Windham Historical Society, Quarterly Review Fall 2020

The Old Windham Town Hearse Still has a Life Ahead

By Haley Pal

Since 2004, the old Windham Town Hearse has been stored away in the annex of the Old Grocery that currently sits at the corner of Route 202 and Windham Center Road. The Grocery is scheduled to move later this month, but the building's annex is not a part of the original structure, so it will not be included in the move.

That means the hearse needed to find a temporary resting place while we get the Grocery onto the Village Green. A team of six Society members, Bruce Elder, Sam Simonson, Dave Stover, Ray Philpot, Lloyd Gilman, and Gary Plummer took the project on.

On September 25, armed with a flatbed trailer, the team safely rolled the hearse out of the annex and onto the trailer. This took some coordinated effort, making sure the wheels still turned easily and that the move would not do damage to the 135-year-old vehicle. When all was said and done, due to the careful efforts of the team, the

hearse arrived at its destination no worse for the wear.

The Town of Windham purchased the hearse in 1885. It was built by the George L. Brownell Company of New Bedford, Massachusetts, a reputable manufacturer and dealer in carriages, harnesses, hearses, robes, and blankets. This was a state-of-the-art hearse of the time.







Top: The Old Town Hearse being moved to its new storage space Middle: Old Grocery before the annex was attached, early 1900's Bottom Left: The hearse being moved out of the Old Grocery annex Bottom Right: Windham Historical Society crew members

It came with curtains on the windows, carriage lamps, and even had wheels that were interchangeable with snow skis for inclement weather. The hearse itself cost the Town \$400 and a hearse barn was also purchased for an additional \$300.

This elaborate vehicle transported many late nineteenth and early twentieth century Windham residents to their final resting place. In summer, to keep the body cold, it

would often be put on ice. At first, some people in town were scared by the liquid leaking from the carriage thinking it might have been the blood of the

deceased, but over time, it became the favored means of transportation for burial in town.

The Windham Historical Society is fortunate to have such an important part of our town's history in our possession. The plan for its future is to have it completely refurbished to bring it back to its original

glory. While that is happening, the goal is to build a new structure on the Village Green where the old Windham hearse will be stored permanently and be easily accessible for the residents of Windham to see firsthand. This will be a major undertaking, but it will be a joy to bring what was once a town fixture back into a new life in a new era.

The Rich Oil Truck is Still Delivering

A few years ago, Don and Janet Rich approached the Windham Historical Society asking if we might want the original Rich Oil Company truck for our collections. This truck was used in the business's early days and helped the Rich Oil Company grow from a small business with 27 accounts to a successful operation servicing 7,000 customers by the time the business was sold.

As much as the Society would have loved to hold onto the vehicle, the reality set in that we have nowhere to safely store it at this time. The truck requires certain temperature levels to keep it properly maintained and we have no buildings that could meet that requirement and safely store the truck until it could be placed in a permanent exhibit.

This led to the idea that the vintage truck should be put up for sale. With the help of Society member, Bruce Elder, it was recently purchased by a Massachusetts oil company who will give it the kind of care that it requires.



Don Rich handing Society President Susan Simonson a bill of sale for the truck. Also pictured is Bruce Elder who was a big help with the sale.

The purchase price for the sale was \$20,000 and Don and Janet have very generously donated all proceeds from the sale to the Society for our Village Green efforts. We are so grateful to the Richs for their wonderful gift. It will go a long way to help us make the Village Green grow into the living history center that we all imagine it will be.

A Shower of Flowers ?! sprinkled sunshine all over town!

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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The Society is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

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une at the Windham Historical Society was our Shower of Flowers month. Twenty-five Society members and friends of the Society were showered with lovely floral arrangements to let them know they were being thought of during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Haley Pal headed up the operation with the assistance of Susan Simonson and with the kind support of Diane Lavigne, who donated a number of vases and made a monitary contribution towards flowers as well.

In addition to garden flowers, the arrangements were adorned by blooms purchased from the Windham Flower Shop. The shop's owner, Rhonda Davis, also generously donated blossoms for the bouquets throughout the entire program. Other Society members and friends who contributed to the success of the initiative were members Maria Clark and Kyle Allen who provided vases, as did Gray residents Monica Fischbach and Stephanie Deveau who are friends of Haley's and who are supporters of the Society and have attended some of our many fundraisers.

Delivering arrangements each week was one of the highlights of the year for Haley and Susan. The reactions of the recipients were heartfelt and genuine and it was clear the deliveries were very much appreciated. We received some lovely thank you cards letting us know that the flowers helped to take an ordinary day and suddenly make it special.

The Shower of Flowers was a bright light in a very gloomy year when people are homebound and feeling lonely. It was a pleasure to shower our older members and people who could use a smile with a little sunshine and it brightened the day of the delivery people as well.







PRESIDENT'S LETTER FALL 2020

Hello Members!

Fortunately for most, the lifting of Public Health safety restrictions has allowed many of us to move closer to leading a more normal life compared to this past spring. The challenges initially faced are diminishing as we course our way through day-to-day life business as well as learning new ways on how to conduct ourselves as we ease back into public life.

A highlight this year was the generous gift the Society received from members Don and Janet Rich. The Society is fortunate to be the beneficiary of the proceeds from the sale of their beloved and reliable oil truck which probably delivered oil to many members over the years! **THANK YOU, Don & Janet!**

As a health and safety precaution of the tireless Society volunteers, we will continue with a 'temporary close' for the museum building through the remainder of the year.

Even though we are closed, activity continues in small, safe, and distanced groups.

- Continuation of the 'digitization of records' project
- The Board has been meeting every other month
- Haley Pal's 'Shower of Flowers' was enjoyable to deliver and well-received by many long-time Society members and friends of the Society
- Preparations for the Old Grocery Store move are in motion
- A work crew consisting of six society members safely and successfully moved the 135-year-old horse-drawn hearse to a temporary location

Unfortunately, some annual events we have always looked forward to have been cancelled because of COVID-19 concerns. They are:

- The Potluck Dinner and Annual Meeting –
 Our first obligation is to the safety of our
 members and their families.
- The Bake Sale at the polls on November 3— This is disappointing because this is one of our most successful fundraisers during election years.

I wish you continued good health as we head into the winter season and look forward to a spring and summer full of fun, activities, and celebrations of a New Year for all!

Susan Simonson, President, Windham Historical Society

Village Green News

By Haley Pal

It's been a sleepy year for the Village Green with the coronavirus keeping activities at bay. But there were some signs of life that have happened over the past few months that are encouraging and hopeful.

During the summer, our Curator, Penny Loura, took some of the members of the Windham Public Library's Knitting Group over to the Village Green gazebo where they could knit and pearl to their heart's content while staying socially distanced. The group usually meets weekly at the library, but were unable to do so due to COVID-19 concerns. Because of the extreme heat and



Curator Penny Loura hosting the Library's Knitting Group.

humidity we saw this summer, they could not meet at the gazebo regularly, but everyone did enjoy the times that they were able to get together and catch up.

Later this month, we can all look forward to the much-anticipated move of the Old Grocery onto the Village Green. The old Windham Town Hearse has been moved from the Grocery's annex into temporary quarters to allow for the move and the Grocery building itself has been cleaned out and is ready to make its trip across the road. This will be a major milestone for our little village.

Let's hope that in 2021, we may be able to resurrect some of our plans for the 2020 season that had to be cancelled, things like the Bicentennial Bazaar that had so much potential and promise. Let's all get ready for another long winter's nap, but let's also be hopeful that spring will soon shine eternal once again.

2020 Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner Cancelled

By Karen Lougee

The 2020 Annual Meeting will not be held this month due to concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a consultation with the Society's attorney, Michael Quinlan, and out of an abundance of caution, the Board agreed that we could not safely hold an in-person meeting. All of the current Board of Directors and Officers have agreed to continue to serve in their current positions for 2021.

The Board of Directors and Officers for 2021 will be:

OFFICERS

President: Susan Simonson **Vice-President:** Samuel Simonson **Secretary:** Karen Lougee **Treasurer:** Linda Lunt

DIRECTORS

Susan Simonson Carol Manchester
Samuel Simonson Kevin Graham
Karen Lougee Isabelle Gilman
Linda Lunt Linda Griffin
Penny Loura Norma Rogers





Schoolmarm Paula Sparks in action at The Village School





By Paula Sparks

In Friday, October 16, the Windham Historical Society, in conjunction with the Windham Parks & Recreation department, will give you the opportunity to lunch and learn about the Society's one-room schoolhouse at a senior luncheon at the Town Hall Gym with food supplied by the Elbow Room Bistro in North Windham.

While you dine, you will tour the Village School and see the one-room schoolhouses that once dotted the Windham landscape via a slide presentation. You'll meet The Village School's official schoolmarm, Paula Sparks, who will take you back in time to the late 1800s to experience a day in the life of a Windham student of that time. Expect to practice reading, writing, and "cyphering." This will be an interactive program and you may want to come prepared with some stories of your own to tell about your own one-room schoolhouse experiences. But remember to mind your manners, or the schoolmarm may have to resort to some old-fashioned discipline.

We'll look forward to seeing some of our senior members there, and maybe you can bring a friend or two along. You need to be 55 or older to attend and you must register in advance with Parks & Rec by calling them at 892-1905 Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The lunch starts at 11:30 a.m. and ends at 1:00 p.m. The cost is \$14 and includes the meal and the presentation.

This is a great opportunity to safely socialize while having some fun with history.

Programs

By Carol Manchester

Surely it has been a long year without discussions and membership connections. However, it is the hope of the program committee that these events will be able to resume in early spring. With that said, most of the 2020 presenters have agreed to participate in 2021 and the committee will update and finalize programming in the winter newsletter.

We've had to cancel the 2020 annual meeting because of coronavirus distancing interaction and concerns and we will miss visiting with our members and, of course, the wonderful food that we enjoy each year. We're hoping 2021 will be a bit more normal and we can all get together next October.

In the meantime, if you feel like exploring some of the history of our town, we have an informative Windham History Trail Map available on the Society's website. This is a fun way to spend a day with family and friends discovering some fascinating places that have historic note that are scattered around town. Also, be on the lookout for the occasional "old time" recipe on the Society's website. These come from a donated recipe box that was located in the Old Grocery. If you try one, we'd love to hear how it turned out. Or if you have an old family recipe of your own you'd like to share, send it along to Haley Pal at haleypal@aol.com and she will try to include some of them in upcoming newsletters.

Membership Corner

By Carol Manchester

Inquiries and memberships continue to occur this spring and summer, sometimes through the website, www.windhamhistory.org, or via phone calls, mail, or chancing a knock on the door when the lights are on to chat "curbside" with Penny or Sue. And so it is that the Historical Society welcomes five new members: Kate Green and Patty Plummer, both of Windham, Roberta Polland of Oxford, and Elizabeth Stewart of Holyoke, Massachusetts. Jessica Curlew joined curbside with Penny Loura. We look forward to the opportunity to get to know you all and to share the many interesting programs and activities that will resume once the COVID-19 "all clear" resounds. Welcome aboard!

And just a reminder: there are regular updates to the website, **www.windhamhistory.org**, and Facebook as a way of keeping membership informed and involved. For example, the 1880s Windham hearse has been moved to its temporary location in anticipation of the move of the "Old Grocery" to the Village Green which is scheduled to happen this fall. Stay tuned. Or, you may wish to send an email to **haleypal@aol.com** or me, **dcmanchester@msn.com**, telling how the Historical Society is valuable and enjoyable to you during this time of social distancing.

Meantime, be well, stay safe, and we look forward to seeing you again, hopefully, soon!



The Windham Historical Society Bicentennial Calendar

The Perfect Way to Remember the Year You'll Never Forget

2020 is nothing if not unforgettable. We will always remember these days of self-quarantining and social distancing. Why not let yourself escape to days gone by when life was much simpler with the purchase of a Bicentennial calendar. These beautifully designed calendars are illustrated by the gifted Jerry Black and are enhanced with lively narratives by the talented Walter Lunt. A true work of art with a story to tell, the Windham **Historical Society** Bicentennial calendars are the perfect way to celebrate the 200th year of Maine's statehood, a year we will never forget.

CALENDARS \$7 EACH!

(Frames \$7 each)

Call the Society at 892-1433 if you'd like a calendar. We will make arrangements for delivery or pickup.



Windham Historical Society experienced the loss of two of its members in recent months.

Windham Historical Society remembers **Stanley C. Rowe**, 85, who died August 4, 2020. A lifetime member of the Historical Society, Stan had been living in Oxford at the time of his death. For many years, he drove truck for Merrill Transport.

On August 25, 2020, **Jane Hawkes Gordon** of Rochester, NH, also a lifetime member, passed away. Jane was 90 and a 1947 graduate of Windham High School. For 29 years, she worked for Porteous, Mitchell and Braun department store, beginning her career as a seasonal sales clerk and eventually becoming a division head in the accounting department. Among her many interests were travelling, camping, dancing, and needlework.

To the many family members and friends of Stanley Rowe and Jane Gordon, Windham Historical Society extends sincere sympathy.

Donations

- Bruce and Tina Atkinson and Priscilla Hopkins made donations in memory of Linda True.
- Liz Wisecup, Elizabeth Winslow, Paul True, David and Glenice Stover, George and Phyllis Hall, Walter and Linda Lunt, Samuel and Susan Simonson, Frederick and Jo-Leen Papandrea, Gerald Allen, Raymond Rogers, Bennett Irish, Bruce and Cindy Elder, John Branson, and Mary Levesque all donated in memory of Don Rogers.
- Donations towards the Old Grocery project came from **Don** and **Janet Rich** and **Greg Fearon**.
- Julia Varney-Chaney made donations in memory of Lucy May Varney McCabe and Jennie Anna Varney MacDonald.
- Contributions to the Shower of Flowers were made by **Diane Lavigne** and **Haley Pal**.
- General donations were received from Alan Anderson, Matthew Stacy, Robert and Paula Smithson, and Dorothy Samuelson.
- **Don and Janet Rich** made a generous donation from the sale of the antique Rich Oil Truck.

Thank you all for your generosity.

Curator's Corner

By Penny Loura

- **Bob and Ellie Hooper** donated four bells attached to a tin strip.
- **Jennifer Harmon** gave the Society an original and unopened "The Game of Windham."
- Julie Carigan gifted the Society a Maine wall atlas by H.F. Walling & J. Chace, Jr. dated 1861 and a Cumberland County, Maine wall atlas dated 1857, also by Chace.
- **Louis Dunlap** donated an award for punctuality given to his grandfather, James Dunlap, in the mid-1880s by his teacher, Hiram Hawkes.
- **Ralph Hatt** donated "The Perfecscope," a stereographic viewing device and 31 generic stereographic cards.
- Roberta Polland gave the Society six photos of the old Windham High School from 1947 and 1948, including a picture of the 1948 graduation class of Windham High School and a photo of a 1928 Model T Ford with Herbert Parker in 1930.
- Ernie Mitchell donated nine artifacts he found near the corner of Alweber Road and Highland Cliff Road, near the site of the old Bodge School.
- Cheryl LeTourneau donated an 1898 diary belonging to Lena Megguier of South Windham.
- The Gorham Historical Society gave the Society a menu from Lowell's Tea Room in North Windham
- **Betsy McDonald** provided us a 1929 *Portland Evening Express* article showing a class photo.
- **Cynthia Kimball** donated a collection of photos, mostly class reunion pictures.



Windham Then and Now

By Haley Pal

Lowell's Tea Room/The Bean Hole





The current restaurant serves Italian fare.

here have been a number of different restaurants in the building on the corner of Angler's Road and Route 302. Today, Franco's Bistro is serving meals to Windham's hungry public, offering a variety of classic

Italian fare and other traditional entrees.

An early photo of the Bean Hole Restaurant.

In its very early days, the restaurant was owned by the Lowell family and it was called Lowell's Tea Room, also known as the Bean Hole. Even then, the restaurant was open year-round and diners were served a variety of classic American food of the time.

Back in the 1930s, some of the dishes you would have enjoyed would have been a Fried Chicken Dinner, complete with soup; brown gravy, mashed potatoes, green peas, apple jelly, hot rolls; pie or ice cream and cake, and coffee or tea, all for the incredible price of \$1.50. If you were a seafood lover, there was a Special Shore Dinner on the menu that included steamed clams, melted butter and bouillon, fried clams, potato chips, hot rolls, ice cream, and tea or coffee for just \$1.25.

And of course, you could try the Bean-Hole Bean Dinner that was comprised of bean-hole beans; homemade

brown bread or rolls; relishes; pie or ice cream; and coffee, tea, or milk for the whopping price of 65 cents.

Bean-hole-beans get their name because they are baked in a hole. The method was developed by the Penobscot Indians hundreds of years ago. When the Bean-Hole Restaurant served them, they were cooked in the ground in a cast-iron pot. The beans were covered with water and a lid and placed in a hole with a wet dish towel or burlap sack. Hot embers and ashes would have been shoveled on top of the pot and then the pot would be covered with dirt. Cooking time depended on the type of beans and recipe used and cooking time could take as long as 16 hours.

The pricing and the meals at the restaurant have changed significantly since those days of the Great Depression. If you visit now, you might try Franco's Bistro's Chicken Marsala served with garlic and mushrooms in an imported Marsala wine demi-glace over pasta for \$16.50. Or you might want to try some baked haddock that is lightly crumbed and baked and topped with Costa Brava sauce for \$17.00. These meals come with a salad and freshly baked bread. Pasta dishes come topped with cheese, but there's not a bean in sight.

Oueries

By Penny Loura

- Adam Parlin was hoping to identify some rocks/ stones that he found near his foundation. He wondered if we knew how old these "out buildings" might be and when they were built. I advised him to seek the Registry of Deeds for building structures as we have nothing to identify these structures on an individual's land.
- Tom Conklin was looking for information about a farm that was previously owned by L.C. Andrew in Casco. He was wondering who the caretakers might have been. I did attempt to contact Raymond/ Casco Historical Society to see if they might be able to help him.
- Liz Pretorius wanted information about the Read family, such as house pictures or historical facts about the houses. I did find some vital records, Quaker records, and Revolutionary War records, but could find nothing in the way of pictures.
- Alex Kaplan inquired about a burial site for Mary A. Brown. I sent him a link to Brown Cemetery where she is buried and photocopied the Brown Genealogy and sent that to him as well.
- Allison Lee wanted to talk to someone about the John and Peter White family. Thanks to her 90+-year-old mother, I was able to locate her ancestors at the cemetery inside and on Richardson Marina Property. I cleaned up the area and sent her some photos of her ancestors.

(Continued top of next page)



QUETIES (Continued from previous page)

- Dan Noel wanted maps of the Highland Lake area which I sent him via email.
- **Shannon Carroll** asked if we knew the amount of gold/silver content in the 250th commemorative coins. I told her the only way to know for certain is to take them to a jeweler. She said she may do that herself. In reality, we had no gold coins, only silver, bronze, and pewter.
- A man named **Paul** asked if we knew anything about a hotdog stand that used to be visible at Swan Road and Vista Drive. I asked several members and no one seemed to remember this. He then sent me a photo.
- Laurie Forbes, a MOCA representative, was attempting to clarify if Stevens Burial Yard was located on Montgomery Road. I told her there was another cemetery on Montgomery Road, but it is on private property and permission had to be granted to go there. Most stones at this cemetery are in poor shape and unreadable. There is also a cemetery on Stevens Road, again on private property, that also has some very old stones.
- **Sue Horton** wanted information on the history of her house on Range Road. I informed her we had no info on this property and that we actually have very little history on any houses other than a few pictures.
- **Mika Lentz** asked who owns Smith-Anderson Cemetery. He was looking for permission to film a portion of a documentary there. I told him that the cemetery is public and referred him to the caretaker of Windham graves.
- **Trent McNally,** a 15-year-old, wondered where rest stops for loggers would have been located along the Presumpscot River when it was logged. I told him I wasn't sure, but probably where the water flow slowed.
- Alan Surgi was hoping to sell a 1710 English Surveying Guide to the Historical Society. Apparently, it contained the signatures of both John Hancock and Peter Thatcher Smith. I told him that although it would be a great addition to our collections, we are not in the habit of buying items.
- **Ethan Bump** wanted to purchase some more Windham yearbooks. I explained our restrictions due to COVID-19 and he said he would wait.
- **Brian Belanger** requested a book entitled *Northeast Road* written by Kay Soldier. I told him there was a story about this and I sent him a copy of the article.
- **Pamela Pallas** asked about donating antiques for the future period home on the Village Green. Due to our very limited space, I sadly had to decline.
- Joanna Diphilippo was seeking information about the death of a child who once lived in one of the Anthoine houses. She didn't have a name or time period to go by, so I couldn't really help her.
- Nancy Michael was willing to donate an antique barn loom from Woolwich Historical Society. As wonderful as this would have been, we have nowhere to put it at this time.
- **Barrett Taylor** requested old photos of his grandmother's house since he will be buying it. We did not have any to provide him.

- **Bill Kenny** is writing a book on tea rooms and taverns and wanted any pictures or info that we could provide to him. After getting Terry Christy's permission, I sent information to him. Terry had already done a bit of research on the subject.
- **Sue Antonsen** was looking for birth/death/marriage records on members of the **Leighton-Cobb** family. She needed these to get back to Mayflower ancestors. I informed her that we don't keep original records and I was able to find some information about the Cobbs, but not the Cobbs she was inquiring about.
- **Beverley Lord** was hoping to locate a map that showed Anderson Brook. It was noted by Susan Simonson and Carol Manchester that Anderson Brook (not on maps we have at the Society) follows the same path as Inkhorn Brook.
- **Cynthia Kimball** wanted information about a doctor named **Lucy Cobb**. I looked through several genealogies, but found no one by this name.
- **Douglas Elder** wanted a copy of the earlier Dole book and a book of poetry by Chute called *Settling In*. I handed these off to him curbside.
- **Jeffrey Plummer** found a "loan" from the Town of Windham on eBay and wanted to sell it to the Society. I declined his offer.
- **Brian Boyd** sent the Society genealogy links he thought would be helpful to us.
- **Michael Davis** informed the Society that a person in New Hampshire had a Sabbath Day banner from Windham's Sabbath School that he would like to sell us. Again, I had to decline.
- **Zachary Schnabel** asked for history about 14 Main Street in South Windham. I will research this and get back to him.
- **Chris Wallace** wondered who owns the property at the Little Meeting House. I referred him to David Manchester who did respond to him.
- **Rebecca Kurtz** came across papers in a vanity she purchased that have to do with Windham and Gorham. I told her if she could make it over on a Wednesday, I would happily accept them.

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	
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