

Windham Historical Society Quarterly Review

Winter 2021

The Old Grocery's New Chapter

By Haley Pal

The Old Grocery has been a familiar fixture in Windham for hundreds of years. It was constructed in the early 1800s and in 1838, it was purchased by Portland historian William Goold who opened it as a tailor shop. Goold was intrigued by history and enjoyed salvaging materials from old buildings that were about to be demolished. He would often purchase interesting items with a unique history and repurpose them for his personal use. An example is the carved ornamental trim on the front of the old store which was once a part of St. Paul's Church in Portland.

Goold sold the store to Alley Hawkes in 1845 and it was converted to a grain store, a cobbler shop, and finally became a grocery store. The business remained in the Hawkes family for over 100 years. For decades, it was a gathering place for town people and a hub of political conversations.

The Hawkes family sold the Old Grocery in 1956 and the building was deeded to the Cross Roads Garden Club. It became the property of the Windham Historical Society in 1996 and was turned into the Old Grocery Museum that was carefully tended by Society member Norma Rogers for many years. The museum featured a number of interesting artifacts including shoes, wooden pegs, a clothes ringer, a coffee box, and many farm-related items that celebrated Windham's horticultural past. The most



Top: The Old Grocery sitting on its permanent foundation on the Village Green.

Bottom: The building being moved from Windham Center Road to the Historical Society grounds.

interesting item the old structure contained was the Windham town hearse dating from the late 1880s.

Over time, however, traffic on Route 202 made it more and more difficult for people to have safe access to the building. Norma retired and the museum was closed to the public. As the Society continued receiving more and more accessions, many were stored in the Old Grocery while waiting to find permanent homes.

In 2010, The Society purchased "October House," and the 2.53-acre parcel of land that came along with it from the Reeves family who had lived there for over 50 years. The property is right next door to the Old Town House Museum owned by the Society. This was when the idea of a Village Green was hatched.

A living history center in the heart of Windham Center would be a welcome addition to town and a wonderful way to introduce local residents to Windham's rich history in a unique, hands-on fashion, truly bringing history to life. The Green was to consist of the Old Town House Museum and the Windham Circulating Library which were already on the property. In addition, a barn, schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, and gazebo would eventually be constructed. In 2012, the little yellow South Windham Library was moved to the Green from its original location on the Windham/Gorham line on Route 202.

(Continued top of next page)

(The Old Grocery continued)

The Old Grocery was the last of the buildings that were slated to be moved to the Village Green, but that would take a considerable amount of money. On the 2017 50th Anniversary Fall History Tour presented by the Society, Windham resident Dorothy Samuelson became fascinated by the Village Green project and decided to join our organization. This was a lucky thing for the Windham Historical Society.

In 2019, Dorothy began a major fundraising effort that eventually led to \$41,000 in donations from Society members. We were now financially ready to make the move. On September 25, 2020, the building was moved to the Historical Society grounds and on October 30, it was placed on its permanent location on the Village Green.

This spring, we hope to begin preparing the building for its new purpose, to be an authentic example of a grocery store of the late 19th century. There is much work that has to be done before we can open its doors. We need to review the materials in the store and decide what we will keep and what will be moved elsewhere for storage. The front porch needs repair and a handicap ramp needs to be constructed. There appears to be some powder post beetle damage inside the building, so an exterminator will need to be hired. The building also needs painting and windows need to be repaired.

There is an Old Grocery committee formed and these Society members are ready to get moving on the project after the snow melts and things warm up. Volunteers are always welcome. If you have a skill that you think would be useful in the renovation of the Old Grocery, we would love to hear from you. Contact Society President Susan Simonson (ssimons1@maine.rr.com) or member Haley Pal (haleyopal@aol.com) if you would like to lend a hand. The more help we get, the faster this beloved old building can begin its bright, new chapter.

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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Winter Hours:

The Society is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

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Share your COVID Memories

By Paula Sparks

Just a little over 100 years ago, our ancestors were experiencing the Spanish Flu, also known as the Pandemic of 1918. Accounts of that pandemic help inform us about what life was like for those living through that difficult time. While much was written in newspapers, a lot of the information came from firsthand accounts recorded by the everyday people of the era. Entries in personal journals and diaries are vital in helping us understand the challenges and concerns our ancestors had during that dark period of history.

With this in mind, the Windham Historical Society would like to create a collection of experiences that chronicle what life has been like for our members during the COVID crisis. Hopefully, these can be gathered into a booklet, and some may be included in a time capsule in the future. We believe this will be useful information for future historians.

If you have been keeping a diary or journal, or have interesting stories to tell about these unusual times, please let us hear from you. Your stories don't have to be great works of writing. Simply, in your own words, tell us how COVID-19 has impacted your life.

Here are some things to consider writing about:

- How has the pandemic affected your daily life?
- What has been the most challenging or the most rewarding experience you've had?
- How have you kept your spirits up?
- What has changed the most for you?
- What has been the most frightening about this time?
- Is there something you miss or have you found positive outcomes as a result of COVID restrictions?

And please remember, this isn't a piece about the politics of the Pandemic. It is meant to glimpse into the day-to-day lives of our members during these unprecedented times.

If you are interested in participating, please email your experiences to info@windhamhistorical.org to the attention of Paula Sparks. Or you can mail your entry to the Society at PO Box 1475, Windham, ME 04062.

We look forward to hearing from you!



PRESIDENT'S LETTER WINTER 2021

Hello Members!

As I look out the window, the snow falling, it brings me a sense of beauty and peacefulness. I truly feel lucky to live in an area that provides four seasons, each giving us something to look forward to as we say goodbye to the season before!

This past winter has been quieter than most at the Society. We closed the museum building the first of November, turned off the water, and secured it for its long winter's nap. Due to the increased pandemic concerns, the last board meeting was held in October, fully expecting to pick back up in March. Although the building was put away for the winter, many individual activities continued. Inquiries, requests, Facebook postings, membership sign-ups/renewals, and contributions continued to be processed. I am grateful to our volunteers who continue to keep this organization running smoothly.

Spring will be here soon and our hopes are to get back to work at the Society. With the very generous donations made, we have a long list of things to do—improvements to the Society (brick) building as well as getting started on the buildings on the Village Green! We are always looking for volunteers for projects, small or large. This could be a great opportunity for a family group to help with an outdoor community project.

As we all look forward to preparing ourselves for a new normal, we should feel fortunate we made it through this past year. Our plans are in place for programs and projects, just waiting for the okay to go ahead safely.

I look forward to seeing you soon!

Susan Simonson,
President, Windham Historical Society

Junior History Club Happenings

By Paula Sparks



The Historical Society's Junior History Club is back in action! The first meeting of the year was held in October, with everyone all masked up and socially distanced. It has been a bit challenging with in-school attendance policies and no late bus, but nonetheless, our group has grown from four members to five and our biweekly meetings are now being held weekly.

We started the year with journal-making. Our goal was recording local history and then placing the journals in a time capsule to be buried on the Historical Society's Village Green grounds.

Christmas and New Year traditions were the topic of discussion in December. We made log cabins out of pretzels, tootsie rolls, and peanut butter. They were a real hit. Club members also gave their parents a Christmas gift of oranges studded with cloves, rolled in cinnamon, and wrapped in red netting.

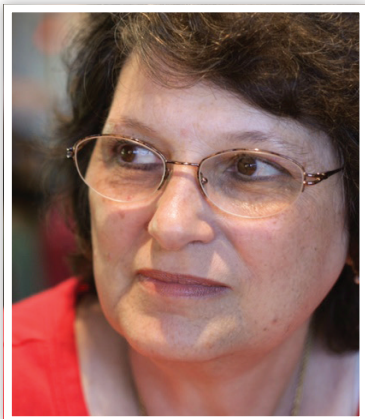
We learned a little bit about our Nation's past presidents around the time of Election Day. The kids particularly enjoyed learning about some of the country's first pets. Did you know that JFK had a trumpet-playing rabbit named Zsa Zsa or that Herbert Hoover had an opossum named Billy?

Our current project is making maps of Windham on wood. Tracing the maps and wood-burning and staining the wood with natural stains has resulted in some beautiful pieces. Our next step is adding historic sites. We're learning about the sites using trivia games and crossword puzzles. Club members are excited that the Middle School has asked them to make a display in one of the school's display cases. Planning has begun and some of these maps will likely be a part of the exhibit.

Coming up next is a photography project. The Club is lucky to have Brian Brigham as a volunteer leader. He will be helping us to make pinhole cameras that will be used to photograph historic sites in our community. Club members will then develop the photos themselves. Do you know anything about some of Windham's past photographers? If so, please let us know. And if you have any ideas for projects for the future, feel free to contact Paula Sparks at psparks46@roadrunner.com. We're always looking for creative things to do.



Junior History Club members working on their map projects.



Meet Carol Manchester

By Carol Manchester and Haley Pal

Most of you already know our Membership Chair, Carol Manchester, but for those of you who don't, she is usually one of the smiling faces greeting you at programs and Society events. Many people have asked Carol if she has lived in Windham all her life and her frequent answer in keeping with Maine tradition and humor is, "Not yet."

Although originally from New York, Carol has spent the majority of her life here in town. She attended Windham schools and is a graduate of Windham High School where she later taught for 20 years.

In addition to her teaching experience, Carol worked for a newspaper for a time and has written various articles and reviews for publication. She is also the author of a book entitled *Joseph K. Manchester: Northern Son in the South, 1861 – 1863*, featuring

letters from the Civil War soldier sent to his family and friends during the war between the states. The book was published in 2013 and is available at the Society's store if you'd like a copy. You can also order the book by calling the Society at 892-1433 and we will ship one to you. For more information about the book, visit the Society's website store.

Carol's lifelong interests include American history, theatre, (both directing and adjudicating), well-crafted phrases, and travel. She has visited most of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, and several European countries. These days, Carol resides in Windham with her husband, David.

May Day Bouquets By Haley Pal

By the time that spring arrives this year, we will all be ready for a little pick-me-up after months of living with COVID and a case of winter doldrums. Seeing tiny green buds on the trees and little bursts of color shooting up from the ground will be a very welcome sight compared to the black and white tones of the long, cold winter.

In celebration of spring and the new beginnings it will bring, the Windham Historical Society will be hosting a springtime goodwill effort we're calling May Day Bouquets. Society members and friends of the Society will be surprised with small bouquets or baskets to remind them that they are in our thoughts and wished well as a new season in our lives begins.

If you'd like to sponsor a bouquet, you can make a \$10 donation to the cause by sending a check to the Windham Historical Society at PO Box 1475, Windham ME. If you have a particular person you would like us to use your donation for, just let us know when you send your check. Also if you should know of someone who would particularly like receiving a little gift or if you'd like to help with deliveries, we'd be happy to hear from you as well.

The effort is being coordinated by Susan Simonson and Haley Pal. If you have any suggestions for the program, feel free to contact them at ssimons1@maine.rr.com or haleypal@aol.com. We'll hope to hear from you in the coming months.

Let's join together to brighten someone's day in the merry month of May!

Membership Corner

By Carol Manchester

I am very pleased to note that WHS digital footprints are of interest to many and have encouraged several new memberships. Among the new members are **Scotty Mallett** of Glen, New Hampshire; **Reis Libby** of St. Augustine, Florida; and life memberships from **Kara L.T. Taylor**, Windham; **Thomas A. Grant Sr.**, Hebron; and **Art Gaffar**, South Portland. The following current members have elected lifetime memberships as well: **Reggie Grant** of Windham and **Beverly Bridges**, **Reggie Butts**, and **Tammy Butts**, all of Raymond.

Welcome and appreciation to each of you.

Curator's Corner

By Penny Loura

- **Irene LeClaire** donated a Windham School Letter that once belonged to his stepfather. His name was Raymond Cote and he graduated in 1953. He received pins for basketball, baseball, track, and swimming for each semester of all four years.
- **Debora Longo** donated what she believes is a Windham High School class ring from 1947 as well as two pins from P of H which are identical and have the number "35" stamped on them.



CONDOLENCES

By Carol Manchester

*While many of us are happy to let 2020 fade into the past,
several of the Windham Historical Society's members lost their loved ones
in the fall of 2020 and January 2021.*

It is our hope that cherished memories of favorite times will give them joy in this new year.

In the fall, Society President Susan Simonson and past President Linda Griffin experienced the loss of their mothers, both of whom lived full lives into their 90s.

Susan Simonson's mother, Jane H. Lunt, died on December 9 at age 94. Over the years, she was employed by Fairchild Semiconductor, Canal Bank and later the Raymond School Department for 20 years. Following retirement, she became a volunteer at the Tate House in Stroudwater. One of her "defining attributes was being the right side of her mirror twin, Joan. They were "always looked at and referred to as the twins, which was perfectly fine with them."

Linda Griffin's mother, Edna Louise E. Carr, died on October 12 at 96. In 1959 she and her husband Linc started the paper *Your Weekly Shopping Guide*. In its early presence it was a four-page paper produced on a typewriter and with hand lettering. It continues in publication still. Other interests included sheep and alpacas on their farm, "Maple Hill Farm" in Cornish, a farm store and an antique shop.

The families of three Society members also experienced the passing of a family member.

Robert (Bob) C. Brackett died on October 22 in Hendersonville, North Carolina, just 12 days after his 94th birthday. With a BS in electrical engineering and later a master's degree in production management, his career brought him to Zenith Radio where he determined whether tube rejects in television sets were the responsibility of the manufacturer, production group, or engineering design. Later he was involved in production and inventory management, retiring after 39 years. He held many professional memberships as well, and served the Boy Scouts for 17 years in various positions. Other interests included public service, volunteer work, and genealogy. A member of several historical and genealogical societies, he had traced one line back to the *Mayflower* and another to the American Revolution, qualifying him for membership in the SAR (Sons of the American Revolution).

Herbert H. Woodbrey was 92 when he passed away in Standish on November 12. He died just 7 days after his birthday. Standish was home to him all of his life. He became a Chevrolet dealer in 1950, owning Sebago Lake Chevrolet in Sebago Lake Village. The dealership later moved to Route 302 in North Windham. Woodbrey was a member of many civic and business organizations in Standish and in the local and regional area. He greatly valued education, enjoyed golfing, fishing, and hunting, sponsored baseball and softball teams, and supported little league and bowling teams as well.

To say that **Jerald L. Davis** was an entrepreneur and a man of many interests and hobbies truly would be an understatement. Jerry died on January 6, 2021 at 75 years. As a very young boy he had three paper routes, mowed lawns, sold worms, and in high school was an enthusiastic salesman of magazine subscriptions for the school's fundraiser. For eight years he worked at Cushmans' Bakery, beginning three days out of high school. From there, he went onto American Can for seven years more, and finally to Tambrands from which he retired after 39 years. During these years he also did carpentry and handyman work, sold real estate and Electrolux at times. He owned a bait shop, and with his wife Annie, developed a chimney cleaning business. Scouting was important to him from his early childhood and he became a mason as well. He collected postcards and other ephemera and enjoyed metal detecting for coins. A member of the Gray, New Gloucester, and Windham Historical Societies, he was especially well known as a resource in the Gray/New Gloucester area for the histories of those communities.

*It was noted that for each of the members above who have passed away,
love of family was of great value. To the families and friends of
Jane Lunt, Edna Carr, Bob Brackett, Herb Woodbrey, and Jerry Davis,
we send sincere condolences and wish you memories of all the good things you shared.*

Just as the newsletter was going to print, it was learned that long-time member **Richard W. Clark** passed away in December. A paragraph of more depth will appear in the spring newsletter. We extend sincere sympathy to the Clark family and Dick's many friends, too.

Windham Then and Now

By Haley Pal

The Old Tavern



The Rogers residence in the 1990s.



The house today. It has not changed very much in recent years.

Back in Windham's early days, Windham Center was a busy part of town. Weary travelers coming from the western settlements and the White Mountains of New Hampshire would often find shelter there on their journey into Portland. Some would stop at the Webb Tavern and others would spend the night at the Old Tavern at the Center. Both establishments were on Windham Center Road, one of the few thoroughfares that would take them to their final destination.

The Old Tavern in the Center, also known as Hanson's Tavern, was built in the late 1770s. It was framed by Samuel Hanson who took up residence in Windham in the 1760s. The building was finished by his son, William, who opened it as a tavern. With William at the helm, the business thrived and prospered for years.

In 1827, William's son, Samuel, sold the establishment to John Reed. From there, it changed ownership many times. Some of its owners included Enoch Gammon of Naples and Benjamin Goodridge. Goodridge sold the business to Edward Boody, a member of Windham's well-known Boody family.

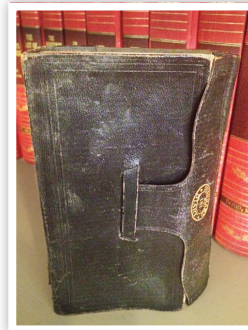
In 1855, the tavern was purchased by William H. Smith, a well-respected businessman of the time. During his tenure, it was renowned as a fine public house and a welcoming stagecoach stop. In 1862, the building changed hands one more time when Smith sold the tavern to storekeeper Alley Hawkes who used it as his primary residence. Eventually, Maurice Linwood Rogers purchased the property and since 1931, it has remained the private residence of the Rogers family.

A Housemaid's Tale

By Haley Pal

If you haven't been following the Society's Facebook page, now would be a good time to start. Throughout 2021, we will be posting daily entries from the 1898 diary of a young South Windham woman, Lena Megguier. Through these pages, you will gain insight into what life was like working as a housemaid for a wealthy family in Portland's West End at the end of the 19th century. It's never too late to join in on the journey.

Start following us on Facebook today!



Programs

By Carol Manchester

Each of the board members are mindful of how much the membership misses the interesting programs and exciting events offered by the Windham Historical Society. At this time the program committee is hopeful that the Society may be able to offer programs for early summer, perhaps beginning in June. Much, of course, depends on diminished virus numbers and increased vaccinations, both of which should provide safety and confidence in gathering in public events. Once again, stay tuned. Meanwhile, there are periodic updates on the website and the Society's Facebook page has become a real joy for many. Currently, there are regular diary excerpts that Haley Pal posts as well as photos and other items of interest. Certainly, we hope for and look forward to the time when we can move from "the new normal" to just plain "normal" again.



Queries

By Penny Loura

- **Janet Soriano** asked about plans/blueprints for her house on Plains Road. It turned out her property is in Windham, Connecticut.
- **Mason Plummer** wanted to purchase an old map. After checking further with him, I found he was interested in Baker's Corner. I sent him a section of the 1857 Place Name Map and a hand-drawn map done by Charles LeGrow.
- Windham Public Library's Reference Librarian **Ray Marcotte** was looking for genealogy information on a Hawkes who called the library. I gave him the Society's contact information, including my email address and he will let her know to contact us directly.
- **Ellen Howard** scanned and sent four pages of genealogy-related material to put in the Hawkes family file. She would like to learn more about the line of the family that began with Ebenezer. When COVID restrictions are lifted, she and her husband **Rick** would also like to peruse our Quaker records at some point.
- **Scotty Mallett** was seeking information about John Farwell Anderson and a survey that eventually brought the Portland-Ogdensburg Railroad to Bartlett, New Hampshire. I sent him a pedigree chart, letterhead, and a letter where J.F. Anderson wrote to his grandson on Portland-Ogdensburg Railroad stationery, a rendering of J.F. Anderson a 3-page biography, an article with the title *Ancestral Cemetery* (9 pages), and an article entitled *Memoir of John Farwell Anderson* by Reverend Bodge (14 pages).
- **Tom Boatman** wanted to donate a two-piece camp stove. We have no use or space for it at this time. Apparently, it was used in a POW camp on Spencer Lake during WWII, which is very interesting in itself. Susan Simonson suggested he try the Maine Military Museum in South Portland.
- **Toni Olinske** requested documents on Elias Cobb including his wife Susan (Stevens) Cobb and their daughter, Mary Ann Cobb. I wrote her back and asked if she could be more specific about the type of documents. I have not heard back from her yet.
- A block and tackle or tackle blocks were found on an archaeological dig in Quebec City by **Erik Phaneuk**. They bare the inscription "STEEL PRODUCTS CORPORATION, SOUTH WINDHAM, MAINE." He was looking for a timeline of when marine fittings may have been made at the South Windham mill. He was told that with the push for shipyards and getting these blocks produced, it was probably sometime in the 1940s.

Donations

By Karen Lougee

- We received two general donations, one from **Scott Mallett** and the other from **William Darling, Jr.** of Gulf of Maine Gunsmithing as a thank you for pies donated by **Diane Lavigne** on behalf of the Society.
- A generous donation toward the Old Grocery project was received from **Carol Riley** in memory of her family's former ownership of the grocery store.
- **Doug Smith** of Friends of the Presumpscot River kindly donated a book titled *River Voice, Perspectives on the Presumpscot* written by Robert M. Sanford and William S. Plumley. Mr. Smith requested we add this book to our library in hopes the readers will "become educated and passionate about the river."

Thank you all for your generosity.

2021 Calendars Available

The very talented Mr. Jerry Black has put together a wonderful calendar for 2021 that is available through the Society. Made to fit into the frames that were sold with our Bicentennial calendars last year, this 11" x 14" black and white version gives you a year-at-a-glance look at 2021.

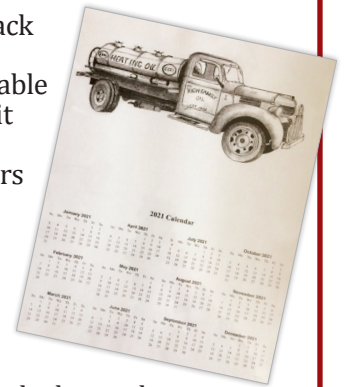
This year's illustration is of the Rich Oil Company truck that was recently sold and whose proceeds were generously donated to the Society by Don and Jan Rich.

If you would like a calendar or a calendar and a frame, call the Society at 892-1433.

We'll do our best to make it happen.

CALENDARS ARE FREE.

Frames are being sold for \$5 each.



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
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