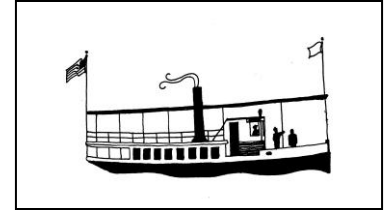


Sunapee Echoes

Sunapee, New Hampshire Historical Society, Inc.
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603-763-9872
Fall 2025



WHAT'S HAPPENING

The summer season is just about over. In fact, it will be over by the time you receive this newsletter, and the museum will be closed until Memorial Day. Don't forget, though, that the Archives remains open year-round. We'd love to see you on any Monday afternoon (1:00-4:00) and can meet you there by appointment if Mondays don't work for you.

Life at the Museum. We had a great summer. The Harbor was buzzing with activity, and many visitors came in to learn about Sunapee's history. Comments were uniformly complimentary as folks admired the extent and quality of our collection and the information that accompanies our displays. As usual, we couldn't have done it without the help of our loyal docents/welcomers who together filled some 368 hours of volunteer help in 147 shifts. Each volunteer hour spent at the museum demonstrates their respect for history and the importance of sharing it with others. Don't you want to join them next summer?

Huge thanks go out to all of them, but especially to our record-setting volunteers for filling more than 10 slots (or 25 hours): Kathy Springsteen on Sundays, Steve Mietelski on Fridays, Sue Garceau and Bryan Trainor for filling in when needed.

Greg Young deserves special thanks for spending so many Saturdays talking with visitors about early industrial power and practices. Thank you, Greg!

Special thanks, also, to Lois Gould for scheduling our docents, filling in as needed, and managing the museum!

History Cruises. Our history cruises were as popular as ever. This year, we began another trip around the lake and learned about lakeshore development in the Harbor and along the Burkehaven and Lake Avenue shores to Gardner Bay while we enjoyed two perfect evenings on the lake. Next year, we'll continue on, covering Gardner Bay, Job's Creek, and Georges Mills. We'll set the dates for those soon and will post them in our January issue of this newsletter.

Stories from the Grave. For our final program of the season on 21 September, we told the stories of several

residents of the Lower Village Cemetery. It was a gorgeous early fall day—perfect for hanging out in a graveyard! Barbara Chalmers told the history of that cemetery; Dave Munn and Judy Thackaberry were Moses and Lucy Knowlton, pillars of the community; Steve Mietelski told the story of David Gardner and his clan; Rozella Scott, played by yours truly, told the rather sad story of the Scott family; and Greg Weiss was William Sturoc, lawyer, farmer, and poet, also known as The Bard of Sunapee. Thanks to all of them and our other helpers as well!

We were especially honored that David Gardner's 3 times great grandson, another David Gardner, came from Maine for the event. Here are Dave (L) and Steve (R):



Our Lighthouses. In September, WMUR's *New Hampshire Chronicle* featured Sunapee's lighthouses—three of only five in NH. If you missed it, check it out here: <https://www.wmur.com/article/chronicle-lake-sunapee-lighthouses/66025806>

Interesting People. Sunapee history is full of interesting characters worth knowing. I'll tell you about one of them: Clarence Collins spent his professional life as a salesman but achieved national renown in retirement with the help of his magnificent collection of antique clocks. Turn the page and read on for more!

And continue enjoying fall in New England!

--Becky

Did you know?.....That a clock museum was once located in Georges Mills?

The museum's owner and proprietor was Clarence Collins, a retired salesman, who displayed more than 300 rare and antique clocks including the Great Historical Clock of America. The history clock was so large—some 13 feet tall by 6 feet wide and 3 feet deep--that it needed space in his barn.

I was recently reminded of that clock while preparing for a short course on the history of timekeeping—an alumni college offering at Middlebury College. The author of one of the assigned books had seen the clock on display at the Smithsonian, and reported that it had been “found” in a barn in New Hampshire. Not only do I recall visiting the museum when I was a child, but Carlton Collins (Clarence's grand nephew) has given this historical society a collection of photos of the museum and the clock, both in Georges Mills and at the Smithsonian. Thank you, Carlton!

I thought you might enjoy learning about the clock. Here's what we know:

The Great American Historical Clock includes scenes from our history, most of which have moving parts that dramatize their events while music plays. At the top, our presidents emerge to review the troops, the Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock, Pocahontas saves the life of John Smith, Paul Revere rides again, and much more. The clock was probably created about 1890, perhaps by craftsman C. S. Chase of Boston. It must have been created during a flurry of similar clockmaking thought to have been instigated by renovations of the monumental Cathedral Clock in Strasbourg, France. Early in its life, it was taken on tour to places as far away as Australia.

Clarence Collins welcomed visitors to his museum from at least as early as 1941 through the 1950s, and evidently had quite a line of patter about items in his collection. One newspaper article mentions a 2-hour lecture that it said should not be missed! After his death in 1963 at the age of 91, and the clocks were sold, and the Great American Historical Clock went to the Smithsonian. We don't know if the Great American Historical Clock was part of the Collins collection from the beginning of his museum, but I found a reference in a 1951 *Argus* (local weekly) paper that a photo taken of the “big clock” by the Associated Press and published in several cities had provided great publicity for the museum. The clock was touted in a brochure distributed by Mr. Collins:

Once seen never to be forgotten

Acknowledged by the press and public of America as

The Greatest Piece of Mechanism the World Has Ever Produced

I found a blog with a YouTube video that you can see here: <https://www.ablogtowatch.com/great-historical-clock-america-patriotic-clockmaking-smithsonian/>



Clarence with his clocks!

Looking for something to do?

Why not try out our self-guided walking tour of the Harbor area? You'll discover old and current photos of the historic buildings and places complete with information about them, all on your smart phone thanks to the *Sunapee Harbor Historical Walking Tour* on the Clio app!

Or for gifts? Check out our store:

<https://sunapeehistoricalsociety.org/our-store>

Take a walk with us through the early stories of Sunapee

Download the CLIO app

and search under "Tours" by either Location or Title *Sunapee Harbor Historical Walking Tour* ~ Enjoy!



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- Follow the numbered pins on the map
- Enjoy the pictures of then and now
- Read the back story of Sunapee Harbor's historic buildings & places

Please thank these businesses for their support!

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Thank you!

Sunapee Echoes

Sunapee Historical Society
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