

WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April - June 2007

BLACK HORSE BULLETIN

Volume 32, Number 2

From the President by Gail Sjo

"The Sanborn House officially begins its new life as the Sanborn Historical and Cultural Center in April, 2007."

This thrilling announcement is one I have been waiting to make for years and is a dream come true. What started off seven years ago as a suggestion by Sam Seidman to find a permanent home for the Historical Society and turned into a lengthy and complicated process of negotiations with the Town is finally coming to fruition. This is not to say the building is renovated, the grounds ready for picnics, nor the exhibits, events, and programs calendar complete. Instead, what this means is that we can finally open the doors to you, members of the Historical Society, and to other residents and nonprofit organizations of Winchester to start using the

(continued on page 2, President)

The Importance of Wright-Locke-Hamilton Farm by Matthew B.Bronski

The Wright-Locke-Hamilton Farm is a truly rare and remarkable historic treasure:

- □ It is the sole place where Winchester's pre-railroad era agricultural history survives essentially intact it is the last working farm in town.
- □ It has been farmed since the 1600's and is Winchester's last tangible link to that period.
- \Box It has been owned by only three families since the 1600's.
- □ It is believed to be the closest intact historic farm to downtown Boston.
- □ It is the only property in Winchester with internationallevel historic significance.
- It is unique in Winchester for its combination of historic significance, environmental significance, and unprotected open space. (continued on page 2, Farm)



Wright-Locke-Hamilton Farm – 1915 Squash House (right), c. 1900 Ice House (left front), and 1827 barn (left rear). Courtesy of Mark Flannery.

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- While the farm is a Winchester jewel, and an essential and priceless part of our town's history, its historic significance extends well beyond Winchester's borders. Accordingly, it has received the following recognitions of its historic significance at the state, national, and international levels:
- Listed on the State Register of Historic Places (all 8 buildings, all land) - 1983
- □ Listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* (all 8 buildings, all land) 1983
- Recognized and commemorated by the Canadian Government for the importance of Philemon Wright in the settlement of the Capital Region of Canada - 1980
- Listed by Preservation Massachusetts as one of the *Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources* in Massachusetts (the only property in Winchester ever so listed) 2006

While the farm includes eight historic buildings and 20 acres of land, it is far more than the sum of its parts. It is a "Heritage Landscape" wherein the buildings and the land are inextricably wed, and their significance cannot be separated. Heritage Landscapes are of such importance to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that they are the subject of a current state-wide Heritage Landscapes Initiative Program through the Massachusetts Department of **Conservation and Recreation** (DCR) to encourage local communities to identify and protect these important pieces of our history and our common wealth. In their publication Reading the Land, Massachusetts Heritage Land-



Wright-Locke-Hamilton Farm – 1828 farmhouse (right), 1827 barn (center), and c. 1900 carriage shed (left). Courtesy of Matthew M. Bronski

scapes: A guide to identification and protection, "Mass. DCR describes the importance and relevance of these landscapes today:

- "Heritage, or cultural, landscapes is a broad term for the special places created by human interaction with the environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past...(they) convey aspects of our shared history that forge our cultural identity."
- "Heritage Landscapes provide each community with its own unique sense of place. Once we begin to look with an informed view, we see the wealth of knowledge that such landscapes convey about a community's past, the emotional connections that many have to certain places, and how this awareness can improve our communities and our lives."
- "The story told by the physical record of the history, interwoven with the natural environment, becomes clear as our ability to read the landscape increases. The study of heritage landscapes reveals habits, concerns, and lifestyles of those who came before us and shaped the environment we know. Re

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house, to finally begin the process of experiencing the Sanborn's potential as a community resource.

A passionate group of volunteers, who have worked countless hours during the past year since we obtained the lease, have grand plans for the house and grounds, including art shows, concerts, lectures, historical exhibits, strolls through flower gardens, plus a variety of social events. Numerous Winchester organizations have inquired about office space, holding meetings and events at the Sanborn Center, and our first rental has been booked. For the Society an exciting and welcome new challenge will be how to schedule ongoing house repairs and improvements around what seems to be a developing calendar of activities.

Patience and perseverance have been the key ingredients in achieving our goal to open the Sanborn Historical and Cultural Center. Undoubtedly, more of both will be required as we go through the process of bringing new life into our special old home. The work to do is substantial, especially to replace the aging and inefficient heating and electrical systems and to realize our objective of moving the Town Archives into the basement, and adding a much needed lecture/meeting room. Despite the hurdles to completing the physical renovations, now is a time to celebrate a new beginning. The Sanborn Historical and Cultural Center is opening and you are invited to use and enjoy our new home. Watch for our grand opening celebration-maybe not until the fall, but definitely coming soon!

Thank You Winchester Businesses by Nancy Schrock

The success of our fall and winter programs owes much to the generosity of local businesses who displayed our new Sanborn House brochures. We extend our thanks to:

- Bagel Land
- Brueggers Bagel Shop
- Book Ends
- Café Dolci
- □ Carlson Real Estate
- □ China Sky
- □ Century 21 Fortin
- □ Coldwell Banker
- D'Agostino's
- □ Fells Hardware
- □ Fresh Paint and Wallcovering
- □ Frame Haven
- Gloria's Pizzeria
- Jenks Center
- La Patisserie
- Mahoney's Garden Centers and Farmstand
- □ Mailboxes
- Nelson's Bakery
- □ News Shop
- □ Noble Cleaners
- Phoenix Salon
- Philip Ciampa
- Pondview Florist
- □ Remax
- □ Russell Hill Dental
- □ Saltmarsh Insurance
- Scotti Insurance
- □ Spirited Gourmet
- □ Starbucks
- □ Stems
- Town Pantry
- Towne Photo
- □ Wedgemere Train Coffee Shop
- □ Winchester Art and Frame
- □ Winchester Co-operative Bank
- □ Winchester Drug
- □ Winchester Savings Bank
- □ Winchester Shoe Repair
- □ Winchester Wine & Spirits
- □ Wine Country

(continued from page 2, Farm)

cognition of heritage landscapes and their meaning becomes the presence of our past."

At first glance at a site plan of the farm, one might think that the buildings are random in their placement on the site - however, quite the opposite is true. By reading the landscape, and understanding the topography and the functions of each building, one can see and read the underlying logic of the whole farm. In doing so, one quickly realizes that the buildings are very thoughtfully placed, and their relationship to the land and to each other tells a story of Yankee ingenuity and of living in concert with the land:

- □ The 1828 farmhouse, the 1827 barn, the 1915 squash house (rear barn), and two carriage sheds all sit along a roughly level grass cart path on a knoll that extends west from Ridge Street, about 8-10 feet above the low-lying cultivated fields where water accumulates. This strategic location allows the hill on the north side of the buildings to direct the cold north wind up and over the structures, but keeps the buildings high enough above the lowest land to tend to keep the cellars dry. (The farmhouse cellar was used for winter food storage.) A "windbreak" of trees on the north side of the buildings further shields the buildings from the cold north wind.
- □ The farmhouse is the closest building to the road, connecting it to transportation for both trade and social interaction.
- □ The ice house sits on the north side of the large 1827 barn, close to the house for the easy retrieval of ice during the summer months. By placing it on the north side of the barn, it was shaded by the larger barn,

helping to keep the ice house cool. The ice house has double walls, and the space between them filled with sawdust as a clever, early form of insulation.

- The well is located at a low point in the land, next to the pond, to minimize the digging required to reach the water table, and to provide the most reliable source of water during dry spells.
- From the well, water was pumped to a covered cistern dug into the top of the hill.
 With the head (height) of the water stored in the cistern atop the hill, water was fed by gravity through a system of buried pipes to the buildings and fields.

Many Winchester residents of all ages best know the farm from fond memories of picking their own raspberries in the fields. Should the Town's citizens vote to purchase the farm, it would provide the opportunity for Winchester residents of all ages to learn about and appreciate farming, living and building in concert with the environment, and centuries of continuous living history. The father of the study of common landscapes, former Harvard Professor J.B. Jackson, taught us that in this modern age of constant change, few things today give us the sense of continuity through the ages which our forebears knew and took comfort in. Those few things should be cherished and guarded - their presence today is the presence and continuity of the past in our lives. The beautiful Wright-Locke-Hamilton Farm is a truly remarkable piece of living history that has over 350 years of continuous farming use. It is a recognized treasure to the people across Massachusetts, the United States, and even Canada, but particularly to those of us who are fortunate enough to call Winchester home.

Ways to Give to WHS ... Later

by Drew Bottaro

Our Historical Society has many good uses for your financial support! Restoring the Sanborn House, creating a vibrant Historical and Cultural Center at the Sanborn, and supporting our historical programs in general will create financial needs for our Society for years to come. Immediate donations of cash or appreciated stocks are always welcome, yet ways to contribute later may feel more comfortable to you while also helping our Society immeasurably.

These deferred gifts require you to take only a small amount of advance action and offer you the opportunity to significantly assist the Historical Society in attaining its goals. Such actions are often called "planned giving" and require small changes either to your wills or to beneficiary designations.

Below are two of the more common ones and why you might consider using them. Both of these simple strategies reduce your estate taxes, and they may reduce your income taxes as well. We leave detailed answers to your tax questions to your tax advisor; we focus here on how these approaches work and why you might use them.

Bequests – This strategy allows you to keep full control of your assets during your life, and then simply makes your contribution at estate-time. Bequests are estate-time gifts you make, typically via your will. Your will would direct your executor to pay a specified amount to the WHS. Your estate gets a tax deduction for your bequest.

Bequests can be of anything of value – financial assets (cash, stocks, or mutual funds) or property (art, furniture, cars, second homes – anything else you may own). To donate in this way, your attorney needs to make a slight modification to your will or estate planning documents.

Beneficiary designations – This approach also allows you to keep control of your assets during your lifetime; the designated assets do not change hands until estate time.

Perhaps surprisingly to you, many of your assets do not change hands by your will but rather by going to the beneficiaries you designate. Examples of such assets include IRAs, retirement plans, annuities, and life insurance. You can direct all or just a percentage of these to our Society by simply changing the beneficiary – and you can do this with or without consulting your attorney.

For assets subject to both income and estate taxes (all the above except life insurance, which is generally subject only to estate tax), this strategy avoids both taxes.

Other approaches - Beyond the two simple approaches above, there are more advanced approaches that involve using trusts in a variety of ways. The central idea behind virtually all of these approaches is for you to retain some current or lifetime interest (income from, or use of, the property) in the assets while presently committing to give the assets to our Society later. You receive a current income tax deduction for the deferred gift. One strategy involves reversing the order (the Society gets the current or lifetime interest, and your heirs get the property via a reduced - and lower tax - gift valuation).

These approaches require attorneys to set up trusts, and are (continued on page 5, Giving) Can You Help by Gail Sjo

March 20th marks the one-year anniversary of the Sanborn House lease signing. This first year has been an adventure in every sense of the word.

Some of the highs have included the substantial amount of ongoing cleaning and repair work donated by talented and dedicated volunteers, generous gifts and donations from many members and the Winchester Co-operative Bank, and the completion of significant projects such as rebuilding and restoring all three chimneys, one of which has been missing for years.

And, as all old-home owners can attest, part of the adventure has been the realization that a few problems are not as simple as they first appear. A prime example is that to stop the long-term leaking problem on the 2nd and 3rd floors, all three levels of roof need to be redone, and the decorative balustrade needs to come down, be repaired, repainted and reattached in a way that no longer allows water into the house. The estimated bill for this major project is \$200,000 - not exactly the amount we had budgeted! We have applied for Mass Historical Commission and EnKa grants, have received cash donations, but still will need more funds to complete this critical job.

Can you help? Any and all contributions made out to the Winchester Historical Society, Inc. are welcome!



Book Ends Children's Own School Hall & Sullivan, Attorneys at Law Mary McKenna and Associates, Inc.

From the Archives by Nancy Schrock

The documents, maps, and photographs collected by the Winchester Historical Society over the past century are currently housed in the Archival Center at Town Hall. Unfortunately for researchers, the Center has been open only three days a month since the Town eliminated the position of Town Archivist ten years ago. Residents will soon be able to learn more about the collections, thanks to the Friends of the Library, who have provided funds to put Past-Perfect, the database that contains the catalog of the collections, onto the Town network. Once installed, library users will be able to search the Center's catalog and locate information - and images of some early pictures of the town - without leaving the library.

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers working under Randy Bairnsfather. more information enters the database each month. Wini Paskerian is inventorying biographies in preparation for a finding aid and index. Alice Fitzgerald is completing catalog records of the E. D. Chase maps after photocopying yellowed newspaper clippings from the Vinson-Owen Collection onto acid-free paper. Carol Swanson has been doing a similar project for articles on the history of Winchester by Henry Simonds. Society members Diane Donovan and Nancy Schrock have joined Randy to open the Center to researchers.

The Archival Center is located in Town Hall. Hours of operation are:

- 1st Tuesday of month: 7:00 9:00 P.M.
- 2nd Thursday of month: 1:00 3:00 P.M.
- 3rd Thursday of month: 3:00 5:00 P.M.

All visitors must be supervised by one of the part-time volunteers who staff the Center. Patrons who cannot visit the Archival Center during its open hours may request individual appointments (tel: 781-721-7146; e-mail: archives@ci.winchester.ma.us), which are set by individual volunteers at their discretion.

(continued from page 4, Giving) most comfortably used after you've worked with a financial advisor to ensure this works for you and your heirs. If you have any questions about how to donate to our Society via any of the above, please contact Nancy Schrock, Society treasurer (tel: 781-721-0135; e-mail: treasurer@winchesterhist oricalsociety.org).

January Program

Historical Society Checks Out the Whittemore-Robbins House

by Carol Keller

In accord with tradition, the Winchester Historical Society again held its annual "Celebrate the New Year Party" on the first weekend after New Year's. This time the party was at the Whittemore-Robbins House in Arlington. This delightful historic home, built in 1801 and completely restored in 1996, was selected for the celebration to help us all imagine how the Sanborn House will look after its restoration.

The Whittemore-Robbins house has about 100 years on the Sanborn House. William Whittemore built the house near a successful family factory in Menotomy in 1801. Nathan Robbins, then the wealthiest citizen of Arlington, bought the house in 1847. He was one of the first to hold a stall at the newly opened Faneuil Hall Market, where he successfully introduced the "fast food" of the day - plucked chickens from Arlington. The house was given to the town by his granddaughters in 1931.

The four main rooms on the first floor of the Whittemore-Robbins House closely resemble the four main rooms on the first floor of the Sanborn House. This wonderful celebration space is also occupied by the Department of Human Services (DHS), which shares the space with the office of the Arlington Historical Commission. In 1996 the DHS, the Commission, and Town planners began the renovation which included long needed structural work, updated systems, handicap accessibility, a catering kitchen and landscaping. The house was also refurbished for office use and as a function facility. Sound familiar? We talk about the Sanborn House in these same terms.

The highlight of the celebration was the presence of Patsy Kraemer, now the Events Manager for the House and our guest speaker. Patsy has been involved with the House since the start of its restoration and reuse, and is a wealth of knowledge on the issues and successes of turning a historic house into a community asset. She gave an overview of the history of the House and its uses, and talked about the experiences of starting up a community facility. Her practical and humorous advice - never accept a clam bake for inside the House no matter how desperate you are (the group finally agreed to serve only chicken), don't separate the parents and teens between inside and outside (under a tent), and have rules and people will respect them. They have never needed to use their required deposit for repairs.

February Program

Early History of the Wright-Locke-Hamilton Farm

by Susan Keats

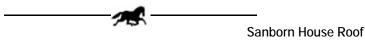
The story of the Locke Farm is one that should be told over and over again. How often have we driven along Ridge Street and not noticed the house and barns as they sit on their knoll, begging us to reflect on an earlier time?

The uniqueness of this property lies in its being nearly untouched since Squaw Sachem and her friends wandered the area some 400 years ago. It is hard to believe that all of Winchester was once mature timberland, inhabited by bears and wolves. One had to work long and hard to clear a piece of land for crops and grazing.

The early settlers of Winchester had names like Converse, Richardson, Nowell and Symmes and we still hear echoes of their past in the streets that carry their names. These settlers were joined by the Wrights and Lockes, who settled on the south side of what in 1640 was part of Woburn. The Wrights and Lockes were neighbors. In 1789, Thomas Wright deeded his property along today's Ridge Street to his son Philemon, who lived there only a short time. In 1800, he sold the property to his neighbor, Josiah Locke, and headed for Canada along with 65 friends and family members. There, he founded the town of Hull and became part of Canadian folklore.

Back in Woburn, Josiah Locke deeded the property to his son Asa in 1804. By 1828, Asa had built a barn and a house on the property and begun to develop the land for productive farming. From Asa, the property was passed down to other Lockes, remaining in the family until the death of the last resident Locke in 1974. By then, although the land was still being farmed, only 20 of the original 65 acres remained. The subsequent owners, the Hamiltons, continued limited farming activities until very recently, and today the property remains largely as it was some 30 years ago.

[Update from the Publisher – On March 13, in a special town election, the citizens of Winchester passed a debt exclusion override to purchase Hamilton Farm. The Board of Selectmen is exercising the town's right of first refusal, and is reviewing proposals that will give the town an opportunity to use the land in a way that reduces the number of housing units while preserving more open space.]



Starting at the Top By Cynthia Latta

Shortly after Christmas, the Historical Society learned that the Massachusetts Historical Commission had received another round of funding for the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund. The Commission has \$750,000 to give away in this round, in grants up to 50% of project cost with a maximum of \$100,000.

Applications were due February 21, giving us only a few weeks to collect all the necessary information, photos, signatures, legal documents, supportive letters, and funds. To apply, we had to show that we had at least 75% of (continued on page 7, Roof)

Changing of the Guard at the Black Horse Bulletin

by Gail Sjo

The *Black Horse Bulletin*'s format and content transformation began about three years ago when John Minniti volunteered to take the reins as managing editor and publisher. To readers, the most obvious change was probably the new format, but what happened behind the scenes is where the most significant change occurred.

John took his job of managing editor to heart, declared we would start publishing four times a year, and put the Society Board and other volunteer authors on an ambitious schedule. John's good natured reminders that articles are "overdue" have brought not only a discipline to this publication, but results to be proud of. Although we understand his reasons, we are sad to report that John is retiring from his role as managing editor to focus on some family genealogy projects that were put aside when he accepted responsibility for publishing the newsletter. Fortunately he has agreed to assist with the production aspects of the newsletter in support of a new managing editor, as yet undiscovered, who will set direction for the Bulletin beginning with the next issue.

Also, Joe Harris is retiring so that he can commit more time to his work with Landmark School, where he has been writing a history of the school since retiring from his duties as Assistant Headmaster. Joe was the first person to come to the aid of the newsletter when we sought editors, and his contributions will be missed.

A sincere thank you to both of these fine gentlemen!

Memories Wanted

by Cynthia Latta

While the Historical Society's telephone at the Sanborn House is not exactly ringing off the hook, serious calls are starting to come in. Perhaps the most interesting one for me, as an avid skater, was a call from Doug Cupples, a history professor at the University of Memphis in Memphis, Tennessee. Professor Cupples is working on "an authoritative and definitive biography of the Vinson-Owen skating family of Winchester, Massachusetts." Maribel Vinson-Owen was a championship skater in the 1930s in both women's singles and pairs, and coached her two daughters, Maribel Jr. and Laurence, to numerous titles of their own in the 1950s. Her husband, Guy Owen, was a champion Canadian skater. As many local folks remember, Maribel Sr. and her two daughters were on the Prague-bound Sabena Airlines flight that crashed in Belgium on February 15, 1961, killing all on board and wiping out the entire U.S. figure skating team. The Vinson-Owen School on Johnson Road, nearly complete and apparently still unnamed at the time of the crash, memorializes the family.

Professor Cupples has already received assistance from our archives experts, Randy Bairnsfather, Nancy Schrock, and Ellen Knight, and has made contact with some old-timers at The Skating Club of Boston. In order to get a feel for the skaters' lives in New England, though, he is coming to town in May to visit the places that were important to the Vinson-Owens and to meet with people who remember them, either as citizens of Winchester or skaters.

If you have recollections of the Vinson-Owens that you are willing to share with a writer, please call the Historical Society at 781-721-0135, as we may be able to arrange a general session of interest to many, or send e-mail to Prof. Cupples at dcupples@mem-phis.edu.

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the project cost in hand. Our thanks to everyone who helped pull things together.

The grant funding came at an opportune time. Over the past year, the Sanborn House roof has sprung two serious leaks. Both times, Peter Lawson at the Department of Public Works hustled a couple of his men up to locate and patch the leaks. The fixes only bought time, however, as the roof is well beyond its useful life. Also over the past year, two of our handymen discovered the source of the dampness and mold in the corners of some of the second and third floor ceilings. Water is seeping under the balustrade pedestals where they sit on the roof and finding its way into the ceilings and walls. It appears that the balustrades were improperly flashed and attached the last time the roof was done, and the only lasting fix is to redo them properly.

We had already begun to investigate solutions before learning of the grant opportunity, but were focusing only on the worst sections of the roof. When we learned of the grant, we decided to try to do the job properly. Using some of the remaining funds from the town, we hired Gale Associates, Inc. (the company that managed last year's Town Hall repairs) to draw up plans for redoing the roof and balustrades. Jon Lindberg, the engineer, and Julie Brown, the architect, went out of their way to accommodate our tight schedule, making test cuts and taking measurements out on

the roof on one of the coldest days of the winter. The estimated cost for removing the balustrades, replacing the roof, and refurbishing and replacing the balustrades came in at \$210,000. Since the Society had only \$120,000 available to back the application, we were able to apply only for sufficient funds to cover removal of the balustrades and replacement of the roof, estimated at \$154,000. Accordingly, we requested \$77,000 as 50% of the (limited) project cost. Since we want the balustrades back up, we will be fundraising over the spring and summer for the additional funds to complete the job properly.

The winners of grants will not be announced until mid-June, and they will not necessarily be for the full amount requested. The MHC is particularly interested in addressing critical exterior needs, but will also want to spread the funds around. If we do not receive a grant, or receive substantially less than requested, we will need additional funds just to do the roof.

One other condition of the grant is that we have a permanent preservation restriction on the house. At the present time, we have only a five-year restriction, granted at the spring 2005 session of Town Meeting. The permanent restriction will be on the warrant for consideration at the spring 2007 Town Meeting and a decision must be made at that time since grant funds will not be disbursed without it and grantees have only until the end of fiscal 2008 to complete their projects.

In Memory of Trudy

The Society lost one of its most devoted members when Trudy Kirkendall died on November 10th. A long-time resident of Winchester, Trudy had a successful career in real estate and a deep commitment to the preservation of the town's architecture and history. She held leadership positions in the Society, including terms as President, but perhaps her greatest contributions were the historic house tours, which she organized for many years. Always forward looking, Trudy began the search for a permanent home for the Historical Society over twenty years ago when the Society's collections were moved from the Sanborn House Carriage House. We will all miss her, especially in April when the Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center opens. The Society extends its thanks to those who have given donations to the Society in Trudy's memory.

Notices and Upcoming Events).

- Meetings Board Meetings Third Tuesday of the month (April 17 / May 15/ June 19, 2007): 7:30 P.M., in the Music Room, Sanborn House (15 High Street).
- **Programs** April, 2007: Covered Dish Dinner (members and their guests only); watch for the announcement.

May, 2007: Annual Meeting; watch for the meeting notice.

June 2, 2007: Town Day (Booth and Trolley tours); watch for the volunteers notice.

Help Wanted – The Historical Society needs:

- Managing Editor, *Black Horse Bulletin* (10 20 hours per quarter)
- Editor, Black Horse Bulletin (5 10 hours per quarter)

For more information, see the Historical Society web site (Volunteer Opportunities), contact Gail Sjo (e-mail: sjogail@aol.com) or Carol Keller (e-mail: kellerck@aol.com), or call the Winchester Historical Society (tel: 781-721-0135).

Volunteers are needed to help with the Society's Town Day booths and trolley tours. For more information, call the Winchester Historical Society (tel: 781-721-0135).

The Town Archival Center needs volunteers to scan and catalog its postcard collection and transcribe tapes. If you can spare a few hours, please contact the Society volunteers who operate the Center (e-mail: archives@ci.winchester.ma.us), or call the Winchester Historical Society (tel: 781-721-0135).

The *Black Horse Bulletin* needs volunteers to write articles about Winchester's history. If you would like to see your bylined article in print, please contact Gail Sjo (e-mail: sjogail@aol.com) or Cynthia Latta (e-mail: cynthia@chickadee.us), or call the Winchester Historical Society (tel: 781-721-0135).

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