



# Waterford Echoes

VOLUME XXXIII Number 2 (Issue 49)

Fall/Winter 2009

Waterford Historical Society

## The Man Who Made Lincoln Laugh Artemus Ward - the Genial Showman

by Lee Warren Merrill

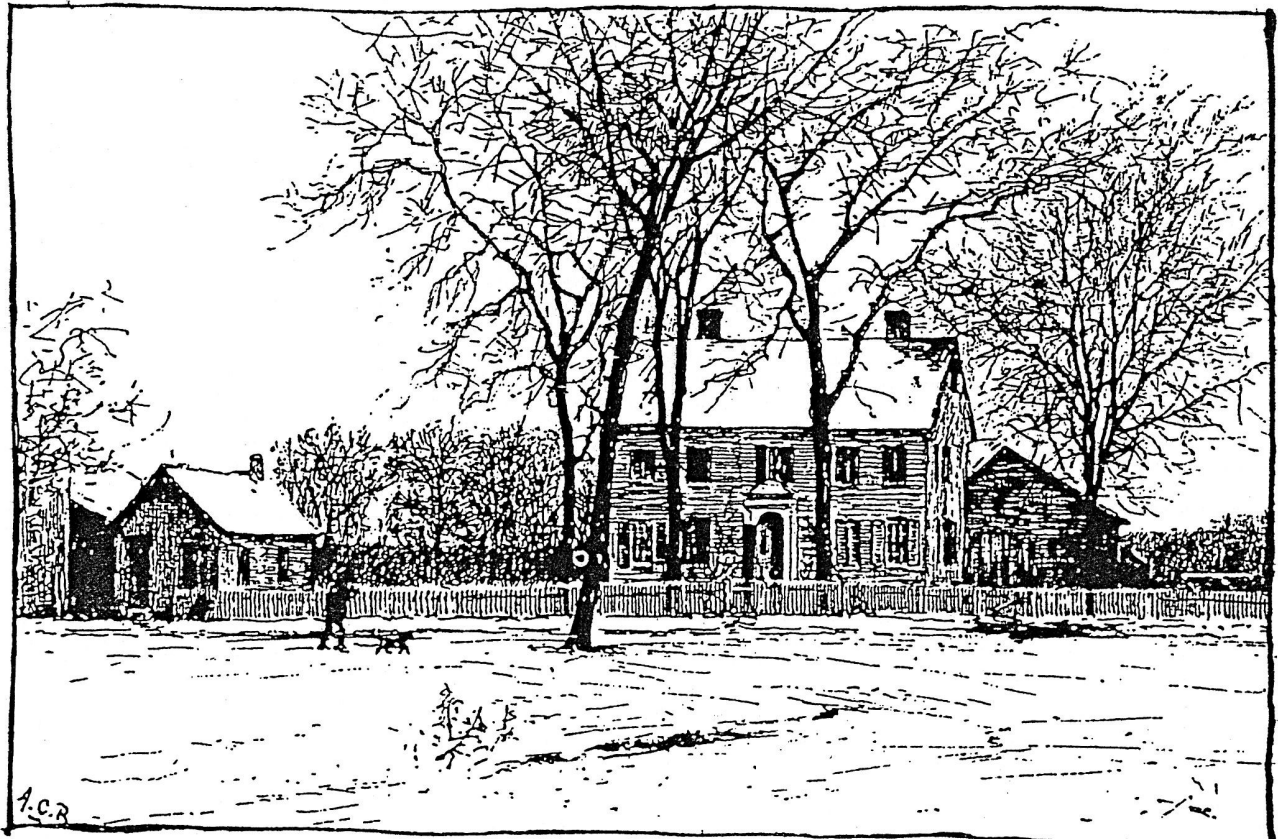
It was one hundred seventy five years ago that Waterford Flat became the birthplace of one of the most brilliant humorists of all time, a man who in a short span of thirty-three years became one of the greatest wits in the entire literary world--Artemus Ward, the Genial Showman.

There was little in Charles Farrar Brown's early life that would indicate what lay before him. And it is probable that no one in the little town of Waterford foresaw the brilliant future of the cheerful but rather lazy boy who started life in such humble surroundings. And it is likely that in the days when he labored as a journeyman printer on the weekly papers of Norway or Skowhegan, he would have been the first to laugh at the

*(Continued on page 7)*



Charles Farrar Brown  
"Artemus Ward"



This is a drawing of what has come to be called "The Artemus Ward House," thanks to a tearoom run in the early 1980s by Lynn Baker and daughter, India. Though he did live in this house, Charles was probably born next door in a small house that is now gone.

# President's Column

by Bonnie Parsons

Greetings everyone,

Fall leaves are on the ground and winter is fast approaching. We do have good memories from the activities and special events of this summer and fall. Attendance has been steady and positive feedback helps it all to come together.

A special thank you to the Town of Waterford for the \$2,000 toward maintenance of the Old Town House. The metal roof was completed in September. Plans are afoot to add a railing and a new door to improve on the front entrance next year.

Sincere thanks go out to all the Trustees and community members who have volunteered their time and skills to make sure 2009 was enjoyed by so many. We appreciate Prentiss Kimball for once again refinishing the town benches before they were placed on the common for the summer.

In June we met for our annual meeting and welcomed two new trustees, Donna Butterall and Marge Nihan. An interesting meeting followed about the 14 mills that once created so much industry along City Brook. David Sanderson added flourish to July with his presentation of Artemus Ward for the July 4th parade float and the July 9th program. The Art Show on July 26 was enjoyed by many despite the damp weather.

Good recollections were shared at our other programs as well, with Merle Ring talking about the wood industry in August, and Nancy's son, Tom Marcotte, doing a presentation on the state of road building in September. In October retired teacher Marjorie Kimball lent reality and nostalgia to the 60th Anniversary of the Waterford School with her school marm get-up and delivery of what a school day for the kids was like in her day. The season ends in November with a potluck dinner at the North Waterford Church.

Trustees will meet this Winter to plan for next year and focus on ways to fund and improve the housing and cataloging of WHS collections. Just a suggestion that now is a good time to go through boxes of things tucked away in attics and closets and look for historical gems that otherwise might be lost. Let us know if you have anything to add to the history of Waterford, past and present. We are also looking for volunteers. Keep us in mind if you can donate some time and help. Many hands do make for light work!

## Waterford Echoes

Vol. XXXIII Number 2 Issue 49 Fall/Winter 2009

The Waterford Historical Society newsletter is published to benefit its membership. The Society, founded in 1965, is a non-profit Corporation created for the purpose of preserving and making available to persons interested, any and all historical and other material that shall be deemed valuable and worthy of preservation, in an effort to perpetuate for this and future generations, events, customs and traditions of local history, past, present and future, and to make possible the diffusion of such knowledge.

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#### Classification: Individual/Couple

Life member: \$100/\$150

Annual: \$10/\$15

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Send checks to:

Waterford Historical Society  
PO Box 201  
Waterford ME 04088

Membership renewals are due June 1. Membership dues help to fund our newsletter and its mailing cost.

We have the following publications for sale: "History of Waterford 1775-1875" and "History of Waterford 1875-1976" for \$15 each (order both for \$25). "This is Waterford 1803-2003" for \$30 (order all three for \$50). Add \$8 to ship one book or \$12 to ship two or three books. Paid-up dues members qualify for a 50% discount.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank many people for donations to the Waterford Historical Society this past year:

- Peter Toohey for an 8-foot pew from The Wesleyan Chapel, along with some ledgers and a pew contract.
- Bonnie Parsons for the trimming & re-upholstering of the pew cushion.
- Gloria Fillebrown for a ledger.
- Eleanor Lord Jodrey for photographs and cards.
- Cynthia Hamlin for books and clothing from the W. K. Hamlin Estate.
- David Sanderson for photographs & other materials.
- Dede McAllister for a school photo.

In addition we would like to thank the following people for their contributions:

- Marjorie Kimball for logging equipment display.
- The Masonic Lodge for moving the benches on & off the common.
- Camp Wigwam boys for community service moving our furniture.
- Birch Rock Camp for cookies for the art show.
- Nancy Engdahl for publicity for the art show.
- Carol Waldeier for flyer artwork.
- Annette Tomaino & Betty Miller for help with the art show.
- Everyone who brought art for the art show.
- Ralph & Joanne MacKinnon for creating a café at the art show.
- Joy Plate for her extra-special displays at the Old Town House.
- Henry Plate for working with Johnny's Steps of Auburn to put a railing on the Old Town House.
- Volunteers at our booth at the Waterford World's Fair.
- Trustees who cleaned the buildings.
- Bill "Dood" Haynes for contacting Merle Ring for a program.
- David Sears for transport for the 4th of July parade.
- Auction helpers & helpful auctioneers.
- Joann Fillebrown for the journal of Mrs. Cyrus Stone to photocopy.
- The Waterford Memorial School principal, custodian & Trish Logan.
- Happy & Perry Chapman for work with Friends of City Brook.
- Happy Chapman for keeping scrapbooks for us.

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## The 60th Anniversary of Waterford Memorial School On Valley Road

by Nancy Marcotte

The 1949 Annual Town Report (for the year 1948) explained the status of the new Waterford Memorial School. The lot had been purchased "of Richard Perkins" and a well had been drilled (295 feet, 20 gal./min.) with private funds of \$1,991.25. Raynor Brown, as per a vote of the town in March, 1948, was bulldozing the four acres and the basement had been excavated. Bids were expected for the construction (eventually won by Phil Wight) and there was already \$17,348.52 in the building fund — started when the town forest was cut over in 1941 and \$3,000 invested in war bonds. In addition, a letter was published from Miss Jeanette Payson which promised \$5,000 when the building was begun and another \$5000 for furnishings and equipment. (Her gifts eventually totaled \$24,463.88.)

The Building Committee was Ted Howe (Chairman), Irene Bean, Raynor Brown, Clayton McIntire, Marion Hopping and Wilson Morse. Rex Rounds had been on it as well. Yet the building of Waterford Memorial School had not been an undisputed event — there was arguing over the location as well as the need for a consolidated school. Superintendent Lester Harri-man wrote in his annual report that "...these differences between townsmen are regrettable...when schools are involved in political disputes the children, for whom schools are built and maintained, are the only ones who suffer."

He asked that every citizen in town help with carrying out the school building project, the need for which "is recognized by the state and a majority of the townspeople." Further, he added, "Schools of America are the foundation of the country. They are our first line of defense. Communism breeds in the ignorance of people. Education of our youth for citizenship and economic self-reliance is the democratic answer to communism." This was to be his continuing theme for many years.

There were in January of 1949, 35 children

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Nuances — Schools

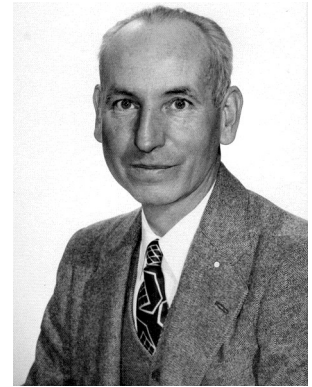
*(Continued from page 3)*

from sub-primary to grade four in one room at North Waterford. “Mrs. (Marjorie) Kimball is doing a fine job in spite of this great teacher load,” Mr. Harriman wrote. Other teachers in 1949 were Clyde Ford, Edith Andrews, Dale Galbraith, Hazel Gardner, Helen Grover, Viabelle Marston and Lawrence O’Leary, Jr. — for about 140 students. (Some of them were also paid to be janitors.)

Thirty-six pupils then attended secondary schools, with a tuition of \$3,350 paid mostly to Bridgton Academy, but also to Fryeburg Academy, to Gould and to Norway and Bridgton High Schools. Those pupils included Malcolm Bean, Janet Marston, David Erickson, Prentiss Kimball, Eva Pike, Edward Niemi, Martha Heino and Evelyn Kimball, among others.

## The Dedication

The final cost of the new school was a little over \$75,000, with the basement finished by the P.T.A. to be an assembly room for up to 600 people. In addition to Miss Payson’s, gifts also came from the Harry Brown Trust and from Constance Warren. The first principal was Lawrence O’Leary, Jr.



**Lawrence O’Leary, Jr.**

Dr. R. E. Hubbard made the dedication speech on November 6, 1949, with over 500 attending. He said, “We dedicate this building to our veterans, but for whose service we probably would not have it — new school buildings are not the gift of dictators. The best school will not be run from Augusta or Washington, but from the community in which it lies.” Commissioner of Education Harland A. Ladd also spoke, admonishing the community that their work was not done once the school was built: “If this school is to be a good school, it must be a community school in every sense of the word...there must be a constant exchange between teachers, parents and people so that there may be a common purpose...”



Bill Haynes photo, 2009

Also part of the dedication program, Vaughn Thurston played a trumpet solo, Dale Allen Jr. and the Varsity Glee Club of Norway High School sang. The building was at first a 106 by 58 ft. wooden building with an 8 ft. wide corridor and four classrooms with large window walls. Schools closed then in East Waterford, the Flat and South Waterford but North Waterford remained open for grades sub-primary through three until 1954, when two rooms were added to the Memorial School. Some of the nine grades were doubled in six rooms.

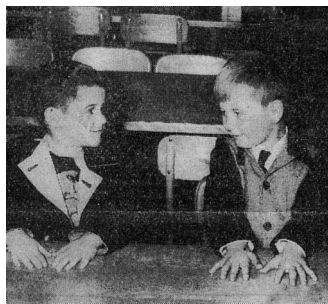
Among the folks arguing the “political disputes” were the two “feuding” columnists who were actually good friends — Charlotte Fillebrown and Flora Abbott. Flora’s opinion was clear in her column of Nov. 11, 1949. She expressed her sorrow at no longer hearing the South Waterford school bell’s “cheery clang” that she and earlier generations had experienced. She wrote that once “we had twelve schoolhouses, which were closed, one by one, as people moved off the farms; and for three generations the children have been coming in from the woods to the villages. Now we have one schoolhouse in the woods and the children are being carried from the villages back to the woods from whence their ancestors sprung. How true it is that times, people and events move in cycles.” That has certainly been true for consolidation!

Flora added a little story about her great-nephew, Leon Noyes, who came home from his first day at the new schoolhouse with an apple core in his coat pocket. He said he “couldn’t find any other place to put it,” which allowed Flora to have her usual last word: “Something must be lacking still when the children have to bring home the garbage in their pockets.”

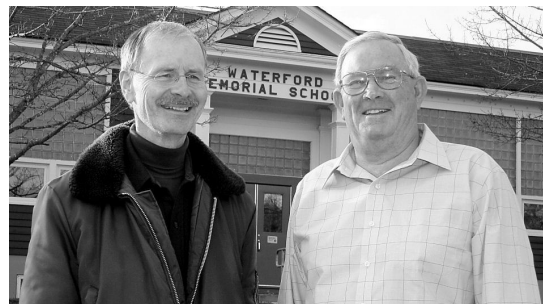
**Next Issue: Controversy Continues**



Mrs. Marjorie Kimball's first class in the new school, 1953-54, the year the North Waterford Primary building closed. **Front row**, left to right: Claude Littlehale, Carroll McKenzie, James Littlehale, Wallace Jones, David Andrews, Clifford Andrews, Mark Stearns and Leon Kimball. **Second row**: Dale Sanborn, Winfield Kimball, Joan Pike, Jean Horton, Carol Sanborn, Maureen Hamlin, Sharon Hamlin, Joanne McAllister, Bobby Truman and Gary Hamlin. **Third row**: Ken Morse, Newell Andrews, Rex Rounds, Larry Herrick, Barry Hill, David Weir and Eddie Merrill. Back row: Alice Dunn, Merritt Kimball, David McAllister, Tim Sawyer, Brian Starbird, Frank Morse and Robert Wentworth.



Gary Rounds and Gale Bell (glasses) were featured in a Nov. 7, 1949 story about the dedication of the Waterford School. At left in the photo that ran in the paper, they are six years old trying out their new desks (Gale's on the left). Sixty years later they posed for a photo in front of the same school. (Bill Haynes photo)



Mr. Dale Galbraith and his 4th/5th class, ca. 1949-50. Left to right, **back row**: Edith Rolfe, Beverly Cyr, Kay Scribner, Eva Millett, Judy Brown, John Littlehale, Johnny Goodwin, Mr. Galbraith and Thornton "Bud" Currier. **Middle row**, Roswell Brown, Kenneth Morse, Priscilla Gammon, Frank Mills, Claudia Hatch, Marion Niemi, Helen Millett, Emily Foster. **Front row**, Bobby Brown, Linda Lahti, Edith "Dede" Perry, Conrad Pike, Glyde McAllister, Reynold "Cheche" Bard, Sherwood Bard, Guy Brown. This photo is a gift from Dede Perry McAllister.



# Albany Town House on National Register of Historic Places

**Albany Township** — A town hall built in 1848, 45 years after the incorporation of the town of Albany, but which had languished for decades after the town gave up its charter in 1937, has been reborn.

Restoration of the vernacular white-clapboard building with Greek Revival details has been the work of volunteers from the Albany Improvement Association. They have restored the original tin ceiling, removed wallpaper and constructed a handicap ramp so that voting could return to this historic location.

In October 2009, the township celebrated the inclusion of the Albany Town Hall on the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Bethel Historical Society member Steve Seames spoke at the dedication and there was a display of memorabilia.

According to the Sun Journal, Lorraine Tanguay of the Albany Improvement Association says the eventual goal is to organize an historical society. Albany Township, with more than 400 residents, is the highest populated unorganized territory in the state and one of 19 in Oxford County. More than half of Maine has unorganized territory or plantation status, which is unique in the United States.

Albany, which has shared so much of the history of the bordering town of Waterford, was settled in 1784 and incorporated in 1803, with a population at that time of under 70 persons. Within two years the County of Oxford was formed (1805), road-building began in earnest and then commerce, particularly from logging and water mills, grew in the whole area.



**Albany Town Hall is now on the National Register of Historic Places**

# Artemus Ward

*(Continued from page 1)*

idea of becoming a favorite attraction in England and America.

But such is fate, that the young printer who was to wander through Ohio looking for work, carrying his belongings in a battered carpet bag, was just ten years later to keep large audiences of dignified Londoners roaring with laughter.

Life in Waterford was pleasant for Artemus in his boyhood days. He enjoyed getting up shows after the traveling circuses and carnivals passed through town, and speaking pieces at school entertainments, but work did not appeal to him. Nevertheless, boys were put to work early in those days and the death of his father when Charles was thirteen made it necessary for him to earn his own living. His inclinations led toward printing and he was apprenticed to John M. Rix of Lancaster, New Hampshire, the publisher of the "Weekly Democrat." Here Charles learned the basics of his trade and acquired the reputation of an ingenious prankster. After one escapade involving the tapping of a rum barrel, Mr. Rix had had enough and sent the boy home to his mother.

Although Mrs. Brown was somewhat disillusioned with her wayward son, she soon found a job for Charles at the Norway "Advertiser," where his brother Cyrus was an editor. The poorly managed paper was soon sold out and Charles, as an apprentice, went with the property. Despite new management, the paper continued to go downhill and folded after a few months.

Once again unemployed, Charles left Waterford in search of work. He first went to Augusta and then to Skowhegan, where he found work with the "Clarion." For some reason he found his stay in Skowhegan unpleasant and, after a few weeks, he departed — by means of a bed cord from the upper window of his boarding house early one morning. He slapped Skowhegan often in later years, either because of his continued dislike of the town, or because the odd name appealed to him.

Following his departure from Skowhegan, Charles returned to Waterford where, aided by the influence of his uncle Calvin Farrar (and a reluctant letter of recommendation from Mr. Rix), he secured a job in the printing office of the "Carpet Bag," a well-known Boston humor publication at that time.

It was while working at the "Carpet Bag" that Charles was introduced to the writings of John Godfrey Saxe, Charles Graham Halpine and other wits of the era. Their writings apparently had a profound influence on him; his first publication, an account of a Fourth-of-July celebration in Waterford, was written there. He sent his story unsigned to Benjamin Shillaber, editor of the "Carpet Bag" and famous for his writings as "Mrs. Purington." It was printed and Artemus continued to write mildly funny things during his three-year stay.

Wanderlust soon struck Charles, as it would in the years to come, and he packed his few belongings and went blithely on his way--headed west. In Cincinnati he set type on various newspapers for a few days at a time. Then, seeing an advertisement for a schoolteacher in Kentucky, he applied for the position and got it. But teaching was apparently not his forte--he stayed but a week and left hurriedly, not stopping for his salary!

He worked his way back through Ohio from town to town until he reached Tiffin. Here he stayed for nearly a year setting type and writing for the "Seneca Advertiser" before wanderlust struck again and he moved to Toledo. He quickly found work at the Toledo "Commercial," first as a typesetter and later as local editor. His talent soon revealed itself and his oddly humorous writings gained him a reputation throughout northern Ohio. This reputation soon landed him a job on the editorial staff of the Cleveland "Plain Dealer."

It was here on January 30, 1858 that Brown published the first letter from an imaginary traveling showman, signing it "Artemus Ward." Both the letter and the name became immediately popular — further news of the showman was eagerly awaited by the readers of the "Plain Dealer." More letters appeared from time to time and were widely copied by other papers so that he soon became popular in all parts of the country.

**To be continued in the next issue.**

# In Memoriam

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**Rick J. Millett**, 37, of Waterford, passed away July 23, at Maine Medical Center. He was born in Bridgton, Feb. 5, 1972, the son of Ralph L. Millett and Betty (Eaton) Millett. He graduated from Oxford Hills High School in 1990, where he participated in sit skiing and track with the Special Olympics. He attended Land Mark Human Resources. He is survived by his parents, Ralph and Betty Millett, of Waterford; his fiancée, Rebecca Boutilier of Bridgton; one sister, Donna Scribner of Waterford; two brothers, Russell of Waterford and George of Albion, Mich.; four nieces, Jessica Scribner of Norway, Sunny Millett of Portland, Nina Millett of Waterford and Ashley Millett of North Carolina; one nephew, Jason Brown of Lewiston; two special great-nieces, Haley Scribner and Mariah Cotton, both of Norway; two special great-nephews, Ryan and Hunter Cotton of Norway; and many aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and caregivers. He is buried in Pulpit Rock Cemetery in Waterford.

**Adrien L. Morin Sr.** of Waterford died Aug. 10 at home from a short battle with cancer. He was born in Lewiston, Sept. 16, 1945. He worked as a logger and then for Pioneer Plastics, Newton Tibbets, Cianbro, Pikes and Lucas Tree. He married Darlene Corriveau on Aug. 5, 1965. He is survived by sons, Adrien Jr. and Yvon of Waterford, Anthony of Bethel, Jody of Gilead, Jeremy of Gilead and daughter Darleen Moldue of Rutland, MA.; 18 grandchildren; four brothers; and five sisters. He was predeceased by one brother and one sister.



**James D. (Duffy) Murch**, 91 of Waterford died Oct. 12 at the Maine Veterans Home in South Paris. He was born in South Paris Sept. 3, 1918 the son of Ellsworth and Annie B. Witham and attended school in South Paris. He served his country in the Army during World War II. He worked as a heavy equipment operator for R.K. Brown, Cianbro and Pike Industries. Duffy was a member of the Mundt-Allen American Legion in Bethel. On Nov. 28, 1936 he married Maisie Millett and they celebrated 71 yrs together until her death on Aug. 19, 2008. Survivors include his sons George of South Paris as well as Alfred and William of Waterford, eight grandchildren, four step grandchildren, 13 great grandchildren, three step great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren and several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by a son James "Ramie" Murch, brothers Chester, Ralph and Ellsworth and sisters Anna, Bertha and Jennie. He is buried in Elm Vale Cemetery.



**Eugene E. McAllister**, 73, of North Waterford died Dec. 3, 2009 at Market Square Health Care Center. He was born in North Waterford on Feb. 12, 1936, the son of Winfield and Edith Crouse McAllister. He attended Gould Academy and was employed by H. E. Haines in Winn as a truck driver and equipment operator. He served in the U. S. Air Force during the Korean War. He married Margaret Allen on June 29, 1957. He is survived by his wife of North Waterford; a daughter, Lisa Scribner of North Waterford; a son, Dale McAllister of Sanford; four grandchildren, Katie Libby, Kristina McAllister, Jesse Scribner and Tamra Scribner; a great-grandson, Cooper; and a brother, Lawrence of North Waterford. He was predeceased by two brothers, Irving and Erlon; and a sister, Celia Littlefield. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery.



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## Acknowledgements

continued from page 3

- Dan Drew for fine carpentry work & coming in under estimate on the painting.
- Mike & Jen Lain for watching over the No. Waterford Museum lawn.
- The Waterford Library for housing some of our archives for winter research.
- Dorthe Hillquist, Librarian, for fielding questions from visitors.
- Everyone who has sent in Oral Histories or Building Questionnaires.
- Lynn Baker for Artemus Ward artifacts.

We tend to have items given to us at every meeting and we may have forgotten who gave us some contributions. If that is so, please forgive us and let us know what you gave. We appreciate every gift related to Waterford. Our big success for the year was an income from the auction of non-Waterford items which allowed us to make up for a loss in our investment funds over the past year. Our Finance Committee is using it wisely to keep the buildings and collections going.



# Wildflowers

(Continued from page 10)

of ninety-two (92), No. 10 [Mary H. Austin] had fifty-five (55) and Nos. 1 [Alice M. Monroe] and 2 [Annie Atherton/Ethel Monroe] about a hundred each.

There were nine schools used, three twenty-six terms each, sixteen different teachers during the year.

Notwithstanding the apparent success of the 1902 wild flower collecting project—one wonders how many of today's Waterford residents could collect and identify 156 separate species--Florence's questionable deviation from traditional basic education did not go unnoticed. Here is her 1903 summary of the nature study program:

*The interest in nature study has continued. During the spring term, many of the schools made a collection of flowers, and kept a list of birds seen. Miss [Alice M.] Hamlin and her scholars in No. 1 sent me a list of two hundred and twenty-eight (228) wild flowers, which is higher by seventy-two (72) than our prize list of last year. Miss Green and her pupils of No. 10 grammar school secured the second place with a list of two hundred and two (202) and they also noted seventy-five (75) birds. I have been sorry to hear adverse criticism in regard to this work, which is so largely done outside of school hours. Some, who are evidently not in sympathy with modern ideas of education say the children had better be learning the multiplication table than hunting up weeds and pollinogs. I believe in the saving virtue of the multiplication table as firmly as our critics, but I also believe there is time for both in our school work. Facts and figures are good, but these alone would be to return to the Gradgrind system of education, which Dickens has caricatured so admirably.*

"The saving virtue of the multiplication table" — whatever her intellectual gifts, Florence remained a Maine country woman, blunt, independent, and never one to suffer fools gladly. Florence's summary of the situation undoubtedly fails to do justice to what must have been an important town issue, at least unofficially; we can only imagine the amount of fussing and complaining that went on over these suspicious activities, which had clearly begun to infiltrate the education system, since it appears that the teachers and students not only participated in them, but thoroughly enjoyed them.

And in the Town Report for 1904 we see the result. George L. Kimball is now the Superintendent, with a report far less colorful than Florence's. And he says:

*Our teachers have been directed to give the rudiments the first place in the school work. Nature study has been continued at the option and discretion of the teacher, but in no case has it occupied a higher place than a diversion and as such it is very useful. If the number of weeks in the school year was considerably greater, more attention might be given to this line of work with profit. But in view of the fact that a great majority of our boys and girls receive all their education in our common schools and having in mind the great utility of a passing knowledge of the things which enter into every-day life, we arrive at the conclusion that the rudiments must continue to hold first place in our schools. There are no substitutes. Other things are helpful, as sugar-coating makes the pill more palatable, but the pill is the important thing, after all.*

The saving virtue of the multiplication table triumphs, at least temporarily, and the sugar coated diversions of encouraging these children actually to learn about the natural world around them is put in its place. A woman worth knowing, Florence must have been. But there are footnotes to the story, too, that give Florence's efforts some perspective. It was in 1901 that George Howe founded the Boy Scientists in Norway, with the objective of encouraging children to study natural history. It was a great success, and the name notwithstanding, the organization fairly quickly included both boys and girls, as well as some adults.

When my grandfather, Burton Sanderson, who grew up in Waterford, went to Bates, where he graduated in 1903, one of the courses he took was Botany. We still have his Gray's Botany from those days. About the same time my grandmother Minnie Halford Sanderson was in high school in Sanford, Maine, where her botanizing resulted in a fine collection of dried flowers preserved in a bound volume.

So the years after 1900 were in fact a time when nature study for young people was becoming common, and was increasingly recognized as being valuable and worthwhile. After 1910, we had the Boy Scout movement in this country, with nature study a key part of the program. This is also the period when summer camps began to proliferate around western Maine, so that city children could get out into the natural world, as well. So Florence Brown Rounds may have frightened the folks in Waterford briefly; but if we look for some of the early stirrings of the environmental movement, surely we see it in her efforts to get the children to begin looking at the natural world around them.

**Watch for The Summer Camps in the next issue of the Waterford Echoes.**

# THE GREAT WILDFLOWER SCANDAL OF 1904

by David Sanderson

One of the most interesting sections of older Waterford Town Reports is the School Report, where the Superintendent of Schools reported to the town in some detail on the condition of the educational system. The School Committee's job was not easy in those days — finding teachers for three terms a year in a dozen or so schools, keeping buildings in repair, and trying to buy things like books and furniture while spending as little as possible. It was not always easy to find people willing to serve on the committee, either.

This particular story starts in 1902, when Florence Rounds became Superintendent. She was Florence Brown Rounds, a relative of Charles F. “Artemus Ward” Brown. She had a reputation as a fine teacher, had served on the School Committee and had been Superintendent in 1898. The turn of the century was a time when some new ideas began percolating through Maine education; a few years earlier the Legislature had passed a law requiring towns to pay tuition for students who wished to continue their education, thus beginning the era when so many Waterford students were able to attend Bridgton Academy and other secondary schools.

Florence was well-educated and progressive, and had an idea or two of her own:

*I have investigated all cases of non-attendance that came under my notice... with the result that the scholars appeared at school or a sufficient excuse was found to exist... parents... should be required to send a written excuse, or present themselves in person with a verbal one... when half the year is vacation [physical disability] is the only excuse that is valid. There is plenty of time in the other twenty-six weeks for working, visiting or entertaining company... The up-to-date teacher has her work planned systematically and knows just what she is going to teach the class outside the text-book. She has no time to do this work twice and Johnny must be the loser.*

Such blunt words may not have pleased some townspeople, but the real problem was this:

*At the beginning of the year I suggested to the teachers that they ask their pupils to bring in and name as many different wild flowers as possible during the Spring term. Nearly all the schools took part in this friendly contest, and the result was a very gratifying interest in nature study and the discovery that our town has quite a variety of wild flowers. The parents were interested, too, in some localities and we heard of the head of one family bringing home rare specimens to swell the list. The school securing the largest variety was No. 12, Miss [Melvina] Greene, the teacher, giving me a list of one hundred fifty-six (156). The second place was gained by the pupils of No. 5, taught by Miss [Carrie] Plummer, with a list of one hundred thirty-five (135). This was equally commendable, as the school was smaller and the scholars much younger. No. 3 [May E. Whitney] sent a list*

*(Continued on page 9)*



Florence Rounds, circa 1890s

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