

Windham Historical Society Quarterly Review

Winter 2022

Spring Awakenings

By Haley Pal



The Village Green is quiet now, but look for some aggressive activity planned for the spring.

*The whole world seems to wake up in spring.
Ting green buds appear on the trees.
Tulips, daffodils, and hyacinth spring forth
from the ground on the heels of the
crocus that show their white and purple
heads early in the season to mark the
start of a new year of growth.*

At the Windham Historical Society's Village Green, there have been many behind-the-scenes activities going on to prepare the Village for some fresh new growth of its own in 2022. Underground utilities are now in place, handicap ramps have been added to structures, painting has been done on some exteriors, and the interiors are being prepped to get them ready to open to the public.

Each building is being placed into the hands of a capable "Steward" who will do an inventory of items found in their respective structures. It will then be determined which items will remain in the buildings for a future display or be moved to another location where they would serve a better purpose. Weekly inventory days will be taking place once it's warm enough to work fairly comfortably in the buildings, probably late March to early April.



Following the inventories, there will be a Reorganization Day where we hope to enlist some additional volunteers to help with the heaving, hauling, and moving of things around. President Susan Simonson and her team are confident that our membership will step up and assist us in this very important task.

Things at the one-room schoolhouse are in pretty good shape. Most of the work in this building has been done, but there are some things in the attic that need to be addressed and a few cosmetic changes that may need to be made. The Village School is a wonderful example of what a school would have looked like at the turn of the 20th century. Students have attended living history classes in the building and they have been very enthusiastic about their experiences. The scholars enjoy seeing firsthand what a day in a 19th century classroom would have been like and take pleasure in comparing it to a typical school day of today. When it's safe to offer classes again, schoolmarm and Building Steward Paula Sparks is ready to go.

At the Blacksmith Shop, a replica of one in operation in the 19th century, Building Steward and Vice President Sam Simonson is hoping to go through the many tools and artifacts that have been donated to the Society and begin sorting through them and putting them on display. When the shop is fully ready to open, it will feature a pan hearth forge and period bellows and Sam will serve not only as the building's Steward, but also

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Spring Awakenings (con't)

as its Smithy. We're hoping that in the summer of 2023, you will see him doing demonstrations of heating and bending techniques that will produce fireplace pokers and s-hooks in person on our Village Green.

In the center of the Green sits the Society's Gazebo. It will be getting a fresh coat of paint in the spring and Building Steward Haley Pal is hoping to have a Concert on the Green in the fall where all of you and members of the community can see the ongoing progress being made on the Green at that time.

At the little yellow South Windham Library, Building Steward and Membership Chair Carol Manchester is making plans for many renovations over the summer and fall. Some projects that will be tackled include installing bead board and/or wall board in the ell, ripping up the carpet in the old section of the structure, refinishing floors, hanging a faux metal ceiling, finishing off electrical needs, and hanging fixtures. In addition, sanding and painting of the library's existing shelves and walls needs to be completed. Carol is hopeful we can open the building sometime next year.

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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Reorganization Day on the Green

Join the Windham Historical Society for a Reorganization Day on the Village Green this spring. On this day, Society members and community volunteers will be reorganizing artifacts in most of the Village buildings. We need people to help with moving and hauling items as we redistribute them. This is a big job and we can use all the help we can get. If you would like to volunteer your time or if you'd like more information, contact Walter Lunt at wlnunt@yahoo.com.

of the 20th century. Before that can happen though, windows need to be glazed or replaced, painting needs to be done inside and out, shelves need to be built, and the back of the building needs some finishing touches. Building Steward Linda Lunt is anxious to get into the store to see what will stay and what will need to be moved so she can organize a plan to begin setting things up with the artifacts that will eventually fill the beloved old building.

The Old Town House Museum will open for visitors in the spring on Wednesday mornings from 9 a.m. – Noon. This is where the Society has its offices and reference library. This building is also in need of some serious repair. President Susan Simonson will be spearheading this project. We will have more about this in the next newsletter.

It seems like many people are anxious to see the Village Green up and running, and the Society wants nothing more. But to do so, we need people to help us along our way. If you would like to get involved with making the Village Green come to life, consider volunteering your time, giving a monetary donation, donating a service, or performing a concert at a discounted rate. We're happy for all and any assistance that can be provided. Now is the time to take action. With your help, the Village Green will more quickly blossom into full, beautiful bloom.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER * WINTER 2022

Hello Members!

I am sure many of you are feeling the same way I am, tired of being cooped up in the house to minimize exposure to the public. I can't wait for warmer temps, getting outdoors, and enjoying time with friends and family!

I am very pleased to announce programs are scheduled for this year! Looking forward to seeing all of you as it has been far too long. A safe and healthy environment will be top priority at each of the programs!

This winter, the Board has been busy making plans for each of the nine buildings the Society owns. The first step was to assign each building with a "Steward." The Steward will be responsible for reporting back to the Board what each respective building needs for organization, suggestions for display, and required preparation to open the (con't on next page)

President's Letter *(con't)*

buildings to the public. This will be a major project and we will be looking to our members, friends, family, as well as members of the community, to step in and assist as specific projects are identified.

Newsletter Editor Haley Pal's postings on Facebook have been very well received! Over 900+ people read and look forward to as well as provide input to the twice weekly postings. Our followers enjoy reading about late 19th and early 20th century life in Windham as well as the surrounding area!

Our schoolmarm Paula Sparks, who also wears the Junior History Club leader "hat," continues to be active with this program. It is in its third year, meets weekly and is now attended by ten students! Paula also shares on Facebook what the history club members are doing for activities, studies, etc.

I encourage you to join the Society's Facebook page, Windham Maine Historical Society. It's a quick and easy way to see what's happening at the Society, read stories about Windham's historic past, view old Windham photos, and we are now also posting old-time recipes!

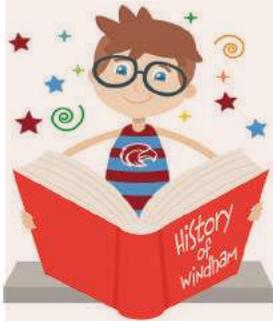
So, although it may have appeared as if we've been taking quite a long winter's nap, many activities and projects are actually in the works. Here's hoping we can look forward to being as close as we can get back to normal in 2022!

Susan Simonson, *President, Windham Historical Society*

Junior History Club Happenings

By Paula Sparks

If you dropped into one of the Junior History Club meetings, you might at first think you happened upon an art club or cooking class. "Is this History Club?" you wonder. How can that be? Where is the "history" in the group discussion of the week or when we're munching on snacks? But indeed, this is our History Club.



For example, if you stopped by in October, you would have found us doing decoupage using flower presses, choosing and cutting leaves and flowers to press, or making candied apples and creating a candy history timeline with bags and boxes of candy. In November, you would have found us filling jars and bags with cookie mixes and gingerbread mixes to sell at the Society's Christmas Fair. Club members also made pumpkin bread, butter, and cranberry sauce to add to

their Thanksgiving dinners.

In December, you might have been enticed to join us in paper-making or creating birch bark picture frames. Then you could have done a decoupage of your own using the flowers we had dried previously. These would have been decoratively placed on our homemade paper to be inserted into the birch bark frames. The finished products made wonderful homemade Christmas gifts for the parents of the members.

In January, you would have enjoyed a trip down memory lane, browsing through old Sears catalogs and comparing shopping then and shopping now. Or you could have joined in on a game of Census Trivia Timeline or Windham Human "Bean" about population density.

We play a lot of games. They help us connect the dots between our activities and history. Trivia true and false, multiple choice, and bingo are just a few. The kids especially liked Trivia Timelines. The most recent game, Silhouette Bingo, started the month of February's history project. The silhouettes were then cut out by club members and made perfect gifts for members to give to their favorite Valentines.

If this Club sounds like fun, it is. We love to have speakers or guests who can share with us. If you have a story to tell or an "antique" hobby to share, we would love to have you. Just leave a message at the Society at 892-1433 and we will get back to you.



History Club members showing off their handiwork. From the pressed flowers to the homemade paper to the handmade frames, these made perfect holiday gifts.



Reba Mae Manchester was born in the old Manchester homestead on March 3, 1909.

Many of you enjoyed reading the diary of Lena Megguier, the young housemaid from South Windham, on Facebook throughout 2021. We haven't forgotten Lena and thanks to Facebook follower Becky Delaware, we now have a copy of Lena's 1899 diary to share with you. In June, we will be hosting a tour of Arlington Cemetery in North Windham where Haley Pal will talk about Lena's life while we visit her grave site.

In 2022, we also have a new Facebook feature called MEMOIR MONDAYS.

Every Monday, we are posting an excerpt from the memoir of Rebecca May Manchester, a Windham woman born in 1909. Each week, we get a little glimpse into Reba Mae's (as she liked to be called) life in the early days of the 20th century.

The memoir is full of interesting stories and anecdotes that tell the tale of life in those simpler times when there was no running water or indoor toilets, when you bought ice for your icebox from the iceman, and used kerosene lamps to light your home. The yarn is rich in Windham history that will fascinate you.

Join in on this unique Facebook journey and have some fun with history!

Young Volunteers Help Spruce Up the Village Green

By Walter Lunt

Several students from Windham High School's Katahdin Program joined Historical Society Vice President Sam Simonson and longtime member Walter Lunt last fall to help work on the grounds surrounding the Old Grocery building on the Village Green.

Over two afternoons of volunteer work, the students raked and leveled the newly excavated grounds, removed rocks and spread grass seed. They were genuinely interested in the buildings on the Green and asked numerous questions about their history. Many of the students offered to return on their own time to help out with other chores.

Lunt and President Susan Simonson were invited to visit the Katahdin classrooms to discuss the development of the Village Green project and to answer questions about early Windham history.

In appreciation of their service, the students were given Windham Historical Society T-shirts. They will return in the spring to help move antiques and display items into the buildings as part of our reorganization process.

"The kids were hardworking, personable, and filled with positive energy!"

—Society President Susan Simonson

CONDOLENCES

By Carol Manchester

Lifetime member **Cora Moody** died on September 8, 2021 at age 82. Music was among her greatest joys. For more than 45 years, she was an organist at the Windham Hill United Church of Christ and helped to bring hand bells to the church. She was also a part of the church's bell choir. When the organ was the concert feature at Merrill Auditorium, Cora frequently attended and occasionally she was a guest organist at other venues herself. As a lifelong member of the International Order of Rainbow for Girls, she served in many leadership roles and "inspired so many young girls across the country with religious and life guidance." Windham residents may also recall seeing Cora when she worked for the school department.

The Society wishes to extend condolences to member Marsha Morgan whose husband, **Peter Morgan**, had succumbed on October 8, 2021 to a disease he had been fighting since 2014. He was 79.

Another lifetime member, **Alice Fish**, 93, passed away on October 24, 2021. Many of this readership may remember Alice from her 25 years of volunteering at Windham Primary School. "She loved the company and laughter of many school children who called her Nana Fish." After they both had retired, she and her husband Dick traveled around New England and spent summer days at their hunting camp in East Hodgdon. She often generously gave baked goods and knitted items to family and friends.

On January 2, 2022, **Elaine Marie Spiller** passed away in the retirement home on Sebago Lake that once belonged to her parents and where she first met her husband Phillip in 1969. Elaine was 81 and lived life true to her belief, "Try to live each day to the fullest." Her career encompassed teaching fifth grade students and that joy of working with young people and adults continued throughout her life. It included volunteering for school, sports, or music, church fairs and writing for the church newsletter, or fundraising. Gardening, raising farm animals, and traveling were also part of her full life. "Being active, remaining engaged in the community, and having many friends helped Elaine maintain her passion for a positive life: always learning, teaching, and having fun."

It has come to our notice only recently that member **Jacob Elder** of Slidell, Louisiana died about three years ago. If you have information regarding Jacob Elder, the Society would welcome it.

To the families and friends of Cora Moody, Alice Fish, Elaine Spiller, Peter Morgan, and Jacob Elder, Windham Historical Society offers sincere sympathy.

Queries

By Penny Laura

- **Muriel Jackson** was searching for information from Quaker records on the Rogers family. Though this was a searchable record, her family member did not show up for our meeting.
- **Andy Robbins** wanted to know the name of the store at the Windham Mall that sold candles, potpourri, and stuffed animals in the 1980s and 90s. I found an article about the store, but it only referenced Candles International. It did not include the name of the store while it was in town. I suggested he try contacting the Windham Community Board with his query. Someone may remember.
- The Society was offered assistance in repairing gravestones from **Bryan Wilson**. I did not feel qualified to answer this legally and referred him to Windham Public Works.
- **Gio Pope** was seeking information about the RSU and I referred him to the Superintendent's office.
- **Josh Hancock** is doing a documentary about the Gambo area of Windham. He wondered what the area was used for, who owned it and if there were any other documentaries about that section of town. I gave him an overview and suggested he read Maurice Whitten's book.
- **John Knox** is an individual who is involved with community band programs and he wondered if he and the Society could collaborate in putting on concerts. Susan Simonson has contacted him and Haley Pal will follow up.
- **Mark Chaplin** inquired about specific homes in Windham and wanted an aerial photo from the 1950s. I could not find any aerial views from that time period.
- **Amy Richardson** was looking for photos and information about her newly acquired home on Overlook Road. I told her I would need a house number in order to do the research, but she has not gotten back to me.

Windham Then & Now

South Windham Community Church

By Haley Pal



The church as it appeared in the 1990s.



The interior of the South Windham Community Church still contains many original features.

The South Windham Community Church is the centerpiece of the Little Falls section of Windham. Sitting perched on a hill on Main Street, it's hard to miss when driving by. The church has a long history dating back to February 1840 when a group of local townspeople gathered at the Little Falls schoolhouse and started the First Universalist Society of South Windham.

Universalists advocated loyalty to and concern for others with regard to national or other allegiances, so from its very beginning, the church provided its parishioners a strong sense of community spirit. The building is the second oldest standing church in Windham, erected on September 1, 1840. The frame without its belfry was raised in 3 hours and 10 minutes. The belfry was put in place 2 hours later. Samuel Elder of Windham was the master framer and Reverend Leander Hussey served as the first pastor to the parish. In 1841, the church threw a fundraiser where people

purchased pews for \$20 - \$40 at an auction. Some of the families that took part in the auction included the Loveitts, Boody's, Webbs, Doles, Andersons, and Smiths. The meetinghouse was officially dedicated to the public on May 12, 1841.

When you visit the church today, it is still adorned with its original stained glass windows, a curved ceiling, and a magnificent chandelier. The church bell hanging in the belfry was added in 1908 and rang for the first time on October 31 of that year. This building's interior has one very unusual feature. It is oriented so the pews and altar of the church face the front entrance of the building. It's believed this was done so that parishioners could be watchful for indigenous people who could be hostile from time to time.

Today, the church is still open for services on Sundays at 10 a.m. It also serves as a community center for the people of South Windham.

Curator's Corner

By Penny Loura

A **Mr. Colby** gifted the Society a postcard of Evangeline Services at South Windham Baptist Church dated 1935.

Donations

By Karen Lougee

The fourth quarter of 2021 saw a number of generous donations from many people and organizations wanting to show their support for the Society.

Bruce McLeod of McLeod Structural Engineering donated the engineering design of the handicap ramp for the South Windham Library.

Windham Rental Center supplied an extension cord for use during the Arlington Cemetery tour that took place in September 2021.

Dorothy Samuelson gave a cash donation to the Christmas Fair held at Friends Church last November.

The Katahdin Program of RSU 14 helped with grading, raking, and disposing of rocks around the Old Grocery and did other landscaping projects around the Village Green in October. They also assisted with installing clapboarding on the Old Grocery.

Jim Elder donated his time and effort for the earthwork that was done around the Old Grocery site.

General donations were made by **Alan Anderson** in thanks for research provided by our Curator, Penny Loura and by **Janet Waterhouse** on behalf of the Pinea Rebekah Lodge.

Membership Corner

By Carol Manchester

Blaine Rich of Windham and **William Harding** of Portland joined the Windham Historical Society family this past fall. Additionally, **Patricia (Patty) Buck** has become a lifetime member, having changed from her yearly membership of the past. Thank you for your memberships and welcome aboard. It is noteworthy to mention here that membership to the Society has remained consistent. Currently, there are 178 lifetime members and 54 members representing 232 people. Despite having lost several members in the last year and the impact COVID-19 has had on in-person programs and events, the Society is fortunate to have so many of its members continue to support and stay in touch with the organization. *Thank you, each of you!*

Programs

By Carol Manchester

Hopefully, the COVID virus will continue to diminish and the Historical Society will be offering four programs this year. Revisiting Arlington Cemetery in North Windham will happen on **June 11** with Haley Pal featuring Facebook favorite Lena Megquier and Carol Manchester focusing on the mid-19th century members of the Manchester family.

In July, Vana Carmona will address *Slavery in Maine*.

In August, guest speaker **Anne Gass** will be discussing the topic: *There's Nothing Complicated about Ordinary Equality: The Equal Rights Amendment Past and Present*. Anne previously shared a program about women's suffrage with Windham Historical Society members a few years ago. Since programming is still in process, the fourth program and place are yet to be determined. Finalized dates, places, and guests will be in the next newsletter and on the website, windhamhistorical.org. **Meanwhile, be sure to mark your calendars for the following Mondays – July 18, August 15, and September 18.**

Also, stay connected through Facebook to enjoy MEMOIR MONDAYS, featuring the curious early 1900s entries from the memoir of Reba Mae Manchester Cressey about life growing up in early twentieth century Windham.

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

Name: _____

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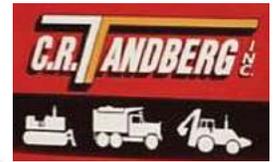
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