

Windham Historical Society Quarterly Review

Winter 2017

Windham Historical Society Turns 50

2017 is a special year for the Windham Historical Society. Fifty years ago, on April 11, 1967, 37 people from Windham and surrounding towns founded the Windham Historical Society.

The Society was organized for the purpose of preserving the town's past while providing members of the community information about their heritage.

We've come a long way in those 50 years and in this issue of our newsletter, we will take you on a brief journey through time featuring highlights from the Society's past, from its formation to where we are today.

1967

On April 11, the Society was founded by 37 Charter members. By October of that same year, the membership had grown to 193.



1969

The Society receives the Bodge House as a gift from Windham First Selectman and Mrs. Clyde Esty. The house originally stood on a crest on lower River Road. It was then moved to Route 202 where the post office stands today. In November 1969, it was moved to Chute Road to land donated by Steve and Jane Worthen to be used as a future history museum.

1975

Windham Historical Society members break ground on the Bodge House herb garden designed by Mrs. Howard Hawkes, a well-known New England herbalist. The garden contained medicinal and culinary herbs and herbs for household use. The project brought Society members together and herbs from the garden were sold to the public as part of fundraising efforts.

1976

Babb's Bridge was rebuilt and reopened on July 4, 1976. The first bridge on the site was built in the 1740s, but was destroyed by a hurricane in 1767. It was rebuilt, but destroyed again in 1843, when a flood washed it out. A post and beam bridge, Babb's Bridge, was built in 1843 and remained in place until 1973 when it burned to the ground.

A new bridge was built and opened to the public as part of Windham's celebration of the country's Bicentennial. The Marblehead Militia, a Revolutionary War Reenactment group from Windham, were the first to cross the new bridge to the sounds of fifes and drums and to the delight of local onlookers. The Windham Historical Society helped to raise funds and organize the event.

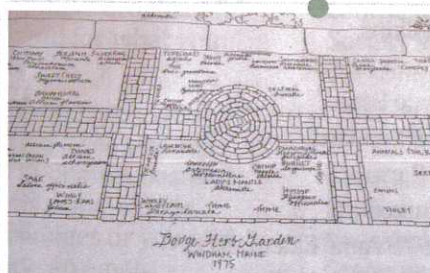
1984

The Old Town House, built in 1833, became the new headquarters for the Windham Historical Society. Over the years, the Society maintained and improved the building, using it as a museum, an office, and a meeting place. The building's vault was and is still used for storage of historic documents and artifacts.

In that same year, the Bodge House was purchased by Society member Linda Griffin. It was a bittersweet sale for the Society members who had worked so hard on restoring it, but repairs were needed on the Town House and so the Bodge House was sold in May for \$32,000.



The Bodge House being moved to its current location on Chute Road on November 29, 1969



The Bodge House herb garden was designed by New England herbalist Mrs. Howard Hawkes



The Bodge House today

(Timeline continued on next page)

1987

Windham celebrated its 250th birthday with the largest parade the state had ever seen. The celebration included a weekend-long fair in Windham Center with hundreds of participating groups, music, and Scottish games. Thousands of people attended the event. The Windham Historical Society was integral in organizing and guiding the activities.

1988

The Windham Historical Society received the prestigious Harry W. Rowe Award from the Maine League of Historical Societies for their work on restoring the Town House, offering an adult education class on Windham's historic homes, and for publishing several pamphlets and books about Windham's history. A plaque and a check for \$100 were presented to charter members Betty and Malcolm Barto at the Rowe Award ceremony on September 14, 1988.

1995

In November of 1995, Town Councilors voted to sell the Town House to the Historical Society for the price of \$1. The Council had agreed to sell the building to the Society years before, but legal restrictions on the property prevented the deal until the title was cleared in October of 1995.



1997

Crossroads Garden Club gave the Windham Historical Society the Old Grocery for safe-keeping and to be used as a museum. The building, built circa 1820, was originally owned by William Gould who used it as a tailor shop. It then served as a cobbler shop until 1845 when it was bought by Alley Hawkes who opened it as a grocery. It stayed in the Hawkes family for 109 years and was also a grain store, garage, and a post office. In 1956, it was given to the Crossroads Garden Club.

2002

The Windham Circulating Library was moved from next door to the Old Grocery to its current location next to the Society building. The library's history dates back to the 1800s. It was a shoe shop, a private residence, and a storage space before it was purchased by the Windham Center Circulating Library Association from Fred S. Hawkes for \$50 in 1907. The building served as the main library for the town until 1970 when the present library was built.



Local residents exchanging stories at Hawkes Grocery Store

The Windham Town Hearse is still in the Society's possession and is housed in the Old Grocery building



The Museum houses many artifacts from the old Hawkes store, including shoes, wooden pegs, a clothes ringer, a coffee box, and a large egg box. For years, Windham Historical Society member Norma Rogers graciously opened its doors to visitors and maintained its many displays which also included the old Windham town hearse, which remains in the building today.



The Windham Circulating Library was originally located next to the Old Grocery

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.

OUR PRESIDENTS

1967 Russell Wilkins
1968, 1969 Ernest Knight
1970, 1971 Clyde Esty
1972, 1973 Phil Kennard
1974 Malcolm Barto
1975 Leslie Bancroft
1976, 1977, 1978 Anne Elder Berry
1979, 1980, 1981 Malcolm Barto
1982 Philip Kennard
1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 Erla Watson Davis
1987, 1988, 1989 Jane Smith LeFebvre

1990 Malcolm Barto
1991 Ann Hawkes Paquin
1992, 1993, 1994 Jane Smith LeFebvre
1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 Edith Bell
2005, 2006 Elizabeth Winslow
2007 Ann Hawkes Paquin
2008 Elizabeth Winslow
2009 Isabel Gilman, Norma Rogers, and Linda Griffin
2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 Linda Griffin
2017 Jim Hanscom

2010

October House, named for its October purchase, was bought by the Windham Historical Society. The 2.53 acre property, house, barn, gun shop, and small garage were sold to the Society by the Reeves family who resided there since 1943.

Initially, the property was posted with auction signs, but members of the Society approached the family who agreed to a private sale. This allowed the Society to negotiate a purchase price. Presently, the house is being used as a rental property. It is the hope of the Society to eventually open the house to the public as a house museum.

The South Windham Library was moved from the Little Falls section of Gorham to the Village Green in October of 2012

2012

The South Windham Library, which was located beside the Presumpscot River in the Little Falls section of Gorham since 1934, was moved to the Village Green in October of 2012. Town residents watched as it made its progress down Route 202 to its new location. The Society is now getting estimates for a slab foundation for the building. Once in its permanent place, work will begin on making it a history museum focusing on the history of the South Windham area of town.



2014

The Windham Historical Society received Planning Board approval for the Village Green in May of 2014. The Green will provide an immersive educational experience for Windham residents and visitors to our town. Some buildings are now on the Village Green grounds, including the Historical Society Headquarters, the Windham Circulating Library, and the South Windham Library. It is hoped the Old Grocery will be moved into place in the not-too-distant future. In addition, new buildings will be constructed, such as a barn, blacksmith shop, and gazebo.

Also in 2014, the Society began the work of changing the Reeves gun shop into a one-room schoolhouse. Salvaged materials from the John Andrew School, including blackboards, wainscoting, flooring, and doors were used in the renovation. Once a handicap-accessible ramp is added to the building, The Village School will open to the public, hopefully this summer.

2016

The design of a future septic system for the Village Green was completed as was an engineered plan for the handicap ramp for The Village School. Members of the Society also spent 3 months improving October House before new tenants moved in. Every room in the house was repainted, new carpets were laid, and a new shower was installed. Also, with the help of member and Power Serve volunteers, the gardens were weeded and raked and made ready for the home's new residents.

As you can see from reading this history, the Windham Historical Society is one busy group and has done a lot in its 50 years. We hope to continue working hard well into the future. Wouldn't you like to help in some way? Wouldn't you like to be a part of history? Consider a monetary donation or the gift of your time to help make the Village Green dream a reality. With a new year here, PLEASE VOLUNTEER!

President's Letter January 2017

Dear Members,

Here we are in a new year filled with new hope that we will come closer to the realization of the Village Green. This has been our focus for the past few years, and as you may know, we've had a few stumbling blocks along the way.

Having to go through the Town of Windham and being treated as a big contractor had its frustrations. It's been very difficult for members working on the Village Green project as we must rely on outside sources to help with all the many details associated with this process.

Problems with the Village Green will be ongoing, but the thought of the end result keeps us moving forward. When we hit a roadblock, we stop, re-evaluate, and then keep pushing on. Fortunately, we have some great people onboard when it comes to problem-solving.

As we move forward this year, we have an opportunity to involve military personnel. We have been given permission from the Town to come up with a large project that the Town will endorse and hope this will give us a better chance when the military reserve

(Presidents Letter continued on next page)

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President's Letter (continued)

unit reviews our application. We hope to build a barn, blacksmith shop, and gazebo. This will happen in 2018 if approved. As usual, we will be asking for help from our members as the reserve unit will supply labor only. We need to come up with all material (wood, roof shingles, cement for foundations, etc.) for the project.

We hope to get the South Windham Library moved to its permanent location this summer. We also hope to move the Old Grocery and install the handicap ramp to the new one-room schoolhouse. We will keep the membership informed through newsletters as to what is happening with these and other ongoing projects.

We also ask members who can volunteer to help so we can see some fruition on these projects. This is and has been a huge commitment on the few that have stepped forward with hours and hours of time.

This is just a sampling of what I see as we enter the new year. We are truly grateful to all our members. There isn't a day that goes by that residents of Windham and beyond are awed at the work and dedication of the people in the Society who give so much of themselves on a daily basis. If you can volunteer to give some time or money to help with any of our many projects, all of us that are involved would be extremely grateful.

Very truly yours, James (Jim) Hanscom,
President of Windham Historical Society

Three Cheers for the Christmas Fair!

The Windham Historical Society Board of Directors and the Christmas Fair Committee wish to thank all members of the Society who participated in the Fair for a job well done.

Your donations of time and the making of crafts, baking, pricing, cleaning, setting up, taking down, advertising, even the cutting of red berries – all helped with the success of the event. We couldn't have done it without you, so please know your efforts are truly appreciated.

The final total income for the Christmas Fair, which took place in November of last year, was \$2,514.60.

The raffle for the little red wagon brought



in \$121.00. The Committee thanks Emma Gilman for the donation of the wagon. It was won by Mark Bryant.

Now it's time to start thinking about getting ready for this year's event. Begin by starting to make some crafts for this year's Fair. You may want to get the word out to anyone you think might want to rent a table. Make pickles, jellies, and jams over the summer. Join the Fair Committee. Bake cookies or make candies we can sell. Any ideas are welcome. Please contact Linda Lunt at 655-3421 with any questions or to share your thoughts.

Election Day Bake Sale A Big Success

Tuesday, November 8, 2016 proved to be a very successful fundraising day for the Society! When the first workers arrived to set up, the voting line was through the hallway and lobby and all the way down the canopied walkway. It was unsure what the mood of the voters would be as the end of a controversial campaign came to a close, but from the size of the crowd, it was evident that it was going to be a steady and busy day.

It turned out the mood of the crowd was very upbeat; people were friendly, smiling, and very generous! Many stopped at the booth just to make a general monetary donation to the Society, no purchase needed!

Throughout the day, a steady stream of Society bakers kept the tables well stocked with a variety of delicious cookies, pies, breads, bars, and fudge. No sooner were the baked goods dropped off than the buyers stopped and purchased them! Some items were lucky to stay on the tables all of 15 minutes!

The Windham Historical Society would like to express gratitude to Sue and Kevin Graham, Caroline Rowe, Izzy Gilman, Nancy Larrivee, Gary Plummer, and Sue Simonson for donating their time to work at the sale.

And a big THANK YOU to the numerous bakers! Your dedicated efforts and talents allowed us to raise \$897.44 for the Society!

Membership Corner

by Carol Manchester

It has been another year of success and growth for the Windham Historical Society and with your sustained support, the Society continues to offer interesting speakers and events throughout the year to preserve the town's rich history and treasures, further the development of the Village Green, and pursue 2017's Historic District projects.

It is also very exciting to note that the Society welcomed 18 new members in 2016. They are: Peter and Robin Aurigemma, Robert C. Clark, Richard Doyle, Robin Doyle, Sara Fleming, Phyllis Hall, Dale King, Maurice and Tracy Labrie, H. Stirling Moore, Robin Oneill, Betty Plummer, Ann Pessoney Rolling, Margery Dean Webb, George Wilson, Harrison Wood, and Clint Smith.

All of us have inherent gifts and skills, talents and ideas, and your suggestions and involvement are appreciated. Have you seen a program elsewhere that seems relevant to WHS? Do you enjoy woodworking or painting? Would you like to donate some of your craft items to the annual fundraising fair? The Fair Committee would be very thankful.

Can you share some treasured family story or item to talk about? Does your house have early history? Perhaps you have written a song or poem about Windham and would sing or read it. Any of these would make a wonderful evening's presentation and board members would be happy to help you with it.

Committing to an ongoing project may be difficult for you, but just a few hours of your time on a one-time project is another way to assist.

One of the best ways to let others know what your Society has to offer them is to invite a guest to a program or event. Often, people are looking for ways to participate in their community and the preservation of the town's history is a wonderful opportunity.

You are the custodians of Windham's past, its present, and surely its future. Your fellow members are thankful for what you have done and are grateful for what you yet may give.

On a different note: for those of you who have given up your landline phones or have added a cell phone, would you please send me an email at dcmanchester@msn.com so that membership records remain up to date. Similarly, if there are address changes or you wish to confirm the one on record, send me an email.

With all good wishes for 2017.

Carol Manchester,
Membership Chair

Village Green News

by Linda Griffin

Even in the winter months, progress is being made on the Village Green. Society member Bruce Elder has been getting quotes to prepare a slab foundation for the yellow South Windham Library which will be moved to its permanent location in the spring.

Once in place, members of the Society will begin working on the inside of the building. The plan is for the Library to house artifacts and pictures that will illustrate what life was like in South Windham in earlier times. Displays of mills, stores, the Oxford-Cumberland Canal and photographs of the bridge, church, fire station, and beautiful old homes will enhance the experience.

The ell on the Library will be rebuilt and finished with salvage from the old South Windham Railroad Station that was gathered in 2013. This will create an ideal place to display the extensive history of the railroad that has been compiled by the Society.

We're also hoping to open the one-room schoolhouse to the public this summer. All that's needed is the installation of the handicap-accessible ramp and we'll be ready to go. The Society would like to thank Eagle Scout Phillip Dow



The Village School on the Village Green

for building the mudroom on the structure with the help of contractor Ed Carignan. Sponsor Walter Lunt and former Society Vice President Dave Tanguay were also integral in the completion of The Village School, as were many other member volunteers. It's a good example of what can be done with hard work and volunteer spirit.

Treasurer Linda Lunt is chairing a committee to fill out an application for members of the National Guard to work for two weeks in the summer of 2018 to help with the Village Green project.

The Society is requesting that the Guard add drainage; create sidewalks; build a gazebo, a blacksmith shop, and possibly erect the old Hall barn that was torn down by Scott Burner in 2013 and moved to the Green where it is currently being stored.

Windham Historical Society 2016 Annual Membership Meeting Brings Members Together

The Society's Annual membership renewal, potluck dinner, and meeting were held on Monday, October 24, 2016 at Friends Church. The evening was enjoyed by approximately 35 members of the Society.

Highlights of the meeting included: Treasurer Linda Lunt reading the Treasurer's report, Walter Lunt discussing the Society's educational efforts, and Penny Loura reporting on Society membership.

Penny also put on her Curator's cap and told members about numerous items the Society received last year: A fainting couch, Blue Willow dishes, a pine dresser and drop leaf table, a Victorian rocking chair and pump organ, a homemade bobsled, and a grandfather clock were among the items generously donated to the Society.

Linda Griffin gave her President's Report, speaking about the year's activities and Gary Plummer updated members on recent repairs to Babb's Bridge.

Recognition Award: President Linda Griffin acknowledged Nancy Larrivee for her hard work and diligence in preparing October House for new tenants. Nancy worked tirelessly cleaning, raking, painting, and polishing. She even took cans of old paint and leaves to recycle locations.

Election of Officers: The new officers elected were Jim Hanscom, President; Linda Griffin, Vice President; Linda Lunt, Treasurer; and Sue Simonson, Secretary. Penny Loura remains Curator and Kay Soldier continues as the Society's Historian.

Other appointments were Carol Manchester, Membership Chair; Kay Soldier, Publicity; Walter Lunt, Educational Liaison; and Penny Loura will again handle displays.

Sam Simonson will be responsible for building maintenance and grounds keeping. Haley Pal will remain newsletter editor, and Sue Graham will continue as volunteer coordinator. Kevin Graham volunteered to do housekeeping for the Society in the new year.



2017 Officers – from left: Susan Simonson, Secretary; Linda Lunt, Treasurer; Linda Griffin, Vice President; Jim Hanscom, President

Condolences

Condolences to the family of
Society member Don Dickinson
who passed away on
Sunday, November 13, 2016.

Don lived in the Parson Smith House with his wife, Elaine, for over 20 years. He and Elaine graciously opened their home to the Windham Historical Society many times. Dozens of third graders have toured the beautiful Georgian home over the years and in 2014, the Windham Historical Society held a fundraiser there to celebrate the 250th birthday of the house. Don will be missed by his former parishioners, his family and friends, and by members of the Windham Historical Society.

2016 Windham Historical Society Donors

- Cooper's Greenhouse, Home Depot, Lowes, and Walmart donated plants for the Society's Annual Plant Sale.
- Hannaford supplied water for the Third Maine visit.
- Donations for improving October House came from Windham Paint and Framing, Ed Millsop, Nancy Larrivee, and Clint and Lois Smith. In addition, Nancy and Tommy Doyle power-washed the garage and shed doors, steps, and the back of the house.
- David Bernhardt and Dale Doughty of the Maine Department of Transportation donated work/repairs for Babb's Bridge.
- The Windham Police Department supplied safety signage during the archaeological dig near the Parson Smith House this past summer.
- Penmor Lithographers donated the printing of Windham Historical Society presentation folders.
- Elsie Haskell of Lake Pine Association donated building proceeds from Odd Fellows and Rebekeh Lodge.
- The Tri-County Extension made a donation towards the South Windham Library.
- Sabrina Nickerson's fifth grade class at Manchester School made a donation for the one-room schoolhouse on the Village Green.
- Richard Doyle donated time identifying rocks that were donated by Phil Kennard.
- Other donors who gave monetary gifts were Jane Hawkes Gordon, Lakes Region Senior Center, Don and Janet Rich, Stanley and Mary Rowe, and the Town of Windham.
- Memorial donations were given by Janice Beattie, Ed and Jeanne Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Frank DeLuca, Barbara Millett, Brenda Orser, and Kay Soldier.

Correction: In our last newsletter, it was stated that the Ebenezer Barton clock was donated by Dale and Susan King. It was actually donated solely by Dale King of Raymond. We thank Dale for her very generous donation of this magnificent antique.

Windham Then and Now

The Webb Tavern was built in the early 1800s by Major Edward Anderson with the intention of using it as a private residence, but he died in May of 1804 at the age of 51, before construction was complete.



The Webb Tavern was a thriving business on Windham Hill.



Webb Tavern today is a lovely single-family residence

It was purchased by proprietor George W. Davis in 1857 and was known as the Windham House. Around 1871, it was sold to Jason Webb, a representative to the Maine State Legislature.

Before the railroad came to Windham, the Webb Tavern was the last stop for teamsters from the White Mountains and other visitors travelling to Portland. During World War I, a Vice Consul from England summered there. He would drive by the school in his black limousine on his way to Portland every day. In the 1920s and 1930s, Demas Burgess owned the property and called it Crossroads Gladiola Farm.

Currently, the building is a large two-story structure which was altered from the original by adding two large dormers on the front and back of the house. The roof was also extended to form a large front porch. Some period features of the original structure still remain, however, including a beautiful side entrance with a six-paneled door with four sidelights and a transom over the door.

The building is now a beautiful private home located on Windham Center Road.

Windham Historical Society Events

Call 892-1433 for more information on upcoming events.

WINTER PROGRAMS

State Historic Preservationist Leith Smith will be the guest speaker at both of the Society's winter programs. At the **February 25** program at the Windham Library, he will discuss the five layers of early forts found in Richmond, Maine and the many artifacts on life in the 1700s that were discovered there.

At the **March 18** meeting, he will talk about the archaeological digs that took place at the site of the old Province Fort over the past two summers. He will also explain what will be happening at the site in the summer of 2017.

Look for emails and flyers with more details about these exciting events in the coming weeks.

A New Year: A Time to Renew Your Membership!

The New Year is the perfect time to consider renewing your membership to the Windham Historical Society.

It's also a good time to encourage your friends and neighbors to become members as well.

To make it an easy process, just fill out this form and send it to the Society along with your annual dues. Or give the form to someone you think may want to join. Get involved, donate some time, and enjoy having fun with history!



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	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15
Family Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25
Lifetime Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

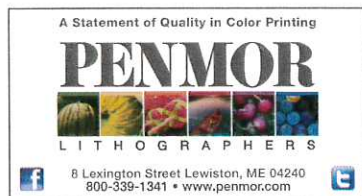
Email: _____

Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email your newsletter? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Business Partners who support the
Windham Historical Society
and this Newsletter:



Friends of Babb's Bridge to Form Group

by Walter Lunt

The Windham Historical Society salutes member Gary Plummer for his devotion and perseverance to the continued protection and preservation of historic Babb's Bridge.

Plummer spearheaded a meeting of town leaders from Windham and Gorham, officials from the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) and representatives of the local state legislative delegation.

Plummer, a former state senator, acknowledged that while MDOT will continue to maintain the bridge, repairs required from the wanton destruction caused by vandals and graffiti "artists" now falls on the two towns. He is heading up the formation of a group to be known as Friends of Babb's Bridge to oversee security at the bridge.

The panel would monitor goings-on at the bridge, which spans the towns of Windham and Gorham over the Presumpscot River, especially during spring and summer months. The group, to consist of concerned citizens and town and state officials, would recommend security measures and secure funds to put them into place. Implementation is slated for the spring of 2017.

Windham Primary School children, who regularly visit the covered bridge replica which was originally built in the mid-19th century, also weighed in on the subject. Their ideas included building another bridge or something in town that people can break or spray paint rather than defacing Babb's Bridge. The children want to spread the word about the importance of our historic landmark and its preservation for them and for all future members of our community.

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