

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 OF WILMOT FLAT

#1 Starting on Route 11 and Old Winslow Road: on your right is the site of the former La Meridiana Restaurant that was recently converted to an apartment house. The restaurant, that specialized in northern Italian cuisine, opened in 1986 and closed in 2017. The building, once a farmhouse and barn, is now divided into apartments.

#2 Farther down Route 11 you will see the red roof of the Wilmot Fire Department built in 1996 with mostly volunteer labor by both members and non-members. The money was raised by donations, turkey raffles, golf tournaments, etc., and the mortgage was paid off in three years! (Turn around in their parking lot.)

#3 Head back on Route 11 and take a right on Church Place. Ahead on the left is a great picture spot and artists' favorite subject - the Church Place Cemetery. Graves date back to the 1830s. This cemetery is now one of ten under the care of the Wilmot Cemetery Committee.

#4 The Wilmot Free Baptist Church was first built in 1839 and burned in 1868. It was rebuilt the same year only to be destroyed again by fire in 1943. The current church was rebuilt and dedicated in 1952 in the likeness of the previous building.

#5 Continue to Village Road bearing left at the triangle. The present Wilmot Post Office building was the site of the first Nelson's 5 & 10 Cent Store (five and dime) operating from 1881 to 1885. Items sold besides essentials, gadgets, and sundries were crackers (sold singly, by the dozen, or the barrel full), ginger snaps, and beginning in 1870, cider, stick candy, summer and winter hats, bed ropes, women's button shoes and men's winter drawers (wool underwear). Later on, the general store owners like the Curtiss and Sanborn families sold gas from pumps out front where once stood a horse tie-up bar. Historical articles about the old general store are on display inside the post office.

#6 Next door, on the right heading west, is the Wilmot Community Association's Red Barn, built in 2005-2006 and is the meeting place for many organizations as well as private and public celebrations. The original building that was sited at the front of the property, was built as a stagecoach tavern. Later it became the home of The Grand Army of the Republic, then the Christian Templars, and then the Kearsarge Grange. In 1963 the then newly formed Wilmot Community Association bought and renovated the building where plays, benefitting local nonprofits, were staged, directed, and performed by Wilmot residents. This building was razed in 2004 and the new building was built farther back. The Wilmot Learning Place uses the bottom level of the building.

#7 Farther down on your left the Soldiers Monument commemorates Civil War soldiers on three faces of the pedestal and the wars of 1812, 1837, 1898 and World War I on the fourth face. It was dedicated in 1920. The memorial for World War II was added later. The bronze statue of Private Lucien, removed and restored in 2006, was returned in time for the 2007 Town Meeting. He was on display at the Town Office building until May 19 when he resumed his place on top of the monument. (The monument location is the site of the first Wilmot Flat Post Office and Morey's General Store.)

#8 Next is the cement bridge over Cascade Brook. Many young people in town learned to fish from it, played under it, and many first kisses were ex-changed there.

#9 After the bridge, on the left, is the site of a former blacksmith shop, which appears on some old postcards of the Monument.

#10 Go past Tannery Lane and on your right is a long low grey home which was built on the site of the first tannery in Wilmot. Built about 1825 (on what is now Tannery Pond), it burned in 1826. The rebuilt one burned also. A third tannery was constructed, only to burn yet again and lasted until at least 1892.

#11 Continue across the short causeway between Tannery Pond on your right and School Pond on your left. Take a left at the next intersection. The gazebo on the green at your left was built in 2002 in memory of those who died in the World Trade Center attack. Wilmot resident, Thelma Cuccinello, was a passenger on the first Boston flight that tragic day. The town green is the site of the annual summer farmers market and Saturday night concerts. The farmers market operates each Saturday from July through September. It sells farm products, yarns, jewelry, pottery and many other items. The July and August concerts are usually held every Saturday night at 6 p.m.

#12 Across the street is an apartment building that had a country store on the bottom floor, which was one of the two stores serving Wilmot Flat.

#13 Next on the left is the Wilmot Town Office, formerly the Wilmot Flat District 8 Elementary School. Built in 1850, it held eight grades in one room until 1957. After that, during the next ten years, only first through third grades were taught here. The school closed in 1968.

#14 Turn around in the Town Office parking lot and proceed back towards Village Road taking a left at the triangle. Take your next left on to Pine Hill Road to the Pine Hill

Cemetery. There are some very old gravesites on the east side of the cemetery. Kay White and Donna Niles, of Freedom Acres (see *Kearsarge Mountain Tour #1*) are buried here along with many other town notables. You might want to stop and look at some of the interesting gravestones throughout the cemetery. Turn around and head back and take a very sharp left on to Village Road.

#15 Farther up Village Road, beyond Shindagan Road, pull off to the right side of the road in front of the old white Federal style house and look to the left. At the top of the embankment is a small historic marker and flag where Billy Buskin, the 30-year-old Civil War horse owned by Wilmot native Captain Francis Chase (hence Chase Pond), is buried. The government gave the horse to Chase when he was discharged after serving as a wagon master with the Quartermaster Corps. Chase rode Billy home from the war. The Federal House across the road was the Chase home. Every Memorial Day, when the graves of deceased veterans are decorated with fresh flags, Billy Buskin's grave receives a new flag. Billy's grave was the subject of a Ripley's "Believe It or Not" column in May of 1935.

#16 You might want to go to the end of Village Road, taking in the scenery of Chase Pond, and turn around. When you get back to Shindagan Road, take a left. Just before the bridge and to your right is an old barn that stands on an old mill foundation. The brook flows from Pleasant Lake in New London, through Chase Pond, through Tannery Pond, and connects with Cascade Brook just beyond the bridge at #8. At that point it becomes the Blackwater River.

#17 Cross the brook and you will find the town beach and the Timmy Patten Memorial Park, which is owned and operated by the Wilmot Community Association and continue the length of Shindagan Road (about a mile).

#18 Turn left on Cross Hill Road and you will soon come to a white house on the right. It is the old Thompson family home, which is still occupied by a Thompson as it has been since 1800. Next to this is the Thompson Family Cemetery established in 1813.

#19 Continue to the top of the hill where you will see Moonrise Farm. This is one of the earliest homes in Wilmot. This point marks the dividing line between Kearsarge Gore and North New London prior to 1807 when the Town of Wilmot was incorporated.

Turn around and go back down Cross Hill past Shindagan Road to the Campground Road intersection and turn right across the bridge. This is the Blackwater River.

#20. On your left is Pancake Street, which is the only “street” in Wilmot. This was the route in the late 1800s to the railroad station in Potter Place. In early morning wagon loads of freight traveled from New London to the railroad station across this road. As drivers would pass through, many of the farmers wives would offer a breakfast of pancakes, hence the name Pancake Street.

Continue on Campground Road, and you will soon be at the intersection with Village Road. This is the end of the Wilmot Flat tour.

Tour of...
WILMOT FLAT

