

# Narragansett Historical Society

September

2014



## A night at the Museum

As I travel through New England, I stop at many small towns to check their local Historical Society or Museums to compare what they have and how they display their collection. Often I will find the building is closed so I move on to the next town. We have this same situation in our town, not enough volunteers to keep it open. With a 100% volunteer base of members, we cannot rely on a paid employee to work at the building, this sets up our new program to help with this common problem.

A night at the Museum will answer any questions you may have and educate you on our building and the collection empowering you to have the confidence to be a better building host. Starting in September and continuing into the winter or until it's too cold in the building we will be open every Tuesday night from 6-8 pm.

Hosted by Harry Aldrich and Brian Tanguay each with over 20 years of dedicated work in the building along with co-authoring the book *Images of America Templeton*.

Open to any member willing to take the time and help keep our building occupied.

On the Common  
Templeton MA 01468

Check Us Out at: [www.narragansethistoricalsociety.org](http://www.narragansethistoricalsociety.org) and on FACEBOOK

# Painting Windows

Our document windows are almost done! Tom Hill, Beth Arsenault, Mary Grimes, Virginia Strahan, Jen Arnold and forgive me if I left your name out. We only have a few more to paint then we can put them back up to complete the look of the newly refinished room.

Many hours and sweat have gone into this long awaited project to be completed, we owe a debt of thanks to all who put in their time and money to make the room look fabulous again.

This is exactly how we need to continue into the future. Working as a team each one doing what they enjoy and taking pride in their work.



Pictured are Jen and Virginia touching up a few more windows on the front lawn of the Society building.

## Gift DONATIONS

The Society is proposing anyone interested in donating items to the Society in the future consider having it in Archival Condition. This will better preserve the item for future years

**DONATIONS ACCEPTED**

**YES!** I would like to make a donation to the  
**Narragansett Historical Society**

I/We have enclosed a check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU

Narragansett Historical Society and send to  
NHS, PO Box 354, Templeton, MA 01468.

Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

# What's up?

We are keeping busy this year.

Saturday Sept. 20th is our Cemetery Tour at the First church Cemetery

Saturday Sept. 27th will be our 2nd annual Engine and Car show on the common

Saturday Oct. 25th we will host a Pumpkin Festival more details to follow

Sunday Dec 7th is our Jack Frost Festival and tree lighting

Volunteers are always needed and encouraged to help in any way in which they would enjoy. Organizing, selling, or simply talking to visitors about our Historical Society. Each event should focus on our Museum and the collection, introducing it to a new visitor is rewarding for both involved.

If you are a new member, please contact us via email on the bottom of the opposite page and let us know how you can help.

## Massachusetts Historical Society trip

In an effort to complete the research on Sarah Goodridge, it was discovered that there were 9 more miniatures stored in Boston at the Mass Historical Society which did not appear on their website. Brian Tanguay, our Curator, called to ask for a showing. Anna Clutterbuck-Cook Reference librarian, agreed to show the miniatures in a private conference room. Brian invited his wife Tina and two of our members Mary and Jerry Grimes. Together they were treated to an interesting show on Boylston Street at the Society which was formed in 1791. We were allowed to photograph the miniatures for our records and to use in a future slide show presentation and a book currently under construction to create the first complete list of all miniatures painted by Sarah that are on public display. The largest collection is currently at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and we can boast the second largest collection right here in Templeton.



Images include:

Left: Daniel Webster

Right: Brian and Anna viewing the miniatures.



## Member profile Virginia Strahan

Virginia Strahan, whose ancestors – Wheelers, Goodnows and Guiles – have lived in Baldwinville for generations, joined the Narragansett Historical Society two summers ago, seeking information on her family roots. Since then, she's been an active volunteer, whom you can find in the Document Room almost every Saturday the museum is open. She recently portrayed Eleanor Roosevelt, who stopped for lunch in June 1941 at the former Chetwood Inn on Route 2A, Templeton, on her way from Maine back to Hyde Park.

Virginia is a member of the Deaconess Community ([www.deaconesscommunity.org](http://www.deaconesscommunity.org)) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the largest of several Lutheran denominations in the United States. The Deaconess Community is comprised of women who have answered a call to serve the church and the world in ministries of mercy and servant leadership. Virginia's skills are in communication. She served as a communication specialist from 2002 through August 2012 for both Lutheran Social Services of New England and the Office of the Bishop of the New England Synod of the ELCA in Worcester.

In September 2012, after being laid off, she enrolled at Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner, as a graphic and interactive design major. As such, she helps with the historical society's publicity. During the 2015 Spring Semester, as a class assignment, she's scheduled to create a logo and brochure for the historical society, and possibly a new website.

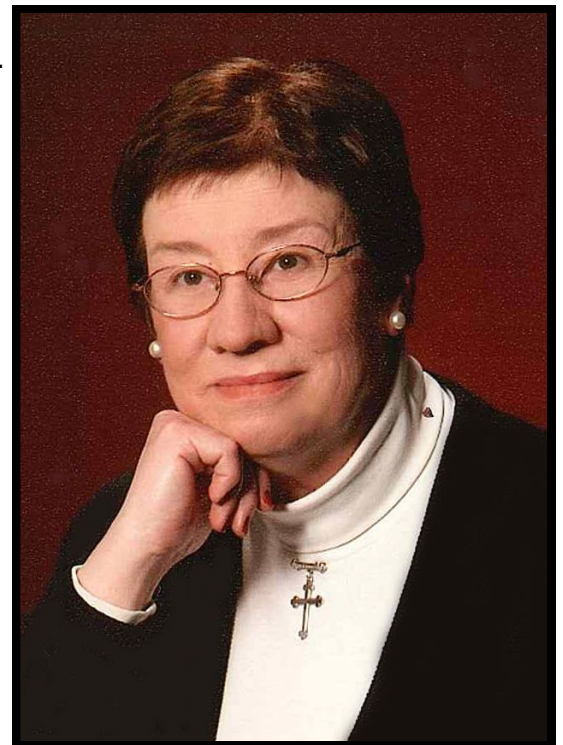
Virginia has traced one branch of her father's family back to Samuel Guile, an indentured servant who came to Massachusetts from England in 1638. She is tracing another branch, the Wheelers, possibly back to one of the proprietors who founded the town of Templeton.

Her great-grandfather, John W. Guile, a blacksmith from Baldwinville, served as a mule skinner with Company G, 53<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, during the Civil War. This special nine-month regiment included men from Templeton and area towns, who fought in Louisiana and participated in the 48-day siege of Port Hudson, a Confederate stronghold. The siege forced Confederate troops to surrender the port, giving the Union complete control of the Mississippi River and its major tributaries, which severed communications and trade between the eastern and western states of the Confederacy.

A great-uncle, Charles Allen Goodnow, born at the Goodnow homestead still located on Bridge Street, Baldwinville, started an impressive railroad career in 1868 at age 15 as a telegraph operator with the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad. He worked his way up to become vice president of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, headquartered in Chicago.

Virginia is a member of Faith Lutheran Church, Gardner, Mass., where she serves as archivist. A professional photographer, published author and researcher, she worked as a reporter and editor at The Gardner News, before entering the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, where she received her Master of Divinity degree in 1997.

A "paper person," Virginia designs and hand-creates unique greeting cards. As a child of the 1960s, she grooves to the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix and has twice visited the Woodstock museum in Bethel, N.Y.





# J. O. Winch

James Orville Winch

The sign hanging outside the cobbler shop on the east side of South Road read “J. O. Winch” with the letters forming an arch over the image of a boot. It was here that James Orville Winch made the shoes and boots for Templeton men, women and children. He also cut the hair of many of the male residents as well, as it seemed to be the New England custom that a shoemaker would offer this service. But J. Orville Winch was much more than just a cobbler and barber. He was one of Templeton’s leading citizens in the second half of the 1800’s to the time of his death in 1911.



Orville learned the trade of boot and shoe making from Otis Davis whose shop stood in the space just south of the Brick Store (now the Historical Society Building.) Upon completing his apprenticeship in the spring of 1856, and not yet twenty years old, Orville was offered the chance to purchase the business, which he did after ascertaining that it was because Mrs. Davis felt her social ambitions did not fit in well with those of Templeton. The building, originally the law office of Hon. Lovell Walker, was in poor repair so Orville had it removed and located his shop in the north end of the ell of the Brick Store Building. It was soon apparent that this location would not accommodate the business that the shop experienced.

In 1858, J. O. Winch bought the house on South Road (#45) from Dr. Jonathan W. D. Osgood and shortly thereafter decided to have a more spacious building erected for his growing business. The new building, built in 1872 by Abel Dudley, was just south of the house and quite close to the road. The three room shop measured forty feet by eighteen, was clapboarded and painted white. The shop made and sold a variety of shoes and boots for men, women and children with prices ranging from 35 cents for carpet slippers to \$5 for French calf boots with hemlock soles, pegged. Haircuts were priced at 10 cents, with an extra 5 cents if the beard was trimmed.



More can be learned about J. Orville, his family, the home on South Road, and the business of earning a living in the later 1800’s in Templeton. Stop by the Narragansett Historical Society Building to access the books and other manuscripts there.

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## Cabin Fever Collectors Show

**Do you have a collection that you treasure? Maybe you have been saving up for years, only to have them collecting dust in your house. We are planning on a winter event that will showcase each of your collections. Whether you save postcards, Barbie dolls, toys, pocket watches, quilts, sewing tools, or hood ornaments we want to display them for the public to see. In the next few months details will be finalized, forms will be created, and a location will be secured. Tentatively we are thinking of Feb. 28th Saturday afternoon at Kamaloht where owner Tom Royer has graciously agreed to host our unique event. This is not a yard sale, it is a multi member collections display. Visitors will be interested to see the many different items not usually seen in public. Refreshments, conversations, and a nice way to spend the afternoon on a winter day. Stay tuned for our Cabin Fever Collectors show.**





## “A moment in time”

by: **Harry Aldrich Jr. *Historian***

My memories of when television first became available

When television came out the screen or picture was only about the size of a post-card and there were very few in town. It didn't take long to hear who had bought one as it was a small town.

Two of the families in the center of town that had bought sets were the Babineau family and the LeBlanc family. The Babineau family lived in the big white house that stands just east on Dr. Nygard's animal clinic and the LeBlancs were just out of the center of town on Gardner Rd. [now RT 2A]. The LeBlanc family had a big magnifying glass in front of the screen so the picture looked bigger.

The network didn't come on until about 4:00 in the afternoon and was only on for about five hours. It was known as the Dumont Network and for the rest of the day there was what was called a test pattern.

The Babineau family allowed us kids to watch their set but we had to watch it from outside through a bay window. One of the shows that come to mind that we watched was Morey Amsterdam. Now days the kids would turn their noses up to a show like that but to us it was television, it was new and we were all for it.

When the LeBlanc family got their set we were allowed to go to their house and sit inside and watch it. This was probably because they had children and a couple of them were our age and knew us.

It didn't take long before just about everyone had a television and they were on the air longer with shows and wrestling. I remember watching the wrestling matches. They would add sound effects to make you think bones were cracking .



## Curator's Corner

by: **Brian Tanguay**



**Now that the document room is almost done, we need to focus on a more organized collection of documents and photographs. As I sift through the collection, I find documents created over the past 90 years located in various places throughout the building. Some in desk drawers, others in the cabinets of our closet, and some in the store behind the counter.**

**Starting this month, a team of volunteers will start to organize everything, for what appears to be the first time in our history. Groups have spent hours cataloging the collection, I've found 3 sets of notes so far. We will fill the file cabinet with everyday documents generated over the years such as minutes to the meetings, Treasurer's reports and Trustees reports.**

**Once this is complete, we can move upstairs and create a working library of photo albums, genealogy books, and miscellaneous record books donated over the years.**

**Finally, when each category of document is in one place, we can focus on recording exactly what we have in each department. Leaving a list and labels with each for our visitors to easily find the information they are searching for.**

**Hopefully, we can input all of this data into a computer system giving us full access by word search and pinpointing our document to the file cabinet drawer, or shelf in the document room.**

*Although the task is a grand one, we have a great group of anxious volunteers ready to accomplish this project. If you are interested in helping complete this project, we are starting on Tuesday nights from 6-8pm and of course, any other time we can get into the building. Whether you spend one hour or 10, you will be proud to be a part of this long awaited mission.*

*Contact us here using the email at the bottom of the page if you have questions or would like to volunteer for our Tuesday night work session or if you want to create a different night more suitable to your schedule.*

**OFFICERS:**  
 President : Brian Tanguay  
 1st Vice Pres. Beth Arsenault  
 2nd Vice Pres. Howard Sands  
 Secretary Christine Stone  
 Treasurer Debbie Caisse  
 Curator: Brian Tanguay  
 Historian: Harry Aldrich

**DIRECTORS:**  
 Karen Rich  
 Tom Hill  
 William Buckler  
 Janet Haley  
 Dennis Rich  
 Tom Jeleniewski  
 Kerry Bettez  
 Mark Moschetti

**TRUSTEES:**  
 Tom Jeleniewski  
 David Huhtala  
 Brian Tanguay  
 John Brooks

**Narragansett Historical Society**  
 Contact: Beth Arsenault  
 Building & Grounds Supervisor

*Contact info:*  
 Main email: [narragansethistoricalsociety@yahoo.com](mailto:narragansethistoricalsociety@yahoo.com)  
 Phone:  
 Building & Grounds:

**ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE WELCOME any time.**

Find us on Facebook—Search for **Narragansett Historical**. It's filled with the History of Templeton, Baldwinville, Otter River and East Templeton. Pictures, stories, and faces of the people who lived here years ago. Some new images will be shared also of around town. Take a look, add a comment, or ask us a question. Friends have been sending images to us and posting online. We fill out the history to go with the photograph and post it for your enjoyment.

Sign up soon. **780 friends and counting!**



**Meeting Notice: 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM unless otherwise advertised.**

[September 24th Wednesday night at 6:30 pm starting in the Garden with a Dowsing demonstration, then we move up to the Document room for our regular meeting starting around 7:30pm](#)

**October 22nd Wednesday night at 7:00 pm in the Document room**

**November Falls on the day before Thanksgiving New date to be determined at the Sept meeting. Location could be at the new town offices in East Templeton.**

**Narragansett Historical Society**  
 P.O. Box 354  
 Templeton, MA 01468

