
◇ The General Store ◇

Wilma Sagurton, RHA Secretary and Curator



Wilma Lewis Sagurton of Mendham Township, a long time member of the Ralston Historical Association and for many years its secretary died on August 25, 2010. She was 94.

Wilma was born at home on February 2, 1916 at her parent's dairy farm on Combs Hollow Road in Randolph, NJ. Her Father's ancestors had lived there since the early

1730's and established mills, farms and other early industries. Wilma fondly remembered her life on the farm and riding in a horse drawn sled to attend the local two room school house. The family moved two miles to Mountainside Road in Mendham Township after being forced off the farm because of a planned reservoir that was never built.

She married James R. Sagurton on September 24, 1937. They lived in Bloomfield, NJ before returning to her family home in Mendham 54 years ago.

Mrs. Sagurton co-authored, "And Then There was Lighting," and wrote, "The Lewises of Combs Hollow". She is featured on the DVD,

"Girl on the Farm," and a DVD in which she describes the exhibits on display at the Ralston General Store Museum. She delivered a series of lectures with slide show and artifact displays on various historical topics to audiences throughout the area, most notably, "Early Lighting". She has loaned or donated countless historic artifacts to many local museums including the Ralston General Store in Mendham, NJ.

We will remember Wilma for frequently bringing an unusual artifact to the monthly Association meetings and explaining how she found the item at an auction or house sale. She was an inspiration to those who enjoy the study of history.

Cursive Writing, Antique or Not?

What used to be a mandate has now become an extravagance that borders on extinction. Something left to be admired but attempted by few and achieved by even less.

Precise, beautifully angled cursive handwriting is in jeopardy of being lost forever in our society. In her penmanship notebook, dated November 28, 1864, Ella Mockridge painstakingly copied phrases over and over. Her spirals and swirls improving with every line.

Perfectly formed letters became beautifully crafted words. Even the phrases she copied over and over carried wisdom to the mind of the

young writer. "Never fail to be courteous if you wish to be useful."

Not only has the message been lost to our fast-paced, technology-savvy youth, but also the manner in which the message is sent. In our present world of text messages, e-

mails and Facebook there is little desire or need for cursive writing. The beauty of the written word is much less appreciated than the

speed and instantaneous response made available by computers.

Even our schools are abandoning their cursive writing curriculums in place of computer keyboarding.

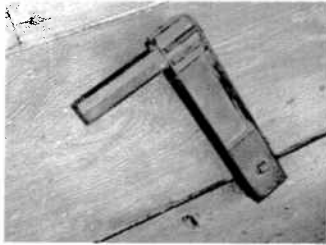
Hence, the question is posed. Will Ella's notebook of practice be elevated from the practical to the level of antique, fine art?

Never fail to be courteous if you wish to be useful.
Never fail to be courteous if you wish to be useful.
Never fail to be courteous if you wish to be useful.

From the Collection

Can You Hear Me Now?

This device is made from metal and wood. It has moving parts that produce a sound. In today's world we might consider "Happy Birthday" or



Happy New Year" but this was not the historical purpose. A clue for you would be "Here I come." So, what is its name and what was its purpose? Come to the Ralston General Store to find out.

Peg Your Answer on This

A clue? Well okay, "Radical Miss Potgorsky!" I love this clue but my wife hates it. This artifact is made of metal. From the picture you can identify its "family" but what did it use and why were there four ele-

ments at the top? These were common during past centuries in Europe and the Americas until technology, knowledge and conscience caused them to be replaced. Stop down to the Ralston General Store to find out more.



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Margaret Hogan and my family and I have lived in the Ralston section of Mendham Township for 17 years. I am one of the Trustees of the Ralston Historical Association. You might ask how one becomes involved with such an organization. Well let me tell you how that happened to me.

My daughter was a fourth grade student at the Mendham Township Elementary School. In fourth grade the students studied the history of New Jersey. The completion of their studies ended in a project. The students had to choose three historic homes in Mendham Township, interview the homeowners and then write about what they learned. My daughter and her partner chose homes in the Ralston section of Mendham Township. All of the homeowners were gracious and kind and invited the girls into their homes for tours and to tell the girls all the history of their homes. Of course I was lucky enough to escort the girls.

I clearly remember the three homes. The Ralston Manor House with the general store in the front is a spectacular home, loaded with history. We were told of stories of slaves living in the attic with no heat. Can you imagine a winter like the one we just had and not having heat!

The Ralston School House was built in 1829. The cost to build the School House was \$500. It was closed in 1940 and shortly thereafter became a home.

Pine Hill was one of the last homes we saw. It originally sat closer to Route 24 and was moved back 1,800 feet off the road. At one time it operated as a convalescent home for World War I soldiers

All of the homeowners had an incredible knowledge of the history of their homes. They were proud to tell us all that they knew. I think I had more fun than the girls. That was it, I was hooked. I wanted to learn more about the history in our area.

It took a little research and a

phone call and I was invited to a meeting of the Ralston Historical Association. I learn something new at every meeting, either regarding a piece from the museum or some history relating to our town. Of course the added bonus is the people I've met.

Most of us decide to live in "The Mendhams" because we love the community. What makes a town a community are the organizations in that town. As you know all the organizations rely on volunteers. So be a part of this community and volunteer. Meet some wonderful people and maybe even learn something new. Just don't say you live in "The Mendhams," be a part of the Mendham community.

I invite you to attend The Ralston Historical Association's Annual meeting being held on June 12 at 1 PM at the Ralston Museum located at 313 Mendham Road – West. I'm sure you have something to offer. I hope to see you there.

Margaret Hogan

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Ralston Historical Association
313 Mendham Road – West
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RHA Annual Meeting – Sunday, June 12, 2011
1 PM at the Ralston General Store
Visit our website: www.ralstonmuseum.org

2011-2012 Membership Renewal Form

Please indicate your membership information

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John Ralston Society (\$1,000.00 one time)
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The Ralston Historical Association is always looking for volunteers to help in a variety of ways. If interested, please include your name and phone number below or send an email to: rjp543@comcast.net

Name: _____
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RHA is a 501(C)3 organization. Please make your tax deductible check payable to:

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Mendham, NJ 07945