New Castle's Boston Post Cane History

Jim Cerny
New Castle Historical Society
rev 2025-02-12

Cane History.

- In 1909, the Boston Post Newspaper awarded elegant canes to 700 towns as a promotion, to be given to the oldest male resident, a tradition that many towns have maintained.
- The canes were made by the J.J. Fradley company of African ebony with individually engraved gold plated heads.
- In 1930 the scope was expanded to include the oldest female resident as well. This site tracks the holders: https://bostonpostcane.org/

Cane Head Engraving.

Cane profile.

Cane Holders.

- Cane holders/designees are listed here with most recent first, date and age when recognized, plus pictures when we have one. When the oldest residents are just months apart, we often designate them as co-holders.
- If possible we have a small ceremony, awarding a certificate, keeping the cane in a display case in Town Hall.
- Jim Cerny and Carol White have tracked the cane holders in the 21st century, surprised that New Castle does not have a complete list back to 1909.

Centenarians

- Since 2000, New Castle has had three cane holders who became centenarians:
  - Ted West (briefly 100)
  - Caroline Stewart (briefly 100)
  - Bill Williams (reaching 102)

- The Williams family is an example of family longevity, with Bill Williams (102), his sister Caroline Stewart (100), and his brother Richard Williams (93).

Islander Magazine, June 2015, p. 27, part 1

New Castle Historical Society

Engraved head of the New Castle cane. (Jim Cerny photo)

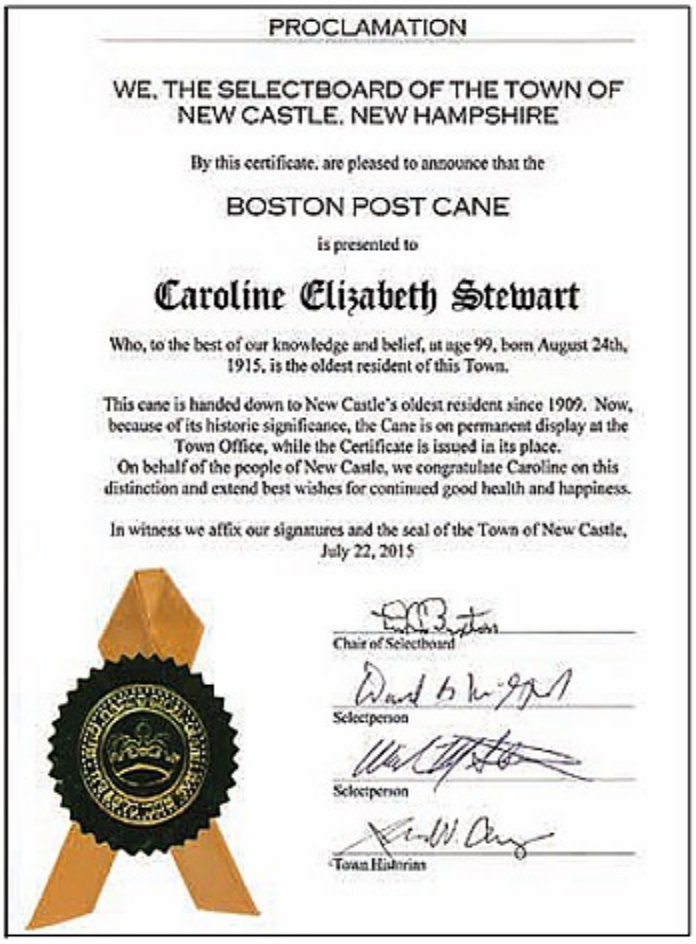
The Boston Post Cane

by Jim Cerny

For over a century it has been the practice to designate the oldest resident in hundreds of New England towns as the holder of the Boston Post Cane. The publisher of The Boston Post newspaper, Edwin Grozier, started this practice in 1909 as an advertising promotion. He gave out 700 canes (formerly believed to be 431) to towns (not cities) in NH, ME, MA, RI, to be held by the oldest resident while they lived. And until 1930 they went to the oldest male resident. The newspaper went out of business in 1956.

The canes were crafted by J.F. Fradley, Co., using African ebony, with a 14 karat gold head, and a ferrule at the tip. The head is engraved as: presented by *The Boston Post* to the oldest citizen of (name of town), to be transmitted.

Islander Magazine, June 2015, p. 27, part 2



PROCLAMATION

WE, THE SELECTBOARD OF THE TOWN OF NEW CASTLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

By this certificate, are pleased to announce that the

BOSTON POST CANE

is presented to

Caroline Elizabeth Stewart

Who, to the best of our knowledge and belief, at age 99, born August 24th, 1915, is the oldest resident of this Town.

This cane is handed down to New Castle's oldest resident since 1909. Now, because of its historic significance, the Cane is on permanent display at the Town Office, while the Certificate is issued in its place.
On behalf of the people of New Castle, we congratulate Caroline on this distinction and extend best wishes for continued good health and happiness.

In witness we affix our signatures and the seal of the Town of New Castle, July 22, 2015

Chair of Selectboard

Selectperson

Selectperson

Town Historian

Proclamation for Caroline Elizabeth Stewart.

David Griffin of Maynard, MA, maintains the most complete website about the Boston Post Cane, with information on current holders. Some 469 are now accounted for, 109 in New Hampshire.

http://web.maynard.ma.us/bostonpostcane/

For many years Towns actually loaned their cane. But that led to the loss of canes over the years and now it is typical to do as New Castle does, to keep the cane on display and present a proclamation certificate. Some towns have replaced lost canes with reproductions so they may continue the tradition.

The New Castle cane is in a glass case just inside the main entrance to Town Hall, on the immediate right hand wall. Examination of the head of the New Castle cane shows a lot of use, a combination of dents and wear of the gold plating.

We don't have a complete record of New Castle holders, but in the recent past it has been used to recognize: Bill Williams (2011), Marion Rowe (2008), Constance Barton (2007), and Fred White (2003). Time gaps occur between the passing of one cane holder and determination of the next holder, as it takes some research. And times change, with more nonagenarians and centenarians now than when the canes were first given out.

Cane Certificate (example).

PROCLAMATION

WE, THE SELECTBOARD OF THE TOWN OF
NEW CASTLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

By this certificate, are pleased to announce that the

BOSTON POST CANE

is presented to

Margaret E. Kimball

Who, to the best of our knowledge and belief, at age 96,
born February 24th, 1920, is the oldest resident of this Town.

This cane is handed down to New Castle's oldest resident since 1909. Now, because of its historic significance, the Cane is on permanent display at the Town Office, while the Certificate is issued in its place.
On behalf of the people of New Castle, we congratulate Margaret on this distinction and extend best wishes for continued good health and happiness.

In witness we affix our signatures and the seal of the Town of
New Castle July 21, 2016

David McGuckin, Chair of Selectboard

Bill Stewart, Selectperson

Thomas Maher, Selectperson

James W. Cerny, Town Historian

Cane holders by year recognized, with initial age.

(reverse chrononology, continuous coverage)

- 2024 James George. 95.
- 2023 Elizabeth Thayer. 92.
  Ted Barton. 92.
- 2022. Phyllis Crosby. 93.
- 2022. Ruth Lanham. 97.
- 2018. Ansel Braseth. 97.
  Ted West. 97.
- 2017. Joyce Kelly. 97.
- 2016. Margaret Kimball. 97.
- 2016. Percy Whitney. 97.
- 2015. Carroll Colby. 97.
- 2015. Caroline Stewart. 100.

Cane Holders Continued ...

- 2011. Bill Williams. 99.
- 2008. Marion Rowe. 98.
- 2007. Constance Barton. 97.
- 2003. Fred White. 96.

Names from newspapers and other sources (not continuous).

- 1982, Cimbro Macrelli
- 1968, Mabel Boylston
- nnnn, Ida Maxam
- 1963 Sadie Ricker
- 1962, Rose Campbell
- 1941, Francis W. Hall
- nnnn, Thomas H. Barber
- 1926, Samuel Batson
- nnnn, Capt. Charles Becker
- 1909, John V. White

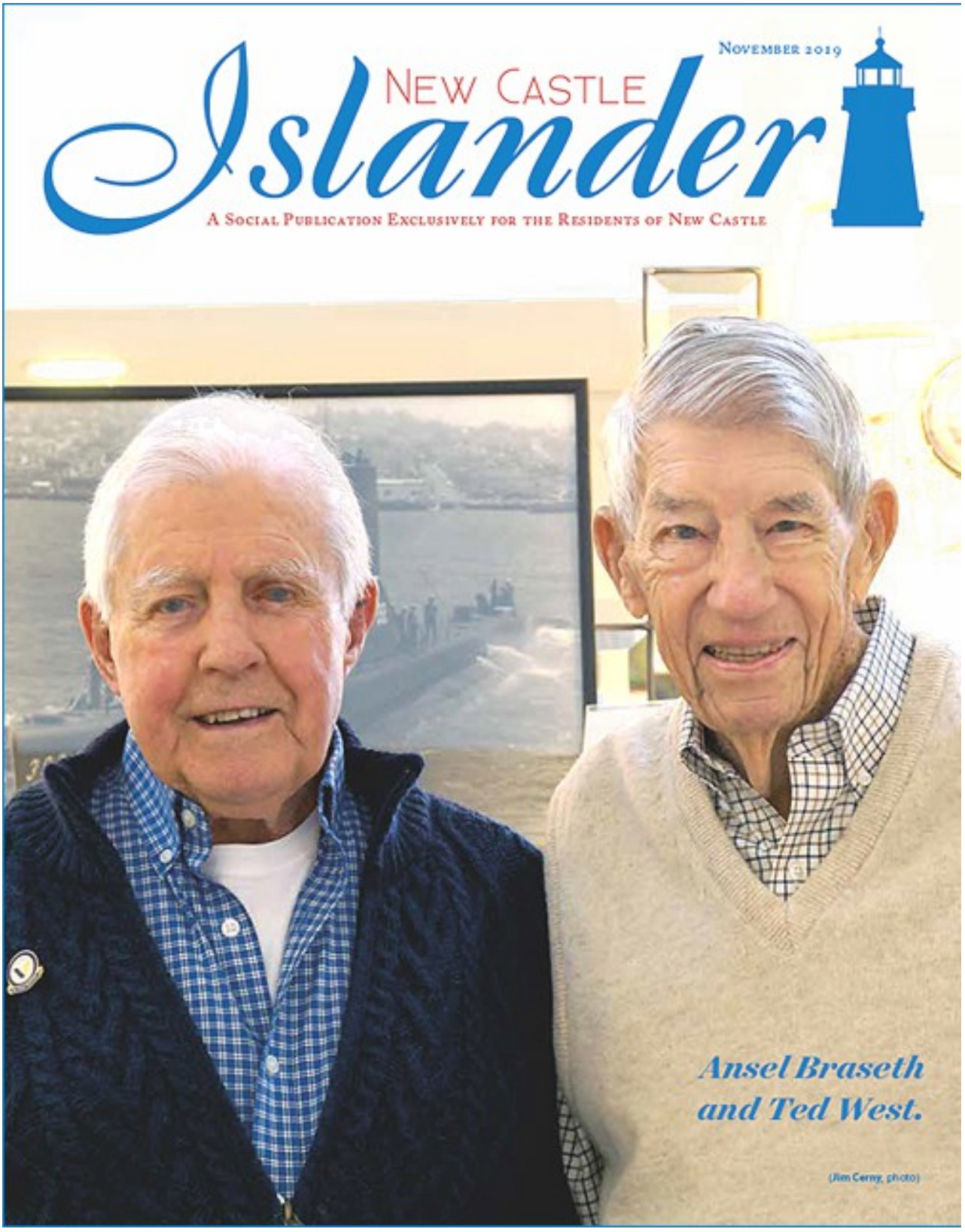
James George. 2024. current.

Ted Barton. 2023.

Phyllis Crosby. 2022.

Ruth Lanham. 2022.

Ansel Braseth & Ted West. 2018.



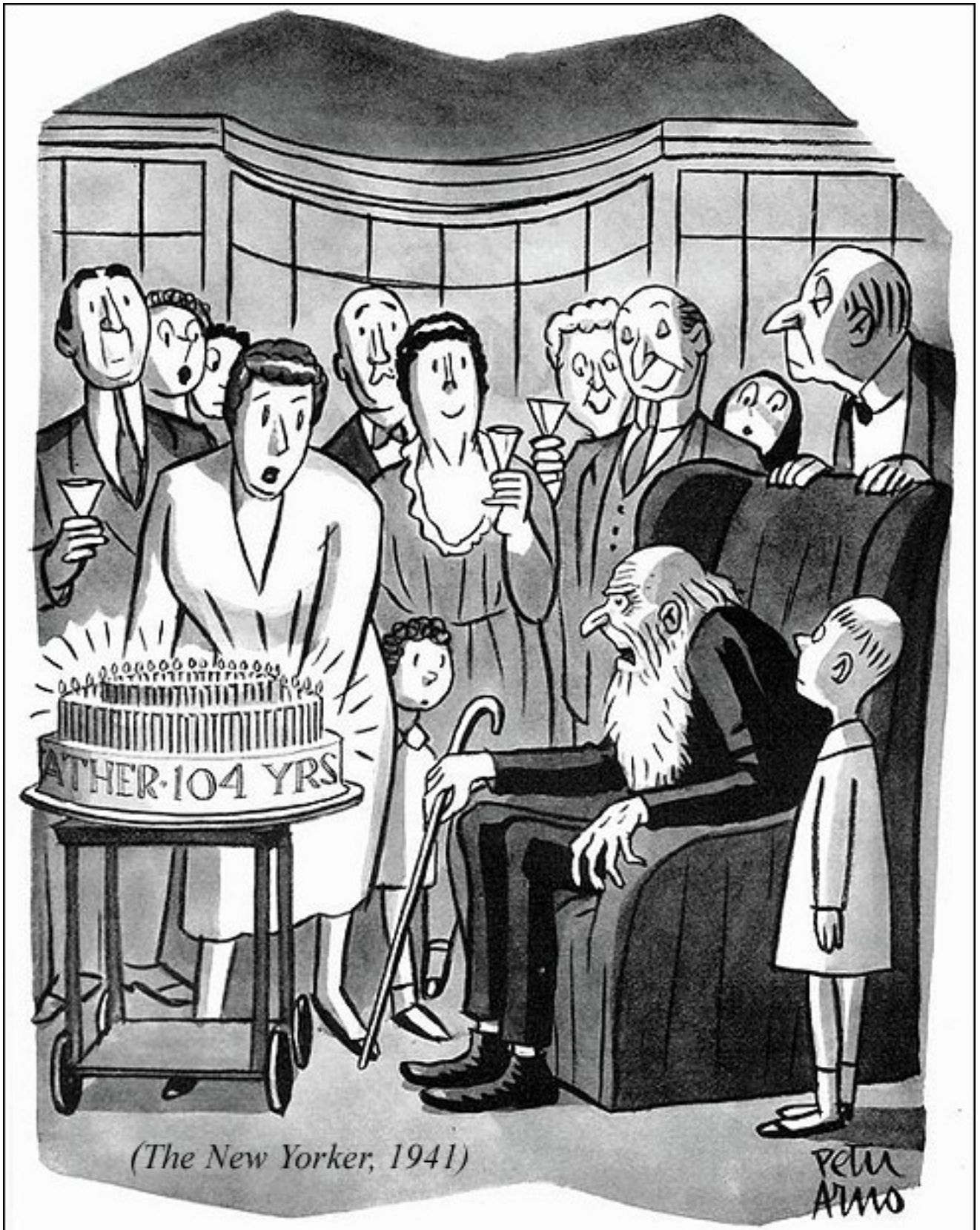
Percy Whitney. 2016.

Bill Williams. 2011.

Marion Rowe. 2008.

Fred White. 2003.

"Which famous person have you outlived now?"



"Never mind the damned cake! Where are the reporters?"