

Winchester Celebrates 175th Anniversary • 1850-2025

The tale behind the saving of Charles Pressey's 'Village of Winchester'

BY NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

A phone call out of the blue set off a series of events in 2017 that led to the uncovering of a Winchester treasure that hadn't been seen in town for more than 40 years or perhaps even longer.

The call came from a friend of long-time resident Nancy Schrock, a member of the Historical Society, who told her a painting of the Old Converse Mill from Winchester was up for auction at Bonhams Skinner in Boston.

The painting was described as American School, 19th Century, unsigned, oil on academy board in a simple wood frame. Its condition was "surface grime."

The painting was estimated to sell between \$400-\$600.

"My first reaction was, 'Oh, it's wonderful!'" Schrock said. "My second reaction was to send it to Ellen Knight."

The town archivist gave it a good once over.

"She called me back and said, 'Nancy, this is our painting!'" Schrock said.

Enlisting the help of her husband, Richard, Schrock headed out to Boston to inform the auction house it was in possession of a painting belonging to the town. But the auction house needed more proof.

The back of the painting was removed, where a card was found describing the scene depicted by a Winchester artist named "Mr. Pressy,



[sic] done before 1800." Schrock also noted a very faint watermark that read "Winchester Historical and Genealogical Society, Winchester, Mass."

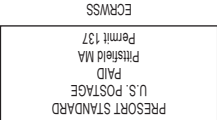
Yet another card under the painting revealed it had been given to

the society as a present by Mrs. E Pressey on July 4, 1889 in honor of her husband, artist Charles Pressey. E Pressey is believed to be Charles Pressey's wife, Elizabeth, one of the first women elected to the Winchester

School Committee.

"We knew it belonged to us," Schrock said, "but they would not stop the auction. They said we needed to do a lot

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Winchester News
109 Wendell Street
Winchester, MA 01890

Winchester News celebrates Winchester's 175th Anniversary

By Tara Hughes



Happy 175th, Winchester! It's our pleasure as Winchester's newest media outlet to celebrate our community as its birthday comes around.

As many of you may know, Winchester News was born out of the Communications Study Committee, which was formed by the town in order to find out how it could better communicate with residents.

The committee found that in addition to some needed improvements in its own communication, the town needed a

local news source. The Winchester Star had been bought out by Gannett Media and then merged with the Arlington Advocate in 2022 to create The Advocate and Star.

The problem? The paper rarely had coverage of either town and when it did, it was not comprehensive. Winchester was slowly turning into a news desert.

So, in 2023, a group of local residents got together and Winchester News was born.

The mission of Winchester News is to be a trusted and reliable source of local news. Our vision is to fill that information gap left by the loss of the Winchester Star and to increase civic participation and improve civil

discourse.

Almost two years later, we are still working on making that mission and that vision a reality. There are always bumps in the road, but I believe we have made some excellent progress.

Due to that progress, and the support of our community, we are able to present this special print edition to all residents in honor of Winchester's 175th Birthday. It showcases the people, landmarks and events that have formed our community.

Winchester News would like to thank Electra Govoni and Hilda Wong-Doo from the Winchester Historic Society, Winchester Town Archivist Ellen Knight, architectural historian Maureen

Meister, restoration expert Nancy Schrock and historian Vincent Dixon for their expertise, advice and support in putting together this special edition.

We would also like to thank all of our sponsors.

We hope this special edition will be both informative and a keepsake. Enjoy!

For more Winchester history, visit Winchester History Online (with the link <https://www.winchester.us/480/Winchester-History-Online>).

P.S. Don't forget to check out WinchesterNews.org and subscribe to our free newsletter, which will arrive in your inbox every Thursday morning!

Tara Hughes, president, Winchester News Board of Directors

WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving the past to inspire a brighter tomorrow

By Electra Govoni



History isn't just about the past — it's about understanding who we are today and where we're headed.

The Winchester Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and sharing the stories that have shaped our town, helping us build a stronger, more connected community. Whether you have deep roots here or are just beginning to explore Winchester's history, we invite you to discover the people, places, and events that have made this town what it is.

This year marks Winchester's 175th anniversary, a milestone that invites us to reflect on our town's journey from its early days to the charming community it is today. As we celebrate this special occasion, it's the perfect time to look back on the people and events that have shaped our town and to consider how we can honor and preserve this legacy for future generations.

Winchester was formed with land from Woburn, Medford and Arlington. In the 1850s, the people who lived in South Woburn

(now known as Winchester) were upset and felt they had little say in getting the much needed infrastructure investments from the town. They needed a school and better roads and they wanted autonomy to make these improvements a priority.

While the nature of our challenges today may be different, it is easy to understand how we all are striving for a better life for our children and families and relate to reasons why they pushed to establish Winchester as a town.

Our town's history is woven into the streets we walk, the homes we live in, and the traditions we cherish. By learning about those who came before us — their struggles, innovations, and contributions — we gain a deeper appreciation for our shared heritage and the values that unite us. Understanding history helps us make informed decisions for the future, fosters a sense of belonging, and strengthens our community ties.

The Winchester Historical Society was founded in 1933 by a group of dedicated citizens who recognized the need to safeguard the town's historical records, artifacts, and landmarks. Over the decades, we

have built collections that tell the story of Winchester's past — from its indigenous tribes, its early agricultural roots, followed by the industrial revolution to its growth as a thriving suburban community.

Through the work of passionate volunteers and in partnership with Winchester's Archival Center, we have documented and preserved vital pieces of our town's heritage, ensuring they remain accessible for future generations.

It's important to distinguish the Winchester Historical Society from the Winchester Historical Commission. While both are committed to preserving our town's history, they serve different roles.

The Historical Society is a private, nonprofit organization focused on education, community engagement, and historical preservation through exhibits, lectures, and collections. The Historical Commission, on the other hand, is a town-appointed body responsible for regulatory oversight, such as reviewing changes to historically significant buildings. Both groups help ensure Winchester's rich history is honored and protected.

Our home, the Sanborn House, is more than just a historic

building, it's a tangible link to Winchester's past. Built in 1907, this grand Beaux Arts mansion has served many purposes over the years, a private home for the Sanborn and Downes families, a school — Marycliff Academy, town offices including the Recreation Department.

It wasn't until 2006, when the Historical Society entered into a long-term lease with the Town of Winchester to become the stewards of the property and started to restore the home as a culture center for the town.

Today, it's a place where people come together to learn, reflect, and celebrate our shared past through exhibits, lectures, and community programs. The Sanborn House also provides a beautiful and unique setting for private events, from weddings and showers to business gatherings.

The Winchester Historical Society hosts a variety of programs and events throughout the year, designed to bring history to life. Our programs this year are focused on celebrating Winchester's 175 year anniversary through different lens — women's history, expanding diversity, stories about notable residents like the Vinson Owen family and stories behind the

architectural talents of Robert Coit, who's home designs have shaped the look and feel of the town.

Our goal is to make history engaging and accessible to all, fostering an appreciation for our town's heritage across generations. These programs are offered at no cost to the public — all are welcome.

We welcome you to explore our collections, attend a program, or simply stop by to experience the history around you. Whether you're interested in discovering more about the many Massachusetts governors that lived in Winchester, learning about Winchester's architectural heritage, or simply connecting with neighbors who share an appreciation for the past, the Historical Society offers a place for you.

History isn't just something to study — it's something to experience. Visit the Winchester Historical Society, explore the Sanborn House, and join us in keeping our town's history alive for generations to come.

Happy Birthday, Winchester! 175 years looks very good on you!

Electra Govoni is the current president of the Winchester Historical Society.

Winchester: It really does take a village

By **Nell Escobar Coakley**



Winchester is often seen as a small, quiet bedroom community. A wealthy community 8.2 miles north of Boston, Winchester is a suburb of the Greater Boston metro area.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines suburb as "an outlying part of a city or town, or a smaller community adjacent to or within commuting distance of a city, specifically referring to the residential area on the outskirts of a city or large town."

Winchester fits that description. But what some may not know is that Winchester has always been a suburb, even before it was incorporated in 1850. First of Woburn and then of Boston.

As part of Woburn, the village residents, who eventually broke away, wanted something different. In fact, that's why they were

in the area to begin with.

I recently spent a delightful — and incredibly informative — morning with architectural historian Maureen Meister, who schooled me on how Winchester went from a suburban village to a true suburb. I learned that Winchester wasn't the bucolic community I imagined it to be before I launched into the research for this special print edition, but it had an interesting, rich history behind it.

Meister taught me it was the rise of transportation and the arrival of the train in the 1830s that pushed city dwellers out into the country, where they found fresh air and plenty of room for their large houses and families.

She reminded me the first things transported weren't people, but goods. And that initially people didn't want to be around the trains because they belched smoke, were dirty and honestly, they were undesirable.

But within a few years, Meister told me, business people saw the potential of trains to take them

back and forth into Boston so they could enjoy their unspoiled country environment. As a result, business people and artists moved into the country.

By the 1840s there was a large enough population on the edges of Woburn who wanted to fund more schools and spend more money than the residents of the town wanted. By 1850, those townspeople had set up their own community and incorporated.

So schools played a big role in the formation of Winchester. And with the current hubbub over school budgets, new buildings and the ever growing need for more programs as times change, it's interesting to see how vital education still is for families who live in town.

People and education are the backbones of Winchester. In this special edition you can read an article by local historian Vincent Dixon about how Winchester honored people when naming the schools in town.

However, the Industrial Revolution was also a huge

touchpoint in Winchester, as more industry moved into the town.

When I started researching in the Winchester Archives for information about local business growth, I found "From a rural village to a suburban town" by Winchester Town Archivist Ellen Knight. It was an incredibly detailed account of the town's history.

Here's just an example, just about early business:

"The McKay Metallic Fastener Co. built a factory on vacant land near the river and north of Swanton Street in 1893. From at least 1854 through the 20th century, a tannery abutted the river south of Cross Street.

"In 1902, the building was sold for the manufacture of gelatin," she writes. "Across Leonard Pond from the gelatin factory, in 1915, a manufacturing plant for the Middlesex Japanning Company was built on Cross Street, next to Leonard Pond, later becoming the Allen H. McLatchy patent leather factory..."

If there's any question

residents might have about Winchester's history, chances are Knight has probably written about it.

In this special edition, Knight contributes essays about why Winchester's symbol is the black horse, a timeline of business in the town, the parks movement, which created the town common and Wildwood Cemetery, and notable people in Winchester and from Winchester.

I encourage everyone to take a peek at the Winchester Archives, whether online at www.winchester.us/130/Archival-Center or in the lower level of Town Hall, open every Monday, from 1 to 7 p.m.

Early suburb

After my read through Knight's essay, I knew I had more questions to ask of Meister during our meeting. I wanted context. I wanted details about the early suburbs.

Meister was happy to explain. There was little construction in

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Rangeley is first suburban development in Winchester

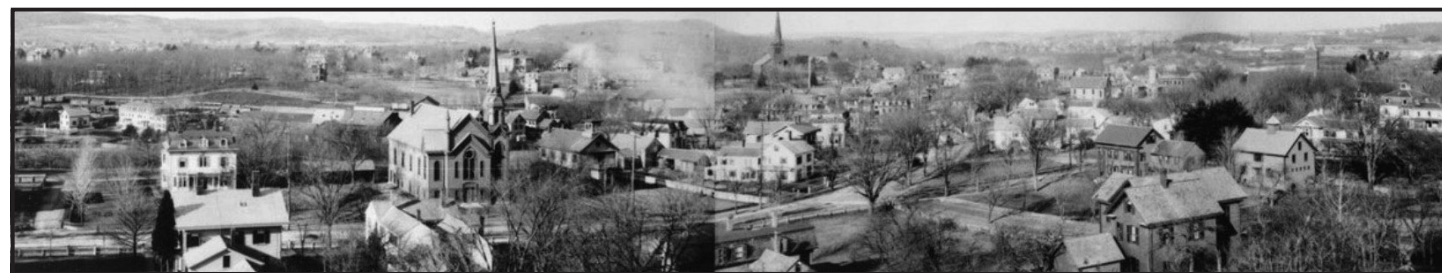
BY MAUREEN MEISTER

The Rangeley development illustrates the nineteenth-century ideal of locating suburban houses in a parklike setting.

In 1875, Winchester resident David N. Skillings, a successful lumber dealer in Boston, began the transformation of his estate into a romantically planned residential enclave.

Assisting him was George D. Rand, a fellow Winchester resident and a Boston architect. Rand admired the ideas of Andrew Jackson Downing, a landscape architect and theorist who promoted a natural approach to landscape design.

Skillings maintained control over the development by leasing, rather than selling, the houses that he built. Because the estate was conveniently located near the town center and the



COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER ARCHIVAL CENTER

A view of Winchester Center from Rangeley, left, to the Town Hall, right, circa 1895.

train depot, Skillings was able to attract Boston professionals and businessmen. Yet, although there was an exclusive aspect to this enterprise, Rangeley also was open to the broader Winchester community, serving as a quasi-public park.

In their effort to appeal to Bostonians, Skillings and Rand erected houses that were consistent in design with houses being erected in the city. The Rangeley houses were constructed in

brick, an unusual and expensive choice for the Boston suburbs at this time.

The Skillings-Webb House (1876-1877, 2-4 Rangeley Road, NR) and the Skillings-Manny House (1875-1876, 38 Rangeley Road, NR) are Ruskinian Gothic, with tar-dipped brick, tile insets, and elaborate brickwork, including soldier and sawtooth courses.

The Skillings Estate House (1880, 37 Rangeley Road, NR)

responds to the new interests of Boston architects during the late 1870s in the Queen Anne revival. This house is broader in its massing, and is ornamented with terra-cotta. Reflecting the influence of H. H. Richardson, the house has the asymmetrically sloping roofline and the projecting gable of Richardson's William Watts Sherman House (1874-1876) in Newport, R.I.

The Rangeley house also features the round-arched,

recessed entrance that Richardson popularized.

Maureen Meister, Ph.D. is a Winchester resident who specializes in American architecture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her article on Rangeley was written for SAH Archipedia, a peer-reviewed encyclopedia published digitally by the Society of Architectural Historians. Read more of her articles at <https://sah-archipedia.org>.

Winchester values education, but who are the schools named after?

BY VINCENT LAWRENCE DIXON

As the 175th anniversary of the Town of Winchester engages, it is of interest to take a look at the educational landscape of the town.

Winchester is well regarded for its public schools, but it does have some other educational institutions, as well. Of some note is the town history that is touched on by the very names on the schools.

In addition, it is worth noting that Winchester was known as Waterfield, of Charlestown, and as such, an early minister was John Harvard. Thus, in some manner, the proceeds from his estate, which included some of Waterfield, likely helped to fund the beginnings of Harvard College.

Ambrose Elementary School

Located at 27 High St.

The current Ambrose School sits on the site of the first Ambrose School, which was built in 1947 as a Catholic girls' school called Marycliff Academy.

After purchasing the site in 1969, the town turned it into a public elementary school named after Howard Ambrose (1909-1970).

A Winchester native who worked for the town for decades in various engineering positions, Ambrose was ultimately named town engineer.

The current structure appears to be primarily from 2003.

Carriage House

Located next to the Ambrose School, the Carriage House had been under possible consideration, to become a newly renovated Central Office for the Winchester Public School Department.

This idea has not yet been fully approved and is dependent upon many individual decisions, including those



Ambrose School



Lincoln Elementary School

influenced by the School Master Plan, as adopted.

Funding has been approved for design work, for its eventual renovation. This idea is still uncertain, in part because the building has been deteriorating.

Lincoln Elementary School

Located at 161 Mystic Valley Parkway.

The Lincoln is named after President Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States, who lived from 1809 to 1865.

Lincoln's ancestors, who were from Lincolnshire, England, came to Massachusetts and settled in Hingham; these are likely collateral relatives. They may not be direct relatives, but Abraham Lincoln, in 1848, became aware of the possible connection to the Lincolns of Massachusetts.

Two earlier relatives of

Lincoln's, served as Massachusetts governors, and were effectively abolitionists: Levi Lincoln Sr., of Hingham (1808-1809), was also attorney general for President Thomas Jefferson, and Levi Lincoln Jr., of the Worcester (1825-1834).

Originally opened in 1904 as Winchester High School, the school was remodeled into Winchester Junior High School in 1956.

In 1961, the name was changed to McCall Junior High. In 1972, the school was remodeled and renamed Lincoln Elementary School. In 2002, the building was renovated and expanded.

Lynch Elementary School (formerly Lynch Junior High School)

Located at 10 Brantwood Road.

The Lynch honors two brothers, both graduates of Winchester High School and both casualties of World War II.

Staff Sgt. Robert Lynch (1917-1944) completed 24 missions as a radio gunner based in England. He was killed in action over Germany and posthumously awarded the Flying Cross with oak leaf clusters.

PFC Andrew Lynch (1914-1945) saw service in several major engagements and won two Purple Hearts. He was killed in action in the Philippines.

This school is presently being rebuilt through what is called the Lynch Replacement Project,

COURTESY PHOTOS BY VINCENT LAWRENCE DIXON



Lynch School

projected to be completed in the fall of 2025.

Meanwhile, the Lynch School is operating at the site of the Parkhurst School, at 40 Samoset Road.



Francis J. Muraco

Francis J. Muraco Elementary School

Located at 33 Bates Road.

This school is named in memory of Francis J. Muraco, Class of 1965 at Winchester High School. The 21-year-old Marine corporal was killed in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam, on Thanksgiving Day in 1967. Muraco's name is on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington D.C.

First opened in 1967 as the Tufts School, the building was the model for what was called the Open Area Education style in Massachusetts. It was rededicated in 1969.

Annually, near Memorial Day, an impressive school assembly is held in Muraco's honor, with members of the Muraco family and friends.

This school will likely be reconstructed and/or rebuilt in coming years.



Vinson Owen Elementary School

Vinson Owen Elementary School

Located at 75 Johnson Road.

The Vinson Owen opened in 1961 and named after a first family of figure skating — Maribel Vinson Owen (mother) and Maribel Yerxa Owen and Laurence Owen (daughters).

All three died tragically on Feb. 15, 1961 in Belgium when the plane taking the U.S. Figure Skating team to the World Championships in Prague crashed, killing all on board.

Maribel Vinson-Owen won nine U.S. National Championships; Maribel Yerxa Owen won the U.S. Junior Pairs Title and the U.S. National Pairs

Championships; and Laurence Owen won the U.S. National Ladies Championships, and the North American Championships.

All three were Olympians. Much more can be learned about Maribel, the mother, from various sources. It appears she participated in training up to 4,000 students over a period of years, including the first great African American star Mabel Fairbanks and the significant coach Frank Carroll, once a resident of Winchester.

Parkhurst School

Located at 40 Samoset Road. Parkhurst has been the Central Office of the School Department (originally to be named the Indian Hill School).

The building was named after Lewis Parkhurst (1856-1949), a Dartmouth graduate and significant educational leader, both in Winchester and at Dartmouth College, where he was an important financial leader and administrator.

At Dartmouth, Parkhurst Hall is named as a memorial for his son.

Lewis Parkhurst was principal of Winchester High School (1886-1891) and a leading citizen of Winchester. He was involved in building a new high school and influential in developing the park system. He was also elected as a state representative and a state senator.

Academic year 2024-2025, Parkhurst School, together with a number of additional modular classrooms, is hosting the Lynch School, during the Lynch Replacement Project.

Winchester Preschool

In 2025-2026, the pre-school will be located at the new Lynch Elementary School.



Samuel W. McCall

McCall Middle School

Located at 458 Main St.

The McCall is named after Samuel W. McCall (1851-1923), who was World War I governor of Massachusetts (1916-1919).

The name McCall has migrated about the town, as school changes have occurred.

Born in Pennsylvania, Samuel McCall, his life and public service, have many uniquely heroic qualities, leaving an

enduring contribution on the life of Nova Scotia, Massachusetts, and Winchester.

Especially notable, is the relief train sent to Nova Scotia to help them recover from a terrible disaster and the annual return gift of the Christmas tree on Boston Common in gratitude.

McCall served in many different positions during his life, including 20 years as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. His remains are buried in Wildwood Cemetery in Winchester.

Samuel W. McCall's grandson, Tom McCall, served as a notable governor of Oregon.

The McCall Middle School continues to be both a gem and a source of additional solutions.

The school has had additional construction of new classrooms. Town voters, by a large majority, authorized just over \$10 million to add classrooms and needed facilities, which are now in use.

Winchester High School

Located at 80 Skillings Road.

In recent years, a successfully completed project, a nearly \$130 million project, was the latest updating and expansion of Winchester High School's capacity.

Several hundred trees decorate newly enhanced grounds, surrounding the improved and expanded building, which are already nearing nominal capacity,

although some further capacity adjustments can be made.

The High School Auditorium is an excellent location for many Town of Winchester events.

Mystic Building

Located at 263 Main St.

The Mystic is named after the Mystic River and was once a school. Presently, it is operated by the Recreation Department. The building hosts numerous programs for children, and relating to recreation.

Children's Own School

Located at 86 Main St.

A private school, founded in 1942 and incorporated in 1947, Children's Own School is the oldest Montessori school in New England. It occupies the former Russell Farm, near the border with Medford.

St. Mary's School, School of Winchester – Early Learning Center

Located at 162 Washington St.

Catholic parochial programs, named after Saint Mary, the Virgin Mary, in Catholic belief.

The school was founded in 1914 and presently enrolls students in selected programs. Students, continue on to many various local area Catholic schools, and local public schools.

Winchester Cooperative Nursery School

Located at 478 Main St.

Offers programs for children, from ages 2 to 5.

Creative Corner School

Located at 11 Sheridan Circle.

Early Childhood Education, from 6 weeks to 6 years. The school is STEAM focused, with a play based curriculum.

Many thanks and credit, are due to various sources in the Winchester Public Schools, Town Archivist and historian Ellen Knight; the principals of the Winchester's schools and others along the way.

Much of this material was part of a tour, conceived of, in conjunction with, the auspices, and sponsorship, of the Winchester Historical Society, for delivery as a Trolley Tour on Town Day, 2018. It has been updated to reflect current information, as of March 2025.

Additional detailed information on Winchester Public Schools can be obtained at winchesterps.org and/or at the Office of the Superintendent of Schools.

Vincent Lawrence "Vince" Dixon, is a local historian with knowledge and expertise in various areas across the field of history, including Massachusetts history, civics, Constitutional history, and more. He also conducts tours, delivers presentations, and welcomes inquiries for customized programming.



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Winchester, MA 01890

781-729-1730

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Saving 'Village of Winchester'

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more work to show where it came from and that it was the society's."

That gave Schrock three days.

"I had to do something," Schrock said, adding there was no choice but to hit the town archives and scope out the ledgers in person. That's where she found a number of paintings listed as gifts to the Historical Society by the aforementioned Mrs. Pressey — and on the list was "Winchester Village."

Schrock also found a newspaper article from Oct. 2, 1889 in the Boston Traveler about paintings having been gifted to the town by the Pressey family. And there was something else.

"This painting was so important that it was photographed," Schrock said. "We also had a photo of it in the town newspaper (front page, Winchester Star, May 1, 1903). There was no question it belonged to the Historical Society."

Back at the auction house, Bonhams Skinner had no choice but to cancel the auctioning off of the painting.

"They didn't want to be involved with an illegal sale," Schrock said.

Where did the painting go?

So, how did a historical painting end up at an auction house in 2017? Schrock has done some further digging and believes she may have an answer.

"I think it disappeared between 1957 and 1975," Schrock said. "There were several pieces of furniture taken by board members to store in their own houses. I think someone was being helpful by putting it in their house and then that person died."

Back up. What?

The Winchester Historical and Genealogical Society, the precursor to the current Historical Society, was formed

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF NANCY SCHROCK



The phases of the restoration of Charles Pressey's 'Winchester Village' by Theresa Carmichael.



When the back of the Charles Pressey painting was removed, cards and watermarks were found pointing to the work once being a part of the Winchester Historical Society's collection.

in 1884. Its collections were installed at the town library in 1887, located inside Town Hall.

By 1898, the Winchester Historical and Genealogical Society disbanded and the collections were turned over to the Trustees of the Library. They were then installed in the library's Historical Room in 1931.

A year later, the Winchester Historical Society was established. With no room at the library, and with no room or place of its own to house the collections, the items were moved to the library's attic in 1957 and were cared for by volunteers. Overflow was taken home by volunteers sometime between 1957 and 1975.

In 1975, the Town Archives were created and moved into the Sanborn House Carriage House. By 1989, the archives were moved to Town Hall and the artifacts moved to the Sanborn House.



Richard and Nancy Schrock with 'Winchester Village' by artist Charles Pressey after the painting and its frame were restored. The Schrocks donated the work to the Winchester Historical Society.

It's that 18-year period between 1957 and 1975 where Schrock is sure a well-meaning person helping the society with the overflow then died and the family didn't know what was in its possession. From there, she believes the



As 'Winchester Village' was being cleaned, restorer Theresa Carmichael discovered a CP at the corner of the painting.

painting was sold at a flea market or estate sale, where a wealthy collector in Lennox, Mass. saw it, realized what it was and snapped it up. She then put it up for sale at auction.

Once the auction was cancelled, Schrock contacted the seller, who was immediately on the defensive.

"I said that of course she didn't know it belonged to the society," she said. "But I decided to offer to buy it from her. She said yes, and sent it to me."

The painting

The painting was in bad shape. As a book conservator, Schrock couldn't bear to see it in that state so she contacted Theresa Carmichael, a painting conservator, who owns Carmichael Art Conservation LLC, to see what could be done.

During the painting's restoration, Carmichael discovered a "CP" on the bottom, the signature of its artist Charles

Pressey. More was uncovered as the grime was slowly removed — clearly identifiable buildings such as the First Congregational Church, the high school, the Converse Mill, the Converse Bridge and local currier businesses.

Schrock was delighted.

"That was one reason our town government wanted to be on its own," she said, of the high school building. "We wanted our own schools."

Once the work was finished, Schrock's husband restored the painting's frame. And, she said, there was really no question what the couple was going to do with it.

"We knew right from the start we were going to donate it to the society," Schrock said.

"Winchester Village" can now be seen at the Sanborn House.

Nell Escobar Coakley is the editor of Winchester News. She started her journalism career in Winchester as a reporter for the Winchester Town Crier and later, the Winchester Star.

What's the history of the black horse in Winchester?

BY ELLEN KNIGHT

It was a landmark in the area for about a century and a half, a stopping place for stagecoach travelers, a meeting place; it even once gave its name to the village that turned into Winchester – it was the Black Horse Tavern.

For about a century, from the 1740s (or earlier) to 1835, the Black Horse Tavern operated as a hostelry on Main Street not far from the juncture with Washington Street. In the 1790s, it was on the stagecoach routes from Boston to Portsmouth, N.H., and Portland, Maine, and until the railroad arrived to provide a different stopping point, the area was frequently called Black Horse Village.

The history of the tavern goes back to the time when much of what is now Winchester was part of Woburn. In 1724, William Richardson purchased two parcels of land from members of two of Winchester oldest families, the Converses and Richardsons. The southern boundary of his new lot lay along the line between Woburn and Charlestown (later the boundary between Woburn and Medford).

Nathaniel Richardson, who researched the tavern history in the late 19th century, wrote that, “It is positive that while William Richardson owned the estate, from 1724 to 1728, the Black Horse Tavern was built.”

Since it was first described as a “mansion house,” the building may not have begun its existence as a tavern, but by the time of David Wyman it definitely was such. Wyman acquired the property in 1743 and was described as “innholder” in his will of 1750. The property then included the house, barn, shed, and 34 acres of land.

It may have been Wyman who named his establishment “Black Horse Tavern.” The name appears in a 1754 deed for a part of the property inherited by his



COURTESY PHOTO/WINCHESTER ARCHIVAL CENTER

The Black Horse Tavern was a landmark in Winchester for more than 100 years.

brother James.

The property passed through many hands. It also changed size. When Joseph Pierce sold “a place known as the Black Horse Tavern” in 1768, it contained 53 acres. In 1806 it was up to 80 acres.

During the Revolutionary War, the tavern was owned by Noah Wyman. It was surely a place in which the locals congregated to talk over the news. However, Richardson dispensed with one story of George Washington stopping at the tavern by calling it “a wholesale fabrication. George Washington or his shadow never honored Woburn with his presence.”

Henry Chapman in his “History of Winchester” tells another story, stating that “the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, meeting at West Cambridge (Arlington) on April 18, 1775, adjourned to meet the next day at the Black Horse Tavern in South Woburn.” As other sources say the Committee met in Cambridge after the fighting in Lexington and Concord and as Chapman does not give a source,



his story is unverified. A tavern in Arlington was also called the Black Horse Tavern.

According to Richardson, the tavern continued to pass from one owner to another. Wyman Weston acquired it in 1806. The tavern was popular and largely patronized while he was owner, but in 1827 “he experienced religion and stopped selling liquor from the bar of his hotel.”

The next innkeeper, Joshua Davis, “was a high liver and a frequent patron of his own bar,” wrote Richardson who heard stories from Davis’s nephew. Through Davis’s time, Richardson said, the tavern had a sign

which swung from the corner of the house, later from a post, and later from an elm tree (which reportedly stood on what is now the southerly corner of Black Horse Terrace).

Davis also had a golden ball mounted upon a post, south of the house. Richardson wrote that Davis said, “The golden ball is for my city friends, and the Black Horse for my country friends.”

Davis died in 1835, the year the railroad came to town.

“Mrs. Davis had the ability and tact to keep a good public house,” but “her husband dying without means, she had to leave the Black Horse Tavern. And from that day the house was closed to the public.”

“With his death the light and life of the Black Horse Tavern went out,” Richardson wrote. The next owner, Noah Johnson, who bought the place in 1836, reportedly took down the tavern sign.

Nevertheless, the building continued to be known as the Black Horse Tavern. Horse Tavern.

The building also continued to be used for public functions. “The first singing-school taught in South Woburn of which there is any remembrance, was in the winter of 1838-39, in the hall of the once famous Black Horse Tavern,” choir master David Youngman recalled.

When the first church was built in 1840, the choir was able to move there.

However, the church was not appropriate for rehearsals of the first Winchester band, formed about 1850, so its first headquarters was the Black Horse Tavern.

The building continued to be a prominent one. It provided a name to the Black Horse Hose Company, located near Symmes Corner, one of the town’s four volunteer companies formed in the 1870s to run with hand-drawn hose carriages.

The property continued to pass from one owner to another, and land was sold off from the building lot. In 1892 Richardson wrote that “not a few gentlemen of worth live on Prospect St. and own lots taken out of the Black Horse estate.”

The tavern’s final owner was Preston Pond who led an unsuccessful drive to raise funds to save the building, then in disrepair, and had it torn down in 1892.

The tavern, however, was never forgotten. The name Black Horse Terrace serves as a reminder of its location. The barn survives, moved to 250 Washington St. In 1973, the insignia of the Black Horse was adopted by the Historical Society and appears on its signs and its newsletter, the Black Horse Bulletin. Downtown, the name was recalled at the Black Horse Bootery and more recently was given to a new Black Horse Tavern on Waterfield Road.

Dr. Ellen Knight, archivist for the Town of Winchester, is a local historian and journalist, as well as an independent scholar in Boston arts history.

A history of the Sanborn House

COURTESY OF THE WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND LUCY YANG

The Sanborn House is one of the few surviving grand estates in Winchester. Nine and one-half acres of property was purchased in 1904 by Oren Sanborn, younger son of James Sanborn, the co-founder of Chase & Sanborn Coffee.

Oren and his wife Lorena (Rena) had lived in Winchester since 1901. The Sanborn House, designed in the beaux-arts style by architects Clinton M. Hill and Thomas M. James, was erected in 1906/07 at a cost of \$250,000.

Their new home, which they called Aigremont, with its majestic setting, balanced and understated exterior, and beautifully appointed interior, set the stage for their role as prominent Winchester citizens.

Oren was a member of the Winchester Country Club and the Calumet Social Club.

Rena, active in Winchester Society, helped found the Winchester Hospital and led fundraising efforts for the hospital for many years.

The Sanborn House itself was opened to hospital benefits. One of the most notable charity events held at the house was the annual horse show that became a social highlight for many years. It was one of the biggest and most important events in town!

Oren and Rena Sanborn had four children. The oldest child was James Sanborn, who was 16 years old when the family moved into their new



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Sanborn House was an estate originally purchased in 1904 by the Oren Sanborn family. It later became a school and eventually the home of the Historical Society.

house. Helen was 11 years old when they moved into the house and often worked with her mother, Rena, in charities.

She especially liked being a part of the horse shows, where she would ride in the ring. Helen became a noted horsewoman.

Caleb Sanborn was 8 years old when the family moved into the house, and attended the Winchester Public Schools. The youngest child was John Sanborn, who was only 6 years old when the family moved in. He also went to the Winchester Public Schools. In school, he was a very talented singer, and had many solos in the boy choir of the Parish of the Epiphany.

Oren had a lot of money, but he was not very smart with the money. He spent it all on himself, buying horses, cars, and yachts. By the early 1920's, the family fortune was gone and the Sanborn family had to move out.

The next family to move in was the Downes family. The Downes family got its money by starting a company called Downes Lumber in Boston. The Downes family used the house as a family home for the next 20 years.

The Downes family had five kids, who all grew up in the Sanborn House. They all went to private schools in the area, like the Buckingham School and St. Mary's

Their decision to sell the house and surrounding land to the Religious of

Christian Education was significant in the ongoing preservation of the house during the years after World War II when so many large homes of the Victorian and Edwardian period were destroyed.

The nuns built an all-girls Catholic school called Marycliff Academy on what had been the western paddock and used the house for their residence.

In 1969, the Town of Winchester purchased the Marycliff Academy and the adjacent house. The school became the present Ambrose Elementary School (rebuilt in 2005), and the Sanborn House became home to a variety of occupants, most recently the town Recreation Department.

In 1981, the Sanborn House was one of first properties in Winchester to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Sanborn House was vacated in 2003 to facilitate construction of the new Ambrose School.

In 2005, the Massachusetts Historical Commission recognized the Sanborn House as a significant and endangered property, awarding the Historical Society a Preservation Project Funds grant to begin the planning process for restoring the house.

In March 2006, the Winchester Historical Society signed a long term lease for the Sanborn House with the Town of Winchester. The Society took on the stewardship for the restoration of the property and its conversion into the Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center for the use of the community as well as a home for the Society.

A look at Winchester then and now

BY CHRIS STEVENS

Life was simple, life was sweet.

That is how Joan Bird described growing up in Winchester.

"I've spent the majority of my life in Winchester," she said. "My great-grandfather built the purple house out toward West Medford."

The purple house is now yellow, and Bird is the last member of her family to still live in town — and her family was considerable.

"I was very lucky," she said. "My parents were here, my aunts and uncles and cousins. My husband and my kids grew up here."

Patty Mawn called the Winchester of her youth the quintessential New England town where the Department of Public Works would flood a field in the winter for kids to skate on.

"We lived next door and would climb the fence with a shovel," she said. "My mom could see us from the front porch."

Setting the age stage

Bird said both her mother and father attended Winchester High School — Class of 1929 and 1930 — which is now the Lincoln School. She was the Class of '53 at what's now the McCall Middle School and her kids attended the Skillings Road high school.

But she attributes the particular closeness of her class to the fact they spent freshman year in the Wadleigh Building. Originally a school, the Wadleigh Building, which stood in what is now Chehalo Park, was closed in 1932, but reopened in 1936 to house the freshman high school class, among other things.

"We had English, history, Latin, and math and



WINCHESTER NEWS
STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

Joan Bird, in her Lewis Street home, has lived in Winchester for the better part of her 90 years. Here she shows off a photo used to play pin the nose on Joan during her 80th birthday party.

downstairs, they had mechanical drawing and shop," she

said. "Then we'd go up to the high school for lunch and gym ... but we were just a group of 210 kids and we were so close and that went on for years."

In fact, Bird is still friends with nine women from her senior class — all of whom have or will turn 90 this year.

The Wadleigh was demolished in 1962, too late for Mawn, who was born in Winchester in 1949, and like Bird, her roots go deep.

"My grandmother was born in Winchester in 1899, my dad in 1921 ... my son in 1975 and my grandchildren in 2004 and 2009," she said.

Mawn left Winchester in 2016, in part because the Winchester she knew had simply changed too much, she said.

Growing up Winchester

Bird joked that you never heard kids say, "I'm bored" when she was young because there was always a group of kids around to play with and

so much to do. It is rare to see kids running around outside just playing these days, she said.

"I love seeing kids being kids and just frogging around," said the great-grandmother of nine little boys.

There were summer sports that pitted the local elementary schools against each other, tennis courts and bikes to ride, she said.

"We had swimming races where we competed against each other," Mawn said.

And Fourth of July and Memorial Day parades, pie eating contests, lots of sports, and arts and crafts, she added.

"I miss Saturday afternoon football games," Bird said. "We had wonderful games during my teen years."

She said the entire town would show up and if you ran late, you'd be hard pressed to

CONTINUED, PAGE 10

HAPPY 175TH ANNIVERSARY, WINCHESTER!

Over the years, your generosity and spirit have allowed us to serve alongside you, making a difference through volunteer and charity events that help strengthen the fabric of our town.

We're incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this community and look forward to many more years of shared memories, growth, and giving back together.



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A look at Winchester then and now

CONTINUED FROM
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find a parking space or a seat.

In the winter, there were after school basketball games at the high school and on Friday nights the game often led to a house party or two.

Bird said it wasn't unusual for someone to throw an open house where 100 people might show up and inevitably, someone would start playing the piano and everyone would sing. She is aware of how it sounds, but said it was a more innocent time.

She is not, however, deluded.

Bird said she knew there were kids that smoked and drank and later in the '60s and '70s, there were drug issues. She joked about her son's friends inviting her to the annual pre-Thanksgiving Day party of their day, which was drinking in what she called Vet's Alley at dusk.

"I wish my kids had the chance to do what I did," she said. "They did

to some extent, but not so much."

She said she thought the 1920s through the 1950s and even early 1960s were the golden years in terms of childhood freedom "then it started to go downhill."

Mawn agreed, saying for her it was the 1950s and '60s that were idyllic.

Downtown difference

Mawn's grandfather was a barber with a shop in town.

She said she remembered being able to take a bus down Washington Street to downtown.

"Mom would do errands then we'd go to Brigham's for ice cream," she said, adding Brigham's stood where ultimately a Dunkin Donuts went in.

"We had a Woolworths where the CVS is, with a lunch counter," and "in the area where the Better Homes and Garden Real Estate office is was a Rexhall Drug Store," she said.

Remembering who was where is a game

Bird said she and her brother love to play. They start at the fire station on Mount Vernon Street and move through the downtown naming defunct businesses.

"The downtown was absolutely marvelous," she said.

There were anchor stores like Filene's and women's retailer Peck & Peck and the luxury department store Bonwit Teller. There were also hardware stores, grocers, shoe shops, Chitel's, where the boys shopped, and Laurel Lanes, where the girls shopped, and The Splendid Lunch.

Mawn said on a cold day, the Splendid Lunch was a great place to get hot chocolate and French fries.

"There was McGlaughlin's Shoes, where they would x-ray your feet," Bird said, with a laugh. "All the shoe stores had them and when we were in high school, we'd go in and just x-ray our feet."

There was also Ward's meat market, Converse and Richardsons markets and the egg and

butter store, which Bird couldn't remember the name of.

Mawn remembers it as Kennedy's Butter & Eggs, where fresh butter was bought by the pound cut from a giant block and then wrapped for you.

Because he was a local business man, Mawn said her grandfather used to shop at all the markets, but he was at Lynch's the most, a favorite of Bird's as well.

Today's shoppers have easy grocery delivery, a trend that flourished during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Bird had one better.

"You could call in an order. They'd wrap it up, write up a bill and charge it to your account and deliver it," she said. "And if you weren't home, they'd go in and put it in the freezer for you because you could leave your door unlocked. Can you imagine?"

"But then the malls came and the stores left," she said.

Big changes

When it comes to

changes, the thing that Mawn said blows her mind the most is the political swing she has seen over the years. She said growing up in the '50s and '60s, Winchester resident John A. Volpe, a Republican, was governor and Winchester was a Republican town. She called the change to liberalism a dramatic shift — "it was shocking to me."

The Winchester she grew up, she said, was filled with old-time Yankees and the Select Board was called the Board of Selectmen and the strong, professional, learned women on the board did not mind that.

Bird said the biggest change for her is the sheer density of the community.

"You used to be able to go downtown and you knew everyone," she said. "It's not that way now."

She said she misses the coziness, that close-knit community feel when there was more land than streets and houses cost a lot less.

Bird said it seems crazy to her that the house her parents paid \$11,000 for and the house she and her husband bought for \$21,000 at 3% interest are both worth more than \$1 million.

"The houses in (the Lawrence Road) area are all \$1 million-\$2 million," she said. "It's absolutely crazy."

As kids, both Mawn and Bird said they had virtually unchecked freedom.

"The '40s and '50s were wonderful years," Bird said. "Parents would throw kids outside and they'd be out all day long ... you could

go from one end to the other and back. No one bothered you."

When Bird was young, Winchester didn't have a movie theater, but they thought nothing of walking the three miles or so to the Arlington movie house, "because that's just what you did."

Winchester today feels more like a city with all the traffic and thickly settled streets, she said.

Mawn agreed. She said in her day, development essentially stopped at Nuttle Field, which was called West Side Field then. Mawn grew up on Nathaniel Street and said her mother thought nothing of letting her brother ride his bike to the West Side Field.

"That's something I wouldn't let my son do in the '80s because we were starting to see more traffic coming through," she said.

But Bird is quick to add that progress is often a good thing and change and evolution are inevitable. Still, she admits, she misses the Winchester of her youth.

"Ted Williams bought his cars at Moody's Motors," she said. "It was a very simple time. So many great people and coaches."

"I'm lucky," she said again. "Winchester has been good to me and I have loved living here and I've loved the history of this town."

Mawn agreed. "It was really good times, innocent," Mawn said. "You were proud to say you were from Winchester."

Chris Stevens is an award-winning journalist with more than 30 years of experience. She has worked as both a reporter and editor.



Winchester: It really does take a village

CONTINUED
FROM PAGE 3

the 1860s, Meister told me, because of the Civil War. Then there was the Panic of 1873 and the Great Fire in Boston. Things were hectic.

In 1875, Winchester residents David Skillings and George D. Rand, a Boston architect, started what is now the first suburban development in the town called Rangeley, which still exists.

Meister explained to me the houses were not side-by-side and were within walking distance to the train, something that is still desirable to people today. The concept of suburbs was taking off at that time in history, especially in bigger communities like London, Paris and Berlin.

Winchester, Meister

said, was a very early suburb in the U.S.

The town continued to transform with a movement to rid the center district of industry. There was no zoning at the time and it wasn't until the 1915 that the town established its Planning Board.

"That was progressive!" Meister said, when I asked why. "They were controlling property through Town Meeting."

The town continued to build, as cars became more common and factories became less prevalent. And eventually, Winchester became what it is today.

"What is that?" I asked Meister.

For her, Winchester is built out with no open land for new development.

But there is a Master

Plan, I pointed out, so what's the future of Winchester going to be?

That, she told me, is what we all need to figure out. Because whatever it is, there will need to be some sort of demolition.

I find that fascinating, given the Master Plan

and the passage of the North Main Street Mixed-use District at the 2024 Fall Town Meeting. The MSMD will offer developers new guidelines for building as properties along the corridor, which runs from Skillings Road to the Woburn line, are

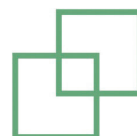
sold and changed.

I've seen the possible drawings for the area. They will change Winchester once again.

Winchester has been an ever-evolving community since before it was founded. And it's incredible the town has

managed to keep its roots by remaining a suburb, but one that continues to change and grow.

Nell Escobar Coakley is the editor of Winchester News. She started her journalism career in Winchester as a reporter for the Winchester Town Crier and later, the Winchester Star.



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HAPPY 175TH, WINCHESTER!

From the members of the Winchester Historical Society



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CONGRATULATIONS WINCHESTER!

175 Years of Our Town



The Jenks Center



-The Winchester Seniors Association -The Winchester Seniors Association Trust -The Winchester Council on Aging

50 Years of Our Jenks Community

The Jenks Center has been an integral part of the Town's history for over half a century. As we embark on celebrating the Jenks's 50th anniversary, we are happy to announce that in the near future we will be unveiling a redesign of the Jenks Center that will enable us to welcome a new generation of older adults from Winchester and its surrounding areas.

The Jenks redesign will reinforce Winchester's commitment to being an age-friendly community. Here's to celebrating another 50 plus years together!

Winchester Historical Society Presents 175th Anniversary Programs

The Winchester Historical Society is kicking off its year-long celebration of Winchester's 175th anniversary. This year's programs will focus on Winchester people, architecture, and history.

All events will be held at the Sanborn House and Cultural Center, 15 High St., Winchester. For more information, visit the Historical Society's website at www.winchesterhistoricalsociety.org.

APRIL 30

'Facing Change – How diversity came to Winchester'

The Winchester Historical Society continues its year-long celebration of Winchester's 175th anniversary with a two-part series about Winchester people presented by Winchester historian and archivist Ellen Knight.

Part one will be presented on Winchester's anniversary, April 30, when Knight will discuss the changing population of Winchester since its inception.

Doors open on April 30 at 7 p.m. for refreshments. The program begins at 7:30 p.m.

This program will also be livestreamed via WinCAM.

MAY

WAN's May 2025 Library Show

WAN will hold its exhibit at the Winchester Public Library in May, incorporating the celebration of Winchester's 175th anniversary as a central theme for the show.

All participants will be asked to complete a brief Artist Statement regarding the theme of Winchester's 175th Anniversary, as life in Winchester relates to your art and/or your life as an artist.

Exhibition Dates: May 1-31, 2025

Installation date: Thursday, May 1, 2025 (12:30-3:30 p.m.)

Exhibit Reception: Saturday, May 3, 2025 (3-5 p.m.) Large & Small Conference Room

MAY 14

'An Armchair Tour of Winchester Women's History'

On May 14, historian Ellen Knight will present part two of a two-part series about Winchester people. Knight will highlight notable Winchester women over the years.

Doors open on May 14 at 7 p.m. for refreshments. The program begins at 7:30 p.m.

This program will also be livestreamed via WinCAM.

MAY THROUGH SEPTEMBER

Arts Winchester Sidewalk Exhibit

Arts Winchester will present its annual Sidewalk Art exhibit, which will run through Winchester's downtown area, from end-May through mid-September, feature 175th anniversary recognition.

JUNE 7

Town Day Trolley Tours

It's Town Day! The Winchester Historical Society will feature its annual trolley tours, starting at 10 a.m. and featuring Ellen Knight, Vincent Dixon, John McConnell, Peter Wild, Joe Govoni and Chloe Silbermann.

The following are this year's Town Day trolley tour topics:

- » "From a Village to a Town" with Ellen Knight
- » "The ABCs of Winchester History..." with Vincent Dixon
- » "175 Years of Architecture" with John McConnell
- » "Historic Tree Tour" with Peter Wild
- » "A Children's Tour of Winchester" with Joe Govoni and Chloe Silbermann

OCTOBER

Unveiling of Winchester History Sign

Spirit Weekend: Unveiling of the new Winchester History Sign at Town Hall, time and date to be announced.

OCT. 11

'Coit Architecture in Winchester'

On Oct. 11, come join Ellen Spencer for "Coit Architecture in Winchester" at 7:30 p.m.

NOV. 12

'Winchester's Boundaries'

On Nov. 12, come join Peter Engeldrum for his new film "Winchester's Boundaries."