

Windham Historical Society



234 Windham Center Road, Windham, Maine
Mailing address: PO Box 1475, Windham, Maine 04062
Phone: (207) 892-1433

June 2009 Newsletter

Preserving the Past - Building the Future

www.windhamhistorical.org



Saturday, June 20

Many members of Windham Historical Society are involved with Summerfest this year. The annual town-sponsored celebration will kick off with a huge parade at 10 a.m., beginning at the Rotary (or Foster's Corner, however you know this intersection. Member Gary Plummer told me he was a little overwhelmed to discover how much work there is to organizing a parade. We remember his adept leadership during the town's 250th celebration in 1987 and know this year's festivities will be outstanding.

Frank Lamb, Ray Philpot, Walter Lunt, George Hall, Buster Gilman and others will be presenting a couple of demonstrations of how a ram water pump works (using a ram pump donated to the Society by Richard Southard; they will also be involved with a "make and break" engine – this is a foreign topic to your newsletter writer, but we're sure many will be fascinated. The Historical Society will also have another huge yard sale, similar to the event of last year where we made a goodly sum. All events take place at the local high school. Finally, after the parade, the scale model canal boat made in Harrison, Maine by Gerry Smith and used in the Society's float will be on display at the fair grounds. To find out more about Summerfest activities, call Walter Lunt at 655-3421. Items for the yard sale can be left at the Society Thursdays and Saturdays, as we are open those days, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call Linda Hanscom or Buster Gilman for more information.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to thank Emma Gilman for the great job she does keeping the obituaries organized. Her note books are impressive and there's an index for each one.

Izzy Gilman has researched the ages of many of the canning jars found in the Gertrude Strout barn. Even the clear Ball jars were produced in the 1920's and 1930's and have a little different logo on the glass.

Norma Rogers is asking relatives of Gertrude Strout for pictures, or stories about her in case the home becomes available we'll have a start on the history of it.

Local Windham residents are bringing yard sale items over and we have 2 trailers full with more coming in.

The library steps have been primed by Izzy Gilman

Walter Lunt has puttied some of the windows at the old grocery

The flower boxes were planted by Izzy Gilman with a red, white and blue theme

Gary Plummer and Ann Paquin represented the historical society and planted flowers at the rotary with the Rotary Garden Club. This is a public organization open to all who help plant and weed and spread mulch on the four gardens at each rotary island. This project started with members of the 250th celebration committee starting this tradition in 1987 and it has been repeated every year

Ray Philpot hung Glenn Libby's collection of early logging and ice cutting tools in the old grocery. Stop in and check them out.

Kay Soldier and Penny Loura have been busy organizing our acquisitions

Linda Tetrault and Caroline Rowe, Linda Lunt are busy helping and cleaning and making crafts.

We appreciate all our help and if you want to feel needed, show up Thursdays or Saturdays from 10-2 to join in with our many projects.

Linda Griffin co-president

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- June 20 Summerfest
- June 22 ... Regular meeting, report on Summerfest, short program – at the Society
- June 27 Field trip to Peaks Island, 5th Regiment, Civil War reenactors
- July 7 Directors Meeting
- July 20 Regular meeting and program
- August 4 Directors Meeting
- August 22 Open House – Old Grocery
- August 24 Regular meeting, Open Forum
- September 1 Directors Meeting
- Windham Hill Club tours Old Grocery this month**
- September 28 Regular meeting

FINANCIAL REPORT

May expenses - \$574.88
May income - \$923.58

Christmas Fair

This year the Society will not be selling items or food at Summerfest. Both of these activities will be featured at the November election and later that month, the first annual Old Fashioned Christmas Fair at the Society.

We welcome donations of hand made items for the Fair – mittens, doilies, toys, anything with an old-fashioned theme. Members are encouraged to visit the Society on Thursdays, to find out more about the on-going “crafty” activities. We’re hoping someone will come forward with some hand-made old fashioned tree ornaments. On the day of the fair, we’ll offer refreshments, a decorated museum and even an old time Christmas tree! It will be a lot of fun and a great way to usher in the holiday season. For more information on the Fair and how you can contribute, contact Norma Rogers.

SOCIETY TEACHES HISTORY TO KIDS FROM WINDHAM, GORHAM

W.H.S. Leads Gorham Village School students on Gambo Gunpowder Tour

Four third grade classes from the Village School in Gorham toured the Gambo gunpowder mills site recently with Windham Historical Society member Walter Lunt. Village School teacher Laurie Tibbets, who lives in Wenham, learned about the Society’s educational tours while browsing the W.H.S. sales table at the polls last November. Walter, who gives classroom presentations and leads bus history tours for classes at Windham Primary School, observed that Windham and Gorham share several historical sites, including the gunpowder mills, the covered bridge, and Great Falls.

THE STROUT HOUSE

The house and barn which sit to the right of Windham Public Library on Windham Center Road, is known as the Strout property. The late Gertrude Strout lived here for many years. The property went to the town of Windham school department when she passed away and subsequently, became part of a bond item for a new/renovated high school, which voters approved the purchase of. Earlier this year, it was announced that this very old property would be burned to make way for a sports field and parking. The Historical Society was notified and successful efforts by many, stopped the burn order. The following information is from a letter circulated to Society members by Linda Hanscom. At the present time, negotiations are underway between the Society and the school board. The future of this property is uncertain. Your voices need to be heard. Call or email Linda, who is Chair of a sub-committee, charged with investigating the possible future use of this very old, historic house in the center of the town.

Five years ago the town passed a bond to build the new high school and acquire this property (home, barn and 10 acres) for expanded playing fields. It is a c.1830’s cape where Gertrude Strout lived at 205 Windham Center Road. We have recently found out that the home and outbuildings will be burned by the end of June as a training exercise for our local fire fighters. The town-assessed value of these buildings not including the land is \$148,000. That is a lot of \$ money for a training experience.

We were told that a former employee of the school department wrote a report which said that the buildings have no value because of a lot of damage in the structure from rot and beetles. We have been inside and this is not true. The home is very sound and has great plaster (except for one ceiling), simple moldings, early doors and a wonderful Victorian mantle and stairway that doesn’t have a scratch on it. The roof shingles look new, there are storm windows and the home is vinyl sided. Yes, the furnace is very old and much of the wiring should be updated but the granite foundation is sound and the dressed granite stairs are beautiful. There are mature plantings of white and purple lilacs, tall maples and many shrubs. There’s also a paved circular drive that is fine.

If the Society acquired the property, it would put the buildings to good use housing our growing collection of Windham heritage. The barn could hold carriages, sleighs, cider mills and early tools. The home could be used as a museum showing how life in Windham was 150 years ago. School children could walk to it for their history lessons. It is close to our campus where we have the first library, an old grocery and the old Town House. We could allow the front lawns to be tastefully turned into parking areas, but why burn a great house just to have 2 acres of paving for more cars?

As a real estate broker, buyers tell me they love the Windham Center Road because of its history and early houses that are still there. Why burn this one down when increased parking could still happen. The historical society would be responsible for insurance, all repairs and upkeep on the buildings. We have a small window to try and save these buildings. If not, then we can go inside and remove some of the historical architectural features. This is not what we want to happen.

If you have any ideas or suggestions please call me 650-7484.

Thanks to Linda, Buster Gilman, Ray Philpot and others, many items have been salvaged from the barn and outbuildings including dozens of valuable Ball canning jars, tools, old wooden boxes, parts of sleighs and carriages, and much more. Some of these items will be available at the Summerfest Yard Sale.

ACTIVITIES AT HEADQUARTERS

On Thursdays and Saturdays, many volunteers can be found working on the landscaping, planting flowers in the flower boxes, trimming up long iris stems and generally keeping everything in shape. Buster Gilman is busy making long shelves and wooden brackets to hold them. These will be placed on the interior walls of the meeting room, near the top of the walls, to hold such items as trophies, glassware and other items which should be displayed for all to see. With display space and space in general in such short supply, innovative ideas are welcomed, which will make our facilities more welcoming.

Repainting the brick continues and should be completed this year. Added insulation has made it possible to be open later in the year, and perhaps this winter, depending on fuel costs and availability of volunteers.

A few windows are still waiting for the application of special film which filters out damaging ultra violet rays (they fade items). Much work was done at the Old Grocery on the special work day and much work still needs to be done. Ray Philpot has done a splendid job with a new display of tools donated by Glenn Libby. Izzy Gilman got inside the 1800s horse-drawn hearse and cleaned the windows, improving the looks of that old vehicle – a wonderful job!!

All items being donated for the Yard Sale are immediately priced (after washing, if necessary) and this year's organization efforts will save a great deal of valuable time.

The Work Room is filling up with donated items to be identified, marked and recorded. A couple of items are in need of repair and some of the older items are being cleaned and new presentation boxes and display methods devised.

ITEMS WE NEED

Walter Lunt is looking for a PA system to be used in the parade for Summerfest.

We've approved getting a back up hard drive so Kay can transfer hundreds of photos and copy dozens of historical articles and records compiled over the last 20 years or so. The trick now is to find time to go get the hard drive!

We continue to need cardboard tubes – the kind that come from paper towels or longer – to hold maps and other rolled documents.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome new member Irene Leclaire, Windham
Condolences to family of Lawrence (Lonnie) Wescott

100 Years Ago

Benny Goodman and Burl Ives were born
Radio and vaudeville were "in"

Admiral Robert Peary, a Bowdoin College graduate, led an expedition to the North Pole
Most people burned coal
Refrigerators kept food cold by the use of a large chunk of ice delivered by the ice man!

The NAACP was founded Feb. 12, 1909
Construction of the Titanic was started
The clothes dryer hadn't yet been invented. A line of rope outdoors was used to dry clothes in the fresh air

Call of the Wild was written by Jack London
The Wonderful World of Oz was written by Frank Baum

The average worker earned \$200 to \$400 a year – making the hourly wage about 23 cents

8% of homes had a telephone

95% of births took place at home

The maximum speed limit on city roads was 10 mph

Items not invented yet: zippers, toasters, hair dryers, sunglasses and ballpoint pens

WINDHAM NEWS 1909

Mrs. Sarah C. Smith turned 90 on April 25, 1909.

She was the oldest citizen in Windham and had been married 65 years. She was the former Sarah Hawkes. She and her husband William M. Smith were married in June 1844 in South Windham

50 Years Ago

A new men's suit cost \$32.00

A cotton dress cost \$10.98

A giant box of Cheer laundry detergent – 69 cents

Pound of coffee – 53 cents

4-speed Hi-fi stereo phonograph - \$67.00

THE FUTURE

What do you like or dislike about programs we've had this year? Please take a minute and let us know your thoughts – anonymous, if you desire

What kinds of programs would you like to see in the future? What do you want to know more about? Here are a few ideas – give us yours! If you'd like, complete this form and mail it to the Society at Box 1475, Windham, ME 04062.

Subject	Good Idea	Not good idea	No Opinion
Old Windham Houses _____			
Flowers and herbs _____			
Native American area history _____			
Immigrants to Windham _____			
Old Windham families _____			
Map-making _____			
Astronomy & local events _____			
Coin Collecting _____			
Stamp Collecting _____			
Windham writers (old, new) _____			
Remembering World War II _____			
Windham in the past _____			
The Northeast Road _____			
Old toys _____			
Textiles and clothing _____			
Civil War _____			
Old time diseases & medicine _____			
Quakers _____			

Other ideas?