

Narragansett Historical Society

On the Common in Templeton MA

February 2021



It's amazing how one picture taken just yards away from all the others we've studied changes everything. This one by Phelps captured a group of kids on the common, far enough away, that we cannot identify any of them, but, at this angle we can see what was behind the building for the first time. A barn! For years, we assumed that since there was no evidence of a barn, no pictures to prove it, that the sunken garden was simply a back yard feature. No ramps, just a few steps down in the front and out the back. This camera angle changed all and proved without a doubt, that there was a barn.

After checking the maps dating up to 1895, there was no evidence of a barn on the property, each house was clearly drawn and every barn was marked with an X over it. So, this brings us to the conclusion that the Phelps family built this barn after 1895. The house became abandoned around the 1920's leaving it empty until the Historical Society purchased it and restored the building, Yet, all the images shared shows no barn out back, so this barn was only in existence for around 25 years. Did it burn down? Still a mystery on the life of the barn, but here we can see what it was like in the early 1900's.

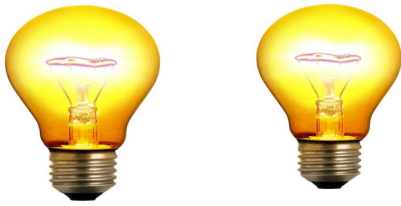
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An occasional series of articles spotlighting items from the Society's antique clothing and textile collections

“Best of the Vests” – Part one of three

Throughout the 19th century, no gentleman's ensemble was complete without a vest, or waistcoat. Invented in Persia, and introduced in England by King Charles II in 1666, the waistcoat began as a simple garment, similar to the coat but of closer cut, with long sleeves and full knee or thigh-length skirts. By 1800, the sleeves and skirts had disappeared, leaving the waist-length vest familiar to us today. The earliest vests were quite sober in color and cut. In fairly short order, however, the waistcoat became a canvas for men to express their taste for color and decoration. Richly embroidered and brightly colored silk waistcoats were popular for much of the 18th century. Although periodically reverting to more restrained fashions, the vest has remained a marker of elegance and style. NHS has several examples from the first half of the 1800s:

A Paisley Waistcoat



Although we currently have little information about this vest, features such as the shawl collar, straight hem, and paisley pattern suggest it dates from perhaps somewhere between 1830 and 1860. Vests often used different fabrics for the fronts and the back; fancier, more expensive fabric was used for the fronts, and a plainer fabric was used for the back, which was concealed under the coat, a practice which continues in modern suits. In this example, fawn-colored sateen is used for the back, and silk m-telassé or cloqué with a colorful paisley print is used for the fronts. Woven on a Jacquard loom, these fabrics have a raised

texture that mimics quilting. The curling teardrop and fanciful plant motifs originate in India, although textiles with these designs have become permanently associated with the Scottish town of Paisley, where they were produced in great quantities. A band of soft suede faces the inside hem, protecting the vest fabrics from rubbing against trouser buttons. The cut of the vest is simple, the better to showcase the fabric, but the close-up photo shows a few decorative details: buttons covered in the same fabric, and edges and pockets piped in a narrow matching silk cord. The piping, sadly, has begun to pull away from the garment. A half-belt and toothed buckle at the back allowed for an adjustable fit.



In part two next month, we'll look at a vest with an unusual print.

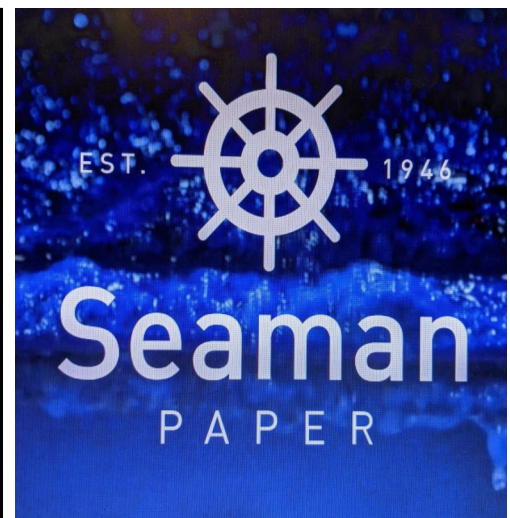
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RALPH HENSHAW 1929-2021

We celebrate Ralph's devotion to the Historical Society where he spent many hours maintaining the building, caring for the garden, and overseeing the collection. Ralph followed in his family footsteps where the Henshaw family was here in the beginning as charter members. He also took the time to wind the Church clock, make sure the repairs were properly done, and take people up to see the clock in action as well as oiling the bell and offering to those lucky ones, a view of Templeton from above the tree line.

His love for this town will live on through those of us inspired by his enthusiasm, dedication, and volunteering without hesitation.

Ralph left us on February 23, 2021 while at home with his wife of 71 years, Mildred (Millie Willis) they married on July 30th 1949.

The images below show Ralph winding the Church clock, at the camp in his younger days and oiling the bell at the First Church. We could fill the entire newsletter with all that he has done for his family and his town.



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"A moment in time"

by: Harry Aldrich Jr. Historian

OLD FASHION WINTERS

I was listening to the weatherman a while back and I thought to myself, these guys don't even know what a real snowstorm is. They get all excited when we are going to get more than 8 to 10 inches of snow and start telling people how bad the driving is going to be. If they could go back about 60 years and come to Templeton they would get to see what a real storm is. It was not uncommon to see young children out with shovels trying to earn money shoveling driveways and sidewalks which is something you rarely see today.

I can remember when I was growing up; parts of South Road would get so drifted in that the highway department would get Walter Lawrence to open up some sections with his dozer because the town's equipment could not handle it. I can remember the highway crew going out in the fall and putting up snow fencing in many of the fields along the roads to control drifting. Some sections of the roads would drift in as fast as they plowed them. The town would hire private trucks owned by people in town such as Kenneth Lawrence, Earnest Strazdas and Bill Babineau to plow certain roads. I can remember when I was younger, when they were out sanding the roads, a worker had to ride in the back of the truck and shovel the sand into the spreader. That couldn't have been a very pleasant job. I can't even imagine doing that today. When flagging fire hydrants, the water department had to put extra-long hydrant flags on certain hydrants to be able to locate them after a storm.

Tire chains were a popular item back then. I can remember my father going up to the fire station to help put the chains on the engines. Paine's Garage used to put them on the mail trucks in Baldwinville.

Louis Johnson, a farmer in town that had a large field just out of Templeton center on Baldwinville Road where the snow always drifted across the road. I had a 1950 Mercury sedan and I had put chains on it and was out driving through some of the drifts with some of the guys that I hung out with. We hit a drift by his field and the drift was a little deeper than we thought. The snow was over the hood of my car and we could not open the doors to get out. We finally were able to back out ruining the chains in doing so. Well, across the road from the field there was a little shanty that an older gentleman lived in and he observed us hitting the drift. The next day he was up at the country store telling everyone that we were all killed. This is not something that I am proud of but I was seventeen at the time and probably no different than most seventeen boys at the time.



President's Page

By: Brian P. Tanguay



As each day passes, we add more to our collection of pictures, stories, and artifacts. This week, we share stories about Ralph Henshaw. The Henshaw name has been heard for generations throughout this town. Only a few of our new town members may not know Ralph, but if you lived in this town for any number of years, he probably made an impression on you personally.

I first met Ralph when I joined the Historical Society in 1991 and quickly noticed he was the go-to guy when you wanted something done. Every meeting he would sit a few rows back and listen to the reports and the stories or updates on the state of the Society, only speaking out to offer his advice. The room would grow quiet when he spoke, one due to his soft spoken voice and most of all for the respect he was given.

In 2012 he took me up into the Church tower to show off his favorite activity, to wind the clock and oil the bell. We had to stop half way up the 5 flights of steps in the first section of the attic, a chair was waiting for him to take a break and catch his breath in preparation for the next two flights along with the strenuous effort to wind the clock 180 cranks. I soon realized he should have help and offered to wind it for him once a week. As I followed him around year after year I could see the many tasks he undertook at the Historical Society building were also taking their toll. I soon found myself mowing the lawn, organizing the collection, and taking on more responsibility to help Ralph take a much needed break.



We would have weekly conversations throughout the years on the advancements of the Society, events on the Common, updates on the tower clock, as well as what needs to be done going forward. His encouragement and appreciation gave me pride in knowing he approved of how the Society was growing.

There are only a few people you'll meet in your lifetime that exhibit the dedication and commitment Ralph displayed. We are lucky to have worked with him, talked with him, and learned from him. He will be missed, of course, but he will be remembered as a great part of our local history.



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Find us on Facebook—Search for **TempletonMuseum (Narr Hist Society)** 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 from around the town. We have created a "page" instead of a "profile" 1700 members
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2021191824825853/>
 Located at 1 Boynton Rd. and 9 Hubbardston Rd
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