

Events Calendar

Hillsborough County GOP Gala POSTPONED until March 23rd

The Gala event that was scheduled Saturday, February 9 at the Crowne Plaza in Nashua has been rescheduled to Saturday, March 23rd. The location, speaker, and planned events will be the same. Ticket purchases made to date will be honored on March 23, and we will make arrangements to provide a full refund to anyone with a scheduling conflict on that date.

Nashua Republican City Committee February monthly meeting

The Nashua Republican City Committee February monthly meeting will be held on Thursday, February 14 at the Crowne Plaza in Nashua. Exit 8 off Everett Turnpike. Doors open at 6:30pm and meeting starts at 7:00pm. Special Guest Speaker is Jennifer Horn, newly-elected Chairman of the New Hampshire GOP. Sheriff James Hardy and Elizabeth Van Twyver who is running in the special election for state representative in Nashua's Ward 4, have also been invited to speak. Bring a friend and a neighbor and get involved to help make a difference for Nashua's future. For more information call Andrew Cernota at 886-6100 or Di Lothrop at 603-864-9287 or visit www.nashuagop.org.

Photographers Forum Camera Club Offers Free Classes

Photographers Forum Camera Club is offering three free classes on the Introduction to Photoshop for club members. The classes led by Brother Ralph Lebel will be offered on the first Wednesdays of the month at 7 to 9 PM at Bishop Guertin High School beginning on February 6. Please use the entrance on the side of the building opposite the tennis courts and bring a flash drive. If interested in joining the club to take advantage of these classes, go to www.photographersforum.org.

Photographers Forum Camera Club Monthly Meeting

Photographers Forum camera club's next meeting is Monday, February 18 at 7:15 at Bishop Guertin High School in Nashua. This is a competition night with three categories: Assigned: "Three" -- people, animals or insects, Challenge: "Camouflage" -- must have a living hidden subject and Open. We are an informal club offering educational programs for all ability levels and the opportunity to meet people with similar interests. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month. Be our guest for your first meeting. Dues are \$30/year thereafter for individuals, \$50 for dual families and \$15 for full-time students. For more information go to www.photographersforum.org

Antique Treasures Or Trash?

The Nashua Historical Society presents Wolfeboro antiques dealer Charles Wibel on Tuesday, March 19, presenting thoughts on what types of items to save and what to throw away, especially if you are considering downsizing or breaking up a household. He will tell us about some of the "treasures" which you may have that you may not be aware of and will talk about types of items which are valuable and show a number of examples. You may have a fortune without knowing it! The meeting will start at 7:30 PM in the Florence Speare Museum, 5 Abbott St., Nashua. Light refreshments will follow. Call 883-0015 for further information.

Nashaway Chapter of the New Hampshire Audubon Society Events

The public is welcome to join the Nashaway Chapter of NH Audubon on Saturday, February 16 from 8am - 3pm as they look for Wintering Owls at Salisbury Beach State Park and Parker River Wildlife Refuge. Harbor Seals have also been known to make an appearance on this field trip! Bring binoculars and a scope if you have one, and dress WARMLY. There is a \$5.00 entrance fee into the refuge and no pets allowed. The trip starts from Nashua at the Exit 7 Park & Ride, on the hill behind Granite Inn. To register or for directions, contact Richard Bielawski 429-2537 or rbielawski@gmail.com. For more information on the parks go to <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/parks/northeast/salb.htm> and <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/parkrivers/>

On Wed, February 20 the Nashaway Chapter of NH Audubon will host Matthew Tarr, UNH Wildlife specialist as he discusses the relationship between caterpillars, invasive shrubs, and the effects on our birds in NH.

All are welcome to this free event held at the Nashua Public Library, downstairs theater room at 7pm. Registration is not necessary, but for more information contact Richard Maloon at 424-5621 or richard.maloon@att.net. To read more about Tarr's project, go to <http://extension.unh.edu/FWT/ShrublandBirdsResearch.htm>

Al-Anon and Alateen Information

Whenever a family member reaches out for help, the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen will be there. Meeting information is available by calling toll free 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666), Monday-Friday 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM. More information is also available on the Al-Anon/Alateen Web site, www.al-anon.alateen.org. To help them you have to help yourself first.

Newcomers Club Welcomes New Members

Amherst Area Newcomers Club holds monthly meetings and events for a wide array of interests. The Club is always open to new members regardless of how long you have lived in the area. For information and a calendar of events visit: NHNewcomers.com

New Members Welcome at Amherst Junior Women's Club

The Amherst Junior Women's Club is actively seeking new members. Any woman over the age of 21 who is a resident of the Amherst area is eligible to join. Members of the AJWC volunteer their time, energy and talent to enhance the community. The club's mission is to focus efforts on civic needs, educational advancement and the less fortunate. For more information, please contact membership chairwoman Kathy Wason at membership@amherstjuniors.org.

Town News

Historic Amherst

Widow Rachel Batchelder's Notorious Son-in-Law, Alvah Blaisdell

BY KATRINA HOLMAN

Rachel Batchelder's daughter, Elizabeth Frances Batchelder (1815-1890), who lost her father as an infant in Mont Vernon and spent part of her childhood in Amherst, was married in Lowell, Mass. in Nov. 1836 to 23-year-old Alvah Blaisdell (born in Oct. 1813 in Canaan, Grafton county, N.H.), when both bride and groom were "of Lowell." Three Blaisdell daughters followed in due course: Helen born in Oct. 1837, Augusta in 1840, and Mary Elizabeth in 1843.

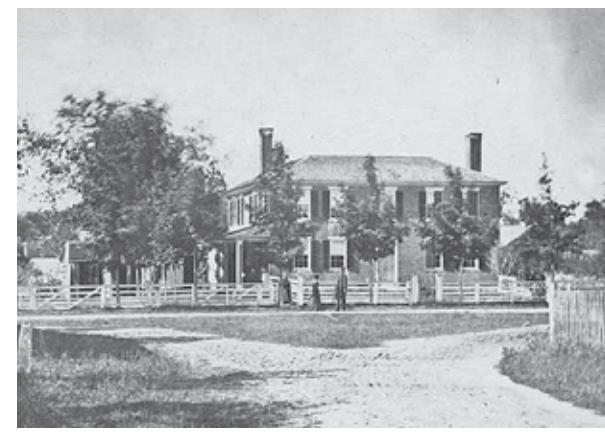
Rachel's Infamous Son-in-law

Following the life path of Mrs. Batchelder's son-in-law will provide a glimpse into a major medical breakthrough in Boston in 1846; the most lurid 19th-century murder scandal of the "great and growing city" of New York a decade later; the South on the eve of the War of the Rebellion; and federal prosecution of distilleries for violation of Internal Revenue laws (defrauding the Government) in 1868/9.

Alvah worked in his father's business, William Blaisdell & Sons, house painters, glaziers and paper hangers in Lowell, along with his younger brother William A., but these brothers also worked at times during their early years as clerks in a general store selling West Indies goods (as can be deduced from annual directories of Lowell). Meanwhile the young married couple took in boarders. The 1840 census shows three "extra" young women in Alvah's household (two teenagers and one aged 20-29 who were part of the workforce) and the Lowell directories of the next few years reveal a couple of young men boarding with them, working in an unrelated business. After fewer than ten years of married life, he made a major career change and moved to Boston.

Discovery of Ether for Pulling Teeth

He just happened to be in the right place at the right time to make it into the annals of medical history as a bit player and witness. In 1846 in Boston, Dr. W. T. G. Morton (1819-1868), a dentist, first used sulphuric ether for painless tooth extraction, and shortly afterward the efficacy of this inhaled anesthesia was publicly demonstrated at Mass. General Hospital during surgery. Morton patented it as "Lethane," but ether was soon widely used, without paying him for a license. Morton's desire for monetary gain sparked a rancorous controversy over who actually discovered it, some credit being due Dr. Charles T. Jackson, a chemist whose lectures Morton had attended at Harvard Medical School in 1844, and another dentist, Horace Wells. This resulted in depositions, in which Dr. Alvah Blaisdell gave testimony. A new book on this subject appeared in 2001, a scholarly biography by a professional librarian intended to "reveal W. T. G. Morton not as a benefac-



When Rachel Batchelder (1786-1863) sold this house at 117 Boston Post Road in 1852, her daughter, E. F. Blaisdell witnessed the deed, shortly before moving to San Francisco.

tor but as a scoundrel," called *Tarnished Idol: William Thomas Green Morton and the Introduction of Surgical Anaesthesia: A Chronicle of the Ether Controversy* by Richard J. Wolfe.

He wrote (p. 106), "Alvah Blaisdell while associating in the practice of dentistry with Drs. Bell and Fitch at 34 Tremont Row, Boston, on Dec. 1, 1846, met Morton at Burnett's apothecary store, at which time Morton told Blaisdell that he wished to employ him to sell licenses for [the right to use] this Lethane. After agreeing to Morton's proposition, Blaisdell on Dec. 14 went to Nashua, New Hampshire, to find subscribers." Blaisdell "proceeded[ed] on to Lowell, where he made several sales, [and later to Providence]." (As an aside, during the Civil War, thousands of wounded soldiers would benefit from ether; Morton himself administered it for free while a volunteer surgeon for the Army of the Potomac.) Dr. Blaisdell established his dental office on Bullfinch Street from 1849 to 1851.

San Francisco

Alvah's wife Fanny must have been visiting her mother in Amherst, N.H. on 4 May 1852, because on that day "E. F. Blaisdell" witnessed the deed whereby widow Rachel Batchelder sold the brick house at 117 Boston Post Road. I next find her in 1860 with two teen daughters in San Francisco, California, where at the age of 45 she is providing furnished rooms to seventeen boarders. Running a boarding house was a respectable occupation available to a woman who needed to support her family. The census shows that she owned no real estate but did have personal estate worth \$1500, so she wasn't poor. Calling herself a widow in her late years, she would remain in S. F. for the rest of her life, as would the younger two daughters who both became Mrs. Joseph, their husbands being sons of a Russian immigrant.

But where was Alvah? Well, he shows up in Trow's New York City directory for 1853 as a dentist on Bond Street! (His parents and brother William & family had relocated to

NYC around 1853, where the men continued as house painters.) So if Alvah went to California too, it was a brief stay. Presumably he was divorced, because he would marry twice more.

Amherst, N.H. Inheritance

Upon the death of her mother in 1863, Fanny Blaisdell inherited Rachel's two houses in Amherst, 11 and 10 Cross Street, which she sold in 1868 and 1871, noted as a "single woman" in the deeds. She also inherited all the personal property, Rachel's furniture, books & bedding appraised for probate at \$61.25; wearing apparel, \$48.15; and misc. articles, \$58.17. To give you a sense of the relative value, the doctors' bills for Mrs. B.'s final sickness amounted to \$25 and the estate administrator's services \$101.55.

Lurid Scandal in New York City

Alvah started out in NYC in a partial partnership for about three years with another dentist, Dr. Harvey Burdell – who would be murdered in 1857 in his office in his four-story boarding house at 31 Bond Street in an upscale neighborhood. Emma Cunningham (1816-1887), a widow who leased from him and who not long before had sued him for breach of promise of marriage, was charged with the crime, along with her two boarders, one being her bachelor "friend" John J. Eckel. Dr. Blaisdell testified at the two-week coroner's inquest that he had met his friend Burdell on the fateful day and that Burdell, fearing harm from Mrs. C. and Eckel, had asked Blaisdell to spend the night with him (but he didn't). The newspapers had a field day with the lurid details of the relationships between the house's occupants. The three-day trial three months later drew huge crowds, including many well-dressed ladies. In the end, Mrs. C. was acquitted and the charges against the other two dropped, but each side destroyed the reputation of the other – the victim and the accused. (For details of the scandal, see *Murder by Gaslight* blog's article "Bond Street Tragedy" of March 2011, which has nice pictures, and *Celebrated Trials* of 1897 by Henry Lauren Clinton, who was defense attorney.) Some newspapers picked up on the defense attorney's suggestion that Blaisdell might have been the murderer! Despite his libel suit against the Times, in May 1857, the damage was done.

Abolitionist Dentist Ousted from Georgia

Alvah must have felt the need to escape the infamy. In Dec. 1857, the *Macon Weekly Telegraph* of Georgia carried an announcement that "Dr. Blaisdell, from New York City, ... has located himself permanently in this city for the practice of Dentistry. ... Dr. Blaisdell has had many years of experience in ... his profession, besides being a medical graduate," signed

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TDD Access



FIRST ANNUAL

Friends of the Amherst Town Library

Trivia night! Putting the FUN in fundraising!

Thurs., March 28

Amherst County Club
72 Ponemah Road in Amherst, NH

Doors open @ 6:30 p.m.
Trivia begins @ 7 p.m.

Trivia teams should consist of 8-10 adults 21 and older.

A cash bar and snacks will be available for purchase.

Door prizes will be raffled off throughout the evening!

REGISTER TODAY!

Please complete and return this registration form, along with your payment by Fri., March 15th. Cost is just \$10.00 per player! All proceeds directly support the Friends of the Amherst Town Library program fund.

Please check the appropriate box: Individual Player (Please assign me to a team)
 Team Registration Couple (Please assign us to a team)

Name or Team Captain _____ Number of Players _____

Team Name _____ x 10 = Total Payment _____

Address _____ Method of Payment: Cash Check

Phone Number _____ (Payable to Friends of the Amherst Town Library)

Delivery payment to the Amherst Town Library or mail to Friends of the Amherst Town Library, 14 Main St., Amherst, NH 03031.
Please contact Christine Farris with any question or to register your team by phone, 603-667-3160.