

Windham Historical Society Quarterly Review

Winter 2019

2018: It was a Wonderful Year!

By Haley Pal

The Windham Historical Society saw advances in leaps and bounds in 2018. It seemed around every corner, there was something new happening on the Village Green. We had a number of successful programs and fundraisers that raised not only the dollars that we can always use, but also awareness of our Society and our vision. It was such a momentous year that it seemed worth noting some of its highlights.

❖❖❖❖❖ WINTER 2018 ❖❖❖❖❖

The Society launched a new website and a Facebook page.

The website, designed by Roy Clark of Pine Point Creative, is much easier to maneuver than the site

the Society had in place for a number of years before. Be sure to visit the site at www.windhamhistorical.org for updates on things happening with the Society. Also, like us on Facebook and engage with us at any time. We always like to hear thoughts from our members.

The first in a series of successful programs that were presented in 2018 was held on March 26. Local author Anne Gass discussed her book, *Voting Down the Rose*, that chronicles her great grandmother's leadership in the Women's Suffrage movement from 1914 to 1920.

❖❖❖❖❖ SPRING 2018 ❖❖❖❖❖

The biggest happening last spring was the approval of the Society's application for help on the Village Green from the National Guard. The Westbrook 262nd Engineer Company of the Maine National Guard brought their assistance in early June when they installed underground electrical work and a 16' x 24' slab that would become the foundation for the Village Blacksmith Shop. To thank members of the Guard team, the Society hosted a cookout on June 9 where Society members donated all the fixings.



The Village Green saw further growth as Rocky Gould of Rocky's Maintenance and Sam Simonson continued work on the South Windham Library. The Village School was being made ready for its Grand Opening, and plans for the Blacksmith Shop were making progress.

Two successful programs were offered to the public and both were well attended. The first, A History of Windham's Correctional Center presented by Brad Fogg, took place at the Little Meeting House on April 23. Then, on May 21, Rosemary Mosher gave us a fascinating look at Windham in the past using technology and an 1871 map.

❖❖❖❖❖ SUMMER 2018 ❖❖❖❖❖

In July, the Society had a booth at the Windham Farmer's Market. Society members donated flowers, plants, veggies, baked goods, jams, jellies, relishes, pickles, salsa, and more that were sold throughout the day. Despite the wet weather, \$200 was raised at the event.



Carol Manchester and Susan Simonson manning the Society's Farmer's Market booth

(Continued on next page)

We had a very successful Grand Opening celebration as we welcomed visitors to The Village School on Saturday, August 25. Society members Walter Lunt, Paula Sparks, and Haley Pal, dressed in period attire and talked about schooldays of the late 19th century. The opening was enjoyed by people of all ages and some of the younger participants even dressed up for the occasion.

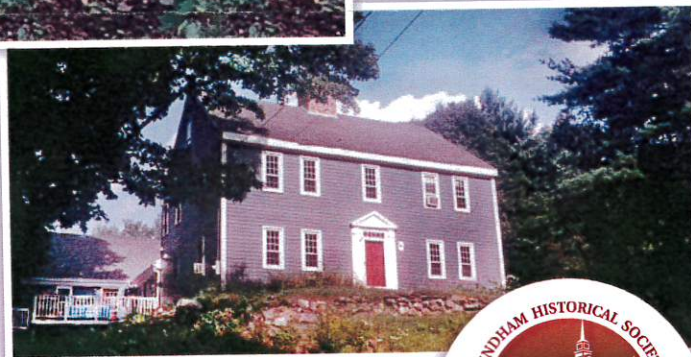
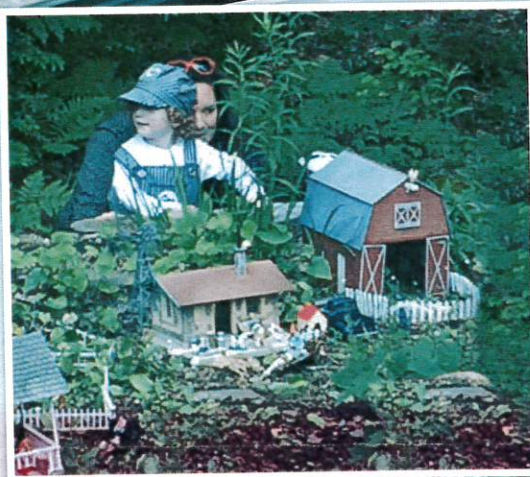
The summer saw two notable programs and they were very different from one another. In June, the Society took guests on a tour of an outdoor train exhibit at the home of David Kierstead. In July, Don Rich filled the house to the rafters with his talk about growing up in Windham.



Thank you to Windham Economic Development Corporation, Don and Janet Rich, and Norway Savings Bank for their generous donations and the Windham Parks & Recreation department for the use of their shuttle bus.

On October 22, the Society had its Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner. This was a fun event where approximately 40 Society members gathered to socialize and enjoy the wonderful food prepared by Society members. Highlights of the night included Treasurer Linda Lunt giving her financial report and Walter Lunt introducing the Society's new third grade tour guide, his son-in-law,

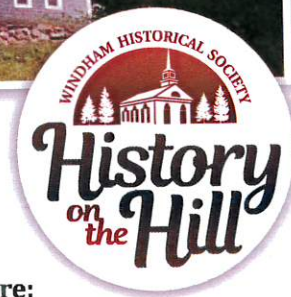
Jason Farley. Bruce Elder introduced new members Roland and Ann Demers, and Carol Manchester reported that the Society has an impressive 235 members. Susan Simonson recognized the many accomplishments the Society achieved in 2018 and thanked all volunteers for their involvement throughout the year.



Top: Walter Lunt passing on the baton to Jason Farley at the annual meeting.

Middle: Young and old alike enjoyed the outdoor train exhibit program last July

Bottom: The Edward Anderson House was a stop on the History on the Hill tour



The Society's 2019 officers are:

Susan Simonson: President
Brien Richards: Vice President
Karen Lougee: Secretary
Linda Lunt: Treasurer
Penny Loura: Historian and Curator
Carol Manchester: Membership Chair
Kevin Graham: Maintenance and Groundskeeper

I will continue on as newsletter editor and Walter Lunt will be The Village School Liaison.

(Continued on Page 4)

♦♦♦♦ FALL 2018 ♦♦♦♦

The Village Blacksmith Shop was framed!

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 project was brought to life

in large part due to Roland Demers. See the story in full detail on the next page!

On October 13, the Society hosted History on the Hill. This tour took us to four famous landmarks on Windham's historic Windham Hill: the famous Edward Anderson House, the Windham Hill United Church of Christ, the beautiful Moses Little House, and the Windham Hill Cemetery. The event made \$600 in ticket sales and we also raised \$900 in sponsorship dollars that helped cover advertising and the bus for the event.

A Chance Meeting with Remarkable Results: A Blacksmith Shop!

By Susan Simonson

What a beautiful sight the Village Green Blacksmith Shop is! But many of you may be wondering how this project suddenly came about. It all began with the Maine Army National Guard laying the slab foundation for the building last June. Then real progress started happening over the summer due to a chance meeting between Society member Bruce Elder and a Windham resident named Roland Demers.

The two met last summer and Bruce was very impressed with some post and beam buildings that Roland had built. Bruce couldn't pass up the opportunity to tell Roland

about the post and beam blacksmith shop that the Windham Historical Society was hoping to construct before winter set in. With very little hesitation, Roland was on the job.

The project got started in September, initially with the help of Roland's family members. As things moved forward, Society members Bruce Elder, Lloyd Gilman, Sam Simonson, Brien Richards, Dave Stover, Gary Plummer, and Reggie Grant joined in. By the end of October, the shop was closed in with a newly shingled roof and Roland and his wife, Anne Marie, had joined the Society!

All of this could not have been done without the tremendous support we received from the community. The Society is grateful to have had numerous building materials donated. And luckily, we had knowledgeable people on hand to actually raise the building itself. Richard Wing & Son Logging in Standish donated the logs used in the post and beam construction, while Phinney Lumber milled the logs and supplied building materials at a reduced cost. Roland Demers and Dave Stover brought in their tractors to raise the posts and beams into their position.

There are a few items remaining to finish on the building— windows need to be put in and a door needs to be installed on the back side. We also need work benches, a ramped entrance, and health and safety codes need to be met.

One of our members, John Kruger, has an old set of bellows to display in the shop. Anvils and blacksmith tools previously donated will be moved into the shop. The shop will also need a freestanding forge. If you have one or know anyone who would like to donate one to us, please get in touch!

We want to thank everyone who has been involved in this project, but want to extend a special nod of appreciation to master craftsman Roland Demers who spearheaded the effort. Thank you, Roland, for volunteering your time, expertise, and skills to create this beautiful new addition to the Village Green.



Work will continue on the Blacksmith Shop this spring

PRESIDENT'S LETTER WINTER 2019

Dear Members,

Wow! What a productive year the Society had in 2018!

The Village School is up and running, the blacksmith shop is built, and much-needed improvements around the Society building have been done. And this year, we'll have another full plate of wonderful events, fundraisers and programs to share with our members and the community!

The reason for all of this? The incredible volunteers who generously give the gift of their time to help bring history to life! We have the most wonderful group of hardworking people who help where help is needed, provide great suggestions and ideas to make our Society a better place, and have a good time while volunteering! The Windham Historical Society is truly fortunate!

As the sun warms up the back field and melts the snow and ice, activities will begin again around the Village Green. We have many projects planned throughout the coming months. And as always, if you think you can give us a hand on a task or two, get in touch with us and join in the fun!

Susan Simonson, President, Windham Historical Society

(Continued from Page 2)

We had some successful fall fundraisers as well. The Election Day Bake Sale saw over \$700 in sales and the Annual Christmas Fair brought in \$1,200 in profits. The Old Town House Museum looked like a winter wonderland filled with lighted village houses, barn wood signs, jewelry and crafts, and of course, the famous baked goods that people always clamor to buy. This year's Fair also featured a Christmas Cookie Platter Raffle. Member Diane Lavigne baked 10 dozen assorted Christmas cookies with help from the Society's new Secretary Karen Lougee and President Susan Simonson. The lucky winners were Amanda Cavanaugh and Julie Lunt. Thank you to Fair Chair Linda Lunt for her amazing organizational skills in putting together yet another awesome fundraiser.



The cookie raffle added a fun flavor to the Annual Christmas Fair

The final program of the year was held on December 3 at the Little Meeting House. Lake Clark National Park Historian John Branson gave a fascinating talk about Dick Proenneke, of *One Man's Wilderness* fame. The Little Meetinghouse was packed with people wanting to get insights into Mr. Proenneke and his life in the Alaskan wilderness. This was the most profitable program of the year.

What an incredible year! We can only hope to surpass it in 2019. All we need is your support and it will happen!

CONDOLENCES

By Carol Manchester

The fall and winter of 2018 saw the passing of three lifetime members of the Windham Historical Society and two closely connected friends of Windham.

Member **Louise Knapp**, known to many as "Nellie," was born in Windham, completed her 12 years of schooling, and married in this town. After graduating from Gorham State, she spent much of her life in the Gray and New Gloucester areas, teaching or volunteering with church or scout groups. Through the years, she pursued her hobby of researching family history, tracing family roots, and maintaining her association with Windham and its history. Louise was 79 when she died on September 21, 2018.

Lifetime member **Josie Morrell**, 90, passed away on October 23, 2018. Married as a young girl, she was widowed at 27. She raised her four children on the family farm. Josie was active in several organizations and community activities, but many may especially remember her as their Windham school bus driver. She spent over 30 years in that job, making Josie a fixture in the hearts and minds of many older Windham residents. Sadly, her son **Peter Morrell**, died suddenly just five weeks earlier on September 17 at age 62.

While he was not a member of the Windham Historical Society, we would be remiss in not mentioning the recent death of local music legend **Al Hawkes**. Living just over the line on Hardy Road in Westbrook, Al delighted locals and people throughout the region with his special brand of country music for decades. In 1962, Hawkes built the swinging arm repair man outside his TV repair shop and recording studio. The intersection became known as Hawkes Plaza and travelers called the icon the "Giant Walking Serviceman." The famous arm stopped swinging in 1989 when the Maine Department of Transportation prohibited moving roadside signs as a distraction to drivers. Hawkes died on December 28, 2018, three days after his 88th birthday and three weeks after the passing of his wife Barbara. The January 11, 2019 issue of the *Lakes Region Weekly*, page 2, features an article written by Michael Kelley about Hawkes' funeral and Wikipedia has some interesting information as well.

To the family and friends of Louise, Josie, Peter, Al, and Edith, Windham Historical Society extends its sincere condolences.

Edith Bell, 1926-2018

By Walter Lund



Windham has lost one of its most dedicated servants of history. **Edith Bell**, past President and Charter Member of the Windham Historical Society, passed away on December 22, 2018 in Williamsburg, Va. where she has lived for several years with her daughter, Joy, and family.

"I don't know of anybody who touched more lives in town than she did," said Cora Moody, long-time friend and fellow

parishioner at Windham Hill United Church of Christ.

Bell was known to contribute eagerly and energetically to numerous causes, committees, and institutions in Windham, including the Windham Historical Society, the Girl Scouts, and her church.

According to Moody, Bell had become concerned that many records of the church might become scattered or lost, so she went on to establish, and assume, the position of church historian. She helped to archive the materials and to write articles on the history of Windham Hill Church, which she would often read to the congregation during key anniversary events.

"Much to the chagrin of the other churches in town," said Moody, Bell made sure it was common knowledge that Windham Hill Congregational Church (now United Church of Christ) was the first religious society formed in Windham in the 1730s, and that it held its initial meetings in the Old Province Fort.

Bell acted with similar zeal in helping to establish the Windham Historical Society in 1967. In 1995, she wrote and compiled the photos for the book *Images of America - Windham, Maine*, the first comprehensive update of Windham's history in nearly 60 years.

Jennifer (Milsop) Millard, one of Bell's many hundreds of girl scouts, recently notified the Windham Historical Society that a scholarship in Bell's name has been established by the Junior Maine Guides organization.

A memorial service for Bell was held on January 12 at Windham Hill United Church of Christ. Burial will be in Mayberry Cemetery, Windham in the spring. Edith Bell was 92.

Programs

By Carol Manchester

The program committee, Sue Simonson, Penny Loura, and Carol Manchester, met in late January to set up the calendar for the 2019 season. Already in the planning stages is a program created by Nancy Larrivee depicting the South Windham of her youth.

The program may involve a group of people who are also familiar with South Windham joining in a panel discussion about that section of town in the middle of the 20th century. Their presentation will relate to and incorporate poster boards and information books that Nancy has created over many years and Nancy's work will be available to Society members who want to take a closer look.

The Friends Church Cemetery tour and the visit to the Windham Hill Cemetery that was part of the October history tour were very interesting and well received by people who attended the events. Cemeteries are very rich in history and so another cemetery tour is planned for this year. If there is a particular cemetery you are interested in learning more about, or if you have some unusual stories to tell, the Program Committee would love to hear from you.

As always, we welcome suggestions from our members about programs you'd like to see in the future. We also welcome members who want to present them. Contact any of the Program Committee members with your ideas. Our email addresses can be found on Page 2 of this newsletter.

Building Stewardship

By Susan Simonson

Our Society is very fortunate in owning nine buildings, most of which are historically relevant to the town. In an effort to properly maintain these valuable historic assets, the Board is looking for volunteer members who are willing to take on the responsibility of becoming a "building steward."

What is the responsibility of a steward?

Initially, you would visit the building, identify and list any deficiencies or concerns and report them to the Board so these issues can then be prioritized and addressed.

Having someone focused on each building will provide it the attention and care it deserves. The steward is not responsible for doing the work, but they would oversee getting projects completed. If being a handyman is not your strength, no problem. All you need to do is care for your chosen building and help in keeping it well maintained!

The following buildings are in need of a steward:

**The Windham Center Library
The Old Town House Museum
The shed behind the Museum
October House**

Would you like to be the person to provide some tender, loving care? Please let us know!

Village Green News

By Carol Manchester

We've been having a bitter cold winter, but that hasn't stopped progress being made on the Society's Village Green. On January 6, three men from All In One Insulation installed the brown-craft-paper-backed-pink-insulation in the ceiling and walls of the new section of the South Windham Library. While the building does not have a heating system for cold weather, insulation will help to minimize oppressive heat during the summer and fall and enable earlier access this spring for interior work.

What's next?

Now that there is electricity in the new walls and upgraded in the original part of the library and the shelving has been taken down where unwanted, significant interior work by members can begin.

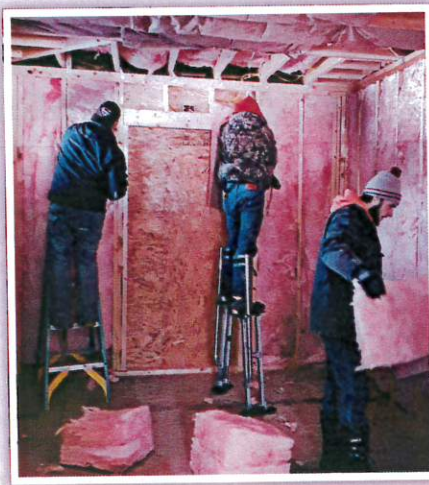
Among the easy tasks is removal of

the carpeting in the original section of the building. Underneath is a lovely hardwood floor which will eventually be sanded. The addition is ready for

wainscoting, and perhaps some sheetrock. This job should take a few of us a day or two to complete.

Before we begin, however, we need to look over the wainscoting inventory and haul it onto the site—another day's work and any strong hands for this activity would be especially appreciated.

In the spring, we will want to prepare the old walls for fresh paint. To continue with the period look, we will be installing a dropped ceiling that looks like tin in the old and new sections. Guidance from any members experienced in these interior construction projects, such as a crew chief, would be very helpful to those of us who will be the "crew."



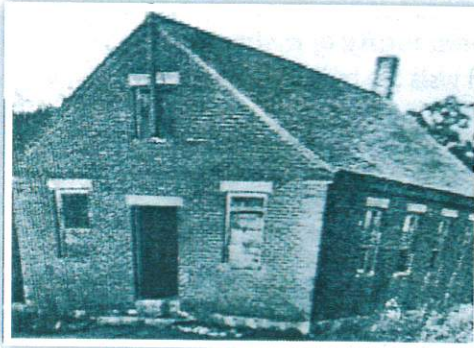
The team from All In One Insulation working on the South Windham Library

Windham Then and Now

By Haley Pal

The Knight School

Windham's School District 6 was established in 1789 and the first school in this district was initially called the Amos Hawkes School. It was common in those days for schools to be named after the families who lived in the area near to the schoolhouse. The school changed names two more times, later becoming the Duck Pond School and then the Knight School.



Then: The Knight School in 1931

Now: The Knight School is now a private residence



Classes were held in a brick schoolhouse that was built to hold 48 students. By 1940, there were 63 scholars among the 25 families that lived in the district. The little schoolhouse was heated by a wood-burning stove and since it took a lot of wood to keep the building warm during the long Maine winters, a woodshed was built near the building in 1915 that also sported a new outhouse and a chimney.

Ken Cole, Jr. was a Windham Historical Society member who attended the school from 1929–1936. He recalled traveling to school after winter storms via a sleigh. Later, a nine-passenger school bus provided rides to students. This service began in 1933.

Cole also remembered that there was no playground at the school, but that didn't stop the students from having a good time at recess. In warm weather, boys would play baseball using cow flop for bases while other children climbed nearby gray birch trees. Skating on a frog pond on Pope Road was a favorite winter activity.

The school closed in the mid-twentieth century and was sold to the Haskell family. Today, it is a private residence on Pope Road, not far from Route 302.

Membership Corner

By Carol Manchester

Windham Historical Society welcomed three lifetime members this fall. Richard Doyle of Raymond became a lifetime member in October; current member Martha Briggs became a lifetime participant in November; and Marc Miller of Windham joined the Society in December. Also, John S. Andrew of South Windham chose a family membership for 2019. Thank you all for your ongoing support of Windham Historical Society. Appreciation is also extended to the members who have renewed for 2018-2019. Many interesting programs and Village Green accomplishments are occurring because of your continued support.

Curator's Corner

By Penny Loura

During the last quarter of 2018, donations have been very forthcoming. We have received the following:

- **Alan Hodgton** dropped off a box containing receipts from 1869, numerous annual reports, graduation exercises for Windham High School for 1918, North Windham bylaws for the cemetery association dated 1927, a letter written by Clarence Proctor to his mother dated 1892, a book belonging to Lizzie Spozedo dated 1872, an attendance book from 1891 to 1900 containing many Windham names, and a diploma for Beulah May Sands dated 1902.
- **Diana Glantz** donated two wooden student desks for The Village School, both in good condition.

- **James Robinson** also donated a student desk with a built-in book shelf and a desk that seats two people side by side.
- **Jo Ann Jarvis** dropped off a manual corn husker.
- **Steve Bryant** donated an enlarged copy of a postcard. The scene features the area at the intersection of Windham Center Road and Route 202.
- **Ken Emerson** donated a 1954 B&W television from Seavey's Appliances who closed their doors this past October.
- **Jennifer Harmon** donated street signs that were once located at Falmouth and Partridge Roads.
- **Rosemary Farrell** donated six letters to/from Emily and Frank Lamb. These were found in a Westbrook residence.

Queries

By Penny Laura

- **Carrie Loring** wanted to know when the Windham Drive-In opened and closed. The answer was that it opened in 1949 and closed in 1984.
- **Dean Gallant** requested information regarding a tour of the Anderson Lord House. He was informed that this was private property and that the owners have never allowed visitor access.
- **Brian Barer** wanted to know if we had any history about the River Road property he was contemplating purchasing. We had no history of this particular place.
- **Suzanne Cook** asked if we were interested in paintings done by Doris Manchester. The Society is now in their possession.
- **Ned Binney** had some land deeds once belonging to the Knight family and wondered if we would be interested in them. We have not yet received them.
- **Carole Drake** was looking for information on Lillian Marie (Cobb) Parker, most specifically about some paintings she had done. Although we have information on many Cobbs, I was unable to find her specific line. I recommended she try Westbrook Historical Society.
- **Rosemary Farrell** asked if we had any interest in letters to and from Emily and Frank Lamb. I told her we did, indeed, have an interest. She has since donated them. Although very faded, they are readable.
- **Diana Riley** was seeking an obituary for Sara Whitney for the year 1907. Unfortunately, the Society's obituaries don't go back that far. I gave her the name of the contact person at the Portland Public Library who may be able to help in her search.
- **Sandy Carder**, a liaison to the Dry Mills Schoolhouse in Gray, requested a visit to The Village School. I'm not sure if she has been here yet.
- **Lanet Hane**, a liaison to both the RSU and the community, is looking for a way to better unite the school district with the community. She is hoping this could be done through learning about local history. I met with her and we toured the grounds. I offered to help her in any way we can.
- **Seamus Maguire**, who works at Liberty Bell Moving Company, found an old brass key while cleaning out a sump pump in their warehouse. He believed it to be a skeleton key and wondered if we could shed any light on its uses. I asked him to send a photo, which he declined to do. I haven't heard a word since, but it sounds interesting.
- **Patty Plummer** requested historical information on a River Road residence. I contacted her and explained that while every house has its own unique history, we do not have historical records for each early home. We have some real estate broker records, but only for a limited number of houses in town.
- **Lucas Damen** has shown an interest in the Blacksmith Shop. He offered help in setting up equipment when things are ready and we'll look forward to his assistance in the spring.

- **David Foster** requested population data in Windham since 1925 and he was sent what he needed via email.
- **Eliza Farrar** wanted to know why James Hawkes who was married to Rebecca Robinson had changed his and his children's names to Robinson. I had no answer for her.
- **Georgetown Historical Society** asked if we had an interest in a Dole book. As we have many, I thanked her and politely declined.
- **Dale Winslow** is researching the Legrow family. I sent him several pages of information on this family and he sent back photos of the Legrows that we did not have. Nice!
- **Katya Dolloff**, a USM grad with a focus in Maine history, has volunteered her time to do something to help us out. We scheduled an appointment to meet her and I hope we can find something that will peak her interest.

Winter 2019 Donors

- **Susan and Sam Simonson** made a donation in memory of Joan Bowden.
- **George and Phyllis Hall and Emma Gilman** made general donations to the Society.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

If you have some time during the day and are looking for an activity that rewards in a big way, please consider some of these suggestions:

Gardener: Help spruce up the Society grounds. We could use someone to weed and water our flower beds regularly. If you have a green thumb and would like to put it to good use, please consider filling this position.

Reader Board Manager: This task is usually done once a month. It involves removing the previous program announcement on the board and putting up information about the next one coming up. It's easy and takes little time, but having someone to do it regularly would be a BIG help to the Society.

Handyman: Would you like to help with repairs, painting, or construction on the various Village Green projects? We can use as many "handymen" as we can get. The more assistance we receive, the more we can accomplish in a timely manner.

With spring just around the corner, now is the perfect time to get involved. Give it a try, make new friends, and see how much fun you can have 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 ☐ \$15 Family Membership ☐ \$25
Lifetime Membership ☐ \$100 per person

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Windham Historical Society

