

Windham Historical Society, Quarterly Review

Fall 2022

HARVESTING THE SEEDS OF HARD WORK



WHEN YOU VISIT THE GREEN,
IT'S LOOKING MORE AND
MORE LIKE THE LIVING
HISTORY PARK WE HAVE SO
LONG IMAGINED.

By Haley Pal

This summer has been a busy one for the Windham Historical Society. The Village Green has been transformed over the past several months with members working in all the buildings to get them one step closer to opening to the public. The grounds have been spruced up and are looking good. All the structures are freshly painted or stained and much of the unsightly trash that had accumulated has been disposed of.

One of the biggest changes made this year was the renovation of the Old Grocery store. The beloved landmark has been restored and now looks like a mercantile of the 19th century. It is packed to capacity with fascinating artifacts and exhibits that celebrate the history of the building. There is a telephone display, complete with a switchboard identical to the one that served Windham many years ago. There is a tailor exhibit, a cobbler exhibit, and exhibits representing all the many departments you would have found in an old-time general store.

The Village School has been cleaned out from top to bottom. It is very representative of what a 19th century one-room schoolhouse would have looked like, complete with lessons on the blackboard, *McGuffey Readers*, inkwells, slates, and feather pens.

The South Windham Library has made significant progress over the spring and summer months. The ell has been sided, the interior shelves and walls have been



The renovated Old Grocery is looking more and more like it did in earlier years

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primed and painted, a new ceiling has been installed, and the floors are about to be stained now that the carpet has been removed. The expectation is to open the building in 2023.

The Windham Center Library has been cleaned out to get it ready for a permanent display. Electricity will be added to the building soon and repairs are being made where needed. We also hope to open this building next year.

The blacksmith shop will be stained this month and then work on its interior will begin.



The Generations Barbershop Quartet

To show off some of the fruits of their summertime labor, the Society hosted an Open House and Concert in the Gazebo on Saturday, September 24, from Noon to 3 p.m.

Over one hundred people came to take a look at that newly renovated Green. The Old Grocery was a huge hit. People were enthralled with all the many artifacts lining every nook and cranny of the building. Children enjoyed seeing the old toys and plastic fruits and vegetables on display in the grocery area. Others were fascinated by the vintage wood stove in the kitchen and all the plates, gadgets, and cookware on display there. Many commented on the old switchboard in the telephone display and took note of the original signs that once hung on the store back in days gone by.

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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Throughout the 3-hour event, there were baked goods being offered for sale in the Old Grocery. As usual, Society members did a wonderful job of preparing the scrumptious snacks we had for purchase. Chocolate chip cookies, peanut butter cookies and blossoms, molasses cookies, fudge, brownies, blondies, muffins and whoopie pies were all available and popular with event visitors.

Attendees were encouraged to bring a picnic lunch and some lawn chairs so they could comfortably enjoy the very first Concert on the Green. The Generations Barbershop Quartet did not disappoint. They performed a number of old-fashioned tunes in perfect four-part harmony including "Daisy, Daisy," "You Are My Sunshine," and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling."

At the Village School, schoolmarm Paula Sparks enjoyed entertaining students of all ages, shapes, and sizes. Guests were captivated by the bird



*Above: The interior of the renovated Old Grocery
Photos courtesy of Bruce Small
Right: Schoolmarm Paula Sparks enjoyed sharing the one-room schoolhouse with a variety of "scholars"*



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prints on the wall, the types of lessons that would have been taught, the seating arrangements, and the potbelly stove. They enjoyed hearing about the dunce cap and its origin and one little girl even got to play teacher for a bit.



Village blacksmith Sam Simonson (left) discussing his trade with an event visitor

Blacksmith Sam Simonson opened the blacksmith shop for the first time. He explained what a blacksmith of the period would have done during his day. He also discussed

future plans for the building, which should be complete by the end of next summer.

People were invited to take a sneak peek into the South Windham Library as well. Steward Carol Manchester was on hand to talk about the museum that is in the works. There was also a coffee station set up there if people were feeling a bit of a chill from the blustery winds that were blowing during the day.

Overall, the event was a wonderful success. It was the perfect ending to a season of hard work. Seeing so many people from Windham enjoying the efforts of our Society members was very rewarding indeed.

THE OPEN HOUSE
AND CONCERT ON THE GREEN
MADE FOR A HARVEST OF HAPPINESS AND HOPE
THAT THE FUTURE WILL ONLY GET BETTER
AS OUR LITTLE VILLAGE
CONTINUES TO FLOURISH AND GROW.

Volunteers Who Worked on the Old Grocery Renovation

Old Grocery Steward Linda Lunt would like to thank the following people who volunteered their efforts in some way to help her to make the Old Grocery renovation a success:

Lee Allen, Bob Bailey, Tom Bailey, Madison Bailey, Cameron Balley, Haddon Boyle, Brian Brigham, Kevin Carignan, Susan Carignan, Pierre Caouette, Becky Delaware, Bruce Elder, Cindy Elder, Susan Garrigan, Buster Gilman, Emma Gilman, Izzy Gilman, Kevin Graham, Reggie Grant, Lynne Jones, Morgan Jones, Diane Lavigne, Karen Lougee, Penny Loura, Walter Lunt, Carol Manchester, Marc Miller, Rachel Miller, Ed Milsop, Vicki Milsop, Haley Pal, Ray Philpot, Gary Plummer, Dorothy Samuelson, Steve Schneider, Sam Simonson, Susan Simonson, David Sparks, Paula Sparks, and Kelly Williams.

Linda would also like to thank Cindy Strout, Izzy Gilman, and Sue Nichols who helped her in making the green and white aprons worn by the Society members working at the event.

Summer Highlights By Haley Pal

The Windham Historical Society was given two significant donations by Great Falls Construction Company of Gorham. On July 12 at the Windham Town Council meeting, the Society was presented with the horns and a sign from the old Windham Fire Department building on Main Street in South Windham. Great Falls Construction is currently doing demolition work to the building's interior, getting it ready to become a brew pub and restaurant that will help to revitalize the Little Falls section of town.



The sign from the old South Windham Fire Station



The Historical Society booth at Summerfest—the Wheel of History was a hit

The Society's Education Liaison Walter Lunt and Society member and former South Windham fireman Ernie Nichols attended the meeting and accepted the artifacts for the Society. Ernie also talked about the horns and how they alerted town firefighters to blazes in the community. Where the fires were located was communicated by a certain number of whistles from the horn. Both pieces will be part of an exhibit in the South Windham Library when renovations to the building are complete.

Another highlight of the summer was the Society's return to Summerfest. Society members Paula Sparks, Kevin Graham, and Haley Pal manned the booth. Many visitors stopped by to spin the Wheel of History, the booth's main attraction. Visitors would spin the wheel and be asked a trivia question that corresponded to the number they landed on. If the question was answered correctly, a small prize was awarded. The booth also featured a "Show and Tell" where people tried to guess what various household gadgets were used for. There was also a free book raffle and one other crowd-pleasing feature. Everyone was thrilled to try the delicious homemade baked goods provided by Linda Lunt, Susan Simonson, Paula Sparks, and Sue Graham, all free of charge. For any pooches that stopped over to say hello, Haley Pal made homemade dog treats. It was a long day, but a rewarding one, reintroducing the Society to the public and showing them that you can have fun with history.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER FALL 2022

Hello Members!

It's so hard to believe that we are in the last quarter of 2022! The momentum at the Village Green has been unbelievable! It will be very difficult to slow it down once the colder weather arrives.

As I look back over this past year, I am amazed by the members and volunteers of this Society and how much they have achieved in getting the buildings closer to being open to the public! It is a mammoth task and the Society is very fortunate to have individuals on their team who are so tirelessly committed to making the Village Green a destination place, full of Windham's rich history! Each of the building stewards has spent a great deal of time preparing and executing their plans as they near completion with help from support staff. They have worked hard, stayed focused and (rightfully so) are quite proud of their accomplishments.

A sincere thank you to the stewards, members, and volunteers for all you have done throughout 2022! Your hard work will be enjoyed by the Windham community for many years to come!

Susan Simonson,
President, Windham Historical Society

Annual Meeting and Election of Officers

By Susan Simonson

Monday, October 24

5:30 - 7 p.m.

Little Meetinghouse in North Windham

It's been a couple of years since we've all come together for the Society's Annual Meeting. We're happy to report that we will be having a get-together this year. It won't be the usual potluck supper, but it will be a means of gathering where we can catch up and share new plans with all of you.

You're encouraged to bring a picnic-style meal to enjoy while hearing about the Society's latest activities and upcoming plans for 2023. Desserts will be provided for you along with coffee and other beverages.

Election of the Society's officers will also be held that evening.

The list of officers who have agreed to continue on in their current roles are:

Susan Simonson, President

Sam Simonson, Vice President

Karen Lougee, Secretary

Linda Lunt, Treasurer

Penny Loura, Curator/Historian

Carol Manchester, Membership Chair

Kevin Graham, Building/Maintenance Chair

We hope many of you will be able to join us.

We've missed your smiling faces and the conversations that bring us all together. We'll look forward to a nice visit with you. The Windham Historical Society is back at last!

CALLING ALL BAKERS!



Election Day
★ BAKE SALE ★

With many COVID restrictions being dropped and most people being vaccinated by now, the Windham Historical Society has decided it's about time to do a fundraiser. And what better way to raise some funds than by having an Election Day Bake Sale this year on **NOVEMBER 8** at the Windham High School Gym. Whether your specialty is cookies, candy, brownies, or whoopie pies, we're putting out the call for baked goods.

Contact Susan Simonson at 671-8428 if you'd like more information.

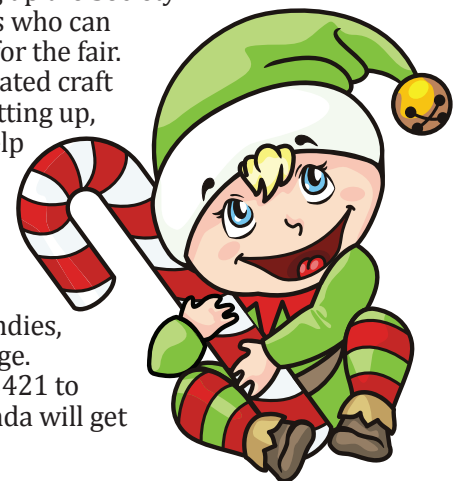
SEEKING SANTA'S ELVES

By Linda Lunt

It's the most wonderful time of the year again and Santa is in need of some helpers!

Windham Historical Society Annual Christmas Fair
Saturday, November 12, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
at Friend's Church

Linda Lunt is once again heading up the Society team and is looking for members who can contribute either time or goods for the fair. Some things needed include donated craft items, baked goods, help with setting up, working a shift at the fair, and help with tearing down when the fair is over. This year's event will feature homemade craft items, ornaments, snowmen, angels, gnomes, pillows, hats, mittens, and bric-a-brac, plus cookies, candies, breads, pies, and homemade fudge. Contact Linda Lunt at 207-655-3421 to sign up. Leave a message and Linda will get back in touch with you.



By Penny Loura

- An employee of the Windham Correction Center, **Karen Yeaton**, was trying to determine if 7 High Street is part of any historic site. After talking with other members of the Society, it was determined to have no relevant historic significance.
- **Carol Labarge** is researching her house on Tandberg Trail in hopes of obtaining a grant for restoration of a 100-year-old farmhouse. I referred her to the Maine Registry of Deeds if she was looking for help in writing a grant.
- **Muriel Jackson** is looking for burial information on Hannah Powers Osgood who passed away in 1853. I looked in our archives and came out empty-handed. Dolby, Segree said they do not have records that go back that far.
- Via a phone call to Susan Simonson, **Patty Buck** requested a picture of a train going by Blue Seal Feeds in Windham. Sue found the photo and sent it to her.
- **Sandy Truslow** was wondering how Atherton Hill got its name. The Town is working to preserve this property. The 1870 map doesn't give this info. I can only assume it was an Atherton who lived there, but which one, I cannot tell. Maybe someone in the Atherton family knows, and if so, would be kind enough to write to the Society with some information.
- **Peter Langella** wanted specific directions to the Chief Polin battle site. He was given directions, but was told it is on private property and he would need to talk with the landowner for permission to explore the site.
- **Stephen Thompson** wanted to know if we had any information on Windham's Trotting Park. This was a follow-up to an article by Walter Lunt. I had nothing to offer him other than poster material.
- **Ben Smith** asked for help in putting together a virtual walking tour of South Windham and Gorham as part of the 1998 Revitalization Plan. The Society will be working with him on this.
- **Jennifer Widmark** of Historic New England inquired as to whether the Society would be interested in a Chippendale chair from the Boston area that was originally presented to the Parson Smith House by the Merrills of Cumberland, Maine. I accepted the donation and will drive to York to transfer ownership.
- **Michelle Josephson** was looking for a photo of Earl Clifford Mains, but I was unable to locate one.
- **Wayne Roma** was in search of a photo of "Elmside" which was located where KFC is today. I found an aerial view in a newspaper clipping and sent it to him.
- **Alice Cash** was curious to know if we had any information about a drowning that took place in the 1930s while she was on an outing. She later wrote back to let me know she found an article about the incident in a New York newspaper.
- **Jennifer Legere** was hoping to find some clear, crisp photos of the Windham Public Works building. We only had newspaper clippings, but nothing that could be hung on a wall.

Junior History Club Happenings

By Paula Sparks

Another summer has come to an end and it's time for the Junior History Club to return to its meetings. With school back to normal, the Middle School held its Open House for parents and students and our History Club leaders were there to greet them. It was a wonderful opportunity to talk with parents and students about the club and the Historical Society.



With the enticement of candy prizes, kiddos spun the Wheel of History. Six students signed up to be Junior History members at the Open House and two more have returned their sign-up sheets.

We have several interesting history activities planned for the upcoming year, including music, dance, toys, games, and more. If you know a Middle School student who would be interested in joining the club, sign-up sheets are available at the Middle School office or they can ask their Social Studies teacher for one. Then we can all strap on our seatbelts and get ready for some more fun adventures into history!



The Junior History Club at the Middle School Open House

Windham Then & Now

The Pleasant River Grange

By Haley Pal

Sitting high on a hill overlooking the Windham Rotary is a structure that has considerable history. It was once a hub of social and political activity in town and was an active community center for over a century.

The Pleasant River Grange Number 35 was organized in 1874 at the height of the Grange Movement when membership surpassed 50,000 people. The first Grange Hall in Windham was located in the Pleasant River House, a hotel that was once situated at Morrell's Corner, now the Windham Rotary. Later, meetings were held at the Moody house, just down the road from where the Pleasant River House had been before the building burned to the ground. After that, meetings were held at Kennard School, a small one-room schoolhouse located on Route 202, and then at the Masonic Hall on Windham Hill.

In 1885, the Pleasant River Grange Hall was built and this is the building we see today. Here local farmers would gather to discuss issues affecting all of them, trying to find solutions to problems that would be of benefit to the entire farming community. Buying supplies in bulk and establishing grain elevators for storage, as well as educational programs designed to improve farming methods, would have been matters decided by and presented to the membership of the Grange. At the time of its construction, the building was located at Foster's Corner.

Over time, the Grange became a place where political action would be discussed and taken. Due to the sensitive nature of some of the information shared, the Grange adopted rituals from Freemasonry. They held secret meetings that required a password to attend, wore special garments, and made oaths to keep their activities secret.

The Pleasant River Grange Hall building was moved to its current location by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal agency, during the Great Depression. Members attended suppers there at that time and people from the community were also invited. There were dances on the second floor with local musicians, special programs with home movies, and guest speakers. Meetings were still being held at the Hall in 1976 when there were 80 active members, but by 1994, membership had dropped so much that the Pleasant River Grange was disbanded.



Pleasant River Grange was a community center in days gone by



Pleasant River Grange is home to Maine Tax Professionals today

Programs

By Carol Manchester

The program committee welcomes suggestions for next year's offerings. If you know of a presenter/topic that may be of interest to Windham Historical Society, please let us know. We would need the topic, presenter's name, and contact information. Similarly, if you wish to offer a program yourself, we would like to hear from you. Some topics of interest you could discuss include an historical event, old-style crafts and methods, unusual antique items or ephemera you may have among your treasures, stories based on letters in the attic, personal topic research, or any other ideas you might have. For example, *A History of Early Roads and Service Station Roadmaps in Maine* would be an interesting topic.

We hope to hear from you and look forward to offering another year of fun and informative programs in 2023.



Donations

By Karen Lougee

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

- **Nancy Beaupre** donated to the general fund.
- We received three beautiful, handmade oak display cases made by **Steve Melanson** for the Society. Two of the cases will be used in the Old Town House Museum to display antique rifles. The third case will be installed in The Village School on the Village Green to display lathing, which are the only remaining pieces from Windham's first one-room schoolhouse.
- **Hall Implement** provided the yearly maintenance on the Society's John Deere tractor free of charge.
- **Diane and Jim Glantz** made a donation to help purchase fabric to make aprons for Village Green volunteers to be worn at the Society's Open House and Concert on the Green on September 24.

Curator's Corner

By Penny Loura

The Windham Historical Society was given a number of interesting artifacts over the past few months. Here are some of the wonderful pieces we received:

- **Terry Saunders** donated a post vise used in blacksmithing.
- **Terry Christy** gave the Society a large poster with a State of Maine map from the year 1798, a large map dated 1852 with stagecoach stops/taverns marked on it, a book titled *Mish and Friends Maine Adventure* by C. Johnson, a *Downeast* magazine article about "Sebago Lake and What's Down There?", three books about Maine, a hand pump, and a saw with Hawkes Cider House painted on it. He also provided a newspaper article from the *Courier Free Press* entitled "Windham's Needs Assessed, Another Elementary School Weighed."
- **The Windham Public Library** generously gifted the Society with beautiful pen and ink drawings of Friends Meeting House, Hawkes Store, and Windham Hill Church; a wooden puzzle-like structure of Babb's Bridge and a framed matted photo of the covered bridge.
- **Susan and Sam Simonson** donated a set of dry nesting containers.
- A collection of three Fairy concretions from the banks of the Presumpscot River were donated by **Paula Sparks**.
- While excavating at Gates Restaurant, **Don Rich** uncovered an elongated, smooth stone, approximately 16" and has given it to the Society.
- **Linda Lunt** donated a collection of four wooden shoe forms that will be used for a display in the Old Grocery, the Village Green building of which Linda is steward.
- While cleaning up the one-room schoolhouse, a box of letters from Roger Reeves to his parents dated October 1959 – January 1962 were found and are now a part of our collections.
- **Bill and Jane Diamond** gave the Society an antique low-sitting rocking chair, a corner chair, and a single chair without arms.
- Finally, I donated a booklet entitled "76th Annual Exhibition Cumberland Farmers Club Fair" dated 1947.



Hawkes Store

CONDOLENCES

By Carol Manchester

On June 16, 2022, lifetime member **Marylee Dodge**, 91, passed away in her home in Gorham where she had spent many years transforming the landscape into an oasis of flowers, bushes, and trees. Marylee was an avid gardener and outdoor enthusiast. Historic preservation and environmental conservation were among her community interests while skiing, fishing, hunting, and antiquing were family interests.

Also in June, **Norma Jean Kruger**, 81, wife of lifetime member Carl Kruger, passed away. Raising sheep on the family farm logically led to an interest in fiber arts and eventually into spinning, knitting, weaving, and quilting.

We learned only recently that lifetime member **Sally Foy**, 73, died June 10, 2019 in hospice care in Scarborough. She held memberships in the Maine state chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Colonial Dames of America. She had the honor of being invited to Walker's Point to present former President George H.W. Bush, and posthumously his wife Barbara, with the Community Service Award from the DAR.

To the friends and families of Marylee Dodge, Norma Jean Kruger, and Sally Foy, Windham Historical Society sends thoughts of comfort.

Membership Corner

By Carol Manchester

We welcome four new members to the Windham Historical Society family—Lee Allen and Steve Melanson of Windham and Steve Schneider and Linda Winton of Falmouth. We hope to see you at some of the programs or events.

October is the month for annual or family renewal memberships and your sustained support is always appreciated. You can fill out the form below, or on the website, windhamhistorical.org. The cost is \$15 for an individual annual membership or \$25 for an annual family membership. Renewals are due by October 31.

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: _____

Address: _____

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Email your newsletter?

Yes

No

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