



# THE PIERCE BRIGADE MONTHLY NEWS



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## VOLUNTEER DAY AT THE MANSE

Volunteers gathered at the Manse on June 5 to prepare for opening day on June 11th. The morning was spent reviewing recent Brigade history, collection conservation, finances and gift shop procedures. Lunch was served and we were pleased to be joined by Ann Covell, author of a new biography called “Jane Means Appleton Pierce, U.S. First Lady (1853-1857) Her Family, Life and Times.”

Ann is a British citizen who is retired and divides her time between Britain, Spain and the United States. Her first book, “Remembering the Ladies, A Century of U.S. First Ladies, 1780 -1880” was inspired by listening to some young American students discussing a homework assignment while waiting for a flight at a Washington, D.C. airport. They had been asked to write an essay on the first lady they would most like to ask to dinner. Their complaint was the lack of information to be found so they could make a decision. Ann returned to her home and decided to write a book to try to fill in some of the gaps in our history of 19th century first ladies. Upon completion of her book, Ann provided copies to some of these students only to find the assignment had been changed due to lack of available information. While researching this book she became interested in Jane Pierce and the influ-



*Author Ann Covell with Jane Pierce costume worn by Ginny Gerseny as Jane”*

ences on her life. Her research revealed her place as middle child in the family of Jesse and Elizabeth Appleton often left her lonely, especially after the family moved to Bowdoin College and both parents became involved in campus life. The tragedy of the death of her younger brother William was the first of many, including the death of her own three sons, which she would have to endure. Ann has written a sympathetic biography of Jane which gives us some new insights into her personality and some of the events which shaped her life. We thank Ann for her visit and look forward to reading her book.

## 2013 Brigade Lecture Series

**COMING THIS  
MONTH**

Thursday, June 27  
7 P.M. @ The Manse

## “WELCOME HOME NH”

Don Watson, a singer song writer from Gilford, NH will present a collection of songs based on people, places and things in the Granite State. His musical style has been compared to the Shaw Brothers, John Denver and Jim Croce and has been described as “upbeat, inspiring and easy on the ears.

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR  
REFRESHMENTS  
AFTER THE  
PROGRAM**

## MEMORIAL DAY AT THE OLD NORTH CEMETERY

The Concord High School Band stands at ease as they wait for ceremonies to begin at the Old North Cemetery. Senator Kelly Ayotte, Mayor Jim Boulay and the VFW Post Commander laid a wreath on the gate. Many spectators watched as groups representing all branches of the service, scouts and community service groups paraded by. Music was provided by the Concord High and Rundlett Middle School Bands.



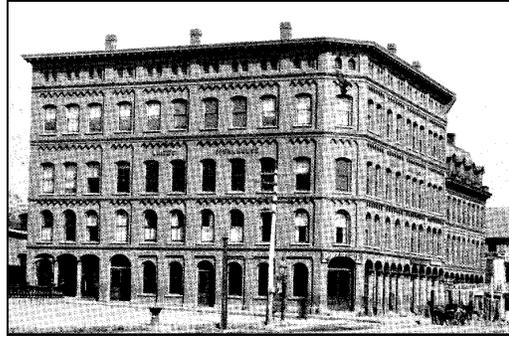
The Brigade Board meets  
June 19 at 9:30a.m. at the  
Manse.

Any Brigade Member is  
welcome to attend.

## WHITE'S OPERA HOUSE LECTURE RECAP

Megan De Vorse presented an excellent program on Concord's White's Opera House based on the meticulous notes of Judge Elwin Page. According to De Vorse, Page was required to retire at age 70 from the NH Supreme Court. He lived to be 97 years old and during that time he kept collecting historical information on Abraham Lincoln, and a century and a third of history and arts in Concord, filling numerous scrap books with news articles, posters, post cards and autographs of famous men which he purchased, sometimes through magazines on travel and history. The Lincoln collection is housed in Massachusetts. Those relating to Concord are in the Concord Room at the Concord Public Library. Page became concerned as he watched bits and pieces of NH history leave the State because no one cared enough to save and keep them here. After seeing the NH copy of the Constitution with side notes scribbled by the signer come up for sale, he approached the Legislature and asked them to appropriate money to save and keep some of this important history here in the State. Fortunately they did!

The five scrap books on Concord document the history of White's Opera House, built by Armenia and Nathaniel White with some of the money earned by selling his stage coach route to Montreal to what we know today to be American Express. The Whites were abolitionists (their barn on Clinton Street was a stop on the Underground RR), favored women's suffrage and were temperate. They built the Opera House in 1881 to provide a place for cultural entertainment for the city. It opened with a meeting of the Temperate Society with 3 local pastors in attendance, a somber beginning! Fortunately it went on to present such shows as



*White's Opera House*

"The Black Woods", a musical featuring scantily clad female dancers which caused consternation among some of the locals. Wild Bill Cody arrived by train and drove up Main Street in his Concord Coach which had travelled with him all over the world as part of his Wild West Show. Bristol's Equine Curriculum was presented twice, once with 22 horses, the second time with 30. Since the Opera House took up the third and fourth floors of the building, one wonders how they managed to get the animals to the stage! Tom Thumb was another famous act to appear and Judge Page had some personal remembrances of him.

At the turn of the century, motion pictures were becoming popular and there were several theaters in town. Films were shown at the Opera House also and fewer live performances were presented. In 1920 the building burned beyond repair. Fortunately there were no fatalities and not much of value in the building itself.

Some of the audience could remember Judge Elwin Page. Thanks to him we have a unique history of the Opera House and the times in which it existed. Our thanks to Megan De Vorse for an interesting program on this Concord landmark.

## SPRING CLEANING DAY

Spring cleaning volunteers performed a variety of chores on May 13 at the Manse. Kathleen Beliveau and Nancy Hartford polished all the silver while Palma Reardon attacked the dishes in the dining room closet and polished the furniture. Cinnie Merrill, Connie Lessard, Polly Johnson, Ann Hasbany and Joan Woodhead went through the closets on the lower level and ended up with a load for the recycling center which Dick Merrill removed with his truck. John Reardon cleaned up the yard in back of the Manse. Nancy Fransen helped relocate things and took a bag of computer parts to Goodwill. Thanks to all who helped on this project. It just goes to prove the old adage, "Many hands make light work!"



## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the Pierce Brigade. Sue Place from Pembroke, NH, Kevin Bragg from Canterbury, NH and Thomas J. Balcerski of New York City, NY. Thank you for your support and participation in the continued effort to restore and maintain the Pierce Manse and the legacy of Franklin Pierce.