

Washington Historical Society

Heritage Day

On September 10th, our Heritage Day speaker will be Kevin Johnson, Photo Archivist at the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport. His 10 am talk, "A Peek into the Cunningham Brothers' Collection", will introduce us to the Cunningham brothers and the PMM's collection of their glass plate images from the early part of the 20th century.

Frank Cunningham (1866-1938) and his brother Herbert, "Bert", (1873-1955) were born in Washington to Charles and Charlotte (Witham) Cunningham. Charles Cunningham was a farmer who had served in the Civil War. He raised his family and farmed in the part of town known as "the mountain". In 1889 Charles deeded his property to his son F.W. Cunningham. However, in the 1900 U.S. Census, Charles was still listed as the head of the household. In that census, both sons were single and lived with their parents. Frank's occupation was listed as photographer while Bert's was listed as farm laborer. In December 1900 Bert married Mabel E. Morang of Liberty. Unfortunately, Mabel died of tuberculosis in February of 1904. They had one child, Frank, born in 1903. In 1906 Bert married a second time to Elonia Howes. In the 1920 U.S. Census Bert and Elonia were living in Liberty, then in the 1930 Census they were living in Searsmont.

Though the brothers worked together in the early years of the Twentieth century, Bert pursued other occupations after the death of his first wife, Mabel. He did continue taking some photographs on his own.

In May of 1904, Frank married Ellen Morang, Mabel's younger sister. He maintained a studio building in front of his home. He traveled by horse and buggy throughout the Midcoast area and beyond taking photographs, then traveling home with the fragile glass plates to process and print them. For a time he had a summer studio at the Advent Christian Campground in Washington. Frank and Ellen had four children, three of whom lived to adulthood. Today Frank and Ellen's great-grandchildren live in their home.

The Cunningham bothers are the subject of the 2004 book by Joseph W. and Jeremy T. Dieffenbacher, "Midcoast Maine: The Cunningham Collection". The interest we have today in their photography is well summed up by a quote from that book, "It is unknown how these two brothers first became interested in photography or where they learned the art, but what is known from their incredible legacy is that they were good at it. The images that they have left behind show moments of a life that no longer exists, frozen in time for us to examine today."

The Washington Historical Society has a collection of Cunningham brothers' postcards which will be on display on September 10. We hope you will join us, to learn more about these talented brothers and take a peek of what Washington looked like in the early years of the Twentieth Century. The Penobscot Marine Museum's collection of the Cunningham Brothers images can be seen at penobscotmarinemuseum.org/cunningham-brothers-collection/. The Dieffenbacher's book is also another interesting source of information and images.

2022 Newsletter



Restoring Light Hill Farm

If you've ever driven up Old County Road towards Liberty and seen that old collapsing farmhouse at the corner of Old County and Crystal Lake, you've probably seen me wave hello. My name is Sam Collins, and my husband Chris and I have been slowly reclaiming the abandoned farm from the sumac and brambles. We moved over here to Washington from Northern Vermont six years ago in hopes of being closer to the ocean and putting down roots. My grandparents are from Searsmont and Belfast, so I was familiar with the area.

We bought that empty farmhouse in 2017. We'd explored it previously as an abandoned structure almost a decade ago, and it had haunted us ever since. It was a story and a half cape with a mostly collapsed ell and a main roof open to the sky on one side. The brush was so thick the house itself could only be partially seen from the road. We'd always wanted an old home full of history that we could restore without damaging. Chris and I were both decent carpenters and handy folks who saw it still had good bones beneath the decay. My academic background is in history, so I began researching the home's previous owners at night when it got too dark to swing a hammer. I knew the structure itself was at least 150 years old.

Things got weird for me fast. This farm was settled by George and Hannah (Meserve) Light by 1800. Tracing down their historical records led me back into my own family tree, whereupon I discovered Hannah's grandfather was also my 9x-great grandfather. She lived in this house – or at least on this land – for sixty years, dying at home in 1867 and buried in the family plot across the street. I can see her grave through my kitchen window, along with the daylilies transplanted down there more than a century ago. George and Hannah's son Washington Light and his wife Eliza (Boynton) inherited the farm and passed it to their son, also named George... who married my first cousin at four removes Angie Turner. So I was related twice over to the family who had lived here, and I'd never even suspected a connection. When Angie died in 1932, the home was sold out of the family. The final long term owner-occupant was William and Jeanette McLain, who were here through their deaths in the late 1970s. The house passed through a number of hands quickly and eventually was completely abandoned about 20-30 years ago.

A heavy windstorm ripped the remaining roof cleanly off the house only a few months after we bought it. In the end it was a blessing, as it made us reevaluate the remaining timbers more realistically and update our restoration plans, but I've kept the original structure as intact as possible. My husband Chris suffered a brain injury at sea a few years ago and we've had to slow down accordingly. I've got a MA in Museum Studies, so this has been the perfect opportunity to do my archival and archaeological research in hopes of accurately telling the farm's story.

Restoring Light Hill Farm has been a labor of love. Countless people have stopped to tell me how glad they are to see it being fixed instead of demolished. It's been wonderful to learn small anecdotes about the Lights and McLains from older residents of town. I'm always searching to learn more about the lives of those who lived here before me, so if you remember exploring this place when it was abandoned or maybe rented it for a little while, please reach out. I don't know of any pictures currently known to exist from before it was abandoned – I'd love to see one!

Building Maintenance

Work continues on both of our buildings in Razorville. Our limits are man power and money! Razorville Hall, the museum, now has clapboard siding on all four sides. The back still needs to be painted but this summer the window side was painted and the railing reinstalled on the handicap ramp.

The Town House now has the platform back in its original location and a connecting voting booth has recently been built. We purchased an aluminum handicap ramp for this building and it is in place. Next we plan to have the interior walls repaired in the places required and eventually repaint everything before we set up permanent displays. We expect it will take us a couple more years before the in-place displays happen.

With fundraising, donations, grants, and town support we have been able to make the improvements to date. We have hired out the bigger projects but members Frank Campbell and Don Grinnell have completed a lot of the work that was needed.

Prescott's 5th & 6th Grade Visits



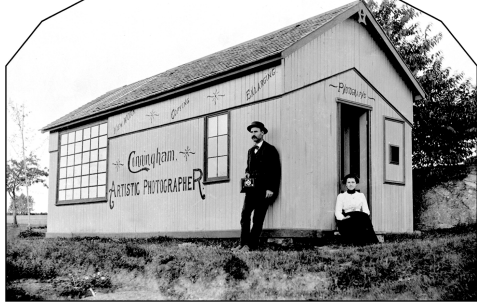
In June, the WHS welcomed students from Prescott Memorial's 5th and 6th grades to visit our museum, Razorville Hall, and the Town House. Each group came on separate days so they could get up close to the exhibits and have hands-on experiences.

The morning programs included learning about the early construction techniques used to build the museum back in 1835. Members led them through the museum showing old tools and farm equipment; kitchen, parlor, and bedroom displays; and horse and ox drawn equipment. Across the road at the Town House, displays featured the Washington Telephone Co.; the history of our early one room school houses; and Clyde Sukeforth, Washington's home grown professional baseball player. Students got to turn a crank telephone, dial a rotary phone, touch one of Sukeforth's signed baseball mitts, and see a wool Washington baseball uniform from the 1940s, glove and bat.

After lunch, the real hands-on activities happened. Each group cranked up homemade ice cream, mowed the lawn with a rotary push mower, used a two man crosscut saw and buck saw, and washed laundry on a wash board and used the hand turn wringer.

The afternoon ended with eating ice cream and identifying old and some newer pictures around town. The weather cooperated and a good time was had by all!

Washington Historical Society
HERITAGE DAY



Kevin Johnson from the Penobscot Marine Museum will speak at 10am. "A peek into the Cunningham Brother's Collection"

Pie Contest:

Drop off at 9am with judging at 9:30. Winner will receive a \$50 Gift Card to Hannaford. Slices will be available for purchase.

Razorville Hall and the Old Town House will be open for visitors.

Annual WHS Heritage Day!

This year's special programming has Kevin Johnson returning from the Penobscot Marine Museum with a program featuring the photographic works of Frank and Bert Cunningham, early 1900s photographers from Washington. The brothers were known for their pictures and postcards featuring images from Washington and surrounding towns. The F.W. Cunningham studio pictured on the poster was located at the family home on Mountain Rd.

Bakers Needed

Bakers are needed for the annual **Tasty Pie Baking Contest**. Pies need to be dropped off between 9 and 9:30 at the Town House. Judging will take place at 9:30. The winner will receive a \$50 Hannaford Gift Certificate. Slices will be for sale after the Cunningham program as a fund raiser for the WHS.

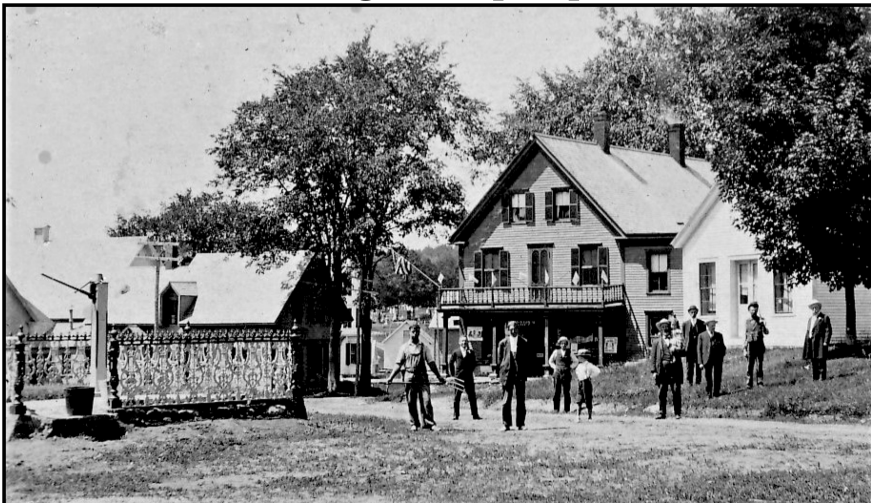
Razorville Hall, the WHS museum, will be open for visiting during the event.

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**Washington Historical Society
 Washington Shopkeepers**



2023 Calendar

**2023 Washington
 Historical Society
 Calendar**

Our 2023 calendar is now available for \$10 at Gibbs Library, Washington General, Linscott's, Blueberry Fields, and at our events. This year's theme is "**Washington Shopkeepers**". It features pictures, letterheads, and advertising from stores and garages once open for business in town. Note the prices of items and the telephone numbers!