



Annual Report --- June 2, 2004

Background

The Wilmington Historical Society was initiated by Wilmington Town Historian, Merri Carol Peck, in January of 2002, when she called together a group of townspeople interested in preserving and promoting the history of Wilmington and creating a permanent and accessible place to protect and house the town's collection of historical records and artifacts. The group met informally for a year and decided to petition the State of New York for a Provisional Charter. The first annual meeting and election of officers was held on June 14, 2003. The first officers were: President ---Karen Marshall Peters, Vice-President--- Merri Carol Peck, Treasurer--- Robert Cressey, Secretary--- Nancy Cressey, Trustee (3 years) --- Doug Wolfe, Trustee (2 years) --- Guy Stephenson, Trustee (1 year) --- Steve Connor.

Accomplishments for the year to date

- The Wilmington Historical Society received a New York State Provisional Charter on September 12, 2003. It was framed by local artist, Jeri Wright, and is displayed in the E.M.Cooper Library.
- We received Federal Internal Revenue 501 (c) (3) tax exempt status in October, 2003.
- We adopted a logo designed by local artist Ginny Crispell, taken from a ca. 1895 photograph of the Wilmington bridge, dam, and mills representing the early industries from which Wilmington got its start.
- One of our earliest accomplishments was the creation of the searchable "Wilmington Virtual Cemetery" on CD by our members, Bob and Nancy Cressey, who took digital photos of all of the cemetery headstones in Wilmington. It is available for research in the E.M. Cooper Library, the Wilmington Town Hall, and the Essex County Historical Society.
- From Kim Marshall, we received a CD of "Rupert", an 1877-1881 Essex County Republican newspaper column of Wilmington, digitally photographed. Copies of the CD are in the E.M. Cooper Library and searchable by name, including birth, marriage, and obituary notices.
- With the expertise of Bob and Nancy Cressey, we have digitally photographed the oldest Wilmington Town Records dating back to 1821, lost for many years, and re-discovered in August of 2003. Copies of the CD are in the E.M. Cooper Library and in the Town Hall. The Society and the Town of Wilmington will be looking into conserving the original document through a grant from New York State.
- Trustee Guy Stephenson, representing the Historical Society, served on the E911 Committee for the Town of Wilmington.
- In cooperation with the E.M. Cooper Library, the Local and Adirondack Sections of the library have been expanded.

- Trustees Karen Peters and Merri Peck have attended workshops on preservation of manuscripts, documents and photos.
- Merri Peck participated in the Regional Roundtable.
- Trustees Steve Connor and Bob Cressey have taken photographs of the new dam construction, 2003, for preservation of our town's history.
- In November, 2003, upon invitation, the Society was the subject of a Survey funded by New York State's Documentary Heritage Program administered by the Northern New York Library Network. The site visit took place on November 15, 2003 with a report prepared by Joseph G. Swinyer. The Wilmington Historical Society has been proceeding forward, utilizing the recommendations contained in the "General Archival Survey and Recommendations" which we received as a result of the study.
- Our first membership drive took place in February, 2004. As of the end of May, 2004, we have an official paying membership of 122 members in each of the following levels:
 - 4 @ Benefactor (\$250.00 +)
 - 14 @ Patron (\$100.00)
 - 16 @ Sponsor (\$50.00)
 - 12 @ Contributing & Sustaining Patron (\$20.00)
 - 4 @ Institutional/ Business/Corporate (\$20.00)
 - 12 @ Senior Citizen (\$5.00)
 - 0 @ Student (\$2.00)
 - 45 @ Family (\$20.00)
 - 15 @ Individual (\$10.00)

We now have some needed funds to begin organizing, preserving, and cataloguing the collection we already have, and to begin community education programs regarding the history of Wilmington.

- Most recently, we received a donation of \$1000.00 to purchase the state-of-the-art Past Perfect Archival Software Program which will enable us to create a searchable catalogue and manage Wilmington's history collection.
- The Society has established a website, currently under construction, through Primelink, with Patrick McIntyre as our webmaster. www.wilmingtonhistoricalsociety.org.
- We are currently in the process of obtaining a construction trailer, used in the 1980 Olympics, to house our larger accessions, in particular the Wilmington cannon and gating gun.
- We are in the process of obtaining information to restore, preserve and display the Wilmington canon and gating gun.
- We have received accessions of a Civil War gun used by Oscar Maynard, Wilmington Civil War veteran, as well as photos of Wilmington people, events, and buildings. We have also received several old biographies of Wilmington residents, copies of which are or will be in the E.M. Cooper Library.
- The Society has submitted articles for the Wilmington Town Newsletter.
- Representing the Wilmington Historical Society, Karen Peters has attended meetings of the Northern New York Underground Railroad Heritage Trail Committee.
- We have presented the following programs:
 - History Walk of Wilmington to children at the E.M. Cooper Library
 - Virtual Walking History Tour of Wilmington to Kiwanis (as well as at today's annual meeting and tomorrow, June 3, to Senior Citizens at the Whiteface Community United Methodist Church)
 - "Dedication of the Whiteface Memorial Highway by Governor Franklin Roosevelt, September 11, 1929" film presentation

Affiliations of the Wilmington Historical Society

E. M. Cooper Library
Whiteface Resource and Preservation Association
Whiteface Mountain Regional Visitors' Bureau
Northern New York Library Network
Essex County Historical Society
New York State Archives – region 4
Northern New York Library Network
North Country Underground Railroad Heritage Trail
Upstate History Alliance
American Association for State and Local History

Through our affiliations with these organizations, we are a part of a larger network of communication, receiving the benefits of training, discounts on materials, technical support, participation in forums, and grant information. We are also able to participate in local, regional, and national historical preservation efforts.

Finances

The current balance of the Wilmington Historical Society is \$2,266.61.

Mission

The Wilmington Historical Society, established in 2003, exists to document the Town of Wilmington and to serve present and future research and educational needs of the town's citizens. The Historical Society was organized to collect and preserve the historical records of Wilmington and to enable these records to be used for historical and other research. The Historical Society also seeks to cooperate with other repositories, individuals, and institutions that create important records in order to promote the identification, preservation, and use of all records important for understanding the Town of Wilmington's history and development.

In Our Plans

- more programming for the public
- a fundraiser called "Films on the AuSable"
- an Upstate History "Get Ready" Grant for long-range planning assistance
- expanding our website with photos, Wilmington history, "famous" Wilmington people, schedules of events & event information
- obtain a building to house the Wilmington Historical Society's archives and collections