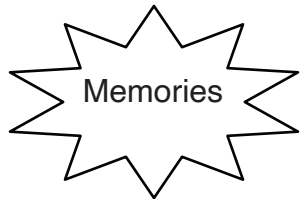


# Historical Society

OF WILMINGTON, VT

1975 ~ 2026



Grand Union, Baptist Church & The Bowker Block (Originally the Masonic Lodge, once located on the old town common. Moved down in 1837, it was later the site of the first telephone exchange. The building was sold in 1965 and moved to its current location North of the Old Red Mill.)

## Small Town School

The Story of Wilmington's  
Central/High School



Dave Larsen

**"Small Town School,"** a history of Wilmington High School written by former Wilmington High School teacher Dave Larsen, went on sale in October and saw many copies purchased by WHS grads and families. Dave and his wife and editor, Kathy, gave a presentation and led a discussion of the book at the Historical Society's September meeting.

Half the proceeds from sales of the book have been donated to the Historical Society of Wilmington and the other half to the Old School Enrichment Center.

"Small Town School" is available for \$20 at Bartleby's Books in downtown Wilmington. <https://myvermontbookstore.com/> or you can contact them by phone @ 802-464-5425

## ***"Memory Lane"***

A town as old as Wilmington is filled with stories, tales, and memories. Many Wilmingtonians have taken time over the years to preserve slices of local life, lore, and history - memories that would otherwise have been lost to time. Whether it be via journal entries, letters, or recording their thoughts looking back on the past, the memories included here are about what it was like to get out-and-about in Wilmington for school, work, or play, and stretch back over 100 years. We'll experience a hike up Haystack, hear about baseball back in the day, see how grocery stores operated prior to self-checkouts, take a look at life in a boarding house, and discover the creation of a snowmobile club. And, there will be a bit of local trivia so you can put your own memories to the test! So, let's take a walk down "Memory Lane" together and witness how Wilmington has changed over the years - and how it's stayed the same!

## ***Haystack Memories from Olive Moore Buffum's Stories***

The morning of August 25, 1916, being quite clear and not too hot, Mary and I decided to go onto Haystack. Hazel Russell had said she wanted to go with us most any day if we would come up. We started afoot at 9 o'clock, and reached the Russell's at the foot of the mountain about 11. Dorothy and Verne Ottagnon walked out with us from the village. At half past eleven Hazel, Mary and I started to climb the mountain. At the spring we found Mr. Aldrich of East Wilmington and eight Lake people (4 boys and 4 girls) eating their dinner. We filled our water bottle and started on the real climb, for the way thus far though rough and stony, had been comparatively level. We carried our lunch box, field glass, camera, water bottle and a bag of apples. When, at 1:00 P.M., we reached the summit and looked down on the lake, lying, seemingly at our very first, we were tired and hungry enough to simply set down and enjoy it and eat our lunch before thinking of the other views spread out all around us.

It was not clear enough to see the most distant mountains, but all the nearer views were clear and distinct, and among the places, we could see our house, Wilmington village, the factory and Mountain Mills, in Wilmington and O.E. Hills, J.M. Upton's and Wm. Shippee's in West Dover. Also we could see the big white stone in the pasture, on the place where we used to live. Best of all for me however were the great rocks which form the summit of the mountain and the lake below.



Soon after we ate lunch the other party reached the top. They took several pictures and so did Mary.

We stayed two hours on the summit then went down by the lake. I had never been to the lake before.

There were big waves that day, and the sand along the shore was white and clear like that of the ocean. Far across the lake, among the dark spruces, we could see the little cabin where the boys go sometimes for camping and hunting.

Sometime after we left the lake I was much surprised to come to another smaller lake or pond which proved to be Crystal Pond of which I had heard, but which I had never seen.

It took us an hour and a half to come down the same as to go up, and when we reached the Russell place, we found Arthur there with the team waiting for us. (Arthur, being Olive's husband)

## I remember... my first 18 years ~ George Van Wyck

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Hand written on (89 pages) yellow legal size paper are memories of growing up in Wilmington, written by George and archived at the society. Chosen are a few select memories.

School memories included many pleasant recesses during my first six grades. From third grade on it was a good baseball game. Before school started in the morning or again in the afternoon, we played scrub baseball instead of the team approach. We spent many, many hours playing scrub as we grew up in Wilmington- not only on the school lot, but in a lot of vacant lots around town as time permitted. One of the interesting "fields" was on Beaver Street (where the old brick firehouse sits today). Another favorite recess past-time, particularly when the weather wouldn't let us play baseball was marbles.

May 1st was always a big day in Wilmington. On that day kids delivered May baskets, beautifully decorated and "filled" with candy to our friends. I never knew if this was a practice followed all over the country or if it was only a New England custom. Also I don't know if it is still being done, but it was nice.

Speaking of holidays, Wilmington always had a big Christmas tree next to the drug store (P&H) at the intersection. Gifts for all the kids mysteriously appeared and Santa Claus arrived to pass them out. He also came to the church and more gifts were given. Christmas was always special and fun.

Memorial Day was also a favorite of mine. The town had a parade with the high school band ending up at the bridge where the band played "Nearer My God To Thee" A boat of flowers was dropped into the river while a "six gun" salute was fired. Then there would be a gathering at Memorial Hall. Someone always repeated Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, I couldn't believe someone could remember and recite something that long. (When I was older I memorized and recited it on that very same stage on Memorial Day). After this there was usually a town meal provided by the DAR or some other group and then a ball game at Baker Field.

(George's family owned and operated the local GU, see cover photo) By today's standards, the Grand Union of my youth in Wilmington was different. It was a full service store - no one waited on themselves. It was the good ole days before "pre-packaging" - candy and cookies were in jars and had to be weighed out. Often when the clerk was hungry a hand might stray into the cookie jar or candy jar for a quick pick-me-up. Every item the customer requested was brought back to the counter, the prices were jotted down on a paper bag and added up. We never had an adding machine. If a customer wanted to "charge it", each item had to be listed individually on an order form. Another "innovation" of our store was the regular routes to outlying districts. On Mondays our "main clerk" would drive on a scheduled route through Jacksonville, Whitingham and Halifax, visiting our customers and taking orders. On Tuesdays, the clerks would "put up" the orders. On Wednesday morning the orders were loaded into the panel truck and delivered. It was an all day job. The Dover Route was called in early Friday, put up during the day and delivered after school. If the weather conditions were good these deliveries could be completed in a couple hours - if not the route could take four or five hours.

## My First Job

Arthur Ball

I grew up on East Main Street between the Congregational Church and School Street. Across the street (next door to Ralph Medbury) lived Clara LaTerre on the bottom floor and Katherine (Kitty) Mills and her daughter, Polly, on the top floor. Mrs. Mills knew my Mom from church, so when her mother Mrs. Ethel Strawser wanted a young man to run some errands for her, and her sister, Miss Alice Courtermanche, my name came up in the discussion. I was about 6 or 7 at the time. So I was sent up to talk with the ladies and it was agreed I would work for them 6 days a week. The duties weren't very extensive and I enjoyed doing it, in fact I did it for about 8 years.

I would go up to their residence daily after school. They lived in the house between Ralph Medbury and Mrs. Helen Allen. They had a TV tray table on their porch upon which they left any letters they wanted mailed and I would take them to the Post Office. I was entrusted with the combination to their mailbox - which I still remember and will still remain my secret although I'm sure the box has been re-rented and the combo changed several times. Then I would return their daily mail to the TV table and I was then free to pursue my interests, that is most days! On Tuesday I would take an old valise in which the sisters had placed 5 or 6 books that they had read. These were delineated by some mark placed on the inside cover to show that they had read this one. I would hand the valise to Mrs. Lettie Wheeler at the library (or Margaret Greene toward the end of my job duration) and the librarian would select 5 or 6 new books and fill out the proper paperwork prior to sending me "home" with them. Friday's were Banking Day! After I got the mail I would take a bank bag down to the one bank in town and hand it to either Bertha Jacobs or Dot Vogel. The ladies desired \$ wishes were already spelled out in the bag. In about 10 minutes I got the bag back for the return trip.

Oh, yes, when I just started going to the post office it was where everything else was (nearby) at the intersection with the stop light! But when the new post office was built I obviously had a shorter "run" although I never minded any of the runs! And this was a daily occurrence and year - round as well. For all my efforts I was paid \$1.50 per week and never got nor wanted a raise.

If the ladies were busy they merely left the door into the kitchen closed (actually they brought the table inside during cold or snow storms), however most of the time I would find the door open. I don't remember who shoveled them out in the winter but I don't think it was me.

Mrs. Strawser had been a music teacher at the high school. Her sister, Alice, had contracted polio at some point before I knew them. But she had a nice '57 Chevy (blue & white) with handicap levers and some times she would take me for a ride - perhaps around Lake Raponda or perhaps just to the Cree-Mee stand where she would treat us both to a cone. They always seemed to be very upbeat and enjoyed talking to me. (continued next page)

Occasionally there would be fudge or homemade cookies on the mail table which I enjoyed. They also invited me in to watch TV on a few occasions. It's the only time I've actually seen one, but they had a piece of ridged plastic mounted to the TV set with BLUE - YELLOW - GREEN or maybe the middle band was red - I don't recall, but the three bands gave some sense of "color" TV before it was common place. Mrs. Strawser tried to teach me piano lessons on Saturday for a while but advised me to give it up as I was tone deaf!

Finally I went off to college and military and they both moved down to West Brattleboro and have been gone for many years. I wish I could visit them again, they were very loving and kind and I thank them for all they taught me.

Last year Rick Stenson - Class of 1963 provided a person trivia which was well received by many. This years newsletter had limited space when he reached out to us with more trivia so the list was shortened to squeeze into this space... BUT stay tuned for the continued list in 2027!

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

1. Holly—One of the doctors daughters  
Wally—Boss at the New england Box Co.
2. Bark—Well known carpenter on Lisle Hill  
Mark—3rd child of Beaver St, family
3. Ron—Game Wardens son on West Main  
Don—Brother of Doug and Dave on Whitney Lane
4. Ken—Owner of gas station on West Main  
Gwen—Sister to Toby and John Castle Hill
5. Terry—2nd oldest of 5 on West Main  
Harry—Oldest of 4 near Searsburg
6. Lee— Lived on Fairview Ave became a barber  
Marie—Sister of Gary on Higley Hill
7. Budge—Mother of John and Tandy on Castle Hill  
Budge— Oldest son of Kenny and Bernice on Shafter St
8. Phil—Store owner and basketball ref  
Bill—Farmer on Higley Hill
9. Franny—Sister of Gordon and Donnie  
Danny—Oldest son of town constable west Main
10. Sue—Youngest girl in family of 5 on Stowe Hill  
Sue—Her dad was Lindsay on West Main



## *Memories* ~ Deb Boyd



I grew up on Higley Hill Road, in the house my parents built. My brother Doug and I played outside most of the time. We had a sandbox in which we played trucks, and frequently rode our bikes down to Adams Farm to play with our cousins. Oftentimes we played in the hay mow at the farm, building nests in the hay and walking along the big rafters in the barn. We chewed on pieces of sweet hay and swiped a few pieces of cow grain, pretending to be cows. In the summer we caught frogs at the cow pond (from which the cows drank), and when it got warm enough, we swam in that same pond.

My grandparents, Louis and Doris Adams, raised a lot of animals on Adams Farm—cows, sheep, pigs, goats, horses, chickens, dogs and cats. They also had a garden and potato patch, and grew hay, and sweet and cow corn. Once the sweet corn was ripe, we kids would sell it at the bottom of Higley Hill Road to earn money to go to the Deerfield Valley Farmers Day Fair. We had a sign, advertising fresh corn for sale (10 cents an ear or \$1/dozen!) and would hold up an ear of corn in each hand as cars drove by. We sold a LOT of corn during the summers!

We always entered crafts, sewing projects, vegetables and prepared food in the fair. Usually about a week before the fair each of us kids would choose a calf to “train” to walk on a lead, and entered it in the cattle show. We rarely did very well with our calves as they weren’t well trained, but we had fun trying to walk them around the ring.

My grandmother also ran a boarding house at the farm for summer guests. My mom, Thelma, helped Gram with meals and housekeeping for the guests, and we kids would play with the boarder kids. Some families came for a week, and some stayed for a month or longer. A lot of the mothers and kids stayed at the farm while the fathers worked in the cities during the week. The dads came back to the farm Friday nights to spend the weekends with their families. I remember Carol, a girl from New York City; she was a ballerina. Carol and her mom stayed at the farm most of the summer and Carol’s dad came up on weekends. Another girl, Ellen, came to the farm for years with her parents and two brothers. Ellen and I became pen pals around age 7, and we still correspond to this day!



"Pictured are Louis & Doris Adams, sitting on the front porch of their farmhouse at Adams Farm. A one year old Deb Boyd is in the duck rocker that her mom made in her high school shop class."

My parents started building their seven bedroom, two bath home in 1959, with the plan to rent rooms and board skiers in the winter. Their home was called "Boyd Home," and mom cooked and served breakfast and dinner to our guests. She also babysat for the skiers' children who were too young or didn't want to ski at Mt. Snow with their families. We had many repeat customers, likely because of mom's great home cooking. Breakfast always started out with hot cereal, and alternated between pancakes and sausage or eggs, bacon and toast. Dinners included meat (or swordfish on Fridays), potatoes, a vegetable, bread or rolls and dessert. No one left the table hungry! One family came up almost every weekend throughout the winter, bringing different college students with them to ski. Doug and I would be allowed to stay up Friday night till midnight or longer, waiting for these guests to arrive. They quite often brought us small gifts when they came, so we were always excited to see them come. We kept in contact with them for many years after they stopped coming up to ski.

In the late 60's my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles harvested and sold large crates of pine boughs to a company that made wreaths, swags, etc. One year my parents used part (most?) of their share of the proceeds to buy Doug and I each an Elan Ski-doo! We were so excited to have our own snowmobiles, as we had been riding on the seat behind either mom or dad on their snowmobiles.

At least one night a week we rode snowmobiles as a family, and on Sundays our family, our grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins went on all day snowmobile excursions. Mom packed thermoses of hot chocolate and tomato soup, a pound of hot dogs and a package of rolls.

During breaks in trail riding, we would sip hot chocolate, and at lunchtime a small fire would be built, and we would roast hotdogs. Although it was cold, we rarely minded—we were having fun, and the hot chocolate and tomato soup warmed us up! My dad Gib, uncles Bill and Pete Adams and Henry Wheeler decided to start a snowmobile club in the late 60's. They named the club the Deerfield Valley Stump Jumpers.

The number of people joining us on snowmobile rides increased, and the Stump Jumpers held annual snowmobile ride-ins to raise money for Deerfield Valley Rescue. The club also held "progressive dinners" for its members, where we snowmobiled to a member's house for an appetizer, to another one's house for dinner and a third house for dessert. That was fun because we never knew what we'd be eating!

Growing up we were a big 4-H family. My grandmother, both parents and an aunt, Shirley Pease, were all 4-H leaders. My grandmother and mom taught me to cook and sew, and my dad taught Doug and other boys in town how to do wood- and metal-working. Every year there was an all-day, statewide 4-H competition in Barre. We could enter the talent show and enter items we had made in 4-H to compete against other 4-H'ers for ribbons.

In 1976 my parents bought and operated the Sunoco station on Route 100. Both of my parents, Doug and I worked at the station. My dad performed minor car repairs, and tire and oil changes, while mom, Doug and I pumped gas. We had many regular customers who bought gas from us, and there were several gentlemen who stopped by the station to visit with my dad.

"Family" is the word I would use to describe how I grew up. Whether it was with my immediate or extended family, we were always doing something together. What a great way to grow up in this small town!

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, 2026—towns and cities nationwide are gearing up for this historic milestone.

The Vermont 250 Wilmington Town Committee is planning an ambitious 76-day program of events running from April 19 to July 4, 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.



• **Patriots Day – April 19 –  
250 th Kickoff Party**

• **April 19 - Kevin Graffagnino:** listen to  
“Why Vermont History Matters”

• **May 23 – Village Stroll:** focused on Wilmington History – who were the founding fathers, when was the town electrified, a history of Wilmington Reunions

• **June 18 - Kevin Graffagnino:** learn about “Zadock Thompson”

• **June 20 - Lake Champlain Maritime Museum:** “The Battle of Valcour Bay”

• **June 20 – Village Stroll on American Eagle Day**

• **July 2 – Wilmington’s Fireworks Extravaganza**

• **July 28 – Reading of the Declaration of Independence on Lisle Hill Common**

• **July 31 – The Deerfield Valley Players open “1776”**

• **August 1 - Red, White & BLUE Parade:** the traditional Blueberry Festival Parade gets an injection of red and white to honor American Independence.

• **August 13 - Kevin Graffagnino:** learn about “Consuelo Northrop Bailey”

• **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.

**Get Involved!** The Vermont 250 Wilmington Town Committee invites all residents & businesses to dress up in red, white, and blue for all of 2026.

For more information, contact the Town Clerk’s Office at (802) 464-5836, ext. 115, or email [tlounsbury@wilmingtonvt.us](mailto: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!

## President's Report

The Historical Society of Wilmington is a duly organized nonprofit 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.

The museum was open to visitors on Sunday afternoons starting in July continuing through Labor Day. Also open by appointment for those visiting during the week or searching out Wilmington history. New last year was the "Passport Challenge" which was created in conjunction with four other surrounding societies, Marlboro, Readsboro, Whitingham and Monroe, MA, with the hopes of generating more visitors. It did increase our local visitors, but not as many as we had hoped. We look at it as a piloting year and will build on it with the challenge starting a new round next summer. Stay tuned...

Our monthly meetings were a variety of traditional meetings held at the museum and visits to "old" locations, such as Crafts Inn, The Old School and the now Gateway Lodge, once known as "Beaver Brook Farm". Thank you to everyone for allowing the society to hold a meeting and for providing a tour of your establishment.

Thanks to the donations received through our annual newsletter for the paving fund we were able to work on part of the project by paving the entrance to help with washouts. The rest of the project will go forward once we have the funds secured.

Museum upkeep: over the winter during heavy wind one of the large maple trees blew over hitting part of the roof and sliding down the front of the building. It did cause some damage to the roof which resulted in an added expense to our budget. Luckily it did not do more damage and Barker Willard III took care of cleaning up the very large tree in trade for the firewood ~ thank you. Another project, the deteriorated railing along the small entryway porch was replaced along with some other sections that had rotted.

Displays and artifacts: a small display was added for the America's 250th Anniversary and will be added to for the upcoming events planned for the celebration in Wilmington this coming summer. A display was also put in place in remembrance of Bill Pool, local photographer and husband to Janet Barber Pool. Both displays will remain through the summer.

The society is ever so grateful for those who continue to support the society, whether through yearly membership dues, monetary donations, artifacts and or volunteering your time as an active member. All of these factors contribute to preserving Wilmington history for years to come - thank you!

Thank you to our board of officers and trustees for helping to keep the society afloat, there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes in order to keep the ship sailing.

In conjunction with the 250th Town Committee we will be holding monthly walking tours of the village - the first one will be held Wednesday evening April 29th.

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

Historical Society of Wilmington

P.O. Box 1751

Wilmington, VT 05363



What is the location of this fine Wilmington building?