

# Wilmot Historical Society



In 2007, Wilmot, New Hampshire, celebrated the 200th birthday of its founding. At that time, the Wilmot Historical Society put together town tours as part of the celebrations. This year the Society has updated those tours and has posted them on its website to be printed out for anyone who is curious about Wilmot and its history.

The tours, then and now, are based loosely on how the various Wilmot towns were laid out. What were once three or four towns became one over time—with four distinct sections—Kearsarge Mountain, Wilmot Flat, Wilmot Center and North Wilmot. Not so long ago there was an East Wilmot as well, a small section that we've included with the tour of Wilmot Center. This section was once known as New Chester - it was not unusual for town lines to be redrawn as towns were settled and populations grew.

While these four driving tours of our 19,000+/- acre town are fairly inclusive, more information on Wilmot is available in Cap LeVarn's *General History* and Florence Langley's more detailed three volume set, all available at the Wilmot Public Library, 11 North Wilmot Road. While supplies last, the Bicentennial sponsored town history, "Home to the Mountain" is also available for free in the library and on request from the Wilmot Historical Society.

For safety reasons, we do not advise driving off the route and down the many narrow dirt roads you will pass. Many are Class VI roads and some are not maintained in winter. Also, please respect private property by not trespassing.

Enjoy the tours!

The Wilmot Historical Society board of directors.

September 2020

## TOUR THROUGH NORTH WILMOT

North Wilmot was first settled along Old North Road in the 1790s. The oldest houses today seem to date from the 1820s and 1830s. Unless incorporated into later buildings, the earliest homes and outbuildings did not survive. There are many cellar holes and wells scattered throughout the woods.

Begin at Wilmot Center. Leaving 4A behind, head up North Wilmot Road. The Tour officially begins at Eagle Pond Road (formally Poor House Road) which is 1.5 miles ahead. You will begin to see sections of stone walls on both sides of the road that, in the 1800s, bordered the fields and pastures of many homesteads where men and women and their families lived and farmed. Some local names included Philbrick, Felch, Milliken, Atwood, Youngman, Farnum, Morrison and Teel.

#1. A little over a mile up what is known as Teel Hill, notice glimpses of White's Pond on the left through the foliage. On the right will be the White's Pond School House (District 11), which is just before White's Pond Cemetery. The building was used as a school from 1846 to 1934, after which it was enlarged and converted to a private home.

#2. White's Pond Cemetery is a beautiful spot with graves of Atwoods, Messers, Teels, Fords, and other local families.

#3. Continue on North Wilmot Road to where the road forks and North Wilmot Road continues to the left and Atwood Road begins (0.1m). On the left, between the two roads, stands a lovely Cape style house. Once a large farm with connected sheds and a barn, it was the home for many generations of Langley family.

#4. Continue left on North Wilmot Road past the White's Pond boat landing to the next house on your left. Once the Myron Langley Farm, it is now Camp Wilmot, a retreat/summer camp owned by the Presbyterian Church.

#5. Turn around at the camp on White's Pond Road, return to Atwood Road and take a left. As the road curves to the right, the old Howard and Lou Atwood farm will be on your left. The farm survived a fire started by a lightning strike quite a few years ago. Continue to follow North Wilmot Road as it takes a 90° turn at Kenniston Road.

#6. In 1/2 mile, at the end of Atwood Road, bear right on Hobbs Hill Road. In about 1/4 mile on the right, you will be able to see old apple trees in the former John Ford apple orchard.

#7. At the "T," turn left on Old North Road. Built in the late 1700s, North Wilmot's oldest road is older than Wilmot! In about 1/4 mile, before you make a right onto Grafton Road, note the Davenport home on the right. It was owned by Stephan Hobbs in 1858. Go about 1/4 mile on Grafton Road. On the left is the Sumner Clay farm, established in 1849 and owned by Stephen Clay in 1858. It is currently the home of Clayton Nowell and has been in the Nowell family since the early 50s. Clayton and his brothers lived and worked on the farm. Clayton started logging with a horse team when he was 17 years old. He also has grown hay, raised beef cattle and done odd jobs. He still makes maple syrup in the sugar house, which is in front of the main house, close to the road. Continue past the farm to LaJoie road and turn around. On your way back to North Road, and as you leave the Nowell Farm, notice on the right the meticulously built Great Wall of Wilmot and the Clayton Nowell Trail. The trail and farmland are part of the Ausbon Sargent Land Conservation Trust. If you have time, take a walk on the trail. It meanders through a mature hemlock forest and back along the edge of the fields of the Nowell Farm.

#8. Where Grafton Road meets Old North Road, you will see the Old North Road Cemetery on the right. Turn right, park, and wander through the cemetery where you will find the graves of veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and later wars. You will also find many familiar North Wilmot names here including the Iddo Webster family, who had a tragic history, as you can tell by the dates on the many graves of Webster children—sadly, a history typical of the times.

#9. Across the road from the cemetery is the site of the North Road School House (District 2). It was used as a school from 1838 to 1942, then as a private summer place. It collapsed of old age several years ago and was removed in 2007. When the nearby garnet mine was blasting, the windows of the school would shake. However, Annie Langley Walker, who was teaching there at the time, recalled hearing her sister Florence Langley say that "most of the time she forgot about the noise and operation of the factory." The mine closed in the 1930s after a fire.

#10. Continue on Old North Road. In 1/2 mile on the right, note the two-story Webster house. Believe it or not this road almost became part of the Turnpike from Concord to Hanover around 1806 (see #22). There was even an inn for travelers 1/2 mile ahead, but that part of the road is now impassable.

#11. Just ahead turn left on Breezy Hill Road and proceed up the hill nearly a mile to the yellow house on your left, known as Breezy Cottage. Though the farm was first settled in 1811, the cottage was built in 1840 by Col. Samuel Thompson. It was owned

by Ed and Maude Kimball from the early 1900s to 1958 and was the center of a rousing summer life for neighbors and friends during the hot days they spent away from their Portsmouth, NH, homes.

#12. Farther down the hill you will pass Little Breezy on the right. Built in 1837, this was Stephen Tewksbury's first farm and was at one time part of the Thompson/Kimball Farm. Imagine open fields 3/4 of a mile around you, as it was in 1920.

#13. Next you come to the North Wilmot Church, which was the second house of worship to be built in Wilmot. Originally called The North Union Meeting House, it is pictured on the Wilmot town seal. Built in 1829 on the top of Tewksbury Hill near the Tewksbury Cemetery, the church was moved to its present location in 1850. It has been told that 30 teams of oxen moved it about a 1/2 mile down through the fields while the team leader and original framer, Josiah Stearns, viewed the event from the steeple! He must have had faith in his work, though rumor has it that a bit of rum helped as well.

The church gets along very well without electricity or plumbing and some say it keeps the sermons short. Services are still held in the summer as well as occasional weddings, and it has been the site of many Old Home Day celebrations.

#14. Turn left on North Wilmot Rd. (in front of the church). Go almost 1/2 mile and turn left on Hobbs Hill Road. Cross the bridge and look up the driveway to the left to see what was originally the Richard Stearns Farm.

#15. Return towards the church and take a left on Tewksbury Road. Beware that this section of the road is not maintained for winter travel. However, if you get stuck in the mud, rest assured that it may now be mud season and not still winter. At the top of the hill is the Tewksbury Cemetery. Established in 1818, it is the final resting place of many old North Wilmot settlers. Park and wander to find many familiar names.

#16. Across from the cemetery is the house that was the home of Dr. Paulus Tenney. Wilmot's first doctor, he began his practice in the 1820s. Later the home of David and Mary Langley Tewksbury, it is now owned by the Tewksbury Family Association and in recent years the site of well attended yearly Tewksbury Family reunions.

#17. About a mile ahead you will come to the Stearns Cemetery on the right. Here among others are the graves of Josiah Stearns, his three wives, and several of his 22 children. There is a memorial stone for his son Tiras, who in 1863, died in battle in Philadelphia, Tennessee.

#18. Just past the cemetery, at the corner of Sawyer Road is the cellar hole of what was once Josiah Stearns' homestead. If you take a left onto Sawyer Road, you will soon come to the Lucas Farm--previously the Sawyer farm. This is a working farm that raises hay and beef cattle; and through the years, many of their animals were in 4H projects and shown at county fairs.

#19. Turn around, go up the hill and take a left onto Stearns Road. You will pass the Stearns Schoolhouse (District 5) on the left. It was used as a school continuously from 1832-1925. In 1938 it was sold and eventually became the home of John Stearns and his daughter Octavia (Tavey). John Stearns, a well-respected land surveyor, was featured in a 1964 newspaper version of Ripley's Believe it or Not, for his many years of service to the town. Over an accumulated 137 years he served in multiple elected and appointed positions, including 21 years as selectman, 37 years as School District Clerk and 24 years as Representative to the General Court, while "never missing a town or school meeting."

#20. Continuing on Stearns Road and down the hill, you will pass the Stearns homestead on the left by the pond. Known to old timers as the Harry Stearns Place, it was built by Josiah Stearns circa 1830 and became the home of his son Minot and his wife Sarah when their house up the hill was destroyed by fire sometime around the turn-of-the-century. It is now owned by some of Josiah's great-great grandchildren who have always referred to it as "the farm."

#21. Continue down the road. Just beyond the farm, the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge-Greenway's Bog Mountain Trail crosses Stearns Road. There is room to park on the right for a hike up Bog Mountain (trail on the left) or a meander along the beaver pond (to the right) on an old cart road through a beautiful forest on land once farmed by the Dickeys and Hollands. Immediately after the second trailhead, the road crosses the brook over the first of four remarkable stone culverts built along the road. To get a better look at one, drive down the hill to the next one which is more accessible. It is worth a stop and some scrambling down the gully to see the workmanship of the men and work animals who built them. In 2011, during Hurricane Irene, when a couple of beaver dams broke and completely washed out the lower hill, all that remained of Stearns Road were those 200-year-old stone structures--testaments to the ingenuity and fortitude of our forbearers.

#22. At the end of Stearns Road take a right on to Route 4A. Incorporated in 1806, the road was built as the Fourth New Hampshire Turnpike. Originally a toll road, it was the main road between Concord and Hanover.

#23. Continue north a couple of miles on 4A to the Gardner Memorial Wayside Park on the right. Cross the bridge at the end of the parking lot. Here you may either choose to proceed 1/2 mile ahead on the path through the woods to peaceful Butterfield Pond or to follow the path to the right for 1/10 of a mile to see the stone ruins of the saw mill that was one of several mills along Kimpton Brook which employed many local people.

#24. Before leaving the park, walk back down 4A (very carefully) to see the historic marker for Mason's Patent. It reads as follows "New Hampshire as granted by authority of the English Crown to Capt. John Mason in 1629, was bounded on the west and north by a curved line 60 miles distant from the sea. The course of this proprietary boundary, called the "Masonian Curve," coincides with the nearby town line between Wilmot and Springfield."

To end the loop of the North Wilmot tour, head back along the brook on 4A towards Wilmot Center. On your left in just under 1/10 of a mile, if you look carefully, you might spot the ruins of the aforementioned mill.

Kimpton Brook begins in East Springfield about 1.5 miles north of the Wilmot/Springfield line and runs from there for almost nine miles through the center of Wilmot and into West Andover where it joins the Blackwater River. Reportedly, it was called Center Brook by some in the past and Quickwater Brook by the early settlers. The various mills along the brook produced among other commodities: boards, shingles, clapboards, lathes, flour, shoe blocks, and chairs.

#25. In about 1.5 miles, turn right on to Quaker Path and immediately bear to the left. The house you come to on the left was the Dodge Schoolhouse (District 4) on Dodge Road. Though the first known report of its existence was 1817 and the last time classes were held there was the spring term of 1909, it is uncertain whether or not it was an active school continuously through those years. At the school meeting in 1929, the town voted to sell the schoolhouse and the land, and it has since been converted to a year-round home. Continue on, bearing left on Schoolhouse Lane to 4A. Turn right on 4A towards Wilmot Center.

This is the end of the North Wilmot tour. We hope you enjoyed it. Be sure to return again sometime to hike on the Greenway Trail and enjoy the glorious view from Bog Mountain.

Tour of...

# NORTH WILMOT

