

# Windham Historical Society Quarterly Review

Winter 2020

1820



2020

## MAINE 200

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## Maine Statehood & Windham

By Carol Manchester

In July 1819, residents of the Province of Maine traveled to their designated town sites to decide for or against Maine's statehood. The people of Windham voted against separation from Massachusetts at that time and they were not the only ones. In Cumberland County, Durham, Freeport, and North Yarmouth also opposed separation and Minot was within five votes of agreeing with them.

Observing *The Maine Atlas* from this period, one discovers that each of these towns included an important nearby river that allowed these interior communities (Freeport being an exception of sorts) to carry on their independence, commerce, and industry without feeling the need to support the larger coastal cities where independence and statehood were embraced. However, in the final determination, the yeas from qualifying voting towns, districts, and plantations was 17,091 to 7,132 nays, seemingly across party lines.

Discussions for separation from Massachusetts began as early as 1785. There were various arguments in favor of it, among them that Massachusetts did not aid the eastern frontier from British occupation. Portland's wealthy merchants, farmers, speculators, ministers, and others with commercial interests maintained that the distance to Massachusetts made legal proceedings arduous to attend or conduct. There would be greater representation in Congress if Maine were a separate state. It was also believed state government would be smaller and less

expensive. On the frontier, families were concerned over growing tensions around land claims and escalating debts. These tensions sometimes resulted in the militia being called to put down mob action.

In 1797, Windham's eligible men voted 16 **For** an 6 **Against** Separation, the only time Windham voted in this way. Possibly, patriotism, George Washington as President, and the American Revolution were still fresh on their minds and this influenced their votes. By the early 1800s, more and more people in the remote settlements were in favor of Democrat-Republican political management rather than siding with the Federalists who represented the more elite, older, well-established citizens of the time.

Jefferson's 1807 embargo greatly affected shipping along the Maine coast and port city merchants and shippers felt abandoned by Massachusetts. Also, Methodist, Freewill Baptist, Shaker, Universalist, and other alternative denominations were gaining ground in inland communities and those subscribers were becoming resentful about the provocative compulsory ministerial tax imposed by Massachusetts and the Congregationalists.

Interior towns began to favor separation while coastal towns did not, until the Coasting Law of 1789 was repealed in 1819. This law required ships along the coast to port and register at each state to which it was not directly contiguous. Prior to the law's revision, New Hampshire was Maine's only contiguous state were it to become independent. From an economic view, it benefitted shipping commerce to remain part of Massachusetts, for then there was a contiguous connection all the way to New York. While the fee was minimal, the time it took to enter each port was a nuisance and as such, the Coastal Law became the backbone of the anti-separationist logic for decades.

With the repeal of the Coastal Law, the yeas on July 26, 1819 and the writing of the Maine Constitution, Maine was ready for statehood – until the objections of Kentuckian Henry Clay. In a slaveholding power play, the bills for Maine and Missouri statehood were entwined although there was no justification regarding the merit of Maine's application to do so.

After debate, disagreements, and political maneuvering, on March 15, 1820, Congress voted to admit Maine as the 23rd state tied to the conditions of the Missouri Compromise, but not before four Maine congressional representatives would oppose statehood on moral

(Continued top of page 2)

grounds regarding the Missouri Compromise. Two would support the vote and one would abstain. Many of Maine's leadership were angered by the compromise and some thought that Maine's admission ought to be postponed for a year rather than allowing Maine to transport the odious, anti-republican principle of slavery into Missouri.

Indirectly, repeal of the Missouri Compromise would be among the reasons that Maine boys were willing to march off to war in 1861. But that's another story.

*Recommended reading for more information about Maine's long, contentious, and compromised journey to statehood and where much of this article was researched, include **Maine Becomes a State** by Ronald F. Banks and **Maine Memory Network's website**, <http://bicentennial.mainememory.net/page/4610/display.html> where you'll find easy-to-read segments about the process. **Windham in the Past** by Samuel Dole and **Memories of Windham** by Kay Soldier are both good sources as well and are available at the Windham Historical Society. **Walter Lunt** has a series in the **Windham Eagle** that is another wonderful source in clarifying what happened along Maine's road to statehood.*

One final point of interest is that, according to our former Windham Town Historian, the late Kay Soldier, eligible voters in Windham would have probably voted at "the first proper church structure" which was located at the corner of Webb and Chute Roads in South Windham. Built in 1795 and moved to River Road In 1861, it's believed the church was taken apart, rebuilt, and converted into a barn that was eventually owned by Cummings and Elizabeth Lothrop. It became the property of CMP and was leveled in 1959.



## The Society's Junior History Club is Up and Running!

By Paula Sparks

Led by Society members Paula Sparks, Walter Lunt, and Brian Brigham, the Jr. History Club held its first meeting in October. Six very energetic and excited students from grades 6 – 8 attend meetings twice a month, and although there have been some school cancellations and rescheduling, attendance has been very steady.

Holding an after-school History Club with middle schoolers can be challenging.

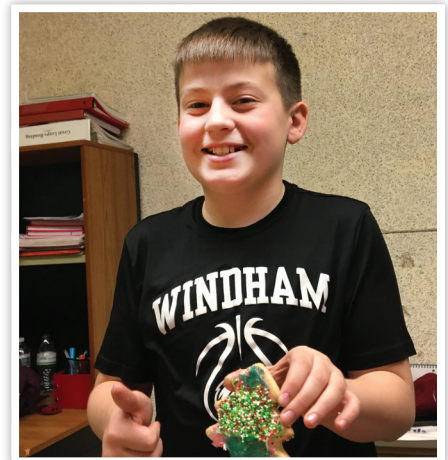
Kids who have been sitting still in school all day are like popcorn in a pan, bouncing around in different directions at all times. There is also technology to tempt them, but these kids are there because they chose to be and enjoy learning by doing. It's what makes history fun.

Playing games, having snacks, cooking, crafting, going on field trips, having guest speakers, and even a little use of Google now and then, seems to engage the kids. Middle schoolers don't have many opportunities for hands-on learning and including them in the meetings has helped make learning a treat. Both members and parents report they are really enjoying the Club.

To date, there have been eight meetings covering different topics. In our first meeting, we talked about some ideas the Sr. Society members had and also what the Jr. members were interested in doing. We used this information to develop a ballot where club members used ranked choice voting to decide the preferences of the group as we move forward.

So far, the Jr. Historians have explored maps to learn a bit about who may have lived where they live now in times past. At Halloween, Club members learned that in the olden days, bobbing for apples was thought to predict who one might marry and they also heard a few Windham ghost stories. They made popcorn balls and played trivia games and learned about Halloween activities and treats from the past, as well as the history of some of their favorite candies.

In November, while playing a true-or-false game about national elections, the Jr. Historians were quite surprised to discover that there were times when a person couldn't vote unless they were a landowner, that voting was not always by secret ballot, and that voters in Windham originally



Jr. History Club members Ty Stahle (top) and Delia Tomkus (below) show off some of their handiwork

show off some of their favorite candies.

### 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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voted against becoming independent from Massachusetts.

Christmas traditions were the topic in December. The Jr. Historians had fun stringing popcorn and cranberries for their Christmas trees, decorating sugar cookies and drinking mulled cider while playing *History of Christmas Jeopardy*. Another meeting explored the Native Americans who were living in Maine when the first Europeans arrived in New Marblehead. After an interesting discussion with Walter Lunt, the Jr. Historians made storytelling birch bark maps; sampled "3 Sisters Soup" made of beans, corn, and squash; and played a Wabanaki dice game using stones and sticks. More recently, the Club sampled popcorn, sunflower seeds, and jerky and tried their luck at doing "quillwork" on birch bark.

The Jr. Historians can also teach some of us old dogs a few new tricks. For example, if you don't understand how to use the Society's website to access the newly archived material available there, one of the Jr. Historians may be able to help you out. Susan Simonson presented the Club an introduction to the site and now they can help explain it to you.

The Club is looking forward to many more exciting activities in 2020. A few of their plans include participating in the Bicentennial photo scavenger hunt, creating a Windham history timeline, being a part of a Society program, making and burying a time capsule, working at a booth at the Bicentennial Bazaar, and making a float for the Summerfest parade.

Would you like to be involved with the Jr. History Club? If you'd like to volunteer; do a short presentation; or teach a historical game, craft, or other activity, please let us know by calling the Society at 892-1433 and leaving a message. This is a very special and rewarding way to introduce history to the younger generation and have so much fun along the way.

## Village Green News

By Haley Pal

The Village Green is quiet during these cold winter months, but that doesn't mean there isn't work going on behind the scenes. The most exciting news on the horizon will be the moving of the Old Grocery onto the Green when the weather warms. We have raised the necessary funds to finally make this happen, thanks in part large part to the efforts of Society member Dorothy Samuelson. Once moved, Dorothy and her Grocery committee will start on cleaning out the building and getting it ready to be set up to look like it would have in 1898. This building will make a very special addition to the Village Green and will truly help us to bring Windham's history to life.

Our lovely Gazebo looked even more lovely at Christmas time when Sam Simonson and Kevin Graham were kind enough to string lights that made the Village Green glow for the holidays. The Gazebo will be the centerpiece of the Bicentennial Bazaar that is planned for June 6. Dave Rowe will be giving a concert in the Gazebo that people can enjoy after having a picnic lunch that they bring along and then some homemade desserts and other goodies provided by Society members.

The exterior of the blacksmith shop is complete. As the weather warms, more work will be done on the interior's completion. Society members have been donating materials such as a metal lathe, a sharpening/grinding stone, and a tool chest that will be useful as we move forward in the coming months.

Once the snow melts, start keeping a watchful eye on the Green. As the seasons change, so will the look of our living history village. We are hopeful 2020 will be a most amazing year!



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER WINTER 2020

### Dear Members,

Please join me in welcoming a new decade as well as a New Year!

The Year 2020 is the beginning of lots happening at the Society. Most importantly, the Society, the town, and the state are celebrating Maine's 200th birthday. Keep a look out on our website for the many events celebrating this milestone in our community. Be watchful of things happening statewide as well.

We are gearing up for another big year! The largest project for 2020 is moving the Old Grocery to the Village Green! Plans are underway now and signs of progress will be apparent as the weather and ground warms up!

We have many interesting programs lined up for this year beginning in March and running through September. They will feature a wide variety of topics with fascinating stories to be told.

There is also work being done by volunteers to continue to improve our One-Room Schoolhouse experience, the record digitization project continues to move steadily along, and The Junior History Club is bustling. I had the good fortune to attend one of their meetings. What a wonderful and committed group of young adults have joined our fold! Finally, the National Guard approached us this winter for a list of projects they can help us with in 2021 and 2022. And yes, we do have a list for them!

There are so many projects in the works that are just waiting to be completed and always so much work to do. We would love some more volunteers to help to keep them moving along. If you're interested in giving a hand on any specific one, please contact me directly at [ssimons1@maine.rr.com](mailto:ssimons1@maine.rr.com) or 207-671-8428 for more details.

Stay tuned! There is much more exciting news to come throughout the coming year!

**Susan Simonson,**  
*President, Windham Historical Society*



# We're Planning an Old-Fashioned Bicentennial Bazaar!

By Haley Pal

*In conjunction with the Town of Windham's Bicentennial Committee, the Windham Historical Society will be celebrating this year's anniversary of Maine's statehood by hosting an Old-Fashioned Bicentennial Bazaar and Concert on June 6 on the Village Green.*

The event will begin at noon and run until 4 p.m. Visitors will be encouraged to bring a picnic lunch and then enjoy dessert in a nostalgic country fair atmosphere. They can also browse the Village Green grounds where they will meet a schoolmarm or schoolmaster in The Village School, see an exhibit in the Old Town House Museum, and hopefully, watch a blacksmith at work

at the new Blacksmith Shop. Everyone from the Society working the booths and buildings will be dressed in period costume to give the public a glimpse of the living history experience we are trying to create at the Village Green.

At 2 p.m., the Windham Third Grade Chorus will perform a song composed by Rick Charette in honor of the occasion in the Gazebo followed by Maine musician Dave Rowe who will entertain with musical pieces reflective of Maine's history. The event will conclude when the concert is over.

We're hoping to present an authentic country bazaar right out of the pages of *Anne of Green Gables*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and *The Waltons*. **Some of the festive booths proposed are:**

- **Pastry Booth**  
-- Cakes, pies, and cookies
- **Candy Booth**  
-- Homemade candies and fudge
- **Rainbow-Maker Booth**  
-- Crystal prisms that create rainbows when the sun shines, just like in the movie *Pollyanna*, will be on sale
- **Posie Booth**  
-- Donated plants and flowers
- **Possible Ice Cream Booth**  
-- We will approach a local ice cream shop to see if they would participate in some way
- **Possible Dunking Booth**  
-- If we can get a member to agree to being dunked
- **Game Booth (or two)**  
-- Possibly "Go Fish for a Prize" or a Ring-Toss— Society member ideas welcome
- **Lemonade Stand**  
-- Hopefully manned by the Jr. History Club
- **Bicentennial Calendar Booth**  
-- Maybe we could have a Bicentennial Trivia Quiz at this booth as a draw. We could give out keyrings as a prize to people who get all the answers right.

This is a rather ambitious endeavor and we will need more than our usual number of volunteers to help make it successful. Please consider manning a booth or possibly building a game booth, baking, making candy or crafts, being a parking attendant, helping make old-fashioned costumes, whatever you do best. We'll need all the help we can get. If you're interested, call the Society at 892-1433 or email Carol Manchester ([dcmanchester@msn.com](mailto:dcmanchester@msn.com)) or Haley Pal ([haleypal@aol.com](mailto:haleypal@aol.com)). This is a perfect opportunity to get involved, mingle with your neighbors, and have some fun with history!

## Meet the Society's New Vice-President: Sam Simonson

Sam has been a member of the Society for over ten years, helping us in many ways. He was involved with the construction of both the Blacksmith Shop and Gazebo on the Village Green and for several summers, he kept the lawn freshly mowed at the Old Grocery Store.

A real jack of all trades, Sam grew up on the grounds of the Maine Correctional Center where his father was the Business Manager. He delivered newspapers in the South Windham/Little Falls area and is a past President of the Windham Alumni Association! Sam and his wife, Susan, the Society's President, resided in Windham for 18 years before making a move to Westbrook.

Sam is also a retired South Portland Firefighter where he served for 37 years. He was a part-time spare school bus driver for the City of Westbrook, allowing him the

privilege of driving his three children to swim meets and other after-school activities. He continues his driving for the Town of Falmouth, enjoying relationships he's established with many students and their families.

Sam's hobby as a blacksmith is another asset he brings to the Society. He has been involved in numerous demonstrations on our behalf, as well as at Merrifield Farm's Maple Sugar weekend and at the Cumberland Fair, both attended by many local folks.



**Please join us as we welcome our new Vice-President, Sam Simonson!**



## Bicentennial Calendar Sale

If you haven't purchased a 2020 Bicentennial calendar yet, this is the time to do it. We're now offering these beautifully illustrated poster calendars at a discounted rate.

They make wonderful gifts and they are the perfect way to commemorate Maine's 200 years of statehood.

**NOW: \$10 EACH!**  
(Frames \$8 each)

Call the Society at 892-1433 to arrange for delivery or pickup.

## Fall Fundraisers

### The Society's Election Day Bake Sale: A Sweet Success!

As usual, our Historical Society members stepped up to the plate and presented a table filled with delicious baked goods to be sold at the November 5 election. The dessert selection was varied and offered a little something special for just about everyone's tastes. Some Bicentennial calendars were sold that day as well! The grand total in fundraising dollars came to \$732. Thank you to all members who contributed their culinary skills and took the time to participate in this successful event.



### Holiday Fair Brings in More-Than-Fair Results!

The Society's 2019 Annual Holiday Fair had a new home this year. Rather than holding it at the Society's Old Town House Museum as in years past, the Society teamed up with Friend's Church to put on a joint venture. Christmas crafts and gifts, knit items, holly and berry bunches, candy, baked goods, books, and Bicentennial calendars were for sale in a festive yuletide display. We were able to raise an impressive \$1,296! Thank you to Linda Lunt for her fine coordination as event chair

and to all the members who donated their time and talents at such a busy time of year.

## 2020 PROGRAMS

By Susan Simonson

### MARCH 23 • 7 p.m. at the Little Meetinghouse

**Anne Gass presents "Patriotism, War and Woman Suffrage"** – In February 1917, voting rights activists were jubilant when the Maine legislature approved the state's first-ever referendum on woman suffrage. The vote was set for September 10, but even as Maine suffragists prepared their campaign to convince their men that women deserved the right to vote, the country was preparing to enter the war in Europe. The wave of patriotism that followed the US joining the war collided with women's efforts in Maine and nationally. It also resulted in reversals in workers' rights and substantially eroded civil rights for women. This is sure to be an engaging talk that will also include historic slides.

### APRIL 27 • 7 p.m. at the Little Meetinghouse

**The lead archaeologist of the 2019 River Road dig, John Mosher,** presents a slide show and talk on the final stage to uncover and document the old Province fort before modern-day road improvements destroy and cover the remains forever. Artifacts from the dig will also be on display to make for a truly fascinating presentation.

### MAY 18 • 7 p.m. at the Little Meetinghouse

**Windham Historical Society's schoolmarm, Paula Sparks,** joined by some Jr. History Club members, will present "An Hour in a Day at The Village School." This will be a fun way to see what learning was like back in the late 1890s.

### JUNE 22 • 7 p.m. at the Little Meetinghouse

**Local historian John Manoush will present "A History of the Foods We Eat."** He will focus on foods from prehistoric time up to the present and he will also discuss food preservation and the types of things early New Englanders would have eaten. This interesting program will give you a lot of food for thought.

### JULY 25 • 1 p.m. at the Little Meetinghouse

**Marty Engstrom, "Marty on the Mountain,"** the former WMTW weather forecaster stationed on Mount Washington, will give a talk and show slides that detail the weather team's weekly efforts to get up and down the mountain to go to work. He will also explain the day-to-day duties of the team and provide a realistic glimpse of what life is like on the 6,288.2-foot New Hampshire precipice.

### AUGUST 29

Program is currently "Under Construction." More details to come in the Spring newsletter.

### SEPTEMBER 20 • 1 p.m.

**A tour of the Mayberry Cemetery on Park Road** (off of Pope Road). The talk and tour will highlight a few of Windham's early settlers, including the Mayberry, Haskell, and Senter families.

# Windham Then and Now

## The Town Farm Farmhouse

By Haley Pal



*The Old Town Farmhouse in the past and as it looks today*

For our first *Windham Then and Now* of 2020, I wanted to focus on a structure that was built in 1820 and that has a rather unique history. Two hundred years ago, the Windham Town Farm was established to serve the needs of the feeble and poor of the community. An existing farm near Windham Center was purchased and the original farmhouse was torn down and replaced with a larger, multi-room dwelling where the residents would reside. Most people who moved into the Town farmhouse were widows, unwed mothers, veterans, and the elderly.

In exchange for room and board, they were responsible for helping with the daily tasks that came along with farm living. The farm itself was run by a superintendent who was responsible for raising crops, caring for livestock, harvesting firewood, and repairing buildings. His wife would be in charge of food preparation, doing laundry, caring for the sick, and keeping the house clean. In summer, she would also have the tasks of preserving food and helping harvest the crops.

The more able-bodied Town Farm residents might help with such things as dairy production, planting and harvesting crops, spitting wood, and building repair. The less-able could help the superintendent's wife with light cleaning, dusting, or with general kitchen and gardening chores.

Another group of people who would sometimes spend a night at the farmhouse would be transients, known as "bums" or "tramps" who might come knocking on the door in search of work and a comfortable place to stay. The farm would provide a cot and a hot meal in exchange for help with chores like sawing and splitting wood.

The Old Town farmhouse remained a home for Windham's unfortunate for over 100 years. Its doors closed in 1938 when only two residents remained. The farmhouse still exists today and can be found on Town Farm Road.

## Membership Corner

By Carol Manchester

Windham Historical Society welcomes Jeffrey Frechette as its newest member to the Society. Jeff has returned to Windham and is a life member. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming programs and events in 2020.

The organizational year runs from October to October and this is a gentle reminder to those who wish to continue their membership but still need to send in their dues. Your dues help support the activities the Society offers during the year. They enable us to share the rich history of Windham through our many programs, events, projects, and Village Green development.

*Thank you to all those who have renewed their membership and to those who intend to do so.*

## DONATIONS

**Hall Implement Company**  
made a donation for the Society's  
lawn tractor's repair.

**Carol Robinson, Cyndi Robash, Margie Boislard,  
Joan Lonnsdale, and Julianne Moore**  
made donations in memory of  
Genevieve Coraline (Dow) True.

**Glenice Stover**  
made a donation towards the Grocery Store move.

**Mr. and Mrs. Robert Brackett**  
made a general donation.

*Thank you all for your generosity.*

## Queries

By Penny Loura

- **Mel Parker** is in the process of purchasing the old Poor Farm at 22 Town Farm Road. He is looking for historical details and photos associated with the house. I pulled a few articles and photos, but he has not picked them up.
- **Mark Swett** is hoping to find information about the type of transportation people would have used if they were Westbrook residents who worked at Robinson's Mill at Mallison Falls in South Windham. He also wanted to know if the workers would have taken the train to South Windham and then walked to the mill from there and wondered if we had employment records for the mill. I told him they probably would have walked and that we have no employment records at this time.
- **Kristen Long** wanted information on the Keddy Mill during the 1940s. I met with her and an associate at the Town office and I did find some of what she was looking for.
- **Nicole Clark** was wondering if artifacts she's digging up near her home were Indian relics. I told her I really had no way of knowing.
- **Elias Reed** had a photo of the Edmund Boody family which he graciously gave to the Society.
- **Mark Leslie** asked if we had any information on the Ku Klux Klan, specifically during the 1920s. Unfortunately we have nothing on the subject.
- **Chelsea Mitchell**, an attorney from Missouri, was looking for the whereabouts of Roger and/or Edith Lambert who apparently lived in Windham during the 1970s. I searched, but found nothing about these people.
- Historian and author **Elizabeth Letts** was seeking information about a paralyzed doctor who practiced near Windham Center. She is in the process of researching a book whose subject was treated by this doctor before moving to California in the 1960s. I put her in touch with Lloyd Bennett who was Dr. L. Bennett's son.
- **Will Fellis** wanted anything of historic interest associated with 21 Main Street in South Windham. I was able to find a couple of old photos for him.
- **Vicki Yager** was searching for a marriage record on Cyrus Hawkes and Mary Pinkham. I told her we don't have original marriage records. I was able to find a Cyrus Hawkes, but not the one she was seeking.
- **Shelly Warters** was hoping to find an old print having to do with Canada Hill. I was unable to find any photos of the location.
- **Donna Aikens** wanted to know if we'd like some older baby clothes she had. I told her we'd be happy to take them and they are now in the Society's possession.
- **Kathleen McKenney** wanted to find a birth record for Florence Sadler who was born in 1855. I looked through our church records, but could find no information about her.

## Curator's Corner

By Penny Loura

- **Joyce Mair** donated "ESSO" road maps from 1969 – 1971, numerous children's books, and several pieces of sheet music from the 1930s and 1940s.
- **Gene Tanguay** has given the Society a metal lathe for our blacksmith shop.
- **Sharon Bickford** donated three wooden crates with partial or full labels intact.
- **Helen Parker** provided us a mahogany drop leaf table, five kitchen chairs, a Tip Top table, and a china cabinet.
- **Patrick and Victoria Miele** donated a large wagon wheel and a sharpening/grinding stone for blacksmithing.
- **Elias Reed** has gifted a family photo of Edmund Boody and his family.
- **The Millette Estate** donated numerous school books dating from the mid-1800s – 1920.
- **John Andrews** donated a model of the Provence fort that he had done as a school project.
- **Diane LaVigne** donated a red tin with a Pennsylvania Dutch motif filled with sewing notions.

## CONDOLENCES

Historical Society member **Doris Barnes** passed away on January 7 in South Carolina where she made her home for many years. Doris was 95 and lived and worked in the Westbrook area until 1986 when she and her husband moved to Fort Hill, South Carolina. Still, she maintained an interest in Windham and "her favorite place was her cottage at Little Sebago Lake." She spent every summer for more than 70 years there and especially enjoyed the water, the nesting bald eagles, and the loons. She was a second grade teacher for almost 30 years and worked with area youth for close to 40 years. The Windham Historical Society extends wishes and comfort to her family and friends.

**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  
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