

Resilience at the Harrisville General Store

There are many definitions of resilience, including, “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties,” “adapting well in the face of adversity,” and “advancing despite adversity.” No matter which one you choose, I think it is safe to say that the Harrisville General Store demonstrated resilience through the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Even in the face of significant challenges, Store Manager Samantha Rule was able to remain focused on our vision, maintain composure, and use reason to find a path through the year’s challenges. With some creative thinking, collaboration, and hard work, the store recovered from numerous surprises, adapted, and even advanced. The Harrisville General Store not only survived 2020 but found new ways to thrive.

Historic Harrisville believes that the General Store is essential to the vitality of our living, working village. We are committed to maintaining a thriving and vibrant store that serves as a gathering place for the community, provides a source of food and supplies, encourages the use and sale of local products, and is a reliable employer of local residents.

As a gathering place. In 2020, gathering was generally discouraged and in many times and situations, it was expressly prohibited. To the extent that it was important for health and safety, the store simply disallowed gathering. They closed the dining room and stopped providing prepared foods for consumption on site. However, as soon as it became possible, the store found new ways to enable gathering so that people could once again experience safe social interactions in Harrisville. The store obtained a liquor license to allow beer and wine consumption on site and using contributions from many of our supporters, purchased additional furniture for outdoor dining. Samantha and her team then launched Friday Nights at The Store, where delicious pub-style food could be enjoyed on the front porch or patio, with beer or wine, in the company of friends. These popular Friday nights were a hit when people could dine outside.



As a source and outlet for local food. Of the \$248,000 the Harrisville General Store spent on food and merchandise in 2020, over \$142,000 (nearly 60%) was spent on merchandise grown or made by 65 local vendors. In addition to supporting local vendors, this commitment to purchasing food locally meant that the Harrisville General Store was able to provide an uninterrupted source of groceries and household supplies through the pandemic. In the month of April alone, more than 160 families purchased groceries at the General Store, with at least 475 contactless grocery orders being filled for porch pick-up or delivery.

Adapting to meet the needs of our community, the store is currently offering Friday Night Takeout meals, offering an ethnic or themed menu for online ordering and in-store or front porch pick up each week. With many people still not comfortable going to restaurants, this has been immensely popular! We fill between 40 and 60 orders, feeding between 75 and 100 people each Friday. This has helped keep the staff busy while in-store dining is still very slow and generates significant revenue for the store.

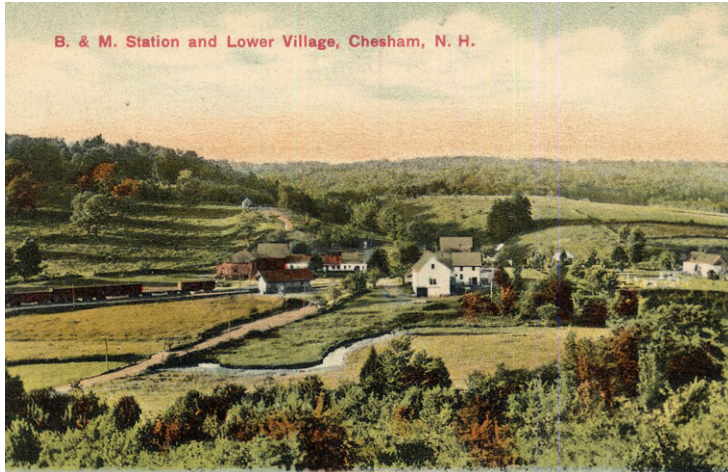


As an employer. Historic Harrisville recognizes that our employees are important assets in this community and is working hard to retain highly qualified people. We launched a new staffing model at the store in January of 2020, which offered full time employment at a higher hourly rate to our key employees, increasing their annual compensation significantly. As we entered the pandemic, we expected business to be slow at the store and wanted to keep our employees safe. Knowing that good unemployment benefits were available, we laid off all but two store employees (a HUGE thanks to Sam and Maddy for keeping it going!!). As the store gradually reopened, most of our pre-pandemic staff returned to the store, and a few new faces joined us.

Historic Harrisville provides the best compensation it can without compromising the sustainability of the store. In addition to providing higher wages and more hours to our key employees, we now provide full-time employees with paid time off. We are researching opportunities to provide other benefits to help retain our wonderful staff. With what is still modest compensation, please know that your tips are greatly appreciated by the staff.

Conservation

Historic Harrisville is committed to ensuring the preservation and stewardship of Harrisville's historic resources, including its historic buildings and structures, as well as the village environment, vistas and surrounding landscapes. The rural setting is critical to the appearance and character of Harrisville's National Historic Landmark village. Therefore, preserving open land in and around the village is essential to HHI's mission.



The combination of relatively dense villages surrounded by rural landscapes defines the historic character of Harrisville. Through ownership of critical tracts of land and conservation easements on others, Historic Harrisville is working to protect the rural landscape that surrounds the town's historic districts.

HHI employs both land ownership and conservation easements to protect land in and around the village as well as other historic areas of town where there may be impacts to important historic or natural resources, scenic views, the watershed, or agricultural lands. Like conservation organizations, we preserve land because of its value in protecting habitat for flora and fauna, as well as our water resources. But Historic Harrisville but also believes in conserving land around the edges of our historic districts to preserve the rural historic character that defines these places. The land, with its natural features and indicators of human activities over time, is an important part of telling our story.

Historic Harrisville currently owns the following critical properties for conservation and/or to protect significant aspects of the National Historic Landmark district and town at large:

1. Johnny Johnson Field (Community Garden), with protective covenants held by the neighbors. This property comprises an essential edge to the historic district, and has been conserved for use by the community to prevent development that would impede views and compromise the transition from the village center to the rural reaches of the town.

2. Mosquitobush Mill Sites, with a conservation easement managed by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. These properties have been conserved to protect the ruins of the historic mill site, as well as important features of the environment. With a new bridge installed by the Harrisville Trails Committee in late 2019 and limited parking available, Historic Harrisville invites responsible recreational use of this area, which provides access to other private trails.









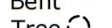

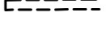








3. Zophar Willard Woods is 58-acres located behind the Cheshire Mills, extending to Hancock Road. While the property is intended for conservation and recreational use by the public, a formal protective easement has not yet been established. A map of this property is included on the facing page. Please explore this property, and let us know what unique features you find, and help us determine where trails should go.



4. Chesham Road Gateway protects 5 acres of land at the entrance to the village district. Acquired in 2020, a conservation easement will be established.

LEGEND:

-  Open Water
-  Wetlands
-  Coniferous Forest
-  Open Fields
-  Deciduous Forest
-  Gravel Pit
-  Contours- 10 ft
-  Boulders
-  Land Marks of Interest
-  Woodland Paths
-  Trails
-  Houses or Other Structures
-  Streams or Brooks
-  Town Roads
-  Property Lines
-  Stone Walls
-  Ledges or Cliffs

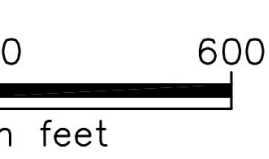


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Zophar Willard Woods



TOWN OF
HARRISVILLE
 NEW HAMPSHIRE
 LAST REVISED DATE:
 04/02/2021

Zophar Willard Woods

is being conserved by Historic Harrisville, Inc. for the benefit and enjoyment of the community. Please feel free to take a walk through this area, enjoying its natural features and historic surroundings. We hope to map additional features as they are discovered, and identify or clear additional walking trails in time.



Old Town Line—this wide stone wall marks the historic boundary between the towns of Dublin and Nelson.



Rock Seat—this large flat rock is one of several interesting features found in the stone walls on the property.



Bent Tree—perfect for a quick rest, this bent tree probably has lots of stories to tell!

Harrisville's History of Outdoor Recreation

The COVID-19 pandemic caused several setbacks for Historic Harrisville by putting a halt to most of our committee meetings. Although the archive committee has not been able to meet, we have made the move to new digital catalog software that makes the artifacts, documents and photographs that we have in the archive much more accessible. We are just beginning to clean up the information, and will be sharing some of the collections on our website soon. In the meantime, we have been enjoying being able to look at and easily share many historic photos.

Enjoy these fun photos of others enjoying outdoor recreation in Harrisville. We encourage you to pull out the map found on the facing page and hit the trails of Zophar Willard Woods. Until we can meet again this fall, please stay safe and get outside to enjoy this wonderful place we call home.



Curtis Silver Jr & Sr shooting on Cobb Hill with Harrisville Pond in the background, circa 1905.



Children fishing in Chesham at the site of the former Russell Mill, circa 1918.

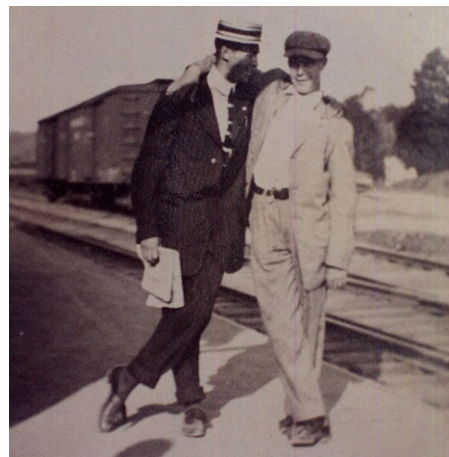


Along Shore, Lake Nubaunsit, Harrisville, N. H.



Pub ishee by W. B. McClellan A String of Fish, Long Pond, Harrisville, N. H.

Above: A good day of fishing on Long Pond. Right: Meeting a friend at the train at the Chesham Depot.



Zophar Willard

Zophar Willard lived his entire life in the area now known as Harrisville. He was born in 1828 in Pottersville (Chesham), where he lived on his family farm through 1850. In 1853, he married Betsey Culver and the young couple purchased a woodlot, later acquiring a 12-acre farm in Chesham in 1855. Their first child was born in 1856.

By 1860, Willard was employed as a teamster, transporting goods (likely timber). In 1865, Zophar Willard became half owner of Amos E. Perry's woodenware factory, located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Main Street and Hancock Road (known to most as the site of the former Winn Chair Shop). To provide materials for their enterprise, Perry and Willard purchased extensive tracts of land, as well as lumber rights on the land of others. In 1869, Willard purchased most of the assets owned by A.E. Perry, including the tract now called Zophar Willard Woods.

In 1870, Willard was identified as a clothespin manufacturer. He had moved into the village with his wife and three children. In 1873, Willard took Silas Atwood as a partner in the woodenware business. At this time the enterprise consumed 25,000 board feet (1,000 cords) of lumber each year to produce 15,000 wooden boxes containing 800,000 wooden clothespins. Willard continued to purchase land and lumber rights to provide materials for his factory, known then as Willard's Mills.

In the early 1870s, Zophar Willard served a brief term as Selectman for the newly incorporated town of Harrisville. Because he owned a lot of land in town, Willard played a significant role in how the outlying areas of town developed, subdividing and selling many parcels around the community.

Willard was also a member of the firm Colony, Craven and Company, which operated (but did not own) the Harris mills in the late 1870s and early 1880s after the death of Milan Harris and before they were acquired by the Cheshire Mills Company. This business venture ended abruptly with the fire that destroyed the brick "middle mill" in 1882.

After a full and successful life in agriculture, industry, and real estate development in Harrisville, Zophar Willard died in December of 1899 of a brain hemorrhage after falling from his wagon. The Willard family is buried in Island Cemetery, overlooking their family home on Main Street.

Preserving Historic Buildings for Modern Use

In January of 2020, Historic Harrisville adopted a new Strategic Plan to guide our work. Our mission and goals were included in last year's annual report, and are available on our website. We are pleased to report that, despite limits on our ability to hold committee meetings and other challenges related to the coronavirus pandemic, we made good progress this year! In addition to the good work at the Harrisville General Store highlighted on the front page, we continued our work rehabilitating and preserving our historic buildings in a way that supports the local economy, worked to conserve important land around the village, and took steps to make our archive of historic documents, photographs and artifacts more accessible. We are improving the energy efficiency of our buildings, and continue to generate electricity using renewable water power. This year's report provides highlights of some of the mission-driven things happening in 2020.

Rehabilitation to Support Economic Vitality

Historic Harrisville has always recognized that responsible stewardship of the town's historic buildings and landscapes, meant preserving them in a way that supported the long-term economic health of the community by providing a variety of places for people to work and live. Therefore, the organization's focus has been on preserving the essential character of the village, while adapting our buildings to house a range of business, creative and residential opportunities.

In 2020, 134 people were living and working in Historic Harrisville's historic properties, including 22 residents, 98 people working in our commercial spaces, and 14 employees of Historic Harrisville.

Affordable Housing

Through 2020, HHI maintained twelve units of residential housing, which were rented to three families, one couple, and eight individuals for a total of 23 people. The three families are comprised of four adults and eight children; six of the children are school-age and two are in college but were at home in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the ten adults living in the remaining 8 apartments, all are over age 50, and eight are over 65. Of these twelve tenants, eight people either work in Harrisville or retired from work in Harrisville and therefore benefit from our 20% affordable housing rental discount designed to ensure that people who work in Harrisville can afford to live here.

The rental income from each building in our affordable housing program was sufficient to cover its own operating expenses, including utilities, maintenance, insurance, and property taxes. And all but one was able to cover all expenses including debt service and capital improvements in addition to the operating expenses and generate a surplus to help cover HHI's staff (administration and maintenance) costs or overhead, which is important to the sustainability of our operations and this program.

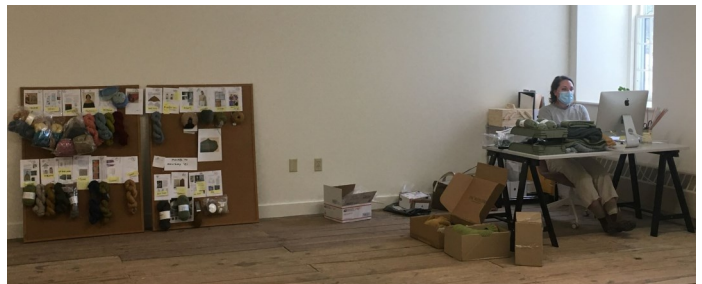
Commercial Rentals

In addition to the five historic buildings that are part of the affordable housing program, Historic Harrisville owns 10 buildings that are leased for exclusively commercial purposes. In 2020, HHI rented to 48 commercial tenants, who used their spaces for office space, art studios, making and manufacturing, and storage. In all, approximately 98 people are employed in HHI's commercial buildings (excluding HHI's own staff and the staff at the Harrisville General Store), and nine more benefit from storage rentals provided by HHI.

Two new tenant spaces where three people are employed were added in the Granite Mill in 2020, with tenants moving in in early 2021.



Two new work spaces were created in the lowest level of the Granite Mill providing studio, workshop and office space.



Cleaning the turbine to remove frozen leaves and twigs to restore efficiency.

Energy Update

One of the goals of Historic Harrisville is to minimize and mitigate our contribution to climate change by improving efficiency, using renewable forms of energy, and promoting energy consciousness. We recognize that significant amounts of energy are consumed to create comfortable and functional indoor working and living environments in our buildings. As stewards of this town and planet, we seek to identify the environmental impacts of our operations and to minimize and mitigate

them using a multi-part strategy. Historic Harrisville continues to make incremental improvements to our properties that help to conserve energy. We also utilize energy from renewable sources in our buildings to the extent we can now and continue to explore opportunities to expand our use of renewable sources of energy.

In 2020, HHI's water powered turbine-generated produced 111,496 kwh of electricity, which supplied all of the electricity needed to power the Cheshire Mills Complex all year.

Textile Production Returning to the Cheshire Mills

Textile production in Harrisville's Cheshire Mills Complex began in 1849, decades before the town of Harrisville was founded. The village pre-dated the town, because it was an ideal location for textile mills.

When the mills closed in 1970, Historic Harrisville was formed to help preserve the town's buildings, and provide an economic environment where people could live and work. Harrisville Designs was formed to keep the town's textile tradition alive, and keep a variety of jobs in the community. In 2021, as both entities celebrate their 50th anniversary, they are working together to bring the production of textiles back to the Cheshire Mills Complex, as Harrisville Designs relocates their spinning mill from Skatutakee Road to Mill No. 6. This will allow the building to be used for its intended purpose, and restore the use of water powered textile production in Harrisville. Harrisville Designs has been spinning 100% Virgin Wool Yarn in Harrisville, New Hampshire for over 40 years, operating one of only a few woolen mills left in this country.



Employees of Harrisville's textile enterprises in the nineteenth and twenty first centuries.



Women working in the Cheshire Mills in the 1880s, 1950s and 1960s, respectively. While weaving will not be returning to the mill, Harrisville Designs does plan to relocate their spinning operations back to the Cheshire Mills in 2021.