

The Waterford Echoes

Volume 5 Number 1

Winter, 1984

Waterford Historical Society

ACQUISITIONS AT THE NORTH WATERFORD MUSEUM

From Ann Pike of Norway, a photo of the Arthur Kingman house in South Waterford.

From Oscar Andrews of North Waterford, a barn door track wheel made in South Waterford by the Miller Foundry.

From Doris Thurston of North Norway, two town reports of 1900 and 1901.

From Hazel DeMerritt of North Waterford, three school books.

From Gladys Knight of North Waterford, a picture of the Odd Fellows insignia.

From the heirs of Wilma Whiting, two pictures of Springers' Store and a picture of the farm house at Passaconway where Linda Bradley lives now.

From James Tyler of Waterford, old newspaper clippings, including a news picture of the Knight Library fire in the fall of 1937 when two barns and a small cottage burned.

From Mildred Noyes of Waterford and Arizona, wooden lock-post-office boxes that had served patrons many years in South Waterford.

From Margaret S. Werner of South Waterford and Florida, the first Werner Park sign which was replaced by the present one.

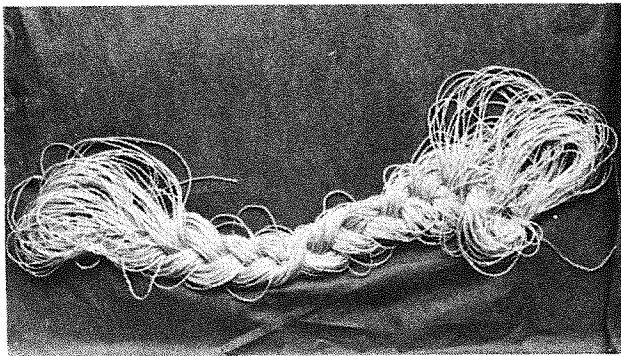
From Beatrice V. Fitts of East Hampton, Mass., a framed Free High School photo at North Waterford of about 1886 which had belonged to her mother, Bertha Rice Fitts. The framed picture was found in the Nancy Jewett house when Bertha and Arthur Fitts purchased it in 1935. Bertha had lived with Nancy and Isaac Jewett while she was going to school in North Waterford and later moved to the Flat and lived with them while attending Douglas Seminary. A great history of all the students pictured accompanies the picture.

From Mrs. Harold Hammond of Potomac, Maryland, four *Maine Registers* - 1899-00 and 1909-10 published in Portland, Maine by G. M. Donham and 1936-37 and 1943-44 published in Portland by Fred L. Tower Companies.

From Keith F. Brown of San Diego, California, photostated *Genealogical Notes, Descendants of Thomas Browne of Concord, Mass. by Goodwin Brown, Esq. of Yonkers, N.Y. 1901.* Also, photostated *Record of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 1853* and containing information about Thomas Brown and early generations of the Brown family by The Rev. Frederick Lewis Weis, Th.D. Also, a great book, *Concord, Climate for Freedom*, by Ruth R. Wheeler for the Concord Antiquarian Society. It relates to Waterford from many people mentioned and is a great history to Brown's in Waterford, including Charles Farrar Brown. (Artemus Ward).

From Bill Fillebrown of Waterford, a peg hammer for driving wooden pegs into buildings and furniture.

From Miriam Monroe of South Waterford, a photo of the 1938 hurricane logs stored in Bear Pond.



Bill Haynes Photo

A braid of silk made by Martha Robinson in 1840 at Lincoln Ripley parsonage in Waterford, Maine. Martha raised the silk worms and fed them on leaves from her own mulberry trees.

SILK CULTURE IN MAINE

by Stephen B. Dewing

The origin of silk is obscure. Probably it became known more than 2000 years before Christ in China, though it may have originated in India. Over many centuries the method of culture was kept secret in the Orient, though many specimens of silk cloth found their way to the civilizations of the Mediterranean area, and there was much speculation about their nature. In 552 A. D., however, two Christian monks smuggled silk worm eggs from China to Constantinople, and the secret was out. Henceforth production spread rapidly and silk manufacture has remained an active enterprise in Italy and France to the present day.

Silk culture in England's American colonies began within a few years of the earliest settlements (e.g. Jamestown, Va., early 1600's) and was pursued on a small scale in practically all colonial areas.

The essentials of silk thread manufacture are the silk worms themselves, and the mulberry leaves they feed on. Fortunately these do well in all the climate areas of what is now the eastern seaboard of the United States. The culture of silk worms "on the farm" as a part-time cottage industry was pursued in Maine for much of the 19th century.

Silkworms were kept in the cool cellar of a home, probably until mulberry trees leaved out in the spring, then they were brought into the warmth of the farm kitchen.

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NOTED IN THE PASSING SCENE

Eighty-two descendants of Llewellyn and Mary Rice Millett met for a second annual reunion at their grandson Vern Millett's farm on Plummer Hill August 7, 1983.

The wedding of India Baker of the Artemus Ward House in Waterford and William Harry Haynes of South Waterford took place October 10, 1983. The wedding and reception were held at the Artemus Ward House. The bride attended schools in England and is an instructor of the British Horse Society. She owns and operates the Waterford Stud and Equestrian Center. The bridegroom graduated from the University of Maine at Orono in 1973 and is a reporter and photographer for the *Portland Press Herald*. They are at home in South Waterford.

Walter Lord, who lived most of his life in North Waterford, died at the Pomeroy Hill Nursing Home, Livermore Falls, Oct. 26, 1983, one month before his 101st birthday. He engaged in many aspects of farming over the years. He received the town's *Boston Post* cane March 7, 1980.

Susie Grant, 99, received the *Boston Post* cane from Waterford's First Selectman, Billie A. Sawyer, November 13, 1983.

After two years of controversy the tradition of driveway plowing was officially finished at the town's annual meeting, March 3, 1984.

A committee was appointed by the 1983 president, Robert Ross, to look into the cost and conditions of having two or three park benches on the Waterford Common with a brass plate on the back of them to commemorate the memory of our Life member, Alice S. Rounds, using funds that have come to the Society in her memory. The Committee is Phil Buchert, Mary Fillebrown and Raynor K. Brown.

John J. Pullen's book, *Comic Relief, The Life and Laughter of Artemus Ward*, was published a few months ago and is on sale at Books 'N Things, Oxford Plaza, Oxford, Maine 04270, Tel. 743-7197.

SILK

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The worms would begin to hatch ten days after being taken out of the cold cellar. Their voracious appetites required a constant supply of mulberry leaves for a month. The chewing sounded like Gypsy moth worms of today when the leaves of a tree are being eaten by an army of Gypsy moth worms.

FOR SALE

The History of Waterford Maine 1775-1875, reprinted from an 1879 publication \$10.00, plus \$1.10 if mailed. Waterford, Maine 1875-1976 published in 1977, also \$10.00, plus \$1.10 if mailed. Both books are available from the Waterford Town Office, Mrs. Curtis Millett above Waterford Memorial School, and from the Waterford Historical Society, Waterford, Maine 04088, and L. R. Rounds & Co. store in Waterford Village.

ADV.

The silk worms were kept on a wide paper-covered shelf; the paper was changed regularly. After their month of feeding, the worms stopped and raised their heads. It signaled their readiness to spin. For three days the worms wound the filament, which they secreted from their mouth-parts, around themselves in figure-eight motions of their heads until they were completely enclosed. Before the cocoon could be unreeled, the worm had to be killed by putting the cocoon into hot water.

It is also rather interesting that there have been efforts to develop fibers from cocoons of numerous varieties of worms. A sad side-effect of this research was the inadvertant release of some Gypsy moths in Massachusetts in 1869 by a French naturalist (Leopold Trouvelot) (credit to Meade Werner). He had hoped (in vain) to develop a new breed of silk producers. The curse of the Gypsy moths has become well-known to New England -- and to us right here in Waterford -- ever since. It may be compared to the misguided introduction of rabbits to Australia. Ultimately the *Bombyx mori* strain of silk worms became recognized as superior and set the standard.

Different varieties of mulberry leaves (and even some other tree leaves) went through experimentation, but finally the white (Italian) mulberry tree was established as best for the purpose.

I myself have some experience of mulberry trees, having climbed a good many as a youngster, from Maine to North Carolina (and even in Greece) in order to eat the berries. In New Jersey, some 30 years ago, I "brought up" a mulberry from a small seedling to a rather large tree - it grew *extremely* fast, despite severe pruning. One unpleasant aspect was that the berries, in season, attract flies by the million and create a local nuisance.

New Jersey, of course, was one of the most favorable areas for mulberry trees and silk worm culture. The city of Patterson, in the northern part of the state, acquired the nick-name of "Silk City" in the 19th century. Since the eclipse of the U. S. silk industry, mulberry trees have become a rather unwelcome "weed" tree in New Jersey.

Marguerite Wolf's book, *I'll Take the Back Road* contains a chapter on silk culture in Vermont in the 19th century. Apparently many people from Connecticut and Massachusetts migrated north during the 18th and 19th centuries and brought with them the "makings" of silk culture from Connecticut, where it had been longer established. The same phenomenon must have occurred in New Hampshire and Maine.

The real enthusiasm for, and peak production of silk in America developed in the early 19th century. A report "relating to the raising of silkworms" by a special committee of the Maine Senate in March 1936 is interesting and representative. This report emphasized the favorable conditions for silk culture in Maine and the desirability of local production to offset the "Ten millions of dollars worth annually imported by the United States from foreign countries." Among the details of manufacture in this report are some interesting statistics; 21 pounds of mulberry leaves produce 1 pound of cocoons (some 300); 3000 cocoons result in 1 pound of raw silk thread; a 5-year old mulberry tree yields 12 pounds of leaves per season; an acre containing 2000 trees provides feed for some 342,600 worms, and would give about 114 pounds of raw silk.

The senate committee wound up its report with the glowing recommendation that silk culture affords "a light but pleasant employment to the young, the weak and least productive classes... This article is one which finds its way into every family and is considered essential... however poor and humble they may be. It is also one which ministers to the gratification of the rich and affluent."

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TOWN MEETING



Bill Haynes Photo

Town meeting, March 3, 1984. Bill Sawyer, Chairman of Board of selectmen; Brenda Bigonski, town clerk; Sawin Millett, moderator. Marguerite Millett, Mother of Sawin casting her ballot in the election for town officers.



Bill Haynes Photo

Duffy Murch about to cast his ballot.

IN MEMORIAM

Wilma S. Whiting died July 18, 1983. She operated Springers Store for many years, was the Postmaster at E. Waterford, and a past Treasurer of the Waterford Historical Society.

Alice S. Rounds died Sept. 29, 1983. She was the operator of Rounds Store and the local Postmaster from 1969. She was a life member of the Waterford Historical Society.

Howard S. Millett, Sr., died Jan. 12, 1984. He had been a school teacher and Superintendent of Schools in Unions 44 and 104, and a dairy farmer before he returned to Waterford and after he returned.

Irene K. Bean died February 24, 1984 in Norway. She taught school in Oxford, Poland, and Waterford and had served in many capacities during her many years in Waterford. She was a charter member of the Waterford Historical Society and curator for most of the history of the Society. She helped much in the publication of the second century Waterford history published in 1977.

SINCE JULY, 1983

- JULY 14** Descendants of Cyrus Hamlin enjoyed a potluck at the North Waterford Museum. They compared genealogical information showing their connection to Cyrus Hamlin.
- AUG. 11** Dr. William S. Tacey Lectured on "How the Civil War Came to Maine" at the North Waterford Museum.
- SEPT. 8** Members looked over many old creamery account books at the North Waterford Museum and Charles Fillebrown told about his working at the creamery during its heyday.
- OCT. 13** Old photos were studied at the N. Waterford Museum after a pot luck supper.
- NOV. 10** Members met with Bob and Mary Ross at Waterford. Oscar Andrews gave the program about the North Waterford Spool Mill, assisted by Raynor K. Brown.
- DEC. 9** Members met with Oscar and Mary Andrews at their new home at North Waterford. Mary Ross gave the program about Susan Hamlin Wilkins and the Community House. Susan was born in Waterford on Nov. 23, 1841. After teaching school for some years in Waterford and then New York she returned with many ideas for a larger building for social events but passed on before her wishes could be fulfilled. She left her estate to her devoted friend, Katherine Baird. On May 3, 1928 the church and Community House were burned. Through the untiring efforts of Miss Baird the present Community House was built and dedicated on the birthday of Miss Wilkins, November 23, 1929.
- JAN. 12** Members met with Mary and Charles Fillebrown taking their unidentified antiques. Displayed were a bed tightener to tighten rope beds, a niddy-noddy (two heads on one body) used to wind a skein of yarn, and a leather document box decorated with brass nail heads, a metal and an oak scrubbing boards, a brass alarm clock with the name H. T. Sawin, N. Waterford on the face of it. Also, a horse rake tine, and agricultural books with articles about Waterford farmers, a peg hammer for driving wooden pegs into buildings and furniture and two standards to hold caskets.
- FEB. 9** Members met with Helen and Phil Buchert, and Charles Fillebrown gave the history of apples in Maine and particularly in Waterford.
- MAR. 8** Members met with Margaret and Bill Sawyer. Officers were elected for 1984.

Join the Waterford Historical Society. Check appropriate category and mail to Box 2, Waterford, ME. 04088.

Name _____

Address _____

MEMBER CLASSIFICATION

___ Life-Couple	\$75.00	___ Senior Citizen	\$ 1.00
___ Life	\$50.00	___ Student	\$ 1.00
___ Patron	\$25.00	___ Sustaining	\$ 2.50
___ Honorary	\$35.00	___ Contributing	\$10.00

ADDITIONAL 1983 MEMBERS

LIFE

Eva and Malcolm J. Bean, Nashua, N. H.; A. L. (Tom) Hammett, Madison, Georgia; John G. Howe, N. Waterford; John Klepinger, Nedsco, Missouri; John C. and Karen N. O'Brien, RFD, Harrison.

CONTRIBUTING

M. Elizabeth Kilburn, W. Newton, Mass; Alfred W. Lovejoy, Traverse City, Michigan; Marguerite Millett, RFD, Harrison; Wm. L. & Carolyn Caldwell Patton, Harvard, Mass.

SUSTAINING

Mary U. Andrews, N. Waterford; Elizabeth and Stanley Lord, Bethel.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Oscar K. Andrews, N. Waterford; Irene K. Bean, Norway; Vera Merrill Emerson, Norway; Mary Jacobson Emery, West Paris; Ida Kimball, Inverness, Florida; Howard S. Millett, Sr., RFD, Harrison.

1984 OFFICERS

The following slate of officers was elected at the March Meeting:

PRESIDENT	James H. Tyler
V. PRESIDENT	Mary T. Fillebrown
SECRETARY	Agnes B. Lahti
TREASURER	Margaret M. Sawyer
TRUSTEES	Bill A. Sawyer Bill Fillebrown Annie Garner

SILK

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Bounties to encourage silk worm culture were common in America in the early 19th century. A report by the Maine Senate Committee on Agriculture in 1842 discussed a proposed increase of existing bounties for silk production and propagation of mulberry trees. The conclusion was to refer the matter to local administra-

tion, at the county level, and not involve the state, as such, in this enterprise. However, the committee's enthusiasm for silk was unmistakable. It allowed that the "worm is easily raised, is healthier, and spins a more durable and better thread in our northern climate than when reared and fostered in a milder zone... Silk culture is among the pleasantest, most profitable, and healthful of all occupations...(it) forms a delightful employment for children and young persons, and may easily occupy the hours and release the painful tedium of persons in infirm health." And much more purple prose to the same effect.

This same committee mentioned in some detail the rather large scale silk production project of a certain "Capt. John Dillingham" of Turner (Oxford County) -- some 8000 mulberry trees, and a water powered "machine that reels the silk from the cocoon and skeins and twists the perfect thread at one and the same operation."

Typical bounties paid in the 1830's and 1840's were 5¢ for every pound of cocoons produced, and 50¢ per pound of reeled silk thread. In 1871 the going rate was 10¢ per pound of cocoons and \$1.00 per pound of reeled silk. Dr. David Smith of the History Department at the University of Maine Orono commented on silk culture in Maine at a meeting of the Society of Mayflower Descendants in May, 1982. He noted that as much as \$1,000.00 was paid in silk bounties in Maine in 1831. Bounties were apparently discontinued officially by 1903.

On our local scene, we here in Waterford have a definite piece of the action. We have in our museum a skein of silk identified as having been produced by Martha Robinson in 1840, at the parsonage of the then incumbent minister, Lincoln Ripley, in Waterford. Martha raised the silkworms herself and fed them with leaves from her own mulberry tree.

Alas, American silk culture has faded in the 20th century. The principal source of silk today is Japan, followed by Italy and France. Labor costs in the United States have proved impossible. Silk has yielded to synthetic fabrics, of course, but still has a limited market in the luxury area -- men's neckties, some expensive suits and dresses, academic gowns, and certain elaborate church vestments. Silk was preferred for surgical sutures for a long time but recently has been superseded by nylon.

Waterford Historical Society
Waterford,
Maine 04088