

Historical Society

Celebrating
50 years!

OF WILMINGTON, VT

1975 ~ 2025



Farmers' Exchange Sign shown at
the original location ~ outside current town
office building - see article, page 4

PURE MAPLE
SYRUP & SUGAR
FARMERS EXCHANGE
OFFICE INC.

76 Days of Celebration

As the United States of America prepares to celebrate its Semiquincentennial—the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776—towns and cities nationwide are gearing up for this historic milestone. Wilmington, Vermont, is no exception, with plans well underway to honor this significant occasion in grand style.

In March 2024, Wilmington's Town Meeting approved a resolution to form a local planning committee, and shortly thereafter, Town Clerk Therese Lounsbury assembled a team of enthusiastic members. Joining her are James Dassatti, Todd Stewart, and Kathleen Banks Nutter, all of whom bring a deep appreciation for both local and national history. The committee is actively seeking additional members and ideas to make this celebration truly unforgettable.

The Vermont 250 Wilmington Town Committee is planning an ambitious 76-day program of events running from April to July 2026. Many activities will align with beloved annual traditions like the Village Strolls, Blueberry Block Party, and July 4th Fireworks Extravaganza. These events will highlight Wilmington's rich history and foster a sense of unity and pride among residents and visitors alike.

Signature Events

Wilmington's celebrations will feature a variety of exciting activities and events, including:

Red, White & BLUE Parade: A spectacular procession through the heart of Dover – the traditional Blueberry Festival Parade gets an injection of red and white, showcasing floats, costumes, and displays honoring the town's history and American Independence.

Fife & Drum Performances: Step back in time with stirring performances by Fife & Drum corps, evoking the Revolutionary War era.

Road to the Revolution: A series of talks, reenactments, and walking tours exploring Wilmington's role and connections to the Revolutionary War plus the consequences of Vermont and national insurrection.

Town Criers: Traditional town criers will add a historical flair by delivering announcements and proclamations throughout the festivities.

Commemorative Coins: Limited-edition coins will be minted to mark this historic occasion, serving as cherished keepsakes for participants and collectors.

Historical Artifacts and Colonial Flags: Exhibits showcasing artifacts from Wilmington's past, including colonial flags and items from the Revolutionary War period, will be displayed at key locations.

5K Colored Run: A vibrant and family-friendly event where participants can celebrate by running through bursts of rainbow colors.

Honoring Wilmington's Legacy

Wilmington's history will take center stage with special exhibits and events highlighting: **Wilmington's Charters:** Original documents that established the town will be displayed, offering a glimpse into its founding.

Wilmington's Founding Families: Stories of the town's earliest settlers will be shared, connecting today's residents with their roots.

The Vermont Presidents: Learn about Vermont-born presidents and their contributions to the nation.

Molly Stark: Celebrate the legacy of this Revolutionary War heroine, whose story is interwoven with Vermont's history.

The Continental Congress: Delve into the role and significance of the Continental Congress in shaping American independence.

Community Collaboration

The committee is partnering with local organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, Wilmington Works, the Historical Society of Wilmington, Pettee Memorial Library, and Twin Valley Schools'

summer WINGS program. These collaborations aim to engage the entire community, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to participate in the festivities.

Get Involved!

The Vermont 250 Wilmington Town Committee invites all residents to join the planning and celebration efforts. Whether you're interested in volunteering, contributing ideas, or simply staying informed, your participation is welcome. For more information, contact the Town Clerk's Office at (802) 464-5836, ext. 115, or email tlounsbury@wilmingtonvt.us.

Let's come together to make Wilmington's celebration of America's 250th birthday a memorable tribute to our shared history and community spirit!



Farmers Exchange

Shown on the cover is The Farmers' Exchange sign that hung outside of what was the Barber Block in the center of town. Polly Johns came across the sign at a local antique shop, owned by Clarence Pickering and purchased it many years ago. She then hung the sign at her shop, known as, Yankee Pickers before moving it to Bean Heads in the old Parmelee & Howe building in the center of town. Once Bean Heads closed she took it home with her and enjoyed it up until December when she donated it to the society. Years ago, Peter Morris asked that if she ever decided to part with it to please contact the society and that is what she did.

This sign is an important artifact of Wilmington history which has made it to the society to be displayed for others to learn about and enjoy. The society is extremely pleased and grateful for Polly Johns donation ~ thank you!

The Barber Block was the location of Mr. Barber's insurance office and the Exchange had an office within the same building. A building on South Main Street, owned by Mrs. Walter Howe, was purchased in 1925 by the Exchange and used to store the 50 gallon drums of maple syrup and for the processing of the syrup.

The following snippets come from an undated article (presumably early 1942) with no acknowledgement of whom wrote it, the complete article is on file at the society on the history of the Farmers' Exchange.

The Exchange was incorporated in 1926 to succeed a Co-operative called Deerfield Valley Maple Syrup Producers Association.

At present there are 36 stockholders, all of moderate means, and twenty-one of these are active farmers and three more are widows of farmers who inherited stock.

About 5,000 gallons of Maple Syrup is handled each year and the amount is gradually increasing. It is purchased principally in Wilmington, Whitingham, Halifax, Dover, Marlboro and Wardsboro.

For several years the price paid to farmers has been increased in the vicinity on account of the existence of the Exchange and in fact the Exchange paid 11¢ per gallon more in 1941 than generally paid by dealers who purchased in bulk.

The syrup is marketed directly to consumers and at the last tabulation the exchange had over one thousand active consumer accounts. These customers are well scattered over the United States and before the war there were several active accounts in the British Isles.

Reflections on Wilmington Village c 1968

Lilias MacBean Hart

When Ed Turgeon, manager of the Wilmington branch of Vermont National Bank, pointed to a building on West Main Street with the words, "that's empty," he set in motion the establishment of a business that is still there fifty-seven years later. The year was 1968, and John McLeod and I had stopped at the Bank, on the corner of West Main and South Main Streets (now the Park) in search of a place to locate our new woodworking business. Thanks to the generosity of Halifax residents Walter and Marge Davis, family friends, who gave us their home, fully equipped woodworking shop and truck for a year, we had grown our business from idea to reality but now needed a new location . . . the year was up! We negotiated a rent/purchase agreement with the owner and set to work.

The first problem was that 11, West Main Street was in terrible shape. It had been used as a "flop house" for the Crafts Inn across the street and assorted small apartments for rent. Most of the plaster walls were cracked and bulging and the old hot water heating system was broken. But we were young and set to work, mostly with crowbars. I do not remember how many loads of lath and broken plaster and old radiators that Fred Nutting took away in his garbage truck, but eventually we were down to the bare bones of this 1837 structure and those bones were good. Strong, hand hewn beams and narrow southern pine floorboards emerged from plaster and paint. We opened our business on Memorial Day weekend that year with a combination of our wood products and woolens from Scotland where my family weaving Mill was located. And, we had made friends with potter, Bob Burnell, who was about to open Stone Soldier Pottery in Jacksonville, and were happy to include a local craftsman. The business thrived from day one. But, part of what made this beginning so successful was the community of business people in the Village. We had arrived in Wilmington at a time when many young people set out to invent a business. Local well-established business owners were helpful and encouraging.

Next door to 11, West Main on the eastern side was The Wilmington Inn (now Alpenglow) with owners Tito and Kay Grandonico serving Italian dishes that were the delight of the area. When Tito hung the red lobster toy under the Inn sign signaling that lobster fra diavolo was on the menu, the line for the dining room went down the steps to the sidewalk. Yet this busy chef still had time to leave a jug of lemonade on our doorstep on a hot day, or a bowl of chicken cacciatore when we were working late on the endless renovations. In front of

the Inn (under where the deck is now) was Tito's herb garden where massive bunches of parsley, basil, thyme, oregano, tomatoes and peppers grew, helped by the manure that Stella, (Tito's dessert chef) brought down from her chickens on Ray Hill Road.

To the west side of our building is The Vermont House, then owned by Ron Andrews and Charlie Watson. They had bought The VH the year before and were building up their clientele with a menu of great lunches and dinners with a little humor added when Ron would add a special of, "Cream of Eagle Soup."

One more building west was Wee Moran's ski shop and Fay Hollander's health food store (way ahead of her time). One day, when fitting a large window at our building and needing an extra pair of hands, Fay answered the request for help and the disaster of dropping an expensive window was averted. The sense of community and connection was then a strong part of our Village.

Diagonally opposite The VH is the 1836 Country Store, started by Al and Sue Wurzberger in 1967. Sue added the Norton House Fabric store that was a destination for quilters from all over the country. It was Al and Sue who suggested that we start a Chamber of Commerce and a small group, with lawyer Tom Politano to keep us legal, met one evening at The VH. Thus began the Deerfield Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Opposite our building is Memorial Hall that was the summer home of The Mirror Players where seasoned actors and theatre students presented a series of plays. It was also where the annual PTA show wowed a sold out crowd that came to see memorable performances by local talent including Dr. Mickey Wolf's "Barney Google".

Local, long-established business owners became frequent supporters of the new arrivals in the Village. In those years we walked from store to store for supplies. It was part of the tradition of a mid - 20th century community where stopping on the street for a chat kept us in touch and built friendships. Ralph Howe and Pete Johnson, owners of Parmelee & Howe pharmacy and hardware, were strong supporters of many of the new young business fledglings. Ralph was also known for his caring for local residents and would open the pharmacy after hours for those who needed prescriptions filled. And Pete was there not

just for our building needs for tools and supplies. He would also give important news, to a select few, on where the fish were biting. In those years the soda fountain at Parmelee & Howe was still open for a rootbeer float on a warm day. The O.O. Ware store, owned by Phil and Clara Ware (where the Home Center used to be located) was a general store essential to everyday living in the Village. Rugged work clothes and boots in one section and meats and veggies in the other made for easy shopping for us Villagers, many of whom lived in the apartments over our businesses. Because Phil did his own butchering, local dogs visiting the store were likely to get a special bonus of a giant marrow bone.

When I think back to those 1960s days in the Village of Wilmington, it is not just with nostalgia but with a deep sense of what we have lost. Changes in communication mean that we don't have daily casual chats with our neighbors and business friends. AARP is trying to make communities more connected by promoting "walkability," and, international programs like, "The Fifteen Minute City" focus on bringing back the cluster of places and services where people meet and shop. Just like it used to be in the Village of Wilmington in 1968!



Early 1970's photo of Quaigh Design Centre



Yummy bones from O.O. Ware's Store

School Days

Have you ever wondered what Wilmington Central/High School student activity lasted more than 80 years?

Did you know that Wilmington Central/High School once had a subterranean gymnasium?

Are you aware that a fire escape at the school was occasionally used by students on weekends and school vacations as a piece of playground equipment?

To find this information, as well as other interesting facts and stories about the school and education in Wilmington, you may want to read **Small Town School: The Story of Wilmington's Central/High School**, written by former Wilmington

Middle/High School teacher Dave Larsen.

The book will be available this coming summer.

Visit the Historical Society web page this upcoming summer for more info about where to purchase a copy of the book.

<http://www.wilmingtonhistoricalsociety.com>

Early 1900 photo of the
new Central School



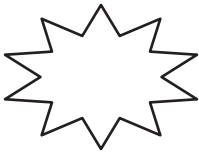
Back cover photo answer:

East Main Street where the Dollar Store is
located today

Name that PERSON quiz by Rick Stenson ~ Class of '63

If you are stuck on one, contact me for the answer (or even if you are not)
brenrick67@gmail.com or 352-421-2856

1. Ron - Youngest in family of 5 near Baptist Church
Don - Lived on South Main Street near library
2. Tim - Brother of Melanie and Mary
Jim - Owner of local Motel
3. Ray - Married the doctor's daughter
Way - State trooper in the 50's
4. Pat - Daughter of one of the nicest teachers ever
Matt - Brother of Lucy
5. Larry - Grew up on Shafter Street
Mary - Youngest, family of 5 on Shafter Street
6. Sullivan - Was a manager at the Grand Union for many years
Milligan - 6 foot 6 hoopster at WHS
7. Pike - Oldest, family of 5 on Shafter Street
Mike - Best basketball player of the early 60's at WHS
8. Leon - Husband of long time librarian
Cleon - One of John and Janice's twins
9. John - 3rd born of 4 on Castle Hill
Braun - Oldest son of Al and Agnes
10. Pete - Back side of Castle Hill - great athlete of WHS
Sweet - Pretty girl just a ways up North Main Street
11. Bonnie - Her dad ran a gas station
Ronnie - Brother of Randy and Reggie
12. Larry - Next to youngest of 5 or 6 living on Castle Hill
Gary - Priscilla's brother
13. Van - A favorite teacher at WHS
Mann - Lived at the bottom of Castle Hill - 1st house after the bridge
14. Rick - South Main St. just before the bridge
Dick - Oldest of family of 5 on Beaver Street
15. Nick - Father owned Deerfield Valley Supply
Mick - 4th child of 5 on West Main Street
16. Penny - Horserider at local hotel
Kenny - Brother of Donnie on South Main Street
17. Big - Lived on Beaver Street, worked for Cy Lavoy
Gig - Son of Fuzzy and Joyce on Castle Hill
18. Fuzzy - Locksmith on Church Street
Buzzy - Owner of a gas station
19. Tandy - Sister of John on Castle Hill
Sandy - Sister of Butch on Church Street
20. Nan - Middle child of 5 on West Main Street
Stan - Milkman and pilot



Celebrating 50 years!

The Historical Society of Wilmington is a duly organized entity, dedicated to collecting, preserving, teaching, and displaying the history of Wilmington. The society is an independent group of volunteers that is funded by donations, memberships, and fundraisers.

With this said, a lot of Wilmington History has been preserved over the past 50 years and we have come a long way as a society. From storing items in homes, a small closet space at Memorial Hall, to our very own museum!

The museum has grown and is filled with lots of interesting artifacts and history. Each summer our displays are switched up and new items are put on display for everyone to enjoy.

The society is very fortunate to have a strong dedicated group of members who volunteer their time to make it possible.

Please stop by this summer to visit the museum on Sunday afternoons from 1pm - 3pm, starting July 6th, through August 31st.

Passport Challenge

Have you ever wondered what other societies have to offer for history and artifacts? Now is your chance to visit a few new locations!

We are pleased to announce, new this summer in conjunction with surrounding societies, a Passport Challenge to encourage locals and visitors to stop in and browse through some old artifacts, photos and or conduct your own research. Not just your local society - but surrounding ones to see what they have to offer, too. The passport will have a list of participating societies, their museum hours and locations. For each society you visit you will receive a stamp acknowledging you have visited. Fill in the entire passport and you will be entered into a drawing at the end of the summer!

Please visit our website later in the spring for updated information about the challenge and where to pick up a passport.

President's Report

Our museum was open Saturday afternoons starting in July through Labor Day to visitors and also open by appointment. NEW for the summer of 2025, we will be open SUNDAY afternoons (instead of Saturday), 1-3:00 starting July 6th through Sunday August 31st.

We wrapped up our theme for our monthly meetings centered around the history of Mountain Mills after visiting Medburyville, the Glory Hole in Whitingham, and a potluck dessert at Mountain Mills for our Annual Meeting. During our October meeting members participated in a game of Jeopardy, to see how much information members had learned over the year pertaining to Mountain Mills. If time permits we will revisit the Jeopardy game during one of our meetings in the spring.

Museum upkeep: thankfully we only had a few small projects for upkeep along with regular monthly expenditures. For 2025 our goal is to raise enough money to have our driveway, entrance, and parking area paved to help with ongoing drainage issues and washouts. Dependent upon our success raising enough funds, we look forward to completing the project sometime over the upcoming summer months.

The society is ever so grateful for those who continue to support the society, whether through yearly membership dues, monetary donations or artifacts that will enable us to preserve Wilmington history for years to come. Newsletters / membership forms are available on our website for you to view and print off. If you would like to be added to our mailing list please let us know.

Displays and artifacts: In the works will be a display for America's upcoming 250th Anniversary. One of several donations acquired was a collection of correspondence from author Elswyth Thane who had a home here in Wilmington.

Monthly meetings (2nd Wednesday of the month) will resume starting Wednesday, April 10th ~7:00 p.m. at the Barber House, continuing through until our last meeting in November. We look forward to visiting some local historical locations as well during some of our meetings, updates on this will be available on our website.

The society strives to work diligently with the continued efforts of our volunteers, without each and every one it would be difficult to continue as we have - thank you to everyone who chips in, whether filling in during open hours, helping with displays, upkeep, being a volunteer board member or just being there when we need an extra hand!

Please visit our website <http://www.wilmingtonhistoricalsociety.com> for the latest update on events at the society.

Julie Moore, President

Historical Society of Wilmington

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What is the location of this Grand Union?

Justin Adams
60494 Billadeau Road
Bend, OR 97702