

RYE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND TOWN MUSEUM

Covid-19 Update: *As of July 1, 2020, the museum will be open by appointment only, limited to 2 visitors per appointment. **Masks are required inside, as is hand sanitizing upon entering the building.**

Appointments may be made by email: info@ryenhistoricalociety.org, or by calling (603) 997-6742

Looking Back at Rye's Great Bi-Centennial Celebration



Albert, Leigh, Janet Clarkson
Rye, N. H. 1976

In anticipation of the national Bicentennial in 1976, a town celebration committee was formed and on July 4, 1975, there was a big parade and Esther Parsons opened her field for all kinds of activities, games and food all day. A tradition was revived that stretched back to colonial times when annual harvest and other agricultural festivals brought the town together to socialize and celebrate. The foundation had been laid for the great events of 1976.

The town and the nation were weary of crises, economic woes and the end of the Vietnam war. With the help of federal grants Bicentennial committees were created all over the country in 1975 to prepare for the big event in 1976. Rye's committee, including Jessie Herlihy, Ralph Morang III, Gail Miles and others, had the benefit of this head start and they began planning in earnest. The one requirement for receiving federal funds was to create something permanent so Jessie Herlihy proposed the creation of a historical society. In February 1976 a representative from the NH

Historical Society came to Rye to preside over the official birth of the Rye Historical Society. This was a natural choice because the Bi-Centennial revived an interest in local history all over the country.

A Founder's Day ceremony packed town hall in May 1976 with everyone in costume including the Rye Militia. This was a chance to recognize the first European settlers at Odiorne Point in 1623 as well as all the Founding Families who built the town in the first two centuries. 1976 was not only the nation's 200th birthday, but it was the 250th anniversary of the parish of Rye and the Congregational church. For months Teddy Wyatt and Jessie Herlihy wrote the libretto for a great Rye Town Pageant performed in the church vestry on July 3rd with a huge cast of locals playing town characters from the past. This theatrical event, which chronicled the history of the church and the town, was a great success.

On the bright and sunny 4th of July 1976 a grand parade snaked through the center complete with many floats, a thrown together town band including Tom Barron and Bruce Valley and lead by majorette Maddie Chichester. Guy Chichester had a huge "Dump Mel" (NH Gov. Thompson) sign in front of his house as the parade passed, but Rye's Mel (Low) was resplendent on a float exhorting support for a new dump/recycling center. Speeches and other pageantry followed at the cemetery town green and a time capsule was buried. There was an art show at the church, historical exhibits at the town hall and library and a lunch was served in Esther Parsons' field. In the afternoon a challenging obstacle course was set up along with booths for sale items and local causes, a dunking booth and a puppet show. A fireman's field day was held at the school followed by bicycle races in the late afternoon. A bean hole supper was in the works all day in the back of the field and was served in the evening. The town band performed under the stars directed by Kay Youschak with Jane Holway on the gut bucket. Fireworks in the field capped off a day no one would soon forget. Rye did itself proud, celebrating itself and the nation, and the afterglow was felt for some time.

The fledgling Rye Historical Society became a catalyst for historical interests and research in town. One of its first projects was the creation of a Bi-centennial medal which was designed by Ralph Morang III and included two iconic Rye images. One of these images became the logo of the new historical society. The old house project, restoring stone markers in historic graveyards, organizing public programs at the library and building a membership organization soon followed. The library provided storage in the Macdonald Room and display space which helped create a permanent "place" for Rye history to dwell and be cultivated. But the society's first big public program was a house tour, co-sponsored this Bicentennial summer with the Driftwood Garden Club. It included a mixture of old and new and included my almost shell of a house where visitors could see the entire frame, a restoration in progress. This tour, the first of several, was a great success and added to the festive atmosphere in town that memorable summer.

~Alex Herlihy



The Quilt Project

If you have had a chance to view our virtual museum tour (below) you will note that we have a quilt that was put together in around 1892 by the families in town. Beginning July 1, 2020 we will start sharing one square of the quilt each day to 'crowdsource' information that descendants of these families might like to share with us.

The pandemic that has the world in its grips right now means more people are at home with family, maybe have a little more time. We hope that we can get lots of information. Each quilt square has several names on it and blog readers will be able to add comments to help bring these names to life. [Follow us on FaceBook](#) or check out the RHS webpage daily for a list of names. There are 64 squares on the quilt, with one square a day being shared through the summer. Let's hear some stories!



Did you know Celia Thaxter's garden has come to Prescott Park this summer? [Click here](#) to read about it at Seacoast Online.

[Star Island](#) is offering virtual programming this summer. See below for an opportunity to learn more about the Shoals from Ann Beattie.

Historic Lecture: Eternal Star

July 21, 2020

Join us at 4pm EST on July 21st for the first in a series of lectures from Isles of Shoals historian Ann Beattie.

Ann is an educator with a fascination for the Isles of Shoals and its rich history. She combs through historical records, salt cod recipes, and journals of Shoalers in an effort to capture and revive the unique stories that bring Shoals history to life. Ann is a former president of the Isles of Shoals Historical and

Research Association and has served as a Board member of the Portsmouth Athenaeum. She leads tours of the Shoals and hosts several week-long history programs on Star Island. Ann always has an intriguing tale to tell about a place so magical it will steal your heart.

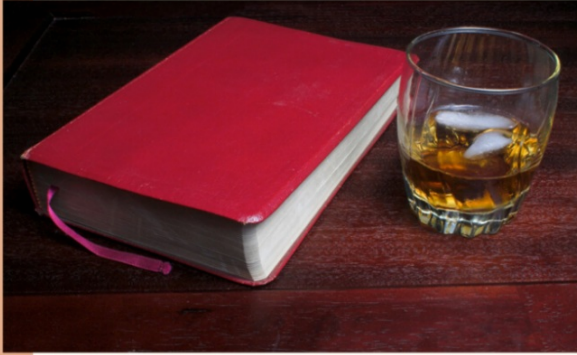
WE REMEMBER

The Rye Historical Society is working on updating the names on our War Veterans Memorial Monument in the center of town. If you know Rye residents who served in a war since WWII, please fill out the survey in this post. Thank you for helping us!

[Take Survey](#)

Rye Museum Virtual Tour





History Happy Hour

Sundays FaceBook Live 5 pm

2020 Programs

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all programs will be suspended and the museum will be closed to visitors until further notice. We are following NH and town of Rye guidelines.

Rye Historical Society invites the public to attend all their programs which are held in the Rye Public Library Community Room at 6:30P.M.

March 26 TBD D. Allan Kerr - *Surfmen of the Seacoast.*

April 30 TBD Glenn Knoblock - *New Hampshire on High: Historic and Unusual Weathervanes of the Granite State*

July 16 TBD Thomas Hubka - *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn*

November 10 Neil Novello - *No Mutiny This Time*

Rye 1623, the committee formed to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Rye's settlement, will also have two programs:

May 26 TBD Craig Musselman *Historic Mills of Rye*

October 22 Ed Bullock (Eyes That Shine) *Native Storytelling, Song and Dance: Teaching of the Drum and Flute*



Rye Trolley Tours

Take a narrated ride through scenic Rye and learn about our rich history. 10:30-noon \$25

9/7 Labor Day

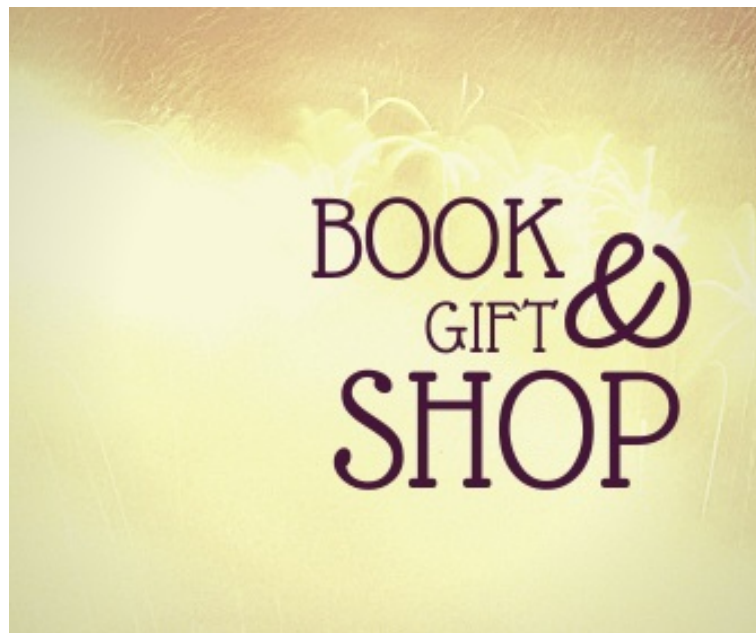
[Purchase tickets](#)

Sharing Stories of Rye

Do you have a story to tell? Rye Historical Society has established a community on StoryCorps to help our members share stories. You are invited to join the Rye NH History community on archive.storycorps.org. Please follow this link to create a StoryCorps Archive account and join our community. Next, download the StoryCorps App to record and share your story with us.

If you'd prefer to share your story with a video please let us know and we will add it to our [YouTube playlist](#).

Stories of Rye



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izi TRAVEL
the storytelling platform



Audio tour

Rye Beach Block

★★★★★ [4 reviews](#) | [Rye](#) | Free

Did you know there is a guided walking tour in Rye Beach? [Download the](#)

[IziTRAVEL app and get started!](#)

Don't want to walk? You can take this tour from the comfort of your easy chair!

Share The History of Your Home with a Historic House Plaque

Many Rye homes, business and public buildings are adorned with these handsome plaques. The cost of a plaque is \$85.

If you would like one for your home to add to the heritage of the town, house plaque applications may be picked up at the Rye library on the coffee table (behind the RHS brochures).

Check and application may be mailed to PO Box 583, Rye, NH 03870 or left in our mailbox by the front door of the museum.



RHS is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization

Rye Historical Society

603-997-6742

info@ryenhistoricalociety.org

10 Olde Parish Road, Rye, NH 03870

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