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Annual Report & Newsletter --- June 15, 2005 (Since the last Annual Meeting on 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, Trustees--- Doug Wolfe, Guy Stephenson, and Steve Connor. 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 Memorial Library. We received Federal Internal Revenue 501 (c) (3) tax exempt status in October, 2003, as a non-profit organization. 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. ***We meet monthly on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, at 7 pm at the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library. Members and the general public are encouraged to attend.***

New Mission Statement

As the result of our "Get Ready" Grant from the Upstate History Alliance, which challenged us to write a mission statement which is shorter, easier to remember and more relevant and unique to the history of the town of Wilmington, we adopted a new mission statement on May 18, 2005:

The mission of the Wilmington Historical Society is to collect, preserve, display and interpret the documents, photographs and artifacts that tell the unique story of how the people of this remote, mountainous small town with big ideas have adapted and survived in the harsh yet beautiful environment of the Adirondacks.

Website

Thanks to our webmaster, Patrick McIntyre, our website is growing. On our website, wilmingtonhistoricalsociety.org, you will find old Wilmington photos, a brief history of Wilmington, our schedule of upcoming events, historical society news, information on purchasing the "Town of Wilmington" Transcribed Serial Records books, membership information, minutes and agendas of our meetings, links to related institutions, and much more. Put us on your web browser's "favorites" list and check it often.

Wilmington books available for purchase

The "Town of Wilmington" Transcribed Serial Records, by Harold E.Hinds, Jr. and Tina M. Didreckson and published by Willow Bend Books are available for purchase through the Wilmington Historical Society, with a 10% discount to Wilmington Historical Society members. At the time of this writing, volumes 2-4 are available, with many more soon to be published. The volumes present surviving records such as the 1850 and 1855 Census Records, doctors' records, general store records, school records and much more from 1830-1900 for the Town of Wilmington, Essex County, New York. These records extend over a period of time and capture a significant portion of the population. These volumes allow genealogists and family historians with Wilmington ancestors to reconstruct a fuller portrait of their ancestors. You may download an order form online from our website wilmingtonhistoricalsociety.org or you may call Merri Carol Peck at 946-7627 for information

Helen and Earl Warren Honored in Memoriam

The late Helen (Marshall) Warren, who passed away on January 28, 2004, and her husband, Earl Warren, who passed away on April 23, 2004, were posthumously recognized with a resolution declaring them Wilmington Historical Society *Members in Memoriam*. It was given in appreciation of their longstanding interest in preserving and promoting the history of Wilmington and, in particular, for their participation in Wilmington's historical organizations, sharing their knowledge of townspeople and events, and contributing to celebrations of historical milestones, providing a basis for the existence of the Wilmington Historical Society. A framed copy of the resolution was presented to their sons, George and Don Warren at the July 2004 meeting.

Educational Outreach Programs

The Historical Society continues to make history-related programs available to the public. Our programs since the last Annual Meeting were:

- June 2004-- a slide presentation by Karen Marshall Peters, "A Virtual History Tour of Wilmington"
- July 2004 --- Guy Stephenson gave a program "Bee hunting and Bear Trapping"
- July 2004--- supported the ASRC's presentation by Professor Harold Hinds and Tina Didreckson of the University of Minnesota, "The Town of Wilmington" Serial Records.
- August 2004, a slide presentation by Jeanne Ashworth, current Wilmington Town Supervisor and three-time Olympic speed skating bronze medal winner slide presentation, "My Olympic Experiences".
- February 2005, in conjunction with the 1980 Winter Olympics celebrations," Electronics, Whiteface Mountain and the 1980 Winter Olympic Games---Getting the Program out to the World" , a slide presentation by Douglas Wolfe
- March 2005, "Antiques and Collectibles---What's in Your House?", an "Antiques Roadshow" style program by renowned antiques writer, lecturer and appraiser Julie Robinson

Upcoming programs for the summer of 2005:

- ***July 14 (Thursday)---7 p.m. at the Wilmington Volunteer Fire Hall, "The History of Fly Fishing in the Adirondacks" by Fran Betters***
- ***August 6 (Saturday)---9 am at the Wilmington Reservoir, "Whiteface Iron Mine Tour", a 3 1/2 mile hike (about 4 hours) and tour of the historic iron mines on Whiteface Mountain by Guy Stephenson, licensed guide. This tour requires a fair amount of walking and exertion as it is a moderate to strenuous hike and is for those who are physically able to participate in the outing as described. The guide fee is \$10.00 for Wilmington Historical Society members and \$12.00 for non-members. Advance registration is required with payment due at time of registration. Attendance is limited, and filled on a first-come-first- served basis.***
- ***August 23 (Tuesday)--- 8 pm at the ASRC on Whiteface Mountain Highway, " Electronics, Whiteface Mountain and the 1980 Winter Olympic Games---Getting the Program out to the World", a slightly revised version of the February program (and back by popular demand), a slide presentation by Douglas Wolfe, co-sponsored by the Wilmington Historical Society and the Falconer Natural History Series.***

Festival of the Colors

On Saturday, September 25, 2004, the Society participated in Wilmington's Festival of the Colors. We set up a display booth containing photo exhibits of the 1890, 1935, and 2003 Wilmington dams as well as the photos obtained at the 2002 Old Photo Meet. Also on display were copies of the transcribed and easy to read 1850 and 1855 Wilmington Census Records by Harold Hinds and Tina Didreckson. One of our historical society members, ***Robert Schneider***, a professional actor, educator, storyteller, and currently educator at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, played the role of ***C. Michael Sheridan, Irish immigrant passing through Wilmington in the year 1876***. Robert was able to expand his character which he regularly role-plays at Mystic Seaport by researching through materials provided by the Wilmington Historical Society, the E.M. Cooper Memorial Library and the AuSable Forks Library. Visitors and exhibitors alike seemed to enjoy talking to our 1876 Irish immigrant, adding a new dimension to the discussion of local history. ***Watch for us again this year at the 2005 Festival of the Colors, Saturday, September 17, with new things on display and the return of Julie Robinson for another "Antiques Roadshow" style antiques appraisal!***

Films on the AuSable

Wilmington's first-ever "Films on the AuSable" classic films fundraiser benefit was held outdoors under the stars at the Wilmington Beach on Saturday, September 25, 2004. The show began with a Little Rascals film, "Beginner's Luck" (MGM, 1935), followed by the main event, "The Mark of Zorro" starring Tyrone Power and Linda Darnell (20th Century Fox, 1940). Movie-goers brought their own chairs, blankets and flashlights. Snacks were available. A donation of \$3.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children was suggested, proceeds to benefit the Wilmington Historical Society. About 60 people attended. The evening was a phenomenal success largely through the ideas and efforts of Robert and Susan Hockert, the organizational efforts of Ginny Crispell, and the volunteer time and effort of many Historical Society members.

Old Photo Meet

On Saturday, October 16, 2004, the Wilmington Historical Society held an "Old Photo Meet" at the Wilmington Community Center. The public was encouraged to bring old photos and family photo albums of Wilmington to identify and share. As a result, we photographically copied more than 200 pictures of places, buildings, and people of Wilmington! We will use them to provide historical documentation and to create historical slide shows and programs. Susan Conway of Creative Memories also provided a display and information for those interested in archiving and preserving family photos. Many thanks go to all those who came and shared their family pictures. We are always looking for more photos, so if you discover an old family album, and would like to contribute to the preservation of Wilmington's history, please contact us, so that, at your convenience, we may make arrangements to make copies. For further information, contact Karen Peters at 946-7586 or Merri Carol Peck at 946-7586 or email us at whs12997@hotmail.com

Our cemeteries now on "Rootsweb"!

Thanks to Wilmington Historical Society Trustees Bob and Nancy Cressey, and Joyce Ranieri, a resident of Franklin County, our Wilmington Cemetery information is now available on **Rootsweb**, a website familiar to genealogists. Ranieri's project is transcribing the cemetery stones of Franklin County, placing them on "Rootsweb". In a recent news article, Ranieri stated an interest in receiving transcriptions of cemeteries in Clinton and Essex counties as well. Bob and Nancy who, last year, completed our own "Wilmington Cemeteries Project", photographing all 1500 + cemetery stones in Wilmington and putting them on an accompanying on searchable CD's, contacted Joyce Ranieri regarding the project. As a result, our cemeteries are now on this popular website. For all you Wilmington genealogists, you can go to our website wilmingtonhistoricalsociety.org and click on "Welcome". Then scroll down to the cemetery you wish to explore, click on a name of interest to you, and, there it is, photo of headstone, and all!

Computer Appeal

We have been using an 8-year-old computer for our cataloguing, using PastPerfect Software, as well as for storing our many digitally copied photos. *It crashed!* So we need a new one, preferably with lots of memory. *The Wilmington Town Board, at their meeting on June 8, 2005, generously got us off to good start toward our new computer by voting to donate \$500.00 toward its purchase. Many thanks to the Wilmington Town Board.* We also have had another donation of \$50.00 to put toward it. If anyone else would like to send a tax-deductible donation to our "computer fund", please send a check or money order payable to the Wilmington Historical Society, P.O. Box 174, Wilmington, NY 12997, and please label it "Computer Fund".

Other accomplishments for the year to date (since June 2, 2004)

- The Wilmington Historical Society received a "**Get Ready**" Grant sponsored by the New York State Council on the Arts and administered by the Upstate History Alliance. Led by a trained facilitator, the special session, held on November 3rd, 2004, focused on strengths and weaknesses of our organization, and the uniqueness of the history and the town of Wilmington. . The main recommendations were that we develop a new mission statement which is more dynamic and specific to Wilmington, develop a strategic plan and apply for the "Get Set Grant" to further assist in planning and professional development.
- From Kim Marshall, we received a printed version of "Rupert", an 1877-1881 Essex County Republican newspaper column of Wilmington, including birth, marriage, and obituary notices. Kim made it easily searchable with names highlighted and indexed. He previously gave us a CD of the same column, easily searchable with a computer by name. .
- In cooperation with the E.M. Cooper Library, the Local and Adirondack Sections of the library have been expanded.

- Merri Carol Peck has participated in the Regional Roundtable.
- Karen Peters attended a conference in Lake Placid put on by the Adirondack Community Trust regarding non-profit organizations and the new financial laws.
- We obtained a construction trailer, used in the 1980 Olympics, to house our larger accessions, in particular the Wilmington cannon and gatling gun. This temporary home is located behind the Wilmington Town Hall. The AuSable Valley Garden Club has provided funding for flowers and the Mountain Artists will be providing art for better “curb appeal”. We thank both of those organizations for their contributions. Lyz Miskovsky and Claire Keiffer will water and weed the plants this summer. The Town of Wilmington has agreed to cut the grass for us.
- We are in the process of obtaining information to restore, preserve and display the Wilmington cannon and gatling gun.
- We have received accessions of objects such as a 1980 Winter Olympic volunteer medal ,a 1980 Olympic Calendar signed by the artist, and a letter from Wilmington dated 1962 from Noah John Rondeau (Adirondack Hermit), as well as photos of Wilmington people, events, and buildings. We have also received several old biographies of Wilmington residents
- The Society has submitted articles for the Wilmington Town Newsletter, as well as press releases and articles for the Community Calendars of the Plattsburgh Press Republican, the Adirondack Daily Enterprise, the Lake Placid News, and the Essex County Free Trader.
- We participated in the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Essex County Historical Society by providing a display of “Wilmington Then & Now”
- We completed the first steps in organizing our archives, with everything now filed or labeled in boxes
- We presented a letter to the Wilmington Town Board at their regular meeting on June 8, to outline our building needs, and to request their continued support

Affiliations of the Wilmington Historical Society

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.

E. M. Cooper Memorial 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
 North Country Underground Railroad Heritage Trail
 Upstate History Alliance
 American Association for State and Local History

Finances

The current balance of the Wilmington Historical Society is **\$2,781.84**. **A copy of this year’s budget is enclosed.**

*****2005 Membership Drive*** Have you become a 2005 member yet?**

Our 2005 membership drive is still underway. Thank you to all of you who have sent in your tax-deductible membership for 2005. Your membership assists the Society in copying, cataloguing, and preserving the Town of Wilmington’s records. It also helps to support our educational outreach programs, creating displays & exhibitions, training& conferences, and purchasing archival-relevant books such as the ‘Wilmington Series’. For those of you who have not yet sent in your membership dues for 2005, we look forward to receiving your support. If you have not received the **Wilmington Historical Society 2005 Membership Brochure**, please contact Karen Peters at 946-7586 or Merri Carol Peck at 946-7627, email us at whs12997@hotmail.com or check out our website at wilmingtonhistoricalsociety.org (you can print out a membership application and mail it in)

Our total membership for 2004 was 154 paying members.

What our membership looks like so far in 2005: As of the end of May 2005, we have an official paying membership of 103 (last year at this time we had 122). The members are in each of the following levels:

- 1 @ Benefactor (\$250.00 +)
 - 7 @ Patron (\$100.00)
 - 11 @ Sponsor (\$50.00)
 - 8 @ Contributing & Sustaining Patron (\$20.00)
 - 4 @ Institutional/ Business/Corporate (\$20.00)
 - 22 @ Senior Citizen (\$5.00)
 - 0 @ Student (\$2.00)
 - 38 @ Family (\$20.00)
 - 12 @ Individual (\$10.00)
- 103 Total members**

Volunteers

We have the fortune of having many wonderful volunteers in many areas of expertise, about 35 in all. They have freely given of their time and services to help advance the mission of the Wilmington Historical Society. They have done baking, collecting money, parking cars, and set-up for the Films on the AuSable, set up and take-down for the Festival of the Colors, assisted at the "Old Photo Meet", assisted in the set-up of our temporary storage & display trailer, volunteered to do landscape assistance at the storage trailer site, given of their time in preparing educational programs, created and maintained our website, contributed art expertise, organized groups and made phone calls, volunteered to write grants, volunteered to create a Haselton Cemetery headstone map, researched topics of historical interest to Wilmington, copied photos, created CD's and searchable archival material, and helped to organize our archives. While our volunteers are too numerous to mention here by name, we would like to thank them all---**Thank you, thank you , thank you! You are such a valuable asset!**

In Our Plans

- more programming for the public
- fundraisers in addition to our membership drive
- an Upstate History "Get Set" Grant for long-range planning assistance
- expansion of our website with more photos, more Wilmington history, "famous" Wilmington people
- participation in the Wilmington Dam dedication in July 2005
- assistance to the Town of Wilmington in obtaining a grant to conserve the oldest Town Records, dating back to 1821 and in fragile condition (recently re-discovered in 2003)
- creation of a cemetery stone location map at the Haselton Cemetery
- creation of a self-guided Wilmington History Tour brochure
- creation of "Old Wilmington Photo" postcards to sell in cooperation with The Cornerstone Gift Shop, as a fundraiser
- participation in the WMRVB's Festival of the Colors
- the temporary housing of our archives in the Wilmington Town Hall, with research hours for the public
- obtain a historic building or obtain land to construct a new building to house the Wilmington Historical Society's archives and collections

Special Message to Members & Supporters

You are the Wilmington Historical Society! It is through your ideas, your volunteer efforts, your attendance at meetings & programs, your donations of photos and artifacts, and your financial support that the Wilmington Historical Society exists. Thanks to all of you for helping to preserve the past of this small, unique Adirondack town.