Grinnell – Archivist

What is this?



A section of wall in a West Washington home seems to be made with 2 x 4s. Who can tell us about this type of construction

and around what years it was used? We think it may be stacked plank construction. Email any info to washingtonhistorical@gmail.com or call Charlotte at 845-2661.

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Razorville Chapel at 7 Young's Hill Road is a local icon. For more than 120 years, Razorville Chapel has been the property of Christian Endeavor (CE), Edmore, Michigan. It became orphaned by CE and for decades a handful of local individuals volunteered maintenance. They are organizing for the purpose of taking ownership, accepting responsibility for its upkeep, and administering its public uses. This is a work in progress! Updates will be at: <https://www.facebook.com/razorvillechapel>

The structure that is known as Razorville Chapel was the original Razorville School at the top of the hill. It was moved to its present location when the second Razorville School (now the VFW Post) was built. It was used for services, Sunday school, and weddings. The property was purchased in 1897 for \$15.