

**MILFORD  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**WEDNESDAY**

**March 19, 2003 7:30PM**

**Town Hall Banquet Room**

**The Milford Historical Society**

**Welcomes Arlene George**

**Speaking on**

**Indian Heritage**

**In**

**New Hampshire and**

**New England**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TRANSPORTION IN MILFORD**

So ---- you think you have problems traveling to the grocery store, to Walmart, to Nashua, Manchester or Boston. Think again. Your ancestors had an entirely different life traveling about. Here's what Ramsdell and The Granite Town say about it.

During the late 1700's most of the traveling in Milford was done in oxcarts. Farmers generally went to mill on horseback. The first stagecoach in the Milford vicinity was established in 1795. It ran from Amherst to Boston once a week and was drawn by two horses, that made the entire trip. The stagecoach was looked at as "one of the wonders of the time". Early in the 1800's an independent line of coaches established a route from Nashua to Keene and the Connecticut River. The coach would stop in Milford every other day, at Buxton's Tavern to change horses and the drivers to have dinner. The coach used two and sometimes three horses.

In 1807 mail was carried on horseback by Daniel Gibbs. He traveled across the Merrimack River at Thornton's Ferry, passed through Amherst, Milford, Wilton and on to Peterborough. In 1816 he started to use a wagon, occasionally taking on passengers. He was killed in Peterborough and his son took over with a two-horse wagon. On or about 1827 a regular state line was established.

By 1850 the railroad had come to Milford. On December 5 of that year, the railroad from Milford to Wilton was completed and formally opened to the public on December 25. Train travel extended to Nashua, and eventually into Boston, and the world beyond.

Horse drawn carriages were the mode of transportation around town. In 1900 the Merchants and the Improvement Society decided that something had to be done about the unbearable dusty conditions of the roads around the Common. A horse-drawn sprinkling cart and driver were hired and paid for by the Society. Water was drawn out of the river into a 300 gallon wooden tank and on the back of the cart was a fan-shaped sprinkler. It took forty to fifty tanks full of water each day to lay the dust in just the area of the common.

FINALLY – the first automobile came to Milford in 1902, an Oldsmobile, purchased by Walter Billings. By the Fall of 1903 there were five car owners. In 1904, auto traffic was starting to become a problem, whizzing through town at 15 mph, scaring horses and boys on bicycles, not to mention startling pedestrians. A law was passed stating that "no one

shall ride through the compact part of town at a swifter speed than five mph." In 1905 state aid for the improvement of the highway became available and the roads were macadamized and curb stones put in. By 1906 automobile ownership was "catching on" as there was 17 in town. They were referred to as "honk wagons" and as many as 7 at one time were on the streets. It was not unusual for 30 cars to pass through town in a single day.

In 1911, Frank Boutelle, who owned the stable in back of the Wallace Block, bought 2 cars to be used for hire. Some Sundays, 119 automobiles and 112 horse-drawn carriages passed up and down Elm Street.

The Milford Automobile Club was organized by W .B. Rotch as president. The club was responsible for erecting badly needed signs at the corner of Union and Elm Streets and at the south entrance to Union Square.

By 1914 one could buy a Ford for \$440. By 1915 one could rent a jitney service, or taxi, for 5 cents and go anywhere in Milford. The jitney was a red Ford owned by Atwood Burnham. In 1920 Atwood acquired an auto bus that carried 14 passengers.

By 1926 the first bus service was started and was soon carrying the mail. Two trains were discontinued between Milford and Nashua. By 1929 there were 1,085 autos in town. In 1932 it was required to have automobile inspections. And by 1939 parking problems were being felt and the speed limit through town was raised to 25 mph. In 1946 a car cost \$1,600 and by the mid 50's I can remember gasoline costing about 15 cents per gallon.

Have things changed today? Cars cost on average \$20,000 or more, gasoline right now is on average \$1 .60 per gallon. And, it is still a problem getting around the common and through town, even with rotary traffic. Everywhere we travel, traffic is terrible, malls are full, there is no place to park. We drive around in circles waiting for someone to leave, finally get a parking spot, so we can step inside the store, purchase whatever we need, come back out and into – you guessed it – more traffic. Aah, for the good old days! !!

Polly Cote, President

### **THE BOOK "OUR NIG" by Harriet Wilson 1859**

With February being Black history month, the book "Our Nig or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black", an autobiographical novel written by Harriet Adams Wilson in 1859, has come again to the forefront of public attention. A book discussion was held February 8, 2003 at Border's Bookstore in Nashua. Among those in attendance from the Milford

Historical Society were Polly Cote, Louie Carey and Janice Adams, along with Prof. Barbara White who did extensive research on the Hayward family. JerriAnn Boggis headed up the discussion. "Our Nig" is believed to be the first book written by an African-American woman in America. Everytime there is a discussion of Harriet Wilson's book, more information comes to light about her. Harriet lived in Milford from about 1827 through her years as an indentured servant to around 1843. Afterwards, she lived in Massachusetts making hats and in Boston, Massachusetts until her son died in 1860 in Milford.

The book tells of "Alfrado" whom her mother abandoned at the age of 6 with the Belmont (Nehemiah Hayward) family. She lived with them as an indentured servant until she was 18 years old. She then goes on to tell of her life, her ill health, her marriage, her son George and his eventual death at the age of 8.

Harriet Wilson is renowned in literary circles and in other parts of the country and around the world, but little is known of her in her hometown. JerriAnn Boggis is working on a documentary project which will give Harriet Wilson's "Our Nig" honor and remembrance as a historical figure.

## **NEW HAMPSHIRE AND NEW ENGLAND – RICH IN INDIAN HERITAGE**

Arlene George will be coming to our March 19 meeting to discuss Indian Heritage in New Hampshire and New England. Over the past 15 years Arlene has spoken to 85 schools around the State and recently spoke in the Jaffrey School System. Arlene says there were over 13 different tribes of Indians in New Hampshire – including Penacook, Abernaci, Souhegan and Nashaway. The Indian burial site behind Agway is believed to date back to the Paleolithic Age. Arlene has continued her research for many years and spends much time in Concord in this endeavor. Come and share Arlene's knowledge as she speaks to us.

## **CURATOR COMMITTEE**

The Historical Society was able to purchase a display cabinet from the Hicks Jewelry Store closing sale. This cabinet has a glass top and glass over part of the sides and storage drawers in the back. It is a substantial piece of furniture. Dave Carter, Norman Cote, Dave Therieult and Ed Carey moved it from the store to the Hutchinson Room at

the Carey House. This gives much more display area in that room and makes items easier to see.

When Janice Adams visited the museum in Hutchinson, Minnesota she saw a picture purported to be the birthplace of the Hutchinson Family Singers in Milford, New Hampshire. The picture was of a very large house elaborately decorated and not in Milford. She was glad to be able to send back a picture of the real early home of the family and correct that mistake.

It is with pleasure and appreciation that we receive donated items. Recent acquisitions include: Scales for weighing gold used by Mr. Hicks when he opened the store and a ring gauge from Hicks Store

Pictures of World War II veterans copied and enlarged from Sarooch Ricciardi

Dr. Law's black bag and 2 period dresses, one of which had belonged in the Peabody family and some bottles from the Law family

Co-op Bank Lectern from the Bank of New Hampshire

We thank everyone for the kind support given to this committee.

Louie Carey

## **WWII Pictures**

Rosario (Sarooch) Ricciardi has given the Society pictures of all the World War II veterans, and as our Program Chair, Sarooch has had great interest in preserving their memories. In the past few years, he has put together several programs with many local veterans speaking of their war experiences. These programs are on Video and are available for viewing. Curator Louie Carey and her committee are currently working on an exhibition for the pictures in the upstairs War Room at the Carey House. The room is currently being rearranged for their viewing. This project is quite an undertaking and the Curator Committee hope to have this display done in the Spring, when a special open house will be held for the public to view this exhibit.

# The Milford Historical Society on the World Wide Web!

The Milford Historical Society's web site will be celebrating its first birthday in March of this year. I feel that the web site has been a success as it has helped to push sales of both the "Granite Town" book as well as the new "Images of America" book. Order forms are available on the web site for these books and we have received many orders for both from the web site. The web site has also generated many inquiry type of E-mails from people all over the world! People write to us looking for information on their families, their furniture, or just for Milford information in general.

The web site has had somewhere in the neighborhood of 7500 visitors over the past year. Those 7500 visitors generated over 50 thousand "hits" or "page views". Though these numbers are not huge, it is a fair amount considering our focus is on local history. Most visitors of the web site find their way there in one of two ways; either by clicking on links at other Milford web sites or by using Internet search engines. Some of the more common search phrases used to find our web site are listed below:

Arcadia publishing  
French & Heald  
sprague & Carleton  
Hayward's Trading Post  
furniture + bedroom + NH  
our nig  
Harriet Adams Wilson  
Milford, NH antique  
farming in the 1700's  
thomas nevins  
jonathan buxton  
nathan merrill milford nh  
mile slip road milford  
Harriet E. Wilson autobiography  
george Ramsdell  
milford coop bank  
presidents in the 30's

The web site currently consists of 6 sections:

- 1) **Membership.** Here people can print out membership forms or even join online.
- 2) **Gift Shop:** Order forms for purchasing some of our merchandise.
- 3) **Newsletters:** Our newsletters in digital format. Great for historical reference.
- 4) **Online Library.** Here there is a photo gallery as well as some other historical information including the beginning of the Ramsdell history online.
- 5) **About Us.** This section tells about the Society, who the officers are, and how to contact us.
- 6) **Milford Links.** Useful links to other Milford web sites.

Going forward and as time allows, I'd like to expand the web site to include order forms for all of the merchandise that we have available for sale (we currently only sell books online). I would also like to spend time digitizing our collection of past newsletters. The online library is lacking in the content that it offers, and is simply a matter of finding the time to add to it. If you feel that you have time and would like to help out with adding additional content to the web site, send me an E-mail at [chris.thompson@milfordhistory.com](mailto:chris.thompson@milfordhistory.com) or call me at 673-9555.

I am currently working at compiling and digitizing information from the French & Heald furniture Co. My goal for 2003 is to have an entire section of the site dedicated to French & Heald Furniture. The majority of our inquiries are about the numerous pieces of furniture still in existence around the world. Any pictures, brochures, flyers, advertisements, or even your memories of French & Heald furniture would be helpful and greatly appreciated!

Please send any suggestions or comments for the web site to my E-mail address or phone number above. If you would like your web site added to the "Milford Links" section, please contact me as well. Visit the site at <http://www.milfordhistory.com>

**Chris Thompson**



5201 BED —  
4/6 3/3  
Head 57½"  
Foot 51"

5217  
NIGHT TABLE  
Top 19" x 15¼"  
— Height 27"

#5200

*Hannah Dustin*

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GROUPING**

*your sweetest dreams  
fulfilled for more  
fashionable living*

*for more fashionable living*

A bedroom group to make you catch your breath with its utter simplicity and charm. The glowing finish of mellow brown . . . the clean lines and excellent proportions . . . the meticulous craftsmanship both inside and out . . . you'll enjoy its enduring beauty for years to come. Prove to yourself how much French and Heald furniture can do for you and your home. Buy one piece or an entire room. French and Heald is the home fashion for today . . . tomorrow . . . and the future.



5211 CHEST  
Top 35" x 20"  
— Height 45"



5200 BED —  
4/6 — 3/3  
Head 57½"  
Foot 51"



5212 CHEST  
ON CHEST  
Top 34" x 19½"  
— Height 49½"



5232 DOUBLE  
DRESSER MIRROR  
Plate 28" x 36"

5207 DOUBLE  
DRESSER BASE  
Top 54" x 20"  
— Height 36¾"



5231  
DRESSER MIRROR  
Plate 22" x 30"

5206 DRESSER BASE  
Top 44" x 20"  
— Height 36¾"

**WOOD — Solid Birch  
FINISH — Old Hampshire**



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**POLLY COTE**

**JANICE ADAMS**

**SAROOCH RICCIARDI**

**KEN MACGRATH**

**EVERYONE**

**OPEN**

**The Carey House is open:**

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday & Sunday of every month 2PM – 4PM

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays 9AM – 11AM

Visit us on the web at:

**[www.milfordhistory.com](http://www.milfordhistory.com)**