

For Immediate Release
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Wilmot Historical Society
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Wilmot Historical Society presents Steve Taylor and “NH Roads Taken—Or Not

Sunday, February 24 at 2 p.m. in the WCA Red Barn on Village Road in Wilmot, Steve Taylor, a seasoned NH Humanities speaker, will present “NH Roads Taken—Or Not,” a talk on highway infrastructure and how it has impacted areas of New Hampshire.

Residents who moved to Wilmot after the late sixties may not know that Village Road in Wilmot Flat was once originally designated as US Route 11. Looking at the width of the road and the proximity of homes to the edge of it, one cannot imagine large tractor trailer trucks, logging trucks, and tourist busses traveling through town on this narrow road.

In his talk, Steve reviews some of New Hampshire's most significant highway choices in the 20th century, followed by discussion of the economic, social, and cultural changes that followed decisions to build or not to build.

Background: Following World War II, New Hampshire embarked on an extensive program of constructing new highways and improving existing roads to accommodate explosive growth in passenger vehicles and the need for better infrastructure to accommodate commercial traffic. Hundreds of millions in federal, state, and local tax dollars were expended on this initiative over the second half of the 20th century and road construction became an enduring part of the state's economy.

Decisions about when and where highway projects would be undertaken were often driven by political considerations as well as by policy dictated from Washington. Frequently, choices not to build or improve certain roads would generate as much conflict and controversy as would the proposals that would eventually be implemented. Either way, decisions about highways came to have profound and lasting impacts upon communities and entire regions of the state.

Steve Taylor is an independent scholar, farmer, journalist, and longtime public official. With his sons, Taylor operated a dairy, maple syrup, and cheese making enterprise in Meriden Village. He has been a newspaper reporter and editor, and served for 25 years as New Hampshire's commissioner of agriculture. Taylor was the founding executive director of the New Hampshire Humanities Council and is a lifelong student of the state's rural culture.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the NH Humanities Council. There is no snow date.