

## *BOSTON POST CANE*

You've heard of the Boston Post Cane, but do you know the story behind it? In 1909, Edwin Grozier, publisher of the Boston Post newspaper, ordered 700 ebony canes from Africa with engraved, 14-carat gold heads, one for each of the towns (not cities) where the Post was delivered. Boston Post Roads all over New England were named for the newspaper delivery routes. For some reason, no towns in Vermont or Connecticut received canes, although they received the newspaper. The Post ended circulation in 1957, but the towns which still had the canes have continued the tradition. The cane has been presented in Merrimack since 1909, although we can find no records from 1912-1938. Many of the canes have been lost, stolen or taken out of town. Such was the case in Merrimack from 1951 to 1998, when it was anonymously returned to town. Ours is now on display in a case at the Town Hall, except during the presentation, when the recipient receives a replica in a pin as well as a certificate.

The towns were to present the canes to the oldest male citizen of each town, to be held by him as long as he lived (or moved out of town), then to be handed down to the next oldest citizen. The cane belonged to the town and not the man who received it. In 1930, it was decided that women were also eligible to receive the cane.

To be eligible, the citizen must have been a resident of Merrimack for the past 25 years. The Town opens nominations, and announces the recipient. It is presented at a Town Council meeting with great fanfare.

Merrimack has honored over 16 citizens with the cane, the youngest was 78 and the oldest 101. The first was William Rockwood in 1910 at age 95, followed by John Stevens in 1911, Orison Sanderson in 1912, Anson Platts in 1938, John Spalding in 1946, Alice Wallace in 1947, Brainard Caswell in 1949, Rhoda Cross in 1996, Yvonne Carter in 1998, Theresa Perozzi in 2001, Louis Sperry in 2002, Thomas Gouvalaris in 2005, Madeline Bennett in 2011, Thomas Ingerson in 2014, Carsten" Bud' Hahn in 2016 and Nellie Granger, 2018.

Nellie moved to Merrimack in 1946 with her husband, Guy, where they raised six children, 13 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. She lived on the same land, although the home had to be rebuilt in 2000 after a fire. She was born in Nashua, graduating from Nashua High School in 1939. She survived the Great Fire in Nashua in 1930, the historic flooding of the Merrimack River in 1936 and the great hurricane of 1938. She worked in Nashua during WW II, and was struck by lightning near a window at work, from which she recovered.

Bud Hahn moved to Merrimack from Seattle in 1962, raising 4 children, 9 grandchildren and five great grandchildren. He served in WW II, where he met his wife, Simone (Sammi). He founded his own company, as well as Boy Scout Troop 424, serving in Scouting for over 50 years.

Madeline Bennett was well known to many in Merrimack, since she taught at Schoolhouse #7 on Joppa Rd, McGaw (#3) schoolhouse, Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Merrimack High School. She married Alba Bennett and they raised their daughter Beverly, 5 grandchildren and several great grandchildren. The road to the new Merrimack Middle School is named in her honor. She rode in a Conestoga wagon to celebrate Independence Day in 2011..

Nellie died in December, 2018, and there is no current holder of the cane

The Merrimack Historical Society keeps records of many events and awards over the years, as well as genealogical and property records and artifacts. These are available at the one-room schoolhouse headquarters at 520 BOSTON POST ROAD in South Merrimack. The schoolhouse is open on Tuesdays from noon to 8 PM for tours and research at no cost. Contact the new president, Marc Nozell at [Marc@Nozell.com](mailto:Marc@Nozell.com) or Anita at 424-5084 for more information. Monthly meetings are held from September through June during the year.