

1919 Centennial Celebration: A real community spirit aroused and strengthened

An August 31, 1919 [Boston Globe](#) editorial began, “The lovely old town of West Newbury had a centennial celebration last week, in which there was more music than met the ear.” It continued, “It was easy to see how valiantly the whole town had labored together to get it up and to make it go....” Later, the organizers [observed](#), “Every man, woman and child could have part in it. A real community spirit has been aroused and strengthened.” This came at a time when population and prosperity were in decline, after the last significant [factories in Town](#) had shuttered.

On [March 3, 1919](#), Town Meeting elected committees for the centennial celebration and for a memorial and reception for WWI soldiers and sailors. The two committees started with [ten leading lights](#). Not least of those were All Saints’ [Rev. Glenn Tilley Morse](#), a force in Town and member of many organizations throughout the state and country; [Parker H. Nason](#), selectman, state representative, Town moderator, committeeman; [Hazel H. Albertson](#), leader of the [Wo-man’s Club](#) and the Girl Scouts—and first prize winner for [pageants in 1917](#). [Subcommittees bloomed](#): the Costume Committee alone had 23 members.

In ensuing months, [attics were raided for costumes](#), barns ransacked for props, subscriptions raised for funding, and parades, dances, memorial events, veterans’ receptions, speeches, and a pageant were planned. On August 19, the [Boston Globe](#) ran a story headlined, “West Newbury Ready for its Centennial,” describing the many activities planned for the 23rd through the 25th. [By that time](#), the Town buildings would have been decorated, and to greet returning WWI vets, house windows would have displayed Welcome Home banners, and townspeople would have at the ready their Welcome Home lapel buttons.

[Festivities began](#) at 9 a.m. on Saturday, August 23, with a band concert at Post Office Square. At 10, the band led a parade (“[best ever seen](#) in the Town”) of all Town officials and organizations to the Edwards Memorial Building (Carr Post), where a [Town history was read](#) and historic artifacts were exhibited. After luncheon, a [cast of 390 current and former residents](#) gathered at the natural amphitheater overlooking the Merrimack at the foot of Pleasant Street to perform Hazel Albertson’s pageant “[The Spirit of the Merrimac](#)” before an appreciative audience of thousands from the area and as far as New York and

other cities. Without question, the amateur “[skill and charm](#)” of the people of West Newbury made it a hit.

Local vocalists and a Boston orchestra [scored the production](#), which [traced the river’s history](#) from the glaciers to the polluting industrial age, with dancing flowers, Indians, witches, George Washington, tea parties, the Civil War, and vanquished “Industrial Greed” along the way. “The leading actor in this show was the Merrimac River, impersonated by a stream of players,” said the [Boston Globe](#). At the end, “[T]he hope of it all is that the stream is purging itself, and will not cease to purge itself until it once more runs clear.”

A quieter Sunday program followed. At 11 a.m. Mrs. [Charles Lewis Carr](#), whose husband was killed in action in WWI, [unveiled the boulder-based tablet](#) on the Training Field containing 80 names of the Town’s WWI veterans. At this event, a double quartet and a community chorus of 150 under the direction of West Newbury’s John W. Peirce of the Boston Symphony Orchestra chorus led the singing.

On Monday, August 25th, the party resumed at 2 p.m. with a parade in honor of the Town’s soldiers and sailors, marching from Post Office Square to the Training Field. Girls in white, “[carefully drilled](#) by George C. Howard, formed an attractive escort” for the marching veterans, who were joined by Town officials and representatives from all organizations. Mothers of the veterans rode in vehicles. “As the procession passed Central School the [school children of the town](#), in mass formation, gave the salute to the flag.”

At the Training Field, WWI Major General [Edward L. Logan](#) (the airport’s namesake), [lauded the soldiers](#) and [presented the men](#) who enrolled from West Newbury with [bronze medals](#) bearing the Town seal on one side and an expression of appreciation, engraved with the veteran’s name, on the other. The [organizing committees’ report](#) concluded, “At five-thirty, the Soldiers and Sailors were escorted to West Newbury Grange Hall where a bountiful banquet was served. At seven-thirty, in Town Hall a brilliant reception was held and a merry dance, led by the Pentucket Orchestra, ended the celebration. Practically the whole town took part in the three days of celebration and it was financed by voluntary subscriptions, which made it much more of a town affair than if it had been paid for by appropriation of the town’s funds, which only the tax-payers contribute.”

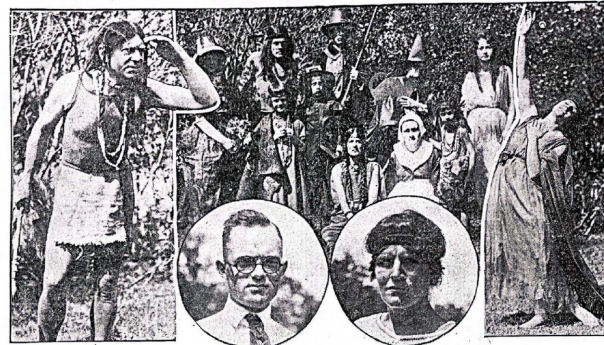
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Celebrations on the Training Field Source: Dot Cavanaugh

'SPIRIT OF THE MERRIMAC' ANIMATES WEST NEWBURY ON ITS CENTENNIAL

Pageant Unfolding History of Town Is Witnessed by 3000 on Ridge--100th Anniversary Marked With Parade and Air Surcharged With Music



Left--Rev. Glenn Tilley Morse, chairman of the executive committee, as an Indian scout. Center--Types of the characters: Left to right, back row, Mrs. D. Thompson, Whittier's grandmother; Lincoln Peirce, Indian; Norman Blodson, Puritan boy; Robert L. Smith, Puritan; Mrs. Helen L. Kloeber (the producer of play), as with; Josephine Macintosh, river maid. Front, Sarah Merrill, Indian child; Lucy Noyes, Indian maid; Glenna Ellis, Puritan maid; George Bartlett, Indian puppets. Right, Miss Mary Kane (dance director), as Spirit of the River. Bottom Left, G. E. Davis, stage manager. Right, Mrs. Hazel Hammond Albertson, author of pageant.

PAGEANT GIVEN AT CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF WEST NEWBURY, MASS. "THE SPIRIT OF THE MERRIMAC"

Haverhill Evening Gazette--SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1919

WEST NEWBURY CELEBRATES HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY; LIFE OF TOWN IS UNFOLDED IN GORGEOUS PAGEANT

WELCOME HOME FOR FIGHTERS IS FEATURE
Tablet in Honor of Service Men to Be Unveiled--Big Parade First Event of Elaborate Program--Occasion Calls for Return of Many Former Residents

The town's centennial celebration, which began today with a parade, will continue through the day with a series of events. The first event of the celebration is the unveiling of a tablet in honor of the service men who fought in the World War. The tablet, which is a work of art, will be unveiled at the town hall. The parade, which will start at 10 o'clock, will be one of the largest ever held in the town. It will feature a band, floats, and a large number of people. The celebration will continue with a series of events, including a pageant, a dance, and a picnic. The pageant, which will be given at the town hall, will unfold the history of the town. It will feature a series of scenes, including the town's early days, its growth, and its present. The dance, which will be given at the town hall, will be a social event for the community. The picnic, which will be given at the town hall, will be a day of fun and games for the children. The celebration will be a day of community spirit and pride in the town's history.

SPECTACLE REVEALS THE SPIRIT OF AGES
Life of Those Who Made History of Town

The pageant, which is a work of art, will unfold the history of the town. It will feature a series of scenes, including the town's early days, its growth, and its present. The pageant will be a day of community spirit and pride in the town's history.

A COMMUNITY SERVICE PAGEANT BY THE TOWNS-PEOPLE OF WEST NEWBURY, MASS.

By ETHEL ARMES



uty. And it was wholly
ision of the people of

The townspeople of West Newbury, Mass., staged their historical pageant on the banks of the Merrimack, in the pasture of the old Greenleaf Dale farm, which over a century ago, was the home of Sarah Greenleaf, grandmother of John Greenleaf Whittier.

tall young pioneer se
acted out in one of
Pageant.

ten by Hazel Hammond

THE entire story



A framed copy of the entire cast photo above is in the Town Offices.

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