



What's Happening?

at the Kingston Historical Museum

February 2023

This Month!

While many of us might find the winter months a time of cold and discomfort, at one time several families in town revelled in the cold to race in dog sled competitions! Read about this exciting sport in this month's **Kingston Stories**.

It was 125 years ago this June that the Nichols Memorial Library opened for the townspeople. The museum is planning a celebration of the event scheduled for Saturday, June 10th from 1 until 4 PM. Set your calendars!

The location of last month's **Where is It?** can be found on the left side of the front of Town Hall to the left of the top of the stairs. See the photo on page three.

Walt Roy photographed this month's **Mystery Object**. It's a rather common object that those of us of a 'certain age' would have seen in our travels. Look familiar?

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Kingston Historical Museum. This month, Kathy Clark Chase shares some of her thoughts of being a museum volunteer.

We also need your help in identifying an object from our collection. We are stumped. Check out the last page.

So you don't miss an issue of the "What's Happening" newsletter, just go the town's website and select to receive the newsletter by email.

The museum has begun its winter schedule. The 1895 Firehouse, the 1880s Cobbler Shop, the 1907 Tramp House and the 1833 Grace Daley barn will be closed during the cold weather. The Nichols Memorial Library will still be open for every Wednesday for visitors!

Kingston Stories

Dog Sledding Through Kingston

by Steve Sousa



Bob Heckman urging his huskies onward during a sledding competition on the plains in January of 1973.

You didn't have to fly out to Alaska's Iditarod competitions to see dog sledding. There was an active group of "Mushers" here in town in the 1960s and '70s!

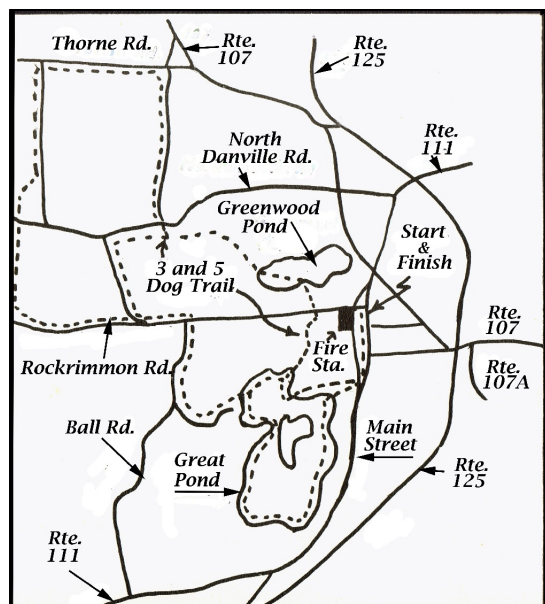
In 1964, the Kingston Firemen's Association organized a Winter Carnival that included Kingston's first New England Dog Sled Race! Gordon J. Bakie, Alfred H. Killiam, Dwight L. Killam Jr., Andrew Christie Jr., and Gerard R. Dolliver were the first dog sled race committee members. There were several "classes" of events depending upon the age, skill, and stamina of the mushers and their dogs. The Junior class raced a one dog sled over a one-mile course, two or three dog teams over a three mile course, and a five dog team over a five-mile course. The Senior classes raced seven to sixteen dog teams over a twelve mile course. The highlight of the carnival was the "Musher's Ball" held at the Swasey Gym. During the ball a Musher Queen was crowned.

Training for the dogs and the sledders for the races began in September and the racing season stretched from January through March. All this was dependent upon there being a sufficient amount of snow during that winter.

Dog Sledding continued on next page

(cont. Dog Sledding)

But what was it like to be a sled racer? In 2018, Martha and Bob Heckman participated in the Museum's Oral History Program and told of their experiences racing sled dogs. When asked about how many dogs they had, Martha said, "Well, with puppies and elders at one time, we maxed out at around thirty because we had a litter of six, but we managed twentyish".



The dotted line indicates course layout.

What was surprising is that there were particular dog types that were sought. They raised registered Siberian Huskies for dog shows. Their kids, who were more competitive, noticed that Alaskan Huskies were better suited for competition. These dogs raced faster and would be put out front as lead dogs. Early racers would have one lead dog with pairs behind. Today, for example, if you watch the Iditarod races in Alaska, you see that there are two lead dogs; one is the "speed guy keeps you going, and [the other is] the brains keep you going in the right direction."

Besides the thrill of dog sledding for the participants, the events brought spectators out into the cold. As Kathy Clark Chase remembered being on the Plains during one of the competitions, "I was fascinated by the dogs; they arrived by trailer in wooden compartments each with a window, and they would bark and bark, eager to get out of their compartments and once in line and hitched, take off pulling the sleds. I was a bit intimidated by them and observed from a safe distance."

In the 1970s, dog sled races ended in Kingston and other areas in Southern New Hampshire and Northern Massachusetts. Bob reflected upon the end of racing. "We raced in Massachusetts, Gardner, Mass, and slowly but surely, Gardner disappeared because there was a lack of snow. In the mid-70s, the same thing happened in Kingston." With an unpredictable winter snow season, sponsor money dried up and so did dog sled racing here.

Nichols Memorial Library Celebrates its 125th Anniversary



This year, the Nichols Memorial Library will be celebrating its 125 years at the center of town.

Donated by J. Howard

Nichols (1837- 1905) in memory of his parents, the Nichols building served the town as its library and now museum.

The museum volunteers are planning a birthday party for the Nichols building this June 10th and the town is invited!

Mark your calendar to be here and wish the building another 125 years of service to the town.

Donations to help celebrate Nichols Memorial Library requested

We are looking for objects either from or about the Nichols Memorial Library to help us document the past century and a quarter that the Nichols building has served the needs of the people of Kingston and surrounding towns.

Old library cards, photos, or other memorabilia about the building would be useful in showing how the library has provided a service to its patrons. If you want to have the materials returned, the museum can either photograph or scan the items for our collection.

Contact the museum at the address below to talk with someone about what you have to share.



Volunteers at the Museum

Spotlight on a Volunteer

by Kathy Clark Chase

Wednesday mornings at the museum is a time I look forward to: three hours well spent with a group of inspired, versatile, and lively volunteers, all interested in the Kingston community and its history. I enjoy the comradery and helping to maintain the museum's collection. It's interesting learning about the making of an operational museum (curating, archiving, conservation).

On Wednesday mornings there are a variety of tasks to do and volunteers can choose those that match their interests. In recent months, I have enjoyed matching identification terms from the reference book, *Nomenclature 4.0 for Museum Cataloging* with photograph sheets of the museum's objects. These terms are specific to the types of objects in museum collections so that every museum is using the same terminology in describing objects in the collection.

Volunteers with some background in archival studies, in turn, input the information in the museum's electronic data base, called *Past Perfect*. I enjoy the task because I like organizing data into themes and categories.

However, the most rewarding aspect of museum work is helping visitors find the information or object they seek. It is a pleasure to greet museum visitors, answer their questions, or help them find the answers to their questions. In October, for example, a visitor came to the museum with an interest in old diaries and journals. She wanted to compare daily recordings of weather and bird observations from the past to the present. I was able to locate two pertinent journals using the Museum Finder which was gratifying. The Museum is, after all, a public service.

I am happy to be of service, albeit in a small way, to my hometown of Kingston.

Please consider stopping by the museum to learn more about being a museum volunteer!

Volunteer Hours Contributed

As we start a new year, there are many opportunities for you to add your efforts to the work of the Kingston Historical Museum. For the month of January, the volunteers have contributed 101 hours. Thank you all so much.

Where is it?

This month's "Where is it?" required a bit of wandering to find it! We've probably walked right past the geodetic marker many times. It is found just below the point of the red arrow in the photo at the front of town hall to the right of the white column!



What is it?



Robert Merrick collection Photo by Walt Roy.

While this month's **Mystery Object** might look like an ancient bomb, it really was at one time quite commonly seen around as you drove about town! Usually it would be found in

groups of three or four. Does it look familiar?



The Kingston Historical Museum headquartered at
the Nichols Memorial Library
169 Main Street,
Kingston, NH 03848

The Museum is open each Wednesday from 9:00 AM
until 12:00 noon and on the second Saturday, June
through October, from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.
Appointment to conduct research or a tour can be
arranged for another date.

For more information, please call Ruth Albert at
603-642-5508 or email us at

museuminfo@kingstonnh.org.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The museum needs help in identifying this object from our collection. The object was donated to the museum by Randall Hatch. He called it a “bee hive”. There is some evidence at one time there being some insects living in it, but the museum's resident beekeeper doesn't recognize it as having anything to do with keeping bees. The object is 22 inches high, by 31 inches wide and 15 ½ inches front to back. The two red highlight circles indicate that there were at one time what appear to be leather hinges for cabinet doors. The sides of the cabinet slant inward from top to bottom.



The center cavity of the object as seen in the left photo gets progressively narrower the deeper it gets. None of the six side shelf openings have any passage into the central cavity.

We are also looking for any information about the Hatch family from the East Kingston area.

We are puzzled about what sort of use this device would have had in years past. If you have any information about this mystery object or of the Hatch family, please contact the museum at **603-642-5508** or email us at museuminfo@kingstonnh.org



Thanks!