

# Yesterday's News

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Fall 2012

## Uncle Steve Kimball

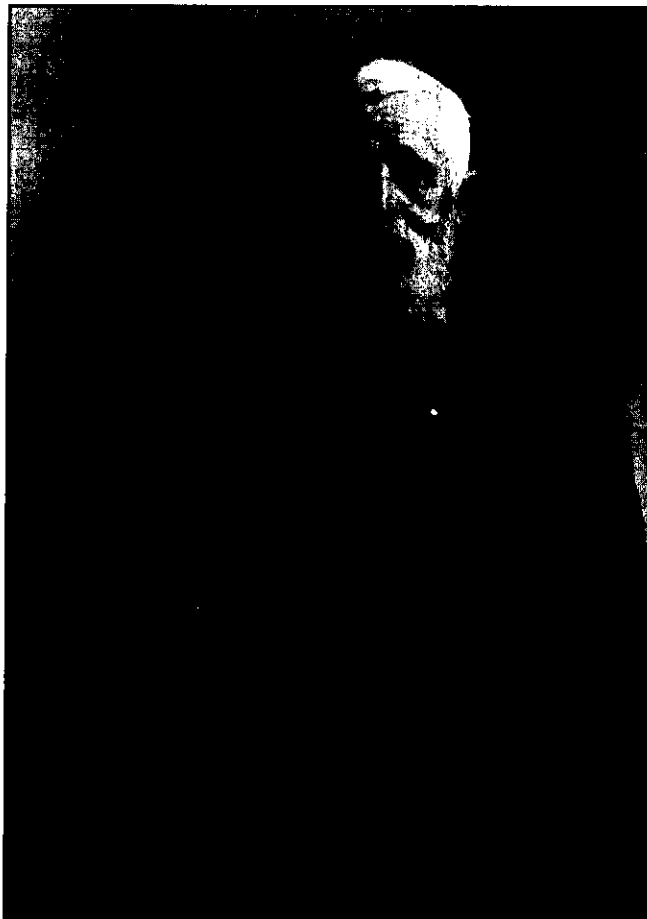
Stephen Farrington Kimball (1852-1934), also known as "Uncle Steve", was a Lovell native who gained notoriety for his dance fiddling and calling. His music was recorded by the Victor Band, he spent time at Columbia University teaching the old dances, and he had a brief career as a nightclub sensation in New York City. Despite these accomplishments, he spent most of his life working various jobs in the area and died in relative obscurity. So little attention was given to him locally, that it appeared there were two Stephen Kimball's living in Lovell at the same time.

Steve was born in Lovell on April 1, 1852, the son of Enos and Catherine (McDaniels) Kimball. According to *The History of the Kimball Family* by Leonard A. Morrison & Stephen P. Sharples, his occupation was "paper hanger and painter". Sumner Kimball, who was the nephew of Enos, repeatedly mentioned hiring Enos and Steve to paint his home, now known as the Kimball-Stanford House. Steve married Hattie Maria Marston (1856-1916) of Waterford on November 18, 1877 and they had one child, Sadie E. Kimball, born December 22, 1879.

In reviewing old Lovell Town Columns from the Lovell Historical Society's collection, the first reference made to Steve's career as a fiddler and caller was in August 5, 1887 when the following was noted: "Stephen Kimball entertained the No. 4 Circle at the skating rink [today's VFW Hall] Tuesday, July 28. Time or labor was not spared by Mr. K. in preparing for the occasion so that one and all might find much enjoyment during the afternoon and evening."

Over the next forty-seven years Steve was sporadically mentioned in town columns, but not for his musical talents. Instead, reference was made over the years to his fishing and hunting. In 1892 a column mentioned his taking work at the Norway shoe shop, and in 1897 he was referred to as S.F. Kimball of Norway. By 1909 the family appears to have returned to Lovell, as mention was made of Steve taking on odd jobs such as well digging and ice cutting. Hattie was mentioned for her work tending the ill and taking in boarders at their home in Northeast Lovell.

By the time Hattie died of tuberculosis in 1916, Steve's notoriety was minimal. It was not until



after her death that he somehow became acquainted with Elizabeth Burchenal, a Columbia University folk dance scholar. The era of square dancing as a mainstay of local balls was being replaced by new styles of music and dance, and Burchenal was determined to document the old style. She published a book, *American Country-Dances*, in 1918 and credited Steve as her primary source. Her 1922 *Folk-Dances from Old Homelands* included "Uncle Steve's Quadrille", which was later recorded by the Victor Band with calls by Billy Murray.

It's not known how he became acquainted with Burchenal, but it is likely she was instrumental

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## From the President

This summer was extremely busy and very enjoyable. We hosted two talks: *North Lovell Conversations* and *Barns*; and two events: the *Antique Show & Auction*, and Lovell's first *Barn Tour*. And we have two more events planned before the end of the year.

*North Lovell Conversations* was held on July 8th at the North Lovell Grange to a packed audience. For more than an hour our distinguished panel of North Lovell experts, Fred Fox, Jack Hawley, Cliff Hill, Bill Lord, and Ruth Mitchell entertained with stories about growing up in North Lovell and favorite local neighbors. If you were not able to attend, a DVD of the talk is available for \$10.

The Antique Show & Auction was a great success. The weather was perfect and the turn-out was excellent. Antique dealers were set up inside and outside and Jay Hanson conducted our fourth auction of contemporary items. Ruth Mitchell coordinated her cooks and servers, providing delicious food during the event. Many thanks go to all the people, too numerous to mention, who donated their time and gifts. The fortunate winners of the raffle were: Al & Jacky Stearns (Victorian mirror); John & Janet Connelly (Fay Burg's *Lake Kezar Cookbook*); and Leotus Morrison (cameo brooch).

Lovell's first barn tour was held on August 12th. Eleven barns on eight properties were on tour and the day was both educational and entertaining. We want to thank all of the barn owner's (Burtis Family, John Derr, Ed & Linda Dunlea, Michael Frenette, Carmen & Beth-Ann Gentile, Dick & Betty Pilsbury, and Ken & Miriam Roy) for opening up their properties for viewing. Thanks also go to the people who served as barn docents and Ken Roy and Davy Sturtevant for providing great entertainment at the Pleasant Point Inn cocktail party at the end of the tour.

Our Fall Harvest event will take place on Sunday, October 14th from 1 to 4pm. During this family event we will be pressing apples into cider and serving free refreshments. There will be a large harvest bake sale, a petting zoo, free pumpkin painting, and *Birds on a Wire* will be playing live fiddle music. Come and enjoy the festivities!

On Sunday December 16th from 1 to 4pm we will host our Christmas Open House. We plan to have our museum and research center open that afternoon and will provide refreshments, a bake sale, and good holiday cheer for all members of our community. We also will be raffling some exciting items to coincide with this event.

For Christmas we also hope to have available for sale our latest publication, *A History of West Lovell*. The book features a diverse selection of writings about this unique section of Lovell. Included is William LeBaron's *A Historical Record of West Lovell* written in 1899, West Lovell Town Column's from 1885 to 1905, and assorted essays highlighting specific individuals who have lived or summered in West Lovell. Details will follow in a separate mailing.

Finally, we would like to make a special appeal for donations dedicated to our oil bill. As you know, heating oil prices have doubled over the past two years, having a serious impact on our annual budget. Please, help heat the Kimball-Stanford House so that we can continue to expand our services!

Best wishes, *Catherine Stone*

### THE LOVELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### MISSION

The Lovell Historical Society exists to collect and preserve historical and genealogical records, property, and artifacts, and to encourage and support interest in and study of the history of the Town of Lovell and its environs. Its collections are available for consultation by its members and other interested parties. In fulfillment of its educational mission, the Society presents public programs on relevant topics, publishes documents and the results of research, maintains an archive, a library and a museum, provides information and guidance to interested researchers, and collaborates with libraries, schools, and other organizations to carry out historical projects.

#### OFFICERS 2012-2013

Catherine Stone, President  
Stan Tupaj, Vice President  
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#### Directors:

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#### LOCATION AND HOURS

The Society, located on Route 5 in the 1839 Kimball-Stanford House, is open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am to 4pm, Saturdays from 9am to 12pm and by appointment. All are welcome to visit our museum and research collections. Business meetings are open to all members and are held on the third Tuesday of every month at 2pm. Our phone number is (207) 925-3234 or (207) 925-2291. Our collection can be viewed at our web site—[www.lovellhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.lovellhistoricalsociety.org)—and our e-mail address is [lovellhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:lovellhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)



in arranging his trip to New York City during the winter of 1924. According to an article in the *Lewiston Evening Journal*, dated January 6, 1926, Steve received in the mail a job offer to play the role of Santa Claus for a large department store. Accompanying the offer was a railway ticket from Norway to New York City. What follows is Steve's account of what transpired that winter:

*Miss Burchenal told me that as soon as I got thru playing Santa Claus to let her know. I did so. She was one of a merry party of New York young people who desired to dance the old-time dances. Among her friends were eight couples, sixteen people, thus making up two sets in quadrille. They met in her house first, then at the home of each of the couples and then repeated it—I fiddled and taught them how to dance the square dances sixteen evenings.*

*Then Miss Burchenal planned a surprise. I knew nothing of it in advance. She told me to be dressed in my best and be ready for a taxi to take me at a certain place—known to the driver. I did as she bade me. We went to a large private club house in the former Samuel J. Tilden house. I peeked thru the doors and saw a large party sitting at dinner, some 200 people I should say. With Miss Burchenal's party—eight couples who had been dancing—I went onto the stage and Miss Burchenal told me the doors would be opened and we would go thru our dance just as we had been doing all winter.*

*The doors were opened. I fiddled a few snatches of a merry jig tune then called for the forming of a fancy quadrille. The couples took their places. I fiddled and called out the various floor movements and we went thru the dance as usual. Such cheering as we got and we had to repeat it several times.*

*When we were back in the taxi and I was on my way to the rooms, Miss Burchenal told me with a merry twinkle that we had been dancing at the National Art Club of New York City.*

*At another time a gentleman – can't remember his name now, but I have it in my diary at home – asked me to meet him at the Lincoln Hotel on Broadway. "You can fiddle?" he asked.*

*"A little," I answered, and at his request played a few jigs and reels for him.*

*He appeared satisfied and said "A taxi will call for you at eight this evening and I want you dressed in rustic clothes and meet me at ---- Club House. He named a fashionable club house in the city. The name of it is along with his name in my diary. "I will play the piano and you will fiddle," he said. "I will ask you some questions and you can answer them in a witty way."*

*I had a rusty old overcoat which I had worn for warmth on the stage journey from Lovell to Norway where I took the train for New York and I wore this to my friend's party. I didn't need much make-up with my white hair and long white beard. He went ahead onto the stage and sat down and instructed me to rap on the door and follow shortly. I did his bidding and the following dialogue ensued:*

*"Come in." I entered slowly, fiddle box in hand and there was a general hand clapping.*

*"Wall, now I swan, if here ain't my old friend Uncle Stephen Kimball from Lovell, Maine. How be you, Uncle Stephen!"*

*"Purty fair and middlin'," I answered.*

*"Wall, I ain't seen you since the British vaccinated New York."*

*There was a general laugh at this sally. He went on in this strain, asked how so and so was down to*

(continued on page 4)

Lovell, Maine – using names I presume of fashionable persons in the audience, for they laughed and shouted as he made each sally. He would ask how Nancy Smith or some such person was and I would answer, “She is helping her father in the hay field or is trying to learn how to make biscuit or darn sock” or some other such nonsense. Evidently my random remarks and answers must have hit home on more than one occasion and perhaps made as much fun as if I had been coached in advance.

He asked how one girl was ‘away down there to Lovell and I told him in answer that I’d thank him for not being too free with her name; that I had sparked her myself and been to corn huskings and was darn sweet on her myself. There was a great laugh, a lot of cheering and then he said in an undertone, “You hit it that time, she is my wife! I was trying to spring a joke on her and you caught me at the same time!”

“But honestly,” I said soberly “I didn’t mean no – harm.”

Three years later, Steve approached summer resident Don Dickerman with a proposal to perform at one of his nightclubs in New York City. At the time, Dickerman owned three clubs, one being the “County Fair”. The club was promoted as being designed after the Oxford County Fair at Fryeburg: “The dance floor is a race track with a specially fenced off outer track for the fast steppers. The famous Eddie Worth orchestra in country band costumes occupy the grandstand while the midway and exhibit row are where the people sit with the funny signs up overhead. White fences are everywhere and hundreds of little silk flags waving in artificial breezes under a blue satin sky”.

An act was created with Steve fiddling and calling for five Lovell couples. To advertise the event, Dickerman created a hand-drawn cartoon which took up two-thirds of a page in *The New Yorker* with this message: “I have signed up the grandest bunch of real ‘Down-East’ natives all old friends of mine who will do a little medley of the American country dances for us three times nightly as they have been done for the last hundred years up here in the good old back woods. Wait till you hear old Uncle Steve Kimball fiddle and then see him peel down to his suspenders and do the Portland Fancy!” The following week he ran another two-thirds page, headed “Special Anniversary Notice”.

Their first performance was on October 31 and ran until December 10, three fifteen minute shows a night, at 6, 9, and 12. The act was an instant success, as evidenced by Lois Long’s review in *The New Yorker*:

*Downtown, Don Dickerman has brought twelve Down East natives to dance the Portland Fancy, the Lady of the Lake, and other old-fashioned dances at dinner, at 10:30, and at supper, at the County Fair. And after considerable toil and trouble in inducing them to leave the caouws for a spell, he is now accused of employing actors dressed up. Well, they are not. I know my Maine. No actor could possible refrain from saying “By Heck” or spitting ‘backy juice on the floor, which the real ones would scorn to do. They are sweet and utterly un-self-conscious. And I have mailed a proposal of marriage to Uncle Steve Kimball, who is seventy-six, boasts the longest and waviest white beard I ever did see, and fiddles in a class with his cousin, Mellie Dunham. My word for the whole thing— and you know what a word-coiner I am—is “refreshing”.*

On December 16, 1927, the *Norway Advertiser* published an article about the act’s success, largely quoting from a letter by Don Dickerman which is excerpted below:

*In justice to a group of citizens from your neighboring town of Lovell, who are making an*

POP GOES THE WEASEL  
PORTLAND FANCY  
LADY-OF-THE-LAKE  
HULE'S VICTORY, ETC.

**SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY NOTICE**

STARTIN  
HALLOWE'EN, OCT. 31st

HAVE BROT DOWN TO  
NEW YORK EIGHT (8)  
OF MY DEAR FRIENDS  
FROM CENTER LOVELL  
MAINE WHO WILL DO A  
SHORT MEDLEY OF THE  
REAL NATIVE AMERICAN  
COUNTRY DANCES  
THREE (3) TIMES NIGHTLY

THESE ARE THE REAL FOLKS FROM "DOWN EAST"  
AT THE  
**COUNTY FAIR**

DINNER & SUPPER CLUB  
FOR SMART NEW YORKERS

54 EAST 9th.

FOR RESERVATIONS  
PHONE CHARLIE  
STUYVESANT  
5250

(PLENTY OF ROOM TO PARK YOUR CAR)

enormous hit here in sophisticated New York City, I am writing to give you a few notes on their success.

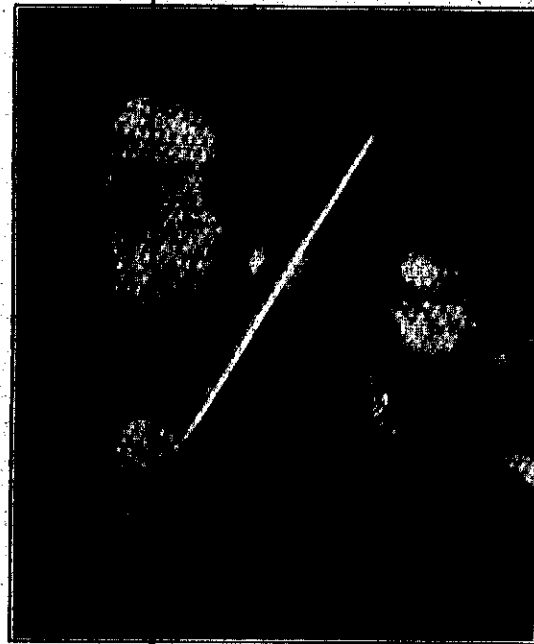
The rendering of the old fashioned country dances to the tune of Uncle Steve Kimball's fiddling is the most charming, sincere performance which has ever been offered in New York City. They are all very dear friends of mine from the region of my summer camp on Kezar Lake and I am very sure that you will be mighty proud to know that their little act, together with their great personal charm, is absolutely winning the heart of New York City.

My "County Fair" is an aristocratic dinner and supper club patronized largely by smart New Yorkers and are a hard crowd to please, but these people have won the most enthusiastic applause that I have ever heard at any exhibition dance, including the greatest stars of New York City. We will indeed be very sorry when the six weeks contract is up on December 10th and while we have done all we can to keep them happy in New York, they are getting a little homesick for their beautiful Kezar Lake Valley and decidedly hungry for the good old fashioned beans.

I am writing to you as their home paper, because I feel that they have earned the cheers of the folks back home and want to spread the news of their success in their home state. During their six weeks in New York, about 25,000 people will have enjoyed their dancing. They have [im]mortalized the grand old American classics which are fast giving way to the innovations of modern jazz.

It does not appear that Steve ever visited New York City again. When he passed away on March 5, 1934 at the age of eighty-one he was boarding at Dana McAllister's home in West Lovell. Only brief mention in the *Norway Advertiser* was made of his passing. It was noted that his internment was to be at No. 4 Cemetery in Lovell, which was where Hattie was buried. Presumably they were buried next to each other, but no headstone marks their location. His death notice did not mention his career as a famed fiddler and caller. Fortunately, his talents did not live in obscurity thanks to the work of a Columbia University folk dance scholar and Don Dickerman.

...



Uncle Steve Kimball

Real "DOWN EAST" Natives

from

M - A - I - N - E

at the

C O U N T Y F A I R

54 EAST 9th

## Carrie Returns to Lovell



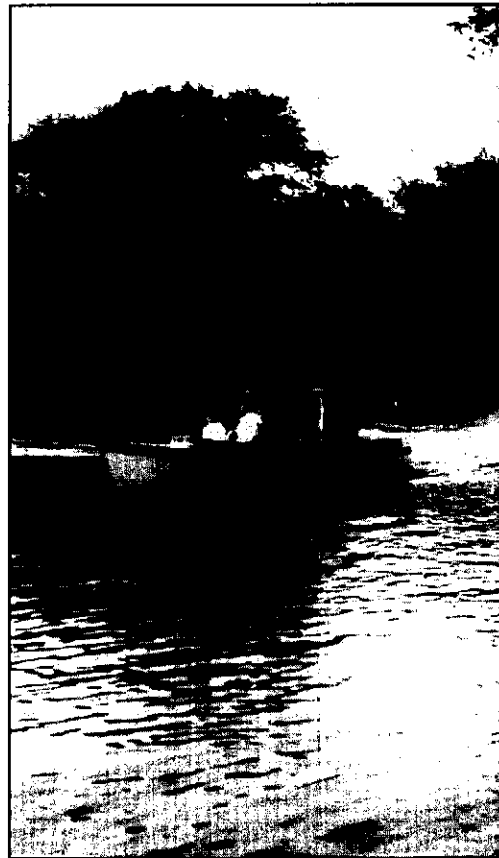
*Caroline and Roger Sorg delivering Carrie to the Kimball-Stanford Museum*

In the early 1900s, Edward H. Kennedy (1862-1938) purchased two islands on Kezar Lake, Buck Island (1903) in the Lower Bay and Sheep Island (1911) in the Upper Bay. Transportation to islands required boats and Edward became a boat builder in his spare time. The family recounts that he built four boats in his Massachusetts garage, three named for his daughters. There was the *Nellie*, *Ruth*, *Carrie*, and *Osprey*.

While the exact year *Carrie* was built is not certain, it lasted longer than Edward's other boats and became known as "Grandma's transportation". Kate (Dean) Kennedy (1869-1965) used the boat to ferry her family from the mainland to Sheep Island until she could no longer physically make the trip. She died in 1965 and *Carrie* was put into storage.

The boat was gifted to Caroline (Morrison) Sorg, the granddaughter of Edward and Kate, in 1975. She and her husband Roger brought the boat to Lake Champlain and had it carefully restored. Since 2000, *Carrie* has been on display at the Old Town Marine Museum in Old Town, Maine.

This September the boat came home to Lovell. The Sorg's have loaned *Carrie* to the Lovell Historical Society for display so that others can see and appreciate her beauty and craftsmanship. She is believed to be the earliest existing Kezar Lake power boat. Come and see her!



*Kate Kennedy driving Carrie on Kezar Lake*

## Gifts and Donations

*We are very grateful for the following gifts received since the last newsletter:* **Craig Adams**—permission to scan photos; **Mary Adams** (in memory of Herb Adams)—Birthday book and genealogy compiled by Martha (Irish) Stone, small froe, animal trap, newspaper articles, *A Return to the Classroom* by Herb Adams; **Jim & Carol Bicket**—collection of postcards; **Lt. Col. William C. Brooks**—bound copy of his 1944 Combat Journal; **William Burton**—*Early Days on Timber Island* by William Burton, permission to scan photos; **Katherine Chase**—wooden blocks, 3 porcelain dolls; **Robert & Robin Chiarello**—*The Blue Lobster's Holiday!* by Robin Taylor-Chiarello; **Gerald & Evelyn Davis**—4 games, 3 books, 1871 journal for the Pioneer Debating Club; **Henry & Christine Deutsch**—Kinapic Lodge meat grinder; **Richard & Catherine Fay**—permission to scan information on Birch Island; **Joni Fox-Campbell** (in memory of Anne Beatrice Fox)—E. Lillian Severance's piano sheet music titled *Lake Kezar Waltz*; **Beth-Ann Gentile**—anti Nuclear Waste Depository bumper sticker, legal assistance; **Kathy Gravino**—large collection of Martin family papers and photos including Civil War letters written by Granville Martin; **Arlene Gould**—permission to scan Kezar Lake Camp photos; **Jeff Harmon**—permission to scan Harmon photos; **Scott Harmon & Sue Biller**—permission to scan Harmon photos; **Phyllis Hetzler**—Maine Memory poster; **Tom & Paula Hughes**—signed floorcloth from Art Underfoot for the 2012 Auction; **Ethel Hurst**—permission to scan photos; **Zoe Iverson**—Barn Tour photo notecards; **Bill & Nancy Jamison**—2012 Lovell Old Home Day Photos; **Jacqueline Lewis** (in memory of Edwin F. Lewis, Jr.)—seven U.S. Geological Survey maps; **Dallas Morris**—collection of material from the Kimball-Stanford House including penmanship books and drawing books; **Leotus Morrison**—collection of Camp Mudjekeewis material; **Family of Rebecca Ring**—3 framed photographs of Moses Gilman, Emma Gilman and a son, permission to scan photos, Lovell Post Office sign, information on the Lovell Post Office, Edna Heim's beer recipe, map of 1903 RFD route; **Sam Ring**—program for the 1930 Graduation Exercises at Annie Heald School; **John & Helen Roberts**—*Vauclains at Kezar Lake* by John Roberts & Family, permission to scan photos; **Frederic Sater**—2012 Antique Show & Auction photos; **Brad Smith**—set of sleigh runners; **Roger & Caroline Sorg**—loan of *Carrie*, permission to scan photos and documents related to Edward Kennedy's boat *Carrie*; **Dean & Pat Stearns** (in memory of Burton and Marcus Stearns)—*Integrity and Raw Strength* by Dean Stearns; **Carol Tickton**—2 Kezar Lake Camp brochures, Staff Manuel for Kezar Lake Camp; **Robert & Ann Williams** (in memory of Dorothy Chadwell Williams)—*The Culture of Summer: Some Camps of West Lovell* by Robert C. Williams, permission to scan photos.

*Cash donations have been gratefully received from:* **Bruce & Sue Adams; Michael Bannon; Martha Barrows** (in memory of Maxine Eastman Buck Fisher); **Mercer & Mary Louise Blanchard; Arthur Cormier; Hank Croteau & Jacquie Maranville; Charles & Joan Dattelbaum; Ben & Nancy Eshleman; John & Carolyn Farquharson; Ray & Peggy Fisher; Elmer Fox; William & Melodie Fox; David & Betsey Freund; Beth Gallie; Theda Gilman; Elinor Goodwin; Robert & Janine Greene; Elner Hamner; Phyllis Hetzler** (in memory of Phyllis Chandler); **Zoe Iverson; Chris Kuhn; Richard & Linda Matte; James & Jean McBain; Paul McGuire; Howard & Veronica Mitchell; Russ Reardon; William Rice; John & Helen Roberts; Gene & Vicki Royer; Raymond & Lois Senecal; Nicholas Skinner; Bonnie Smith; Brad Smith; Al & Irene St. Germain; Al & Jacky Stearns; Carol Stewart; Hunt & Margaret Stockwell; David & Alison Tomlinson; George & Zoe Trautman; David & Brittany Williams.**

*If you have made a donation or given an artifact or other form of historical material and it has not been listed here or previously noted, please contact us immediately. We appreciate the thoughtful generosity of our members and friends, and most certainly want to acknowledge and list gifts properly.*

## In Memoriam

*We note with sadness the death of the following friends and neighbors.*

**Maxine (Eastman) Buck Fisher**, 91, of Billings, MT, passed away on September 6, 2012. She was born in Lovell on July 24, 1921, the daughter of Max and Mabel Eastman. She attended Fryeburg Academy and Bridgton Academy and in 1943 enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve. During her service she was stationed in San Francisco and worked as an ignition and carburetor specialist on trucks. Maxine was a life member of this Society. She was predeceased by her husbands A.E. Buck Jr. and Bill Fisher, and is survived by her son Clint Buck and two granddaughters.

**Lisa A. Graves**, 45, of Conway, NH, died on September 12, 2012. She was born on March 23, 1967, the daughter of Lloyd Graves and Sally A. Knox, and grew up in Lovell. Lisa was an accomplished artist and had a great love for the outdoors. She is survived by her partner, Maryanne Fiorello, and one child, Devon Downey.

**Juanita (Wilkinson) Cushman Perkins**, 85, of Lovell, passed away on August 25, 2012. She was born in New Castle, IN, the daughter of Melvin and Violet Wilkinson, and grew up in Lovell. Juanita was an accomplished photographer and an avid mountain climber. She was a former member of the Ladies Auxiliary of the VFW, a founding member of Lovell Youthways and a life member of this Society. She was predeceased by her husbands George Cushman and Frank Perkins and is survived by her two sons Eric and Chad, one grandson, and four step-grandchildren.

**William Watkins Rinebold**, 56, of Lovell, died on July 5, 2012. He was born in Pittsburgh, PA, on April 4, 1956, the son of Lewis and Priscilla Rinebold, and grew up in Decatur, IL. He worked for Norfolk and Southern Railroad in Illinois and for hotels there and in North Conway, NH.

The Lovell Historical Society  
P.O. Box 166  
Lovell, ME 04051

If your mailing label doesn't say "6-13" or "Life",  
it is time to join or renew your membership. Thanks!