WINDHAM NEWS & NOTES

Volume I ... Issue II

Sept/Oct 2003

Flash Floods and Governor Visit Windham

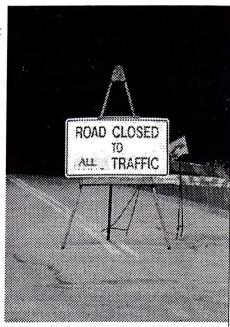
On Saturday, August 1st, the calendar changed, and so did the weather. The town awoke to driving rains, and by day's end, more than four inches had fallen. That was just the beginning. Sunday, August 3rd, started out okay, but by early afternoon the rain began. The rain was heavier in some spots than others (perhaps as much as six inches in two hours), and the saturated ground was unable to handle it.

"It sounded like a jet engine" said Ann Garrett, describing the noise she heard as water, trees, rocks, and chunks of road washed down her driveway.

Route 121 collapsed in many spots, leaving deep gullies and rendering the

road impassable. One house was knocked off its foundation. Many dirt roads literally washed out before the eyes of drivers passing over them. A few hours later, the sun was out, but parts of town looked like an earthquake had struck.

By Monday afternoon, Hitchcock Hill had been filled in by our hard-working road crew, providing a way out of the northern end of town. Outside contractors began temporary repairs to Route 121, a state road. But many lives were disrupted, and our community was left with an enormous cleanup job. (Continued on page 2)



Thank You Windham ...

On May 13th, we had our first meeting to discuss the idea of a community newsletter for Windham. Six weeks later we were folding the first edition and getting it in the mail. We sent it to property owners, renters we could identify, the Old Home Day mailing list, the Friends of the Windham Meeting House mailing list, and anyone else we thought might be interested, such as nearby libraries, businesses, etc. And, we've sold subscriptions at the Friends' Picnic, the Windham Community Organization BBQ, the Fire Company's Auction and other recent events.

What a response we have had! We now have 150 paid subscriptions (including one from Europe), and requests continue to arrive. Not bad for a town with only 354 homes. We believed we were filling a need when we began *Windham News & Notes*. Your response tells us we were right. We have had numerous donations above and beyond the price of subscribing, local media have been

supportive, and we have received advertisements from businesses in and around town. We are up and running. Even Governor Douglas took a copy with him when he visited the Windham Town Office. We want to thank everyone who has subscribed, donated, taken the time to write to us about his or her feelings, submitted articles, or paid to advertise with us. Not every article we received could fit this time around, but you may see them in future issues. Keep them coming; we want to hear from you: ideas, suggestions, letters, articles, announcements, criticisms — all will be welcome.

We will continue to find new ways to serve and connect with the community, and we hope that *WN*&*N* will become a part of the fabric of Windham for years to come.

- The Editors

Flash Floods Continued

On August 11th, Governor Douglas and representatives from the Vermont Emergency Management team and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) visited the Windham Town Office. They began their tour in Grafton. Rodney Watkins, our road crew foreman, rode back to Windham with the governor, pointing out some of the worst spots which of course, all looked much better than they had one week before.

Back at the town office, Ann Garrett and Elsie and Walter Sharon, whose properties were greatly affected, talked to the governor about what they had experienced. The governor and his team were shown two videos that made the terrible strength of the storm that day vividly clear. (Thanks to Randy Foster and Clarence Merritt for getting this all on tape.) The select board walked the governor through the myriad of problems that had occurred. It was clear that the video was a real eye opener, and the governor suggested making copies to use with the application to FEMA.

FEMA is completing its assessment of road damages. Homeowners were generally told that their insurance policies would not cover this type of event. Whether government aid



Carol Merritt, Rodney Watkins (rear), Governor Douglas, Helen George, Margaret Dwyer, Walter Sharon and Walter Woodruff (l. to r.)

will be available to them at this point is unknown, but anyone with damage to their primary residence should report it in writing to the town clerk immediately, so that an assessment can be made of the total picture.

We had a tough winter here in Windham, now it looks like we are having a tough summer too

Windham Elementary School Web Site

The Windham Elementary School web site was reestablished in June 2003. It can be reached through the web site for Windham Central Supervisory Union for Southern Vermont, http://www.wcsu.k12.vt.us. Instructions: Open this web site, then click on **District Schools**, then click on **Windham**.

The Windham Elementary School web site lists the 2003-4 School Calendar. It has links for teacher and student resources and provides students with a means to learn about the internet and to publish online.

Report on Windham Summer Day Camp

The Windham Day Camp took place throughout much of the month of July at the Windham Congregational Church. Thirty-seven children between the ages of three and 12 attended! We had a lot of fun making a wide variety of crafts, swimming and playing games. Also, Dave Crittenden met with the children each morning and taught them a wide variety of songs. By the time camp was over, I believe their total number of songs was 25. The children really enjoyed this and even made up new verses to many songs. Ernie Friedli worked with many of the children building bird houses, and a number of other people donated their time to teach the chil-

dren everything from cooking to origami. All in all, the children had a great time and were very disappointed when camp ended. The camp would not have been possible if it hadn't been for a number of people who saw the importance of donating their time and money to help the children of Windham. I am very happy to know that so many people believe, as I do, that our future lies among our children. There were far too many people involved to thank everyone by name, but I hope that you all know how much the kids in Windham and I thank you.

- Kathy Campbell

Letters to the Editor- A Sampling of the Feedback We've Received

"What a great idea! Thank you so much ..." - Cate Kelley, West Windham ... "We think this newsletter is a great idea ... we can help out" Your Friends, Ralph and Jan Wyman, Windham ... Great idea ... Count me in" - Bob Barrett, Grafton ... "This is a good idea" - Ken Garrow, Belcherton MA and Windham ... "Excellent" - John O. Gooden-, Windham "Great idea!" -Joan Burdge, Avon CT and Windham ... "This is a terrific idea ... We love the idea of a community newsletter, and it is especially nice that you care about us folks who do not live there year round but often wish we did ..." Judy and Dave Nelson, Norwalk CT and Windham ... "Happy to support this worthwhile community effort" - Michael Obuchowski, Bellows Falls ... "We love the newsletter. It helps us know what is going on even if we don't get to Windham too often" -Diane and Chris Fisher, Enfield CT and Windham ... "What a neat project!" - Michael Newton, Corvallis OR ... "Great job! Interesting! I enjoy it very much" - Carol Merritt, Windham ... "Great idea and great first issue" - Mary Western, West Windham ... "Great newsletter. I wanted to save it in its entirety" - Marcia Clinton, Windham ... "Congratulations on the first issue - it seems just right to me and it is visually so varied and attractive" - Meredith Mayer, Springfield VT ... "Can't wait to see the newsletter!" - John Boynton & Cathy Stover, Windham ... "As new homeowners in Windham, we were delighted to receive Windham News & Notes" - Tom and Louise Johnson, Pluckermin NJ and Windham ... "The Windham newsletter is a wonderful way to find out what is going on in our community" - Carolyn Partridge, Windham ... "Love it. It is a great idea. Thanks." Dona and Paul Robinson, Monroe CT and Windham ... "Congratulations on your newsletter. I want to subscribe" - A. Hughes, New York NY and Windham "We really appreciate the newsletter." Joanne and Al Ferreira, E. Hartford CT and Windham ... "Great job" -B. Arnold, Charleston RI and Windham ... "Really enjoyed reading this" - Joann Mackenzie, Walpole MA ... "We think this is a great idea. Thanx." - John and Colleen Harrison, Richboro PA and Windham.



Windham Library

Great news — the library will now be open year-round. Starting in September, the library will be open on the first Wednesday of each month, from 3 to 5 PM

There is a book club starting up in Windham.

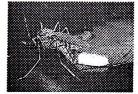
Members will all read an assigned book and then get together to discuss it.

Monthly meetings are anticipated.

If you would like more information about the library, or if you are interested in joining the book circle, call Bev Carmichael at 802.875.4874

West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) is again in the headlines. It usually causes mild illness, but is fatal in 7% of humans, mostly elderly or those with compro-



mised immunity. The virus is carried by the Culex (see photo) and other mosquito species. In this third year of WNV surveillance by the Department of Health and Agriculture, over 20 species of carrier mosquitoes have been identified in Vermont. Last year, there was one human WNV case; none have been confirmed this year. Three birds have tested positive. The season ends with the first hard frost.

The virus infects mostly birds and horses, but also humans and other warm-blooded species. Mosquitoes transmit the virus between animals. Infected animals are not themselves contagious. A horse vaccine is available; but none is available for humans. There is no specific treatment. The FDA recently approved a screening test for WNV. It detects antibodies against the virus and is useful to evaluate seriously ill people with symptoms of meningitis or encephalitis.

<u>Prevention works!</u> Protect yourself from mosquito bites with long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Apply DEET insect repellent to exposed skin only (as directed).

Drain standing water to reduce the mosquito population from breeding sites such as flower pots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pool covers, buckets, old tires, birdbaths (change water every 3–4 days), etc.

Dead bird sightings are used to monitor virus activity. If you find a dead bird, call the toll-free dead bird reporting line, 1.800.913.1139. Virus activity is rapidly rising in the US

Remember these tips for next year, since you are your own line of defense. And although the cold weather is coming to Windham, here's wishing you "bite-free" summers to come.

- Marcia Clinton Health Officer/ Town of Windham

Chip's

Property Maintenance

Caretaking Lawn Mowing Plowing Firewood

Free Estimates 802.874.4517

Wanted: School Teacher

Would anyone like to apply for this position? The instructions to the school committee in 1798 were to hire a school teacher at 3 shillings per week, and pay her in salts at 20 s. per hundred, or butter at 9 d. per pound, or wheat at 30.3 s. per bushel, or rye at 4 s. per bushel, or corn at 3 s. per bushel. From that time on, the circumstances and manner of doing business changed very rapidly. By 1807, the town paid \$1.00 per week, mostly in cash.

Common schools were established very early in every neighborhood in Windham. Eight schools for Windham are listed on the maps of 1856 and 1869. The superintendent in the year 1863 lists a ninth school. It may have been the one at the corner of Routes 11 and 121. It would have been handy for Windham students living in that area even though it actually stood in Londonderry, since there were no school buses or cars to take kids to school back in those days.

Before the inhabitants were able to build good school-houses, their summer schools were held in barns. When the haying season commenced, school either had a vacation for a few weeks or moved into an empty stable converted to a school room. They fitted up for the winter school in some old log house or a spare room in a dwelling house.

I did some research at the Windham Town Office and discovered that the superintendent's report for 1863 recorded 107 students in the 8 to 12 weeks of summer session, and 170 in the 10 to 13 weeks of winter session. Thirteen different teachers had been employed in the early years, with only two retained in the same school for a second term. The total cost to the tax-payers for this service was \$472.20 in 1863. That included wages, board and fuel.

- Margaret Woodruff

The Fire Company Auction

The Fire Company would like to thank everyone who came out to support the auction and BBQ in August. The day was a big success, thanks to the tireless work of the many volunteers who worked flat out for weeks collecting donations, organizing them, etc., and then from dawn till night on the day itself. A big thank you also goes to all of the businesses and individuals who donated items to make this day possible.

Ron Wood, the auctioneer, gave his usual cheerful 110%, making the auction fun even for those who were outbid. There was the typical selection of used items from exercise equipment to copy machines, bikes and even a commercial paint shaker and a sailboat, along with an amazing number of gift certificates from local businesses and new items from the Vermont Country Store, Green Mountain Gringo, and many others.

The Town wishes to thank the Fire Department volunteers for all that they do on this special and fun day and throughout the year. They welcome newcomers and remind everyone that there are many capacities in which anyone can help. If interested, contact Clarence Merritt, fire warden at 802.875.3740.

If you missed the auction and dinner this year, plan to attend next, always the second Saturday in August ...

Windham Congregational Church

Pastors: Reverend Frances Hakenson (802.824.0064/hakenson@sover.net) and Margaret Woodruff (802.874.4302/maw@sover.net)

Sunday Service/Sunday School – 9 AM Holy Communion – First Sunday of each month

Forest Management and Conservation of Vermont's Natural Resources Part 1 of 2

Vermont's forest soils are excellent for growing a multitude of coniferous and hardwood tree species. The Newton property in West Windham, for example, has 17 species of trees with marketable qualities, and numerous small trees and shrubs that add diversity. This diverse forest was mostly cleared and grazed for over a century, ending with the Depression.

Species composition and tree form on these secondary forests is improving, but it still leaves a lot to be desired. All species naturally present are there, but many of the most valuable are suppressed by poorly formed maple, aspen (popple) and crooked cherry. Individual trees of many species have grown large branches, and do not make good logs. Many pines invaded pastures in sparse stands, and the branches of the widely spaced trees did not get shaded, so now they have huge knots and are of limited value.

The stands now growing in areas not converted to pasture have their own problems. In years past, most have suffered from the assumption that if one cut only the big trees, regeneration would then take their place and the high quality forest would be sustained. This logic has generally

Michael Newton grew up in West Windham and is Professor Emeritus of Forestry at Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR. He has authored over 200 scientific papers on forest management, reforestation, herbicide use and forest ecology. He has received many prestigious awards, including 1984 Scientist of the Year. Officially retired, he continues a busy research schedule and consults worldwide. His favorite place is in the woods.

not been supported by long term research which indicates that our most valuable species need fairly major disturbances, such as small clearcuts (or even large ones) periodically in order to maintain species that need more light to survive under the forest cover.

The birches, pines, oaks and ash are our most valuable trees, and all of them need quite a bit of light to be sustained. Most of the old forests that have been selectively cut are now dominated by sick beech, crooked maples, and hemlock. Many of these are full of decay. This, and the unthinned pasture invaders, is the stuff that is growing the future forest. Much of it has little aesthetic or economic appeal, and is just so-so for wildlife habitat.

Part II will provide the author's suggestions on how to improve the local forest stands. It will be published in the next issue of WN&N, to be mailed in late October 2003.

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Council on the Aging Monthly Dinners

Chester Congregational Church

Second Tuesday of the month/11:30AM

Call 802.875.2524 to reserve a place by the first Thursday of the month

Londonderry Congregational Church

Second Thursday of the month/11:30AM Call 802.824.6521 to reserve a place by the second Monday

Grafton Cares - Every Wednesday, noon at the chapel, call Marjorie Heindel (802.843.2461) for information

Donation:

Age 60 and over - \$2.50

Under 60 - \$4.00

An Editorial: Can It Be Everyone's Meeting House Again?

Twenty-four years ago, restoration of the Windham Meeting House was spearheaded by fund-raising efforts of the new Friends of Windham Meeting House. At its 200th birthday celebration last July, our representatives announced the state legislature's designation of July 8th

as Windham Meeting House Day, "to commemorate the bicentennial of the raising of this magnificent edifice which has earned a deservedly important place in the sacred and secular history of the Town of Windham."

It is jointly owned by the Windham Congregational Church and the Town of Windham. Once a lively community center year-round for religious and civic activities, its use gradually declined along with its physical deterioration. The \$300,000 building project beginning in the 80's restored much of the physical health, but the Meeting House remains greatly underutilized today.

For a time, it was just a summer church with a tiny congregation and sometimes no preacher. Now services are held all

year. The March town meeting and the summer Windham Day Camp, Old Home Day, Friends' July 4th Picnic and Windham Community Group's Barbeque draw the wider community to the Meeting House, as do infrequent weddings and funerals. During the rest of the year the Meeting House sits high on Windham Hill,

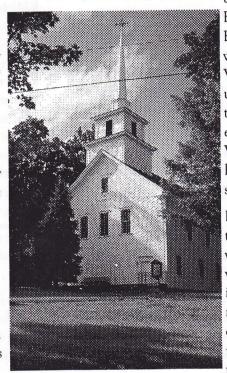
lonely and unused except for Sunday services for its tiny congregation.

In 1979, the late D. Benton Crittenden wrote to the Windham community to announce the formation of

the Friends of Windham Meeting House. Every resident should read it. He wrote, "Have you ever considered what might happen to the spirit of Windham if the Meeting House were used more effectively to enhance the town's sense of community, and to enliven the good feeling of being a Windhamite? Twenty-four years later, Ben's question remains unanswered.

Its physical health mostly restored, the Meeting House's potential for wider community use is ripe for development: more weddings, meetings, reunions, musical events, dinners, receptions, etc. The church congregation is tiny, so this effort requires community input and participation to plan and develop.

(Winter and summer residents are invited.) One idea is a task force. Call subcommittee members with your interest and ideas: Margaret Woodruff (802.874.4302); David Crittenden (802.874.4049; Maggie Newton (802.254.3484).



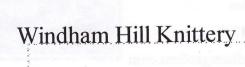
Ode to Rodney and The Road Crew

Rodney, our highwayman, in shining truck Came to our rescue during devastating floods on August Three

He helped us all through water, fear and muck
With good cheer, good advice and clout
He saw to it that we got out
Over broken driveways and washed out roads

To Rodney and his crew we wish to say:
"Thank you!!! ... and, the cake is on the way!"

- Ann Garrett & Family



Hand knit children's sweaters, lady's accessories - shawls, boas Beverly Carmichael 802-875-4874 windhamhillknittery.com

Remembering Lee Giles

Lee Giles, lifelong resident of Windham, died on November 9, 2002, just before his 102nd birthday. He spent his whole life in the Giles homestead just down the road from the Windham Meeting House and not far from Four Corners. Many generations of the Giles family have lived in that same farm house since Windham was settled.

During his lifetime, Mr. Giles served in many different positions for the town, a total of 65 years of service, with many overlapping terms of office. His posts included selectman, auditor, Windham Center Cemetery commissioner (for all 65 years!), justice of the peace, tree warden, lister and fence viewer. He received the Vermont Public Service Award for his dedicated service. I remember, while attending school in the one-room schoolhouse in South Windham, we were required to write a report each year about town meeting. We would walk the five miles to Windham Center to attend, or in my case six miles since I lived a mile below the south village. I remember seeing Lee Giles at the long table on the stage in the Meeting House, performing his duties for the town.

Lee Giles was known as a water witch, and many folks in town have him to thank for finding their springs, back in the days before we drilled wells. Even those people who never got the chance to meet him remember seeing him sitting on his front porch, watching the world and Windham go by. His house is the one that always had the sign up each fall, "Free Pumpkins for Kids," a friendly gesture that made us all smile as we drove past. Lee Giles will be greatly missed .

- Margaret Woodruff



Strong Living Program for Seniors Begins Labor Day Week

Beginning the week of Labor Day, seniors age 55 and up who have enrolled will begin a twelve-week "Strong Living" class at Windham Meeting House, the Vermont Department of Health. The Strong Living Program was designed at Tufts University, specifically to

prevent muscle, strength, and bone loss as people age. Since advanced physician clearance is required, only those who have signed up can participate in this class. If interested in future classes, contact the leader, Maggie Newton at 802.254.3484.

WN&N Classified Ads

WANTED – FOR TOWN OFFICE

Do you have a working color TV and/or VCR that you no longer need? If so, please consider donating to the Town Office, since there is a need to be able to view video tapes there. Contact Walter Woodruff at 802.874.4053 if you can help

FREE MOBILE HOME — 12' X 44', Homette by Skyline Corp., 35 years old, used weekends and summers only. Call 203.261.3825

Valley Bible Church

Pastor Mark Griffin (874.7287/mgriffin@sover.net)

Sunday:

Sunday School – 10 AM ... Sunday Morning Worship Service – 11 AM

Sunday Evening Bible Study – 7 PM

Thursday:

Bible Study & Prayer Meeting – 7 PM ... Children's Meeting – 7 PM

Special Events: Aug. 31 - Baptism & Picnic at the West River ... September 14 - South Windham Heritage Sunday

Monthly:

Ladies Craft Night/2nd Tuesday of the Month/6 PM Hymn Sing/3rd Sunday of the Month/7 PM

Friends of Windham Meeting House

The annual community picnic was held on the grounds of Windham Meeting House on the 4th of July. There was a wonderful turnout that evening, and the weather couldn't have been better. Thanks to all who made that night a success, and thank you to those who attended so that we could all get to know each other better.

Reminder, the next meeting of the Friends is on September 16th, at the Meeting House at 7PM.

The Friends invite all interested parties and hope that some will join their group.

For more information, call Helen George, Treasurer, at 802.874.4076

Eldercare Needs Assessment

The West River Valley Eldercare Task Force was formed after Stratton House in Townshend closed last fall. The closing left a considerable gap in the continuum of care for the elderly and disabled in the region. This led to the question of what kind of services are available and how accessible they are to the people who need them. The task force will be conducting a "needs assessment study" using focus group discussions with seniors, caregivers and service providers, along with adult children of seniors and others concerned with care of the elderly in this area.

The purpose of the needs assessment is to uncover and address gaps in existing services, determine what is needed to allow seniors to remain in the community, and to determine whether they are accessing the services they need.

Anyone in Windham who would like to participate in one of these focus groups or who would like to express their thoughts about the needs of the elderly in this community should call Edith Serke, Windham resident and member of the task force, at 802.874.4821

- Edith Serke

The Windham Community Organization

Once again, Chicken BBQ was a great success, raising money which will be used to help the Windham Community. Many people pitched in to help, and newcomers got to know the group along the way. We had a number of generous donations, and after expenses, the evening raised \$895.

This group meets monthly, and has a number of upcoming projects in the works.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Carolyn Chase, WCO President at 802.874.4039



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Snakes and Critters

A red-bellied snake was sighted one August night by former Windham residents and snake lovers, Peggy and Ken Farabaugh, as they drove down Windham Hill Road. They stopped to avoid the snake. They suggest that local residents report unusual snake sightings to Middlebury College scientist, Jim Andrews, who is compiling a Vermont reptile atlas: www.middlebury.edu/herpatlas/herp_index.htm. He seeks to find where reptiles live. Peggy said to look out for rare snakes here, such as the eastern racer, which are not yet recorded in the atlas.

A cormorant was spotted near Burbee Pond, not a bird we tend to see in this area too frequently. An American bittern, a generally secretive bird, was seen walking across Ingall Road.

Moose sightings have become commonplace, but one longtime resident who has seen more than his fair share of them said he saw the biggest bull moose ever (including Maine) right on Burbee Pond Road. And a bear (or bears) have been making themselves known all along Burbee Pond Road since late spring. They take feeders, even empty ones, down from their hooks, and have reminded us all that we are living in their neighborhood.

Send your interesting animal and critter spots to WN&N (see details below).



Editorial Staff

Maggie Newton

Lydia Pope France

Margaret Woodruff

Would you like to join our team? Please contact us at (see details below).

We welcome volunteers

We Want to Hear from You

Please send us comments, letters, suggestions, ideas, whatever. You can use the post office box or phone number below, and our e-mail address is now up and running, too.

Write to us: PO Box 1068, Windham VT 05359

E- Mail: windhamvtnews@adelphia.net

Call: 802.254.3484



Emily de Coninck 309 Old Route 8 Jamaica, VT 05343

Tel . 802-874-4956 Fax 802-874-4957 email emilyre@sover.net

If You Know Someone who Hasn't Subscribed, Subscriptions are Still Available

Annual Subscriptions to the bimonthly *Windham News & Notes* are \$10.00. Please make your check or money order payable to <u>Windham News & Notes</u>, and mail to PO Box 1068, Windham VT 05359

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Windham News & Notes welcomes submissions
... Send articles of 75 to 225 words and
Signed Letters to the Editor at the
above address

GET INVOLVED IN WINDHAM!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR - Fall 2003

Library open first Wednesday of every month NEW SCHEDULE!!! Wednesday Evenings 3-5 PM Week After Labor Day TBD* Strong Living Program for Seniors at Windham Meeting House (802.254.3484) Sept 16 7:00PM Friends of Windham Meeting House Meeting at the Meeting House October 5 -11 Fire Prevention Week - A school visit with fire drill and responding fire truck will be scheduled. Children will have a chance to explore the fire truck. This will be followed by a movie and fire prevention discussion Halloween Party for all the children of Windham at the Fire Last Week of October House

(* Dates To Be Determined)

Please note ... if the Town's request for a donated TV and VCR is met, the videos of the storm damage and the WCAX Burlington TV coverage will be available for self-viewing during normal Town Office hours.