

# FREE

# Whitefield News

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## The Elmer's Barn tradition continues

By Sue McKeen

When I called Ivana Wilson to set up an interview, she told me not to show up before 10:00 because by then the old barrel stove would really be throwing out the heat. Ivana and her dad, Elmer, are partners at Elmer's Barn in Coopers Mills.

When I first moved to Whitefield I recall being told it was practically a felony not to visit Elmer's Barn. It was quite an experience then, and that was over 35 years ago. The experience hasn't changed much, but Elmer's Barn has taken on some innovations instituted by Ivana. There is something for everyone at Elmer's Barn - in fact there are three floors chock full of antiques, plunder, trash and treasures.

As Ivana and I perched close to the wood stove on this very cold day, I asked her how she decided to get into the business. She replied, with a laugh, "I started as a little kid, it was a family business. We started unloading truckloads of stuff when I was

four. My dad would get all the neighborhood kids to help and then he'd take us out for an ice cream." She said she really hated antiques until she was in her twenties, when she began to appreciate them.

She explained that her father started "wheelin' and dealin'" out of his truck in the early 70's when they still lived on the Howe Road. He built the barn out back and set up shop. In order to expand, Elmer bought what used to be the Howe Fur Company and opened up Elmer's Barn in its present location off Route 17 in Coopers Mills.

Ivana gave me a copy of a 1985 *Yankee Magazine* article by Mike Kimball which is a wonderful depiction of Elmer. A portion of the piece describes Mike and wife Glenna's trip from Massachusetts to Coopers Mills to look at Elmer's house, which was for

sale. The following excerpt is about Mike's first encounter with Elmer, who apparently had been awakened from his nap and went down to meet his visitor.

Mike to Elmer: "I saw your house advertised in the paper," I said handing him the classified ads. He raised his hands as if the printed page would burn him. 'I can't read nor write,' he said with a heavy twang. I didn't know it then, but I know now - he had my scent. He must have smelled Massachusetts on me from his *See Elmer's Pg. 3*



Ivana Wilson

Photo by Tony Marple

## Fire Chief Higgins: 'We have a good crew' -Part One

By Lucy Martin

Midway through an interview in early January, Whitefield Fire Chief Scott Higgins jumped into his turnout gear, powered up Engine 2, and headed to a fire in the back of a trash compactor truck on Gardiner Road.

Four other Whitefield volunteer firefighters happened to be off work that morning and sped to the scene to help douse the blaze kindled by live ashes set out in household rubbish. They quelled the blaze before it burned into the major body of the vehicle.

Manpower is not always available, quick response is not always possible on a week-day, so the chief was pleased. Rapid and effective response is the paramount goal of the 21 fire and rescue workers charged with saving lives and protecting property in Whitefield. They were challenged to do just that most recently in the late December ice storm, making sure roadways were clear of

downed branches so emergency vehicles could answer calls and plow trucks could get through.

One of the selling points of the central station when the question went to voters in 2010 and a municipal department was formed, was that it would be a warming center during electric outages where people could come get water, information about Central Maine Power's progress restoring power, take a shower, drink coffee and socialize. Higgins said about twenty residents dropped in.

"What a blessing to have the station. I don't know what we'd have done [without it]. We had heat, running water, a generator. Our main job was keeping roadways open. We were everywhere in town," he



*Fire Chief Scott Higgins reminds all Whitefield home owners to install carbon monoxide alarms and to "number your house so we can see it."*

Photo by Lucy Martin

said, except for Vigue Road, which was closed because of fallen trees entangled in power lines. Only CMP could deal with that.

There was constant contact *See Higgins Pg. 4*



## Beaver Bites

by Kit Pfeiffer, Maine Master Naturalist Volunteer

We are blessed with a diverse natural world surrounding us here in Whitefield. Recently, as I prepared for a field trip with some Whitefield School students to hunt for signs of beaver

(*Castor canadensis*), I noticed how much activity there is right in my Benner Lane neighborhood.

There is a small lodge built into the



*Courtesy of Hidden Valley Nature Center*

bank of Finn Brook, which you can see on the far side of a large pool created by the beavers damming up the culvert hole as best they can. Even though the pond is frozen now, you can see a stash of winter food they have gathered in front of the lodge. As you walk through the woods near there, there are many signs of their chewing. The wood chips they leave behind would make excellent kindling for your winter fires. But be sure to dry them out first, since they come from a live tree. Beavers only harvest live trees, because they get nutrition from the cambium layer just under the bark. Birch, willow, alder and aspen (poplar) are their favorites here in Maine.

As if on cue, beavers have moved back into an abandoned lodge on the bank of the Sheepscot at the bottom of our Benner Lane field. Freshly cut sticks, newly packed mud, and lots of tree harvesting nearby were the clues, as well as several "outhouse" piles near the lodge. Now, in the depths of this snowy winter, they are living inside. The hoarfrost around the exhaust hole on the top of the lodge shows where their warm, stale air escapes from inside the burrow. It's about 34 degrees inside there!

Have beaver stories of your own? Please write to me at [k\\_pfeiffer@yahoo.com](mailto:k_pfeiffer@yahoo.com).

## Calendar of Events



### February:

**3th:** Kings Mills Fire Dept. Mtg. 7 pm

Coopers Mills Fire Dept. Mtg. 7 pm

**5th:** Signs of the Season: A New England

Phenology Program, SVCA Office, Newcastle 6:30 pm

**7th:** Whitefield Food Bank from 1-3pm, Sheepscot Valley Community Church

Sheepscot General—documentary, Untouchable Love by Meghan Vigeant 6 pm

**10th:** Whitefield Fire Dept. Appreciation Gathering 6 pm

Whitefield Municipal Fire Dept. Mtg. 7 pm

**12th:** Arlington Grange Meeting, 6:00 pm Supper, 7 pm Meeting

SVCA Volunteer Appreciation and Recruitment Dinner, Newcastle, 6 pm

**15th:** Whitefield Lions Club Model Railroad & Doll House Show,

Armory, Augusta, 10:00 am—3:30 pm

**13th:** RSU School Board Mtg. Whitefield School 6:30-9 pm

**19th:** Bats of Maine, SVCA Office, Newcastle 6:30 pm

**21st:** Open Mic Night, Sheepscot General, 7-9 pm

**22nd:** Bats Box Building, SVCA Office, Newcastle 1 pm

Story Time by Holly Torsey at Sheepscot General Store, 2 pm

### Ongoing

- Every Monday and Wednesday: ZUMBA 3:10-4pm, Whitefield Elementary
- Every Monday and Tuesday: Whitefield Historical Society 10-2 or by Chance. For an appointment contact Libby Harmon at 549-7209
- Every Tuesday: Select Board Meeting, Fire Station, 6pm
- Third Wednesday: Planning Board Meeting, Town Office 7-9 pm
- Every Wednesday: Women of Whitefield, Sheepscot General. 10 am
- Every Thursday: Whitefield Senior Men's Group, Sheepscot General 10 am
- Every Friday: Pizza Night, Sheepscot General, 5-7pm

**Do you have an event?** Contact [whitefieldtownnews@gmail.com](mailto:whitefieldtownnews@gmail.com) We'll add you to the town calendar website and newsletter.



**Don't Forget to Recycle**  
**Saturdays 8 am—12 pm**

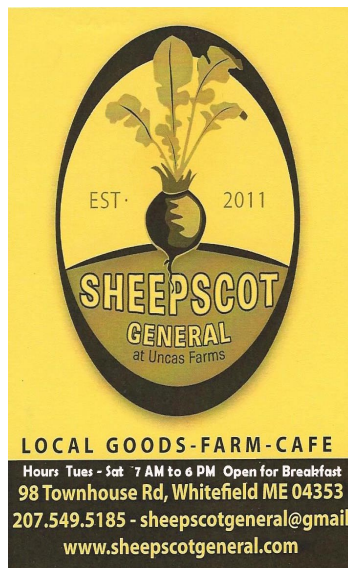
## Heating costs breaking your budget?

By Tony Marple

Help is available through Efficiency Maine, a State program funded by a surcharge on electricity bills (*Efficiency Maine.com*), tel. 866-376-2463. Efficiency Maine offers funding for air sealing, home insulation, and heating system projects. While most of Efficiency Maine's incentives require some out of pocket expenses, the energy cost savings can be dramatic. You can also reduce your electricity bill with funding for hot water heat pumps and other electric efficiency projects.

Low income residents may also be eligible for heating fuel assistance from LIHEAP.

Applications are available through [mainehousing.org](http://mainehousing.org), or telephone 626-4603.



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## Just Yesterday

In Emma Chase's 1921 diary, husband Harry wrote the entries that year, for reasons unknown.

On Feb. 4: "Got ready and went to dance. Horace

Tarr run it, had a fine time, sold all the oysters for \$60.20, best time I have had for 5 years. Emma and I dressed better than anybody."

Feb. 10: "Put in 64 cakes of ice today."

Emma wrote in 1923, on Feb. 6: "Will Potter's house and stock burned." Feb. 8: "Mr. (George) Fowles died today, he was found unconscious yesterday." [Ed. Note: George Fowles was the mail carrier and collapsed on his afternoon route near Head Tide.]

Feb. 23, 1925: "It is still cold and I guess it always will be. Folks are getting discouraged with the weather." Feb. 24: "Went to store in Head Tide, bought cloth and thread. I hadn't been out since January 7<sup>th</sup> so I enjoyed the ride very much. We had cookies and cheese in the store." *Courtesy Jane Chase*

Excerpted from *The Lincoln County News*:

Feb. 25, 1881: "William Ford has completed his mill at King's Mills and is sawing at the rate of 8000 per day. The machinery is all new, put in by Ladd, of Gardiner, and works like a clock. We have plenty of snow, and all the lumbermen are busily engaged in hauling logs to the mills. Business has recovered its former activity, help is scarce, wages good, all pointing to a prosperous future."

*Courtesy Whitefield Historical Society*

## Whitefield Trail Committee in action

By Tony Marple

With temperatures hovering around zero, several members of the

trail committee walked a couple of sites with a high potential for trail development. The first

fronts on

Rt. 17 and is partially in Wind-

sor, and partially on town-owned land. While the parcel, bequeathed to the town by Harold B. Olsen more than 20 years ago, is only 17.5 acres, the frontage on the west branch of the Sheepscot River is beautiful. It would be a great location for a nature trail with perhaps benches and a picnic table.

From there the group traveled to the property of Sandy Benne on Hunts Meadow Rd. Sandy has developed a number of trails on his land, which has a conservation easement. The trail the group followed leads to a high ridge with a stone monument that Sandy built. The views from the ridge to the east and particularly to the Camden Hills are spectacular.

The trail committee is growing rapidly and now includes Clint Towle (chair), Steve Spencer, Gary Best, Bill McKeen, David Elliot, Bill Brooke, Ron Kenoyer, Ed Mooney, Tom Vigue, Ben Marcus, David Wright, Jim Torbert and Tony Marple. If you know of potential trails in town or wish to participate, please contact Clint at [wctowle@hotmail.com](mailto:wctowle@hotmail.com). As the committee's work continues, volunteers will be needed for trail development and maintenance.



*Photo by Tony Marple*

**Elmer's cont. from Pg. 1** bedroom. And now that I think about it, the 'outastater' fragrance probably woke him up. Needless to say, I bought the house." Classic Elmer.

Ivana has a style all her own. She is quiet and friendly and intent on building the business for today's market. After leaving her job with Sylvania in 2006, Ivana asked her dad if she could open an antique mall in the barn; he said that sounded good. She started with five dealers, and now there are over 50 all housed on the second floor. I asked how she collects all her "inventory." Besides the dealers, she purchases from people who come to the Barn, she attends auctions and even has her very own "pickers." She also makes "house calls." Every April and November she holds an open house - featuring lots of food and lots of sales.

Ivana told me her father is semi-retired now. He was her mentor for several years and taught her everything he knows. He even taught her how to "wheel and deal," a very particular art. She explained she and her dad are partners and that he is reluctant to give up the reins. She has to gently remind him she can handle things herself now.

I asked her how the business has changed. She said people are more educated about antiques and collectibles. "It's television - things like American Pickers, Antiques Road Show, e-Bay - people are more savvy." She would like to have more dealers and is working on renovating the first floor. She said, "Everyone is looking for a deal." And don't ever ask the classic question, "Can you do a little better?" because the answer might be: a little better for me would be a higher price for you.

On the other hand, there is usually some room for bargaining. Her father has a violin in the Barn with an \$800,000 price tag on it. She said it's falling apart, not worth anything. "Because my father loves it, he doesn't really want to sell it." She pointed to an old wooden directional sign on the wall and explains she loves that sign, but like everything else at Elmer's it's for sale. She explained she put such a high price on it probably no one will buy it - but if they offer to pay the price, she'll sell it. Meanwhile, it's been on her wall for several years - she enjoys looking at it every day. But someday.....

When I asked her if anything unusual or interesting has happened, she told me about a couple who met at Elmer's. "They met and fell in love right here at Elmer's Barn. In fact they would like to have their wedding here in the spring." She laughingly said, "What will we do if it rains?"

Ivana had to leave to wait on a customer. I heard her say, "There must be something up there you need." She returned to say good-bye and I thanked her for taking the time to talk with me. But not before I bought something - I couldn't help myself - it was 10% off. The Elmer's Barn tradition continues.

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**Deadline for newsletter submissions is the 10th of the month. Email [whitefieldtownnews@gmail.com](mailto:whitefieldtownnews@gmail.com)**



### Higgins Cont. from Pg. 1

Lincoln County Communication Center and the town's plow truck drivers, too, "so they could continue on their routes," the chief said. Sometimes after a road was cleared, "we'd come back to the station and get a call about that same area, and sure enough, another tree was down."

A critical phase of dealing with the storm was checking on people's welfare. Whitefield Rescue responded to the carbon monoxide poisoning of two elderly Heath Road residents, restoring their breathing while awaiting hospital transport.

Higgins said the station was manned from 6 a.m. Dec. 22 to 1 a.m. Dec. 30. "One night four of our guys spent the night here, and we were open daily."

Thomas Feeney, who retired from a 26-year career with the Augusta F.D. and moved to Whitefield four years ago, was one of the four staffing the station. The problems of the 1998 ice storm in Augusta were vivid in his memory. Radio towers were not working particularly well that night of Dec. 23 and he wanted to be near the radio in the station in order to respond to emergency calls.

On Dec. 25, "I told my crew they had a lot to feel good about. We had several significant or potentially significant (medical) events occurring at the same time," as well as two potential building fires, while being short-staffed.

"We easily had 100 calls between the outage on Monday through Christmas night," he said.

From his viewpoint as a career firefighter, Feeney said the families of the men who were busy on Christmas Day responding to emergencies "handled it exceptionally well."

As someone who received a paycheck for battling fires and now trains Whitefield volunteers, Feeney finds "the dedication here is incredible. They have drive and determination." But, he added, the department is "starting to age."

Reflecting a widespread phenomenon in rural communities, numbers have declined also. The 2011 town report shows 30 active fire dept. members and seven active EMS personnel compared to 18 and two, respectively, today. (Just recently 30-year volunteer Norm Best gave his retirement notice.)

To meet minimum standards, it would be beneficial to have more and younger firefighters. Feeney spoke of the physical demands of events like car accidents or the "storm we just had. You need crews of 20-40 people just so they don't get worn out. Most of us are in our 30s and 40s. They say a firefighter during one building fire expends as much as a person in a 40-hour work week."

Chief Higgins agrees that the town "could always use more members, but we have a good crew." Additionally, five surrounding towns supply mutual aid and there are several others he can call, such as Chelsea and South Bristol. (Part One of Two)

BE MY  
VALENTINE!

## State issues Clary Lake draft water level order

A draft water management plan, issued by the state Dept. of Environmental Protection, is the latest development in a Clary Lake shore-front owners' petition to manage water levels.

The plan outlines repairs and operation of the Rt. 218 dam, which Pleasant Pond Mill LLC (PPM) bought in 2006.

Leading into 2013, PPM filed a petition for release of dam ownership. At special town meetings last May and again in November, Whitefield voters rejected the option to research and consider ownership of the dam.

On Dec. 19 the DEP issued the draft water level order, which contains time lines for compliance and states that PPM must submit a Water Level Management Plan to the department for review and approval no later than May 1, 2014.

The draft order also states the "water level in Clary Lake shall be maintained within a range of fluctuations, not to extend greater than 2.0 feet below the established normal high water line..."

All comments on the draft Order were due by Dec. 30. PPM's request for a 30 day extension and a subsequent motion for withdrawal/reconsideration were both denied.

The deadline for receiving comments on the draft Water Level Order was Jan. 6, 2014. Seven parties have submitted comments. After the department reviews all comments, it will issue a final order.

For more information, visit [www.clarylake.org](http://www.clarylake.org). (SM & LM)

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Residential and Commercial

## Outsiders help CMVFD

By Chuck Vaughan

It's amazing how hard work and dedication of a small group of committed people become contagious and attract people and resources. There are now two talented, experienced professionals volunteering alongside Coopers Mills residents working toward the construction of a new fire station. Several other folks who live nearby and enjoy raising money for good causes have joined up recently to help out as well. In fact, when I moved to Coopers Mills, the reason I wanted to join and support that effort was that I heard they weren't using tax money for building and vehicle purchases.

Coopers Mills Volunteer Fire Department has been steadily working toward a new fire station for probably 15 years. Volunteers have worked thousands of man hours to raise money for it. So far \$121,000 has been raised for the building project; at the same time, they've funded all their truck purchases without any tax money. The land between the present fire house and Route 17 has been purchased and \$17,000 has been spent on site development and engineering. The existing station houses five vehicles including the 1934 fire truck, which is used as a parade vehicle, and a tanker owned by Whitefield. (If the

tanker is needed for a fire in one of the mutual aid towns, another vehicle has to be moved now.) The new building would have better access and accommodate at least four trucks plus have adequate storage and ADA compliant bathroom and meeting space. The design has evolved and been refined to where cost figures can be projected but the final plan will be influenced by how much can be raised without a large mortgage to burden future firefighters. By summer, final plans should be firmed up and a date for construction picked.

Coopers Mills is unique in that it is situated at the corner of four towns, Whitefield, Jefferson, Windsor and Somerville and has traditionally had firefighters from all four towns. We are currently looking for more people to get involved, both as firefighters and as association members. There is a big task ahead of us and a great deal of satisfaction in being part of a worthwhile project.

You can receive the newsletter by email by signing up at [www.townofwhitefield.com/Newsletter.html](http://www.townofwhitefield.com/Newsletter.html) or pick up a hard copy at The Superette, Health Center, Country Corners, Sheepscot General, Town Office, & Recycling Center.