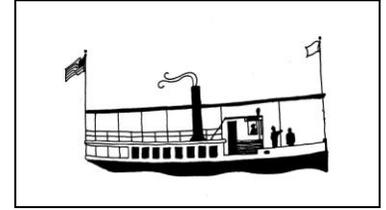


Sunapee Echoes

Sunapee, New Hampshire Historical Society, Inc.
P. O. Box 501, Sunapee, NH 03782
www.sunapeehistoricalociety.org
e-mail: contact@sunapeehistoricalociety.org
603-763-9872 or 8809
Spring 2017



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

At the Museum. Our snow is melting rapidly and the big barn door at the museum is open now—a sure sign that spring is here! Opening Day on Memorial Day Weekend will be here before we know it. Between now and then, we have plans to revamp more of our exhibits, replace the office door, and more. Join us on 13 May from 9-12 if you'd like to help us clean up and get ready.

Summer Programs. We have a busy summer planned. Our line-up of programs starts later this month with one focusing on the Old Abbott Library. Please see details below. After that, all at the museum at 7pm and free unless otherwise noted:

26 June, 5:30pm: **A History Cruise** on the MV Mt. Sunapee. This year we'll explore the north end of the lake. \$30 per person. Light refreshments; cash bar. Reserve your spot via email or phone to us.

6 July: **Billy B. Van in Georges Mills.** Though small in stature, this former vaudevillian was larger than life. We'll discuss his time in Georges Mills and all he did for the town while starting a silent movie business. We hope to be able to show a newly rediscovered Van film!

12 July, 7pm under the tent at Dexter's: **Billy B. Van, the Sunshine Man.** After giving up his movie business, Van moved to Newport, became an inventor and radio personality, coined Newport's "The Sunshine Town" slogan, and was named honorary mayor. The Newport Historical Society generously joins us to present this program as a gala fundraiser for the Archives at the Old Abbott Library. Ticket price to be announced.

27 July: **Diving in Lake Sunapee.** The LaPortes, along with others, will share their experiences, including visits to the steamboat Weetamoo in 90' of water.

3 August: **The NH Boat Museum** presented by its executive director, Lisa Sampson Lutts. Come and learn about their collection, located in Wolfeboro, NH.

17 August: **Lake Sunapee's Pleasure Boat History.** Barbara Chalmers will present an illustrated talk featuring sailboats from 1894 to 1938 and the evolution of power boating from steam launches to speed boats.

Sunapee Archives at the Old Abbott Library. We have begun raising funds to purchase the Old Abbott Library. To all who have already donated, thank you! We are eager to begin working there to create archive and research space. The necessary legal documents for our lease/purchase agreement with the town are nearing completion, so it shouldn't be long.

Docents Needed! As always, we need docents in order to maintain our usual summer schedule at the museum. If you'd like to help, please let us know. No experience or knowledge of Sunapee history is required. We'll train you up in no time, and you'll have fun talking with our guests.

We look forward to seeing you again!

Becky Fitts Rylander

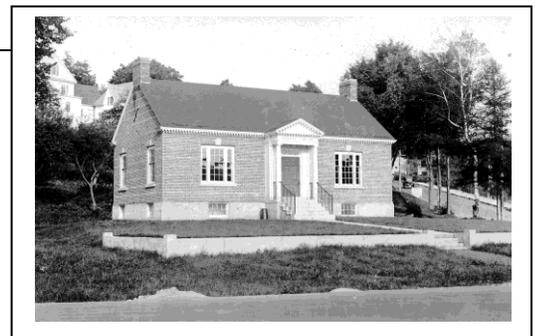
Announcing our Spring Program!

The History of the Old Abbott Library and Our Plans for Its Future

Presented by Becky Rylander

7pm on Wednesday, 26 April,
at the Lake Sunapee United Methodist Church

Free; all welcome; refreshments following.



Did you know...

The Lake Sunapee Regatta Association held competitions in all sorts of water sports nearly every August for more than 60 years, drawing competitors from all over and thousands of spectators. Here, excerpted from *Regatta! Part One* by Barbara Chalmers, is the beginning of the story:

On Friday, July 29, 1892 at Sunapee's Harbor Hotel, the Lake Sunapee Regatta Association (LSRA) was formed "to institute an annual regatta upon the Loch Katrine of America." By 1901, its mission had evolved to bring together the people of the lake. Among those in attendance were Frederic M. Dey, John Tyler, Col. George H. Dana, Col. William S. B. Hopkins, Eugene C. Derby, Samuel D. Lewis, William A. Whitney and A. Perley Fitch. Frederic Dey was elected president, Perley Fitch treasurer and Eugene Derby secretary. Following the meeting, the group announced a 4-day event to include launch, sailboat, rowboat and canoe races. The prospect of silver cups for the winners was offered to increase interest. Local papers observed that the regatta announcement was attracting a good deal of attention to the lake.

The First LSRA Regatta – 1892 Tuesday to Friday, September 6, 7, 8, & 9

Held in 1892, the first regatta sponsored by the Lake Sunapee Regatta Association was promoted as the "Greatest Novelty in New Hampshire." Attendance from Newport was encouraged with a special round-trip connecting train and steamboat fare of 65 cents. "No one can find fault with such rates!" declared Newport's *Republican Champion* newspaper. An ambitious 4-day program was held late in the summer season on September 6 to 9.

Strong winds challenged the sailboats. In the Class A race, Prof. Quackenbos's boat, *Wild Goose*, was capsized with his son Payne and Prof. O'Connor aboard. Both were safely picked up. In the Class B race for skiffs rigged with a sail, only one of the five boats that started was able to finish.

For the 13-mile launch race, each boat was assigned a handicap. This time was subtracted from each actual finish time to determine the race winner. For example the fastest launch going five mph took 2.6 hours and was handicapped zero minutes. A slower launch capable of half the speed theoretically took twice as long, so was handicapped 2.6 hours. Variations from the theoretical finish times could then be attributed to the skill of the captains.

The regatta water sports event called the "Carnival" was held in Sunapee Harbor and drew hundreds of spectators. The local Flanders and Osborne boys showed well in the rowing events and would dominate in future years. The sole ladies' race, doubles rowing, was won by Mrs. Margaret Yardley, age 48, of Overlook Cottage in Burkehaven with Miss Charlotte L. Hubbard, age 23, from Claremont and later a co-owner of the Indian Tree Tea Room in the Harbor.

By all accounts, regatta organizers outdid themselves with the Grand Finale on Friday evening when every boat was expected to participate in a parade, followed by fireworks from a float along with two enormous bonfire rafts on the main lake. The *Boston Journal* reported that the display of fireworks was the finest ever witnessed here and that many lantern-illuminated boats were out on the water. The event became known as the "Grand Illumination."

The following week, the *Sunapee Echo* proclaimed:

"The past week was a high old time on and about the lake. The Carnival was a success from start to finish... Let it be said, however that no such display ever occurred on Lake Sunapee before; and it demonstrated the possibilities of entertainment on this beautiful sheet of water. Everything went like clock-work, no conflict, no accident, to mar the continuous pleasure. The evening was especially grand and the illuminations on board the moving craft and at all the cottages made a scene reminding one of the Italian Venice."

You can read all about the evolution of this major summer event on Lake Sunapee, view photos, and look for familiar names (family members, perhaps?) in the race results, all included in Barbara's book. Part One covers 1892 to 1922; Part Two, expected to be published by summer, will detail 1923-1957. We're still looking for photos from 1947-1957 and hope you have some to share. Please let us know if you do!



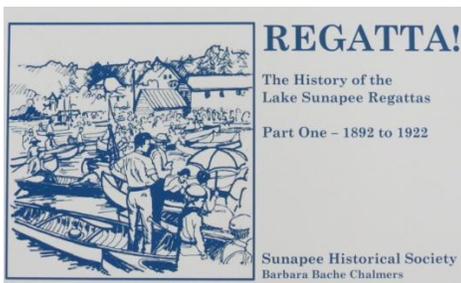


So how does a vaudevillian end up in Georges Mills? I hear you ask. Billy B. Van tells the story himself in *Snap Out of It!*, an inspirational book of Yankee philosophy he published in 1933. Some 3 months after being diagnosed with tuberculosis, Billy says, “We were playing in Boston at the Howard Theatre, a burlesque house, where the dampness was so pronounced it oozed through the walls and into the dressing rooms. I became too ill to continue with the company and remained in my room at the Quincy House, one of Boston’s old hotels.” Ultimately, the hotel proprietor took him on a trip to New Hampshire. “Eventually we landed at a little hamlet called George’s Mills, on the shore of Lake Sunapee in New Hampshire...I liked the place more than any spot I had ever set eyes upon. It represented something I had never known—the peace and quiet of rural scenes where one can watch a sunset without blocking traffic...There I stayed clasped to the bosom of Mother Nature for nine months. Spring came and I saw for the first time in my life the greatest show in the world—Nature’s Spring Review. From a front row seat I saw the trees bud and blossom and watched the hills and fields make up in the most gorgeous transformation that the world’s stage ever presented.” Small wonder

that so many of our families have been here for generations!

Smile.Amazon.com contributes to the Sunapee Historical Society!

Are you an Amazon shopper? If you log on via Smile.Amazon.com you can help us. Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase price to us. Either use this link: smile.amazon.com/ch/02-0338273 or search in the appropriate field at smile.amazon.com for “Sunapee New Hampshire Historical Society” to establish us as your charity of choice. Thanks! Every little bit helps!



Now available: *Regatta! The History of the Lake Sunapee Regattas, Part One – 1892-1922*

By Barbara Bache Chalmers

\$20 for members; \$22 for non-members. Add \$5 for shipping if we need to mail it to you. Send a check made out to Sunapee Historical Society to PO Box 501, Sunapee, NH 03782 to order or phone or email if you’re nearby.

2017 MEMBERSHIP – RENEWALS – CONTRIBUTIONS

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

TOWN, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

CHECK MEMBERSHIP TYPE:

\$15 Individual \$25 Family \$50 Business \$100 Patron \$300 Sustainer

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Donation \$ _____ I wish to remain anonymous

NEWSLETTER

Send future newsletters by e-mail
 Send future newsletters by postal mail

Please make checks payable to:

Sunapee NH Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 501, Sunapee, NH 03782

Thank you!

Sunapee Echoes
Sunapee NH Historical Society, Inc.
PO Box 501
Sunapee, NH 03782

2015-2016 Board of Directors

Officers:

Becky Rylander, *President*
Barbara Chalmers, *Vice President*
Lela Emery, *Treasurer*
Lois Gould, *Secretary*

Directors:

Sandy Alexander
Bob Blakley
Ron Garceau
Ron Hand
Lucy Young

Programs Chairman:

Ron Garceau

Docent Coordinator:

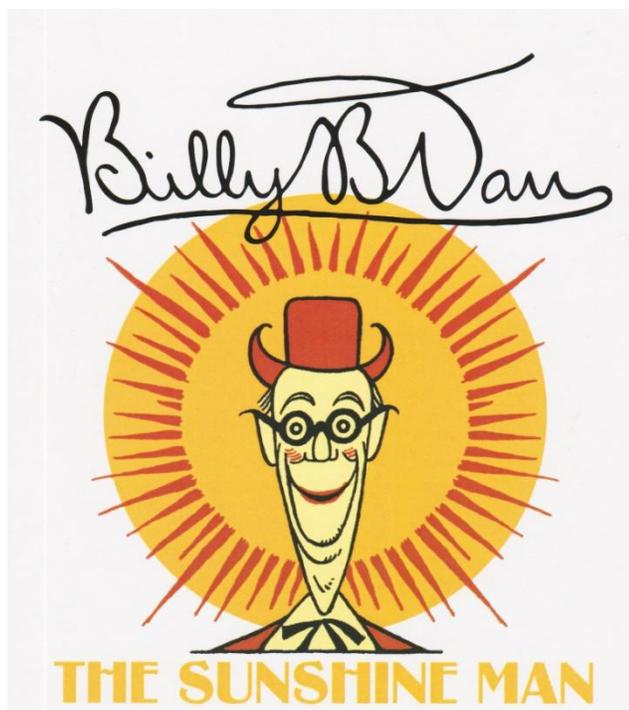
Lucy Young

Nominations:

Ron Garceau

Emeritus:

Eileen Stiles
Jo Hill
Lois Gallup



*Caricature from cover of "Snap Out of It!"
by Billy B. Van, 1933*