



NEWS FROM NORLANDS

Newsletter

August 2016

Aunt Clara Celebrates 40 Years

By Jane Frost, Board of Trustees

Willi Irish, better known as “Aunt Clara,” “Mercy Lovejoy” or “Patty Washburn” to visitors at the Washburn-Norlands Living History Center in Livermore, recently marked her 40th year of introducing the public to the people and way of life in 18th and 19th century rural Maine.

Willi was one of a handful of local women recruited by the Norlands’ founder, Billie Gammon, in the early 1970’s, to learn how to help visitors understand everyday life on a Maine farm in 1870.

Willi shared Billie’s vision for the 445-acre Washburn estate as a place where the public could experience rural life in the past and also learn about the extraordinary Washburn family. She learned “living history” techniques, in which participants actually took part in the farm chores and housework as practiced one hundred and fifty years ago, and interpreters assumed the dress and manners of the period.

Willi’s birth family, the Boothbys, shared the Livermore neighborhood with the Washburns. She claims ancestors directly descended from Plymouth Colony founder William Bradford, as well as the other Pilgrims, who made the first voyage on the Mayflower. She grew up on the family homestead, Century Elm Farm, less than a mile from the Norlands. A cousin, Rob Boothby, still operates the farm and apple orchard. On fall weekends, Willi entertains visitors to the farm with Abenaki stories. Willi and her husband, Bill Irish, live just a mile from the Washburn estate, in a home they built themselves.

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“It’s the most real. I look out the windows of the one-room school and see the same scene the schoolmistress did in 1870, and we are using the same objects and methods she did a hundred and fifty years ago.”

—Willi Irish



Willi Irish, Norlands’ Director of Interpretation and Training, portrays Clara Howard

Save the Dates

September 10
PIE & ARTS

October 12
HOMESCHOOL DAY

December 10
CHRISTMAS AT
NORLANDS



Norlands' New Website

Check it out at
www.NORLANDS.org.

One of our strategic goals was to create a more user-friendly website that shows more of what we do—making history come to life! We believe we achieved that goal.

This was only possible because of the incredible commitment and inspiration of Phil Poirier of Protean Graphics.

Please visit his website at:

www.philpoirier.com

THANK YOU PHIL!

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FIND US



Maine's "Most Remarkable" Election of 1856

By Kerck Kelsey, great-great grandson of
Cadwallader Colden Washburn

Our current election frenzy would have fascinated the Washburns. From Father Israel and his brother Reuel down through all of Israel's seven sons - all the Washburn men loved elections. Oldest son Israel Jr., who himself was reelected to congress for a fourth term, called Maine's state election of 1856, "the most remarkable of any in the whole record of the country."¹

The levels of excitement were many. First came the newspapers. The family subscribed to many newspapers, from the *Kennebec Journal* to the *New York Tribune*, and they devoured them when they arrived at the farm. Heaven help the local mailman, if he was late with a delivery! Newspapers could be counted on to print every word of every important speech and to include the editors' own commentary right next to it. Since every newspaper was the admitted organ of a political party, this commentary was colorful. Editorial bias was presumed and was an important part of conversation around the Washburn dinner table, at gab sessions around the cider barrel in the store, and later in evening gatherings on the great porch, and perhaps even during the hot summer days while forking hay in the fields.



Politics for the Washburns was people, and it was ideas. As the boys grew up, their ideas were the conservative Whig ideals for government: federal funding for public works, a national bank with a single national currency, and protective tariffs on imports. Later, as young Israel and then his brother Elihu were elected and reelected to congress, the ideas were more morally driven: debates about the role of government in limiting immigration, prohibiting liquor, and the expansion of slavery. After their experience in Congress, and overriding everything else, the Washburns fought to prevent the southern control of their beloved Whig party, as well as of the Congress, the courts, and the presidency.

In 1854, despite every strategy by Israel Jr. to stop it, the Democrats passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act and removed the last barrier to allowing slavery into the western territories. This epic battle brought the end of the Whig party, and, led by the Washburns, brought the birth of the Republicans. In Maine, the first great victory of the new party was orchestrated by Israel Jr. in the election of 1856.

When Israel Jr. came home after the Kansas-Nebraska debacle, rather than discouraged, the country lawyer was on fire with enthusiasm. From his first speech from the steps of the Bangor City Hall, to subsequent addresses all over the state, he urged creation of the new political party, "a great and truly national party, sectional at first, national at the end, to resist the tyrannical slave oligarchy and save this Union." Such a party must override "all old party divisions and effete party organizations of the country."² Likened by an opposition reporter to a galvanic bullfrog, Israel Jr.'s delivery added to the excitement.

Enthusiasm spread across the state. What happened in Maine was also of high interest outside the state. Maine's state election was held in September - eight full weeks before the national election. If any new idea showed good

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Meet Deliliah Jordan: 2016 Billie Gammon Fellow

After a competitive application process, we are pleased to announce Deliliah Jordan as our 2016 summer fellow. Each year, the Norlands awards a \$1,000.00 history education scholarship to a Maine High School Senior. The award is made in honor of our Founder's, Ethel "Billie" Gammon, bottomless energy and enthusiasm for making history fun for students of all ages. Deliliah (pronounced "dee-lay-a") is spending the summer giving tours of the Washburn mansion. She is creating a child-focused tour of the historic house and creating a plan for adding more hands-on activities in the mansion. *"Through my frequent visits to Norlands and an interactive class at the high school, I have developed a new found purpose in my life. I made the choice to major in early childhood education to make a difference in kids' lives and better their futures. It is my hope to find a career teaching at a school that promotes*

the importance of history and advocates for active learning of the past for their students." Deliliah will attend the University of Maine at Farmington. **Welcome Deliliah!**

Aunt Clara Celebrates...cont'd

Her interest in history was sparked by..."one of the best teachers I ever had, Gwylm Roberts, a professor of history at what was then Farmington State College, where I was majoring in home economics." Willi was inspired to carefully record the many stories told by her father and older relatives who had come into regular contact with the Washburns and their neighbors. She uses these stories to bring to life the actual 19th-century characters she portrays. One of the personas Willi takes on at the Norlands is "Aunt Clara", based on her great, great aunt, Clara Boothby Howard.

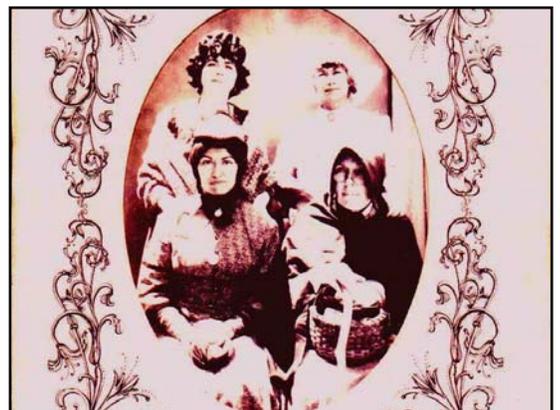
As important as her renditions of Aunt Clara, Mercy Lovejoy, or Patty Washburn are Willi's contributions as Director of Interpretation and Training. She has encouraged dozens of other interpreters to draw upon the Washburn family and other farm family diaries and letters in order to accurately portray the speech, manners and activities of women living in small rural towns in the 1800s. Interpreters are inspired by Willi's stories of people and events that actually took place in the neighborhood. She explains, "It's painless education because it's entertaining, and people love to be entertained."

Road trips with other members of the original band of interpreters are among Willi's favorite memories. Glenda Richards, Norma Boothby and Willi took the Norlands experience to schools and other organizations, often at long distances from Livermore. Among Willi's favorite programs offered to visitors at the Norlands is the schoolhouse experience. "It's the most real. I look out the windows of the one-room school and see the same scene the schoolmistress did in 1870, and we are using the same objects and methods she did a hundred and fifty years ago."

Have there been humorous situations over her 40 years at the Norlands? Of course! Willi recalls one such event during a three-day "live-in" attended by 20 adults at Pondsides, an 18th century building just below the Washburn mansion. In the very early morning hours, with just the dim light of candles and a small fire in the big kitchen hearth, Willi and a fellow interpreter struggled to prepare corn meal mush for breakfast. Half way through the agonizingly slow process of stirring the porridge to prevent lumps, the two women discovered that they had been adding whole wheat instead of corn meal to the pot. "We switched to corn meal and kept right on cooking! It was a little different breakfast, but no one seemed to mind."

Her wishes for the future at Norlands? "It will be so wonderful to have our barn again!"

Would she give up her 21st century conveniences in order to live in the era she portrays? "No, I'm very fond of my modern kitchen and bathroom," she answers without hesitation.



Top L to R: Willi Irish, Glenda Richards,
Norma Boothby, Billie Gammon

Seeking Former Interns

Did you ever intern at the Norlands? We want to hear from you, whether you were here in the 1970's or in 2016.

Take a 5-minute survey and your name will be entered into a drawing to win a complimentary membership to the Norlands. Thank you in advance for your time.

Find the survey on our website:

www.norlands.org/latest-news



WISH LIST

Postage Stamps
Ream of Paper
Ream of Color Paper
Toner – Canon #106

Barn & Farm Tools

Treadmill-Animal Powered
Corn Grinder
Corn Stalk Chopper
Grain Cradle
Hay Knife
Winnower
Ice Block Pulls/Pushers
Potato Barrels
Potato Baskets



DAR Awards \$2,310 Preservation Grant For Steeple

The steeple is usually the first glimpse of the property when people travel to Norlands. It's not only breathtaking, but serves as a reminder to people that they are about to "step back in time." We are pleased to announce that The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is donating \$2,310 to our Meeting House Steeple Preservation Project. The grant will be used to fix and re-flash the leaking roof at the steeple tower base. Funding for this project was made possible through the sponsorship of Mary Dillingham-Burnt Meadow Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, located in Lewiston, Maine.

We are thrilled to receive such a generous donation from the DAR. The leak is worsening with each heavy rain storm. Water is already infiltrating onto the steeple staircase and floor above the narthex. With this grant, the leak will be halted before water weakens the structure and seeps into the sanctuary, potentially destroying the restored painted trompe d'oeil stencils on the ceiling and walls.



Built in 1828, the meeting house is the oldest building at Norlands and was the first church in Livermore to have a steeple. The spire is 105 feet high. Israel Washburn Sr., and his neighbor, Otis Pray, donated the land and raised money by selling pews.

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution was founded in 1890 to promote patriotism, preserve American history, and support better education for our nation's children. Its members are descended from patriots who won American independence during the Revolutionary War. Patty Benjamin (1782-1861) was the daughter of Samuel Benjamin, a lieutenant during the American Revolutionary War. In 1999, the DAR honored Norlands' founder, Ethel "Billie" Gammon, with a DAR History Award, recognizing her original and significant contribution to the understanding and promotion of American history.

Mid-Maine Restoration (MMR) of Boothbay, Maine, will complete the work on the steeple roof this fall. MMR is a small company based in Boothbay. In business for 35 years, MMR specializes in tower and steeple renovation. They are members of Maine Preservation and Greater Portland Landmarks.



For more information about the Steeple Preservation Project, please contact us at 207-897-4366 or email norlands@norlands.org. The entire cost of fixing the steeple roof is \$4,910. Once the tower base roof is repaired and more funds are raised, the Norlands will be able to move forward with a badly-needed complete restoration of the steeple. If you are interested in donating to this project, you can do so securely online via Norlands' website, www.norlands.org or by calling 207-897-4366.

A Washburn by Marriage



Fred Walker reads letters written by Samuel Benjamin in the Washburn family dining room at Norlands, July 2015.

Many husbands and wives of Washburn descendants are enthusiastic supporters of the Norlands and very interested in the lives and accomplishments of Israel Washburn's family. Fred Walker of Fredricksburg, Virginia counts himself as a member of this group. His wife, Sallie Washburn Walker is a descendant of Sam Benjamin Washburn, often referred to as "the seagoing Washburn."

Sallie, Fred, their daughter Cindy and their son Rich, were frequent summer visitors to the Norlands in the 1960's and '70s. Fred remembers, "We slept in the mansion then and our kids would raid the [antique] trunks and dress up in the old clothes. The Whittemores were farming the place then."

All three generations of the Walker family came to the Washburn reunion at the Norlands in June 2015. Both Fred and his daughter Cindy were asked to read from Washburn diaries and journals after the formal dinner in the mansion dining room. "We all had a great time!"

As a self-proclaimed history buff, Fred Walker says he misses the time when Washburn descendants could stay in the mansion, but he appreciates the Norlands Foundation's efforts to keep the Washburn legacy and values alive and relevant. "I went to a one-room schoolhouse very similar to the one at the Norlands. Young people today aren't taught about the experiences of people years ago. If you don't know where you've been, you don't know where you're going."

Fred and Sallie's affection for the Norlands has carried over to their children and grandchildren. "Rich and Cindy's families are very interested in the Norlands and their Washburn ancestry. I hope you'll talk with them!" We plan to follow Fred's advice for a future newsletter!



Samuel Benjamin Washburn
(1824-1890)

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Fashion with a Side of History: Norlands on the Road

The Norlands has hit the road this spring and summer, bringing outreach programs to senior centers and other community groups. Many groups have enjoyed our new program: "Hats to Hoops: What the Washburn Women Wore." In this program, "Patty Washburn" and her daughter "Caroline" and daughter-in-law "Adele Gratiot" make an appearance, talk about their famous family, and how their fashions changed depending on their role and status. Other available outreach programs include "The Busy Cradle: An Interactive Story of the Washburn Family" and "School Days, 1853." Contact us for details if you are interested in Norlands visiting you in Maine with a program.

I just want to thank you again for the FABULOUS program you gave at Quarry Hill yesterday. Everyone just LOVED it and I was so amazed and impressed with how beautifully the program blended education, information, entertainment, and FUN! Thank you for making the long drive and for all the time, talent, and energy you put into offering this memorable event for the midcoast older adults who attended! I will look forward to future opportunities to work with you again! Best of luck in all the wonderful work you and the Washburn-Norlands Living History Center do!

—Suzanne Miller, Program Coordinator, Quarry Hill Retirement Homes, Camden, Maine

Tea Parties and Meal, Laugh, and Learns

The Norlands provides the perfect setting for intimate, small group experiences. We're often given rave reviews of the food here at the Norlands. What could be better than combining history with a delectable treat? This spring and summer we've hosted groups from several senior centers and motorcoach tours. In



Meal, Laugh, and Learns, guests enjoy a delicious homemade country meal and participate in two fun, interactive programs – "The Busy Cradle: Story of the Washburn Family" and "A Country School, 1853" - visiting both the 1883 library and the one-room school house. Other groups choose the "Norlands' Tea Party: A Taste of History" where they congregate in the cozy Washburn kitchen for tea and homemade cookies (the rosemary cookies are a big hit!) while being entertained with a visit from "Mercy Lovejoy", Livermore town pauper, or perhaps from "Clara Howard" as she talks about the dreadful Health, Sanitation, and Deadly Diseases of her time. The Lady of the House then gives an informative tour of Mr. Washburn's home.



A Meal, Laugh, and Learn was the perfect break for a group of Stanley Steamers on their Eastern Invitational Tour of Franklin County on June 23rd. They not only filled up on chicken pie, but also on water for their cars in order to make the journey back to Kingfield, Maine.



RAISE THE BARN
Rebuild the Magic!

Fundraising Continues to Rebuild the Barn

Our most important classroom and home for the animals is on the horizon.

\$150,000 is still needed to fully complete the barn.

The timber frame is raised. We are enclosing the walls and installing the roof. Our goal is a weathertight shell before winter, but help us do better than that.

Make a gift today to help us fully complete the barn! Without the ramps, interior stalls, doors and windows, the oxen and sheep will have to overwinter again under the barn.

Gifts of all sizes are needed and much appreciated. Some Naming Opportunities are still available. You can view the Opportunities, Campaign Brochure, and Giving Card on our website at www.norlands.org/support/raise-the-barn-rebuild-the-magic.

The Grand Lodge of Maine Masonic Foundation Presents Check for \$5,000

On June 11, 2016, the Norlands hosted the first-ever statewide family fun day for 400 Maine masons and their spouses and children. Reuel Washburn, brother to Israel Sr., was a Maine Grand Master and several other Washburns were Masons. At the end of the day, Grand Master Thomas Pulkkinen presented a check for \$5,000.00 to support the Raise the Barn: Rebuild the Magic campaign. Fun was had by all! .



\$15,000 Grant for Sprinkler System!

The Norlands is pleased to announce a substantial grant from The Windover Foundation. This brings us one step closer to finishing the barn. The funds will help pay for the fire protection system (dry sprinkler) in the new structure, so we will never lose it again!

Remarkable Election...cont'd

results there, its boosters had eight full weeks to preach it elsewhere. The potential for Maine leading the country was very real.

By 1856 the Democrats had been in control of Maine for many years. Recently their hold on power had been loosened by loud anti-liquor agitation and by a more shadowy anti-immigrant movement. But these enthusiasms became dwarfed by the anti-slavery issue, because the new Kansas-Nebraska Act removed the old limits on slavery that Maine had agreed to in order to become a state in 1820. Now the country had abrogated that agreement. Israel Jr. could now state that slavery could legally exist anywhere.

Maine became on fire with resentment. A Fourth of July political rally at a remote campground in East Livermore lasted two days and drew over 8000 people. Among the speakers was Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose recently published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had contributed much to the anti-slavery fire among Mainers – most of whom had never seen a slave.

Washburn's new Republican Party drew immediate converts, including Governor Morrill and James G. Blaine, who had just taken over the *Kennebec Journal*. After weeks of trying, Israel Jr. succeeded in persuading Democratic hero Senator Hannibal Hamlin to join the new party and head its ticket as their candidate for Governor. Pro-slavery violence in Kansas caused shock across the state and forced voters to think past the local rivalries and patronage squabbles that had

characterized Maine politics in the past. The expansion of slavery had to be stopped, and the new Republican Party was the only one committed to do that. As Israel Washburn Jr. had always insisted, it was ideas that would win the day. In 1856 they did.

The results in Maine were stunning. The new party won the governorship in a landslide. Twenty years of Democratic domination was ended, as all six congressional seats went to the Republicans, as did control of both houses in the legislature. More than ten thousand people voted for the first time, siding with the new party. A bandwagon was started, and, eight weeks later, the new party swept the northeast and northwest sections of the country and almost won the presidency.

From Wisconsin, Cadwallader Washburn won a seat to join his brothers Elihu from Illinois and Israel Jr. from Maine. The three brothers even roomed together, providing living proof of the new alliance between the northern sections of the country. Soon the Democratic opposition would split, and both the temperance and immigration groups would join the Republicans. Four years later, in 1860, the upstarts who had first won in Maine would win the country. Their rise would cause the secession of the southern states and a bitter civil war.

1856 was a remarkable election.

1. Washburn to Charles Parsons Chandler, Sept. 14, 1856.
2. Bangor Whig and Courier, June 2, 1854.



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