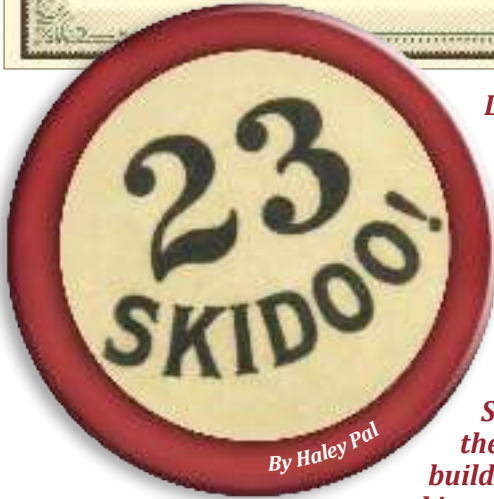


Windham Historical Society, Quarterly Review

Winter 2023



By Haley Pal

Last year, the Windham Historical Society's Village Green really began coming to life. The Old Grocery opened to the public and work began in earnest on the Windham Center Library, the South Windham Library, and the Blacksmith Shop. The Village School was spiffed up and cleaned out and ready for classes to begin again. The Gazebo was painted and hosted our first-ever Concert on the Green. It was a special year for all of us.

With the coming of winter, physical work came to a halt, but that doesn't mean the momentum has slowed down. Building Stewards took this quiet time to go through their respective buildings and are making plans for when the warm weather returns.

Here are some of the priorities for the months ahead:

WINDHAM CENTER LIBRARY – Our Secretary Karen Lougee is the Steward of this building. “I am very excited to be helping to bring life back to the Windham Center Library,” Karen said. She has a number of projects lined up and is ready to get them rolling once the weather warms. These include repairing or replacing the stabilizer bar to keep the right side of the building from bowing any further and evaluating whether the roof needs replacement or repair. Electrifying the building and installing exterior lights, replacing the storm door, and painting interior walls and some of the building's furniture are also on the list of things to do. Volunteer Pierre Caouette will be working on the windows, replacing some panes and reglazing. Pierre is also in the process of painting the cast iron patio set that will eventually sit on a small patio to be built at the back of the building overlooking the Green.

SOUTH WINDHAM LIBRARY – Carol Manchester, our Membership Chair, is heading up work being done on this building. “It is expected that the South Windham Library, fondly referred to as the “mustard” building because of its color, will be open to the public this summer,” Carol said. “The floor is the first priority. Originally, it was to be sanded and refinished, but tacky glue, revealed when the carpeting was ripped up, delayed the project. We'll address it further in the spring,” Carol explained. In addition, electrical work is needed which includes installing and energizing the exit signs. Finishing the interior painting and installing mopboards are among the last steps before books, displays, and furniture can be brought in. “It's very exciting to anticipate it all happening this year,” Carol said.



Top: Karen Lougee, Library Steward
Left: Karen's grandson, Quinn Jacobs, exploring the library, is fascinated by the typewriter

OLD GROCERY – “Much of the work at the Old Grocery is done. All we need to do is bring items stored away for safe keeping over the winter back out and put into place and a lot of dusting,” said Steward Linda Lunt. Other than that, some minor repairs on the building will be done and painting will be completed. *(con't on next page)*



Linda Lunt and Haley Pal at the Old Grocery Open House last September

The Blacksmith Shop – Building Steward and Resident Blacksmith Sam Simonson is looking forward to opening the Blacksmith Shop this year. His projects for the building include assembling a metal lathe, building the forge, purchasing and installing boards on which to display the many tools in the Society’s extensive collection, hanging old bellows, and adding the required handicap ramp. With any luck, we may get to enjoy watching Sam working at his trade by the time Fall comes around.

The Village School – Schoolmarm Paula Sparks is also the Steward of the one-room schoolhouse. Her plans for this spring include finishing the ceiling in the cloakroom and painting the windows. A reproduction Maine map needs to be hung and some games need to be brought over from the Old Town House Museum to the schoolhouse so children can play with them when visiting the school. “I also hope to prepare an interactive activity for kids/families to do together when they come in for a tour that’s not a living history class,” Paula said.

The Old Town House Museum and Village Green Grounds – President Susan Simonson is spearheading these two Village Green projects. “We will be looking into grants to help with some extensive repairs that need to be done to the old brick building,” Susan explained. “In the meantime, we need to replace the soffit and fascia boards. We also hope to replace some wooden joists and do a few other building repairs.” In addition, an updated site plan for the Green is needed so that the Society can design safe walkways for visitors. A security system also needs to be installed.



Paula Sparks, Schoolmarm and Steward of The Village School

THAT’S A LOT OF WORK... AND NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE TO DO IT.

If you would like to join in on the excitement and fun of watching our Village be transformed into the Living History Center we’ve all imagined, why not volunteer?

- **Do you like to paint, do repairs, or construct things?** We can use you for many projects.
- **Do you like to sew or cook?** We can use your skills in our buildings or at special events.
- **Do you know how to write a grant?** Your help in understanding the process would be appreciated.
- **Can you make a monetary donation towards the Green?** Your donation would be very welcome. Whatever you can do, we can put it to use.

This is the year to truly realize our dream, so come along on the ride. Show us what you can do...’23 SKIDOO!!!

WINDHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION STATEMENT

The goal of the Windham Historical Society is to foster interest in the history of the town by presenting relevant programs, providing educational opportunities, and maintaining historical facilities where displays of the town’s past are available.

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PRESIDENT’S LETTER

HELLO MEMBERS!

The Board has already held its first meeting of the year with the focus on 2023 projects! Each of the building stewards presented their ‘to do’ lists which we reviewed and prioritized. Once the weather warms up and we can gain access to the buildings, the work will begin!

Programs and events are also a big part of the annual planning process. Our first program will be in March this year – *The Gunpowder Mills of Gorham and Windham, Maine* by Patrick Bonsant. Patrick spent a significant amount of time researching and interviewing local historians. He has created a wonderful record of our local history to share with all.

We look forward to another busy season and look forward to seeing you at the Society this year!

Susan Simonson,
President, Windham Historical Society

2022 Election Day Bake Sale Takes the Cake

By Susan Simonson



Society members were so happy to get back to normal by once again having our Election Day Bake Sale at the November election. It was wonderful to see so many of the familiar faces from all around Windham! There was a delectable assortment of baked goods available, all homemade by the Society’s very talented bakers. I think Windham’s voters were happy to see our bake table back at the polls to be able to select from the variety of delicious treats we had to offer! It was a great day with a great reward. The \$523 we made in profits truly did take the cake!



Windham voters were happy to see the return of our Bake Sale



2022 Christmas Fair Earned a Fair Profit

By Linda Lunt



President Susan Simonson and Event Chair Linda Lunt waiting for customers at the Fair

Last year's Christmas Fair, held in November at Friends Church, raised over \$1,500 and was a huge success. A big thank you to all who helped with baking, donating of sales items, and set-up and cleanup. This annual event has consistently been the Society's biggest fundraiser year after year.

STAY TUNED! *There are big changes in the wind regarding this year's fair. Given the tremendous progress we have made renovating the Village Green, this year's annual event will be a **HARVEST FESTIVAL!** It will be held **Saturday, October 7 from 10AM - 3PM** and will enable us to expand the fair's offerings.*

The Village Green buildings will feature a variety of crafts. We'd also offer space to vendors who could display their wares on the Green itself. You'll still have the same wonderful quality of crafts to choose from as well as the delicious baked goods you've all come to know and love. There will be contests for kids and adults alike, a grilled lunch for sale, and live entertainment in the Gazebo. It will be an old-fashioned day of fun, games, and community reminiscent of something that would have happened in Windham at the turn of the twentieth century.

We encourage our members to participate in this exciting new venture. If you can help, please call Linda Lunt at 409-2002 or 655-3421. And thanks so much in advance for your continued support.

2022 Annual Meeting Results

By Susan Simonson

For the first time in three years, the Windham Historical Society was able to hold its Annual Meeting in person. Although different from the Potluck Suppers of the past, the October 24 meeting still felt good with so many of us back together again. Approximately 20 people were in attendance.

The meeting began with "A Year in Review" PowerPoint presentation by President Susan Simonson. This pictorial review of 2022 highlighted the accomplishments of the Society during the year including the Open House at the Old Grocery on September 24.

The Treasurer's Report was given by Linda Lunt. Carol Manchester updated everyone on the Society's membership and Education Liaison Walter Lunt spoke about events that were done in coordination with Windham schools. Paula Sparks told us about the Junior History Club and all the wonderful projects they worked on during the school year. Susan Simonson gave the President's Report and Society Officers were elected.

Light refreshments were served throughout the meeting and people really enjoyed mingling and catching up with each other. Thank you to all of our members who attended. It was a pleasure seeing so many of you again.

Kids on the Green

By Walter Lunt

Over 200 third grade students from Windham Primary School visited the revitalized Village Green last fall as part of their month-long study of Windham history.

Over two days, groups of 10 to 20 learners rotated through several museum buildings, including the Old Grocery, The Village School, the Blacksmith Shop, and the Hearse House.

Windham Historical Society members Linda and Walter Lunt, Susan and Sam Simonson, Paula Sparks, Haley Pal, and Lynne Jones were hosts to the students, acting as docents in the various museum buildings.

Teachers and teacher assistants accompanied the groups and engaged in lessons at the one-room schoolhouse. Gathered around the pot-belly stove in wooden desks and benches, the scholars wrote with quill pens, read aloud from early *McGuffey Readers* and solved arithmetic problems (ciphered) using slates and chalk.

In the Old Grocery, our early general merchandise store, students crowded around an old telephone switchboard and learned how calls were completed in the early to mid-20th century. It was "cool," they said, but their cell phones are better.

The visitors also viewed fashion displays from days gone by, and after seeing bolts of assorted material and a treadle sewing machine, seemed surprised to learn that most clothing was created in the home. And instead of food ingredients packaged in plastic or cardboard, docents demonstrated how customers would bring in their own packaging material (cloth bags or glass jugs) to purchase flour or molasses by weight.

Several of the children said they wanted to return to the Village Green with their parents. That was music to the ears of the volunteer docents.

Earlier last fall, the same students participated in a 3-hour Windham history tour around Windham in school buses. The tour, guided by WHS member volunteer Jason Farley, included stops at the historic Friends Church, Parson Smith House, Anderson Cemetery, and Gambo gunpowder mills.

The Windham Historical Society's school liaison director Walter Lunt said, "The time to instill an interest and a sense of hometown history is when they're still young."



The students loved seeing the old sewing machine

ELECTION RESULTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

President: Susan Simonson

Vice President: Sam Simonson

Secretary: Karen Lougee

Treasurer: Linda Lunt

Curator/Historian: Penny Loura

Membership: Carol Manchester

Building Maintenance: Kevin Graham



Junior History Club Happenings

By Paula Sparks

The Windham Middle School Junior Historians have had a very busy four months! To start, we played “get acquainted” games using North, South, East, and West to locate where each of us lives on the Windham map. To become more familiar with our town, we put together map puzzles of its different areas. Using compasses, we found our way to Town Hall where we met with the Town Planner and learned about zoning rules and why we have them. Later, we glued the map puzzles to poster board and added photographs of familiar area buildings and businesses.

Each week during snack time, we read from a locally set historic fiction novel told from the perspective of a hand-carved doll made in Portland. So far, *Hitty* has taken us on a journey from Portland to Boston. Along the way, she has gotten left behind in a church and in a blueberry field where she encountered Native Americans and was dropped in a nest by a crow. Soon she will be sailing the seas on a whaling ship! This is the one time during the meeting that these lively Middle Schoolers are quiet.

October found us playing old-fashioned games of bobbing for apples and donuts on a string and chopping and pressing apples for apple cider. Technical difficulties with the press required

three separate meetings, but we finally pressed enough cider to sample and take a bit home. It was unanimous – it was the best we have ever tasted!

In November, we focused on Veterans Day and WWII. Members made thank you cards that were put on a poster for display at the Veterans Clinic in Portland. Discussion of the Pilgrims took us on a trivia journey across the ocean on the *Mayflower* board game.

In December, we learned a bit of the history of writing letters to Santa. The story of Virginia’s letter to the newspaper asking about Santa along with actual letters to St. Nick from years past provided great insight into the economics and toys of the time. This was also a good opportunity to learn about games of the past, including the game of Nine Men’s Morris. A bit of a cross between checkers and Tic-Tac-Toe, this ancient game requires a little strategy. It was interesting to watch as each Junior Historian figured it out. After playing, club members made a wood-burned game board and drawstring pouch for the game pieces and brought them home to be given as holiday gifts.

You can see we have a lot of fun with history in History Club. If you think you would like to volunteer or be a guest speaker, leave a message at the Society (892-1433) and I’ll get back to you.



Top: Club members using compasses to get themselves to Town Hall to meet the Town Planner

Bottom: Club members with Town Planner Amanda Lessard



Top: History Club members playing Donuts-On-A-String

Bottom: Paula Sparks and History Club members toasting with their homemade cider.

Programs

By Carol Manchester

Mark your calendars for programs and events that the Historical Society is offering for 2023.

MARCH: On Saturday, **March 11, Patrick Bonsant**, who has done extensive research on the Gambo Mills area, will discuss and present his film about the *Families of Gambo Mills*. His program begins at 1PM at the Little Meetinghouse on Route 302 in North Windham. The program is free and refreshments will be offered. Donations are always welcome.

MAY: Our next guests are **John Mosher** and **Leith Smith** who will give an updated talk about findings from the River Road archeological dig done near the Parson Smith House a few years ago. We've enjoyed parts of this presentation before when Leith did a previous program for us. This time around, both he and John will bring a few artifacts along that were found during the excavation. The presentation will take place on **Monday, May 22**, at 7PM at the Little Meetinghouse. This program is also free of charge, but a donation to the Society would be most appreciated.

AUGUST: This summer, the Historical Society will give you some fun opportunities to tour the buildings on the Village Green. On **Saturday, August 26 from 10AM - 2PM**, we will be having an Open House much like the one we had last September when we opened up the Old Grocery to the public. This year's event is still very much in the planning stages, but right now, we hope to invite the community to tour not only the outstanding **Old Grocery Museum** renovation and very authentic **Village School**, but the original **Windham Center Library** and the **South Windham Library** as well. Our **Blacksmith Shop** may also be available to view.

The **Windham Center Library** will provide a taste of what this early small-town resource was like and will include displays and information about some of the town's local organizations. The South Windham Library will showcase the South Windham area of town and will contain a railroad feature that celebrates the mode of transportation that was once a vital part of the South Windham landscape. As in the past, food and music will be a part of the event. Want to sing? Are you in a small dance group that can perform on the gazebo? Can you teach an early dance style? Let me know (dcmanchester@msn.com) or contact Haley Pal at haleypal@aol.com. You can also call Haley at 892-7139. Also, if you'd like to volunteer in helping set up a building or if you'd like to work the day of the event, you can contact the Society at 892-1433 or email us at info@windhamhistorical.org.

OCTOBER: The Society is planning a **Fall Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 7 from 10AM - 3PM**. For more information, see Linda Lunt's Christmas Fair article on page 3.

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

As a member, your involvement is always welcomed. If you would like to be a building host or host an old-fashioned activity, play an instrument and sing, pull together a band for the gazebo, be an onsite vendor, or perhaps offer ideas or information with "where or how-to" suggestions, please call and leave a message at 892-1433 or email any of us who are listed on page 2 of this newsletter. We welcome your input and invite you to join us in having fun with history!

Meet Steve Melanson By Haley Pal

Working with wood is nothing new to Society member Steve Melanson. He began showing an interest in woodworking when he was a student at Westbrook Vocational High School where he studied the Building Trade and Cabinet-Making. After graduation, he worked as a professional carpenter and did so for the next 7 years.

These days, Steve is retired and enjoys nothing more than being in his workshop coming up with creative projects using wood. He is a neighbor to another one of our Society members, Paula Sparks. Paula mentioned to Steve that the Society had been given three very old flintlock rifles and how it would be nice to have them prominently displayed.

Steve remembered he had some pieces of oak from a 250-year old tree that he had cut down on his property. He thought that cases made from that wood would be the perfect home for the historic guns. He contacted Paula, made an appointment to visit the Society and took measurements so he could begin the project.

"It was nice meeting the people in the Society," Steve said. "This was a fun project for me and everyone was so appreciative when I brought in the finished cases."

Those cases are now hanging in the Old Town House Museum with the firearms proudly displayed inside. There is also one case in The Village School that contains an ancient piece of wood salvaged from the first schoolhouse in town that was located at the old Province Fort.

Steve is a lifelong Maine resident. He was born in Westbrook, but he and his family have been living in Windham for roughly 43 years now. They have two children who both attended Windham schools and now have a grandson who is doing so as well. Before retiring, Steve worked as a Union electrician for over 40 years. Right now, he is working on a potential new project for our organization. He may be making us a wishing well for the Village Green!



Top: One of the gun cases Steve made is now home to an antique rifle from the Society's collection



Left: Steve in his workshop

Windham Then & Now

Fred Hawkes Grocery

By Haley Pal

For decades, there were two “Hawkes” stores located at the corners of Windham Center Road and Route 202. The first was the Old Grocery owned by Alley Hawkes. This historic old structure is now situated on our Village Green and serves as the Old Grocery Museum.

Right across the street from Alley’s store was another grocery owned by another member of the Hawkes family. Fred Hawkes was a forward-thinking businessman and his store served many purposes over the years in addition to providing Windham residents with housewares and food products. The store also served as Windham’s first library, a post office and in 1904 became the home of the town’s first telephone switchboard.

Hawkes set up the manual switching system in a corner of his general store. He called it the Windham Center Telephone Exchange. Both men and women worked as operators on the manual six-line switching station that could accommodate less than 100 subscribers. There was only switchboard service available during the day.

By 1917, it became obvious that there was a need for growth. More and more local residents were getting telephones and the lines were jammed with people wanting to make calls. So, in that year, Hawkes decided to build an annex on his general store that would house two 60-line boards powered by storage batteries. This was a welcome addition to the town of Windham at that time. In the 1930s, nighttime service was offered and by the time World War II arrived in the 1940s, the store boasted three switchboards capable of serving 4,000 customers. Three operators worked full-time to handle all the calls.

The switchboard is not the only thing Fred Hawkes’ store was famous for. It is said that Alley and Fred Hawkes had quite different political points of view. Republicans would patronize one store and Democrats the other. Based on his 1919 obituary, which read “Always a Republican,” I’d say we can be safe in saying it was not the Democratic agenda that was supported at Fred’s store. In addition to being a storekeeper, Hawkes served in other capacities in our town. He was Town Clerk for more than 20 years and also held the positions of Town Treasurer and Postmaster.

In 1978, the store was purchased by Donato Corsetti and it became Corsetti’s Windham where sandwiches and pizza are served. The original store was destroyed by a fire and was replaced in 1998 by the building that we see today.



The Fred Hawkes Store in the early twentieth century



Corsetti's Windham now sits where Fred Hawkes' store used to be

Donations

By Karen Lougee

There were a number of generous donations made to the Windham Historical Society over the past few months.

- **Nancy Beaupre** made a donation to the General Fund.
- **Elizabeth Stewart** donated to the General Fund in memory of **Charles Herbert Maines** and his wife **Bertha Maud Harris Maines** and their family.
- **Janice Boucher** made a donation specified for The Village Green and the Election Day Bake Sale.
- **Debora Longo** made a donation to help stock the shelves at the South Windham Library.
- **Rocky's Maintenance** donated supplies and labor for work performed to repair the flashing on the Old Grocery, labor on removal of a critter hole, and labor on the Old Town House Museum. Rocky also made repairs on The Village School and the Train Station portion of the South Windham Library with his labor being free of charge.

CONDOLENCES

By Carol Manchester

Long-time resident and Windham community member **Ann Hawkes Paquin** died September 20, 2022 under care in Michigan near the home of her daughter. Ann's earliest education was in Windham schools, later in Gray and Augusta. A graduate of Colby College, her BA in English served her well over her many years of employment, including at the Maine State Library and as a school secretary and records clerk. Having lived in California for 15 years, she and her family returned to Windham in the early 1970s where she worked for the Windham Public Library and later Warren Library in Westbrook. Her interests ranged from serving on the town's 250th anniversary committee, membership in the Windham Historical Society, community theatre, genealogy, and beekeeping.

The Windham Historical Society community extends its sincere sympathy and comforting thoughts to the family and friends of Ann Paquin.

Queries

By Penny Loura

- **St. Joseph's College** requested collaboration on a Native American project that is researching tribal and Colonial histories in the Windham area. I referred them to Dr. Ellsworth. This is her area of expertise. I offered our services as needed.
- **Barbara Sawhill** requested information done by Ray Philpot on a presentation he did on Little Sebago Lake a few years ago. I contacted Ray and his response was that he got all of his information from Dole's *History of Windham* and Portland newspapers. She may come for a visit in the spring when we reopen.
- **Katherine Rhoda** is offering a number of programs consisting of music from old-fashioned instruments and history. At the time of the Program Committee meeting, Haley Pal did not know the exact dates for the August and October events where this might be the perfect form of entertainment. She has been in contact with Katherine to express our interest now that we have dates for the events confirmed.
- **Jay Parish** was seeking information about a tavern in Windham that his 7th Great Grandfather owned. I informed him it was not in Windham, Maine, but maybe Windham, Connecticut is where he should be looking.

Curator's Corner

By Penny Loura

There were no major contributions to the Society over the past few months to be reported.

Please note: The Society is closed for the winter. Do not leave your treasures on the steps of the Old Town House Museum. They may not be found for several days and may be exposed to the elements. Instead, if you have something of historical significance you'd like to donate to the Windham Historical Society, please call 892-1433 to set up an appointment to drop them off. One of our members will be happy to meet with you.

Membership Corner

By Carol Manchester

Newest members to the Windham Historical Society include **Alan Farris** and **Mike Pattee**, both of Windham, and **Roger Perra** of Longwood, Florida. To each of you, a heartfelt welcome. Also, the following people have renewed their memberships at the Life Level: **Barbara Tolman, Kate Green, Karen Dobransky, Roberta Pollard, Paula Sparks, and Mikki Van Summern**. The Windham Historical Society appreciates your continued involvement and support.

A FRIENDLY REMINDER

Memberships to the Windham Historical Society are renewed every October. If you have not yet renewed yours or if you know someone who would like to join, now is a good time to do so. There is a form on the website, windhamhistorical.org, for your convenience. You can also fill out the form below and mail it back to us with your check. Or just write us a note and enclose your check with it. Fees are \$15 for an annual individual membership, \$25 for an annual family membership, and \$100 for a life membership. Please mail your check to: Treasurer, Windham Historical Society, PO Box 1475, Windham, Maine 04062. Much appreciation to all of you for your continuing support.

I Want to Join!

Fill out the form below and write a check made payable to the Windham Historical Society. Mail to:

Windham Historical Society, PO Box 1475, Windham, ME 04062

Individual Membership \$15 Family Membership \$25
Lifetime Membership \$100 per person

Name: _____

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Email your newsletter?

Yes

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