

Community Profile

Wilmington Town, Windham County

Prepared for the Citizens of Wilmington Town

by

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To mark the occasion of the community visits
by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

Just as a community is never finished modifying, adapting and organizing its natural, political and social environment, an attempt to profile those dynamic processes must be a work in process. Materials below are organized to reflect community resources. Please join us in this profiling effort and call attention to major omissions, inaccuracies and errors of fact.

SECTION 1. TOWN ORGANIZATION

The option to settle Wilmington was originally granted by N.H. Governor Benning Wentworth on April 29th, 1731. Wentworth chartered Marlboro, a town adjacent to the east, on the same day. The French and Indian Wars and other factors slowed settler mobilization, and the area was not significantly inhabited within the specified five year period. Wentworth granted the land for a second time, 12 years later on June 17th, 1763. Recipients of the second grant were entirely different from the initial grantees and included some of Massachusetts' most distinguished families.

Apparently these grantees were well organized; a census taken in January of 1771 reported 71 inhabitants including 14 heads of families. Having achieved a critical population mass, the town has witnessed decades of growth, reaching 1,000 inhabitants by 1800 and never suffering significant declines. Settlement clusters have emerged and declined in several spots around the town. For instance, 170 years ago the town center was closer to the top of Lisle Hill Road, a mile from the present nexus. At present, the most significant and stable cluster appears to be along the western junction of Routes 9 and 100. While the civil structure of villages in Vermont vary considerably, Swift reports no significant village level organization in the town throughout its history, save two neighborhoods that for short periods of time offered federal postal service.

Table 1.1- General Town Characteristics

Year(s) Granted	1751, 1763
County	Windham
Settlements and Neighborhoods	East Wilmington, Haystack, Medburyville, & Raponda Turn
No Incorporated Villages	

sources: Vermont Place-Names: Footprints of History, Esther M. Swift, Brattleboro, VTS. Green Press, 1977
Vermont YearBook, Chester, VT: The YearBook
Wilmington Town Offices

What is in a name?

The original grant creating this town gave it the name of Wilmington in honor of the English nobleman, Spencer Compton, first Earl of Wilmington (1673-1743). Compton had held various offices and for a brief time had been England's Prime Minister. It is likely that Compton's influence helped earn Wentworth the colonial governorship of New Hampshire in 1741. However, the second group of grantees, with strong Massachusetts allegiances, introduced the name Draper for the second grant, thereby honoring John and Richard Draper, well know father and son printers from Boston. John Draper (the father) had become publisher of New England's oldest newspaper the NewsLetter, and after his death, son Richard expanded it into the *Massachusetts Gazette* and the *Weekly NewsLetter*.

Ironically, subsequent settlers didn't like the Draper name and began calling it Wilmington. No official action has ever been made but the name Wilmington has been established through custom as opposed to law.

Historical Chronology

- 1731 - Initial granting of this area by New Hampshire's Governor Benning Wentworth in April.
- 1813 - Frank Hastings Hamilton is born in Wilmington. Hamilton went on to serve as a surgeon in the Civil War and later organized the U.S. General Hospital in New York. He was President James Garfield's personal doctor.
- The Civil War leaves one in ten Vermont farms vacant. In the period following the war, Swedes move to Wilmington, Weston and Vershire to work on farms.
- 1921 - The Harriman Dam is built and forms Lake Whitingham, which becomes the largest body of water entirely within the state's boundaries.
- 1964 - Haystack Ski Area is built.
- 2001 - The VT Council of Rural Development is invited to begin a series of visits aimed at addressing important issues within the community.

Chronological materials drawn, in part from Susan Kelley, "Our Towns: Vermont 1791-1991, Bicentennial Year Series, Burlington Free Press, 1991.

Table 1.2- General Town Planning Characteristics

<i>Vermont Forum on Sprawl</i> Category	1 – Traditional Center
Town Plan	Yes – expires August 2003
Zoning Ordinance	Yes – including Village Design Control
Subdivision Ordinance	None
Septic Approval Process	Must be designed by VT-Licensed Engineers
Flood Hazard Conditional Development	Flood Hazard Area Regulations
Development Review Board	None

sources: crs.uvm.edu
Wilmington Town Offices

SECTION 2. HUMAN RESOURCES

No single indicator is as powerful as the population measures. The number of people in a place relates critically to the carrying capacity of the locale as well as to the “density of acquaintanceship,” and thus to the very heart of life quality and social interaction. The 2000 census materials show a steady growth rate for Wilmington, yet having been recently released, yield little detail to compare changes in this place over the past decades. Tables and graphics presented below will be reinterpreted in the light of additional 2000 census information but are provided for your perusal as we await the final tallies.

Table 2.1- Wilmington Population Characteristics – one interesting note on this table is the fact that Wilmington’s population in 2000 (2,225) already exceeds the 1993 estimate for the year 2015 (2,084).

Total Population, 1990	1,968
Total Population, 2000	2,225
Absolute Population Change, 1990-2000	257
Percent Population Change, 1990-2000	13.1%
Population Projection for year 2015, 1993 est.	2,084
Persons per Square Mile, 1990	49.2
Persons per Square Mile, 2000	55.6
Percent Urban, 1990 & 2000	0.0%
Percent Rural, 1990 & 2000	100.0%
Percent Rural Farm, 1990	1.6%
Percent Dependent, 1990 (persons under 18 and over 65)	33.4%
Percent Native Born, 1990	42.3%
Percent Reporting French or French Canadian Ancestry, 1990	19.2%

sources: U.S. Census of Population and Housing 1980, 1990, 2000
 crs.uvm.edu
 Vermont Place-Names: Footprints of History, Esther M. Swift, Brattleboro, VTS. Green Press, 1977.
 Vermont YearBook, Chester, VT: The YearBook
 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980, 1990
 Vermont Department of Health, 1997
 Vermont Health Care Authority, 1993
 Preliminary Census 2000 Release(s)

Table 2.2- Components of Population Change

Period	Initial Pop.	Absolute Change	Percent Change
1970-1980	1586.0	+ 222	14%
1980-1990	1808.0	+ 160	9%
1990-2000	1968.0	+ 257	13%

Period	Net Migrants	% Population change due to Net Migration
1970-1980	127.0	8.01%
1980-1990	-33.0	-1.83%

Period	Births	Deaths	Increase	% Population change due to natural increase
1970-1980	253.0	158.0	95.0	5.99%
1980-1990	330.0	137.0	193.0	10.7
1990-2000	NA	NA	NA	NA

sources: Computed using U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1970, 1980, 1990 and Vermont Department of Health Vital Statistics files, 1970-1990.

Table 2.3- Town, County, and State Population Characteristics – Notice that the % increase in Wilmington’s population from 1990 to 2000 was greater than the rates experienced by both Windham County and the state of Vermont overall.

Place	1980 Pop.	1990 Pop.	2000 Pop.	% Change 1990-2000
Wilmington	1,808	1,968	2,225	13.06%
Dover	---	993	1,410	41.85%
Whitingham	---	1,177	1,298	10.28%
Marlboro	---	924	978	5.84%
Brattleboro	---	12,241	12,005	-1.93%
Windham County	36,933	41,588	44,216	6.32%
Chittenden County	115,534	131,761	146,571	11.24%
Vermont	511,356	562,758	608,827	8.2%

sources: U.S. Census of Population and Housing 1980, 1990, 2000
crs.uvm.edu

Note: see *Change In Population 1990-2000* map on next page.

Table 2.4- Housing & Family Characteristics

Number of Families, 1990	499
Number of Households, 1990	803
Total Children in Single Parent Families, 1990	81
Total Housing Units, 1990	2176
Total Increase in Housing Units, 1960-1990	1,653
Number of Owner-Occupied Housing Units, 1990	505
Number of Renter-Occupied Housing Units, 1990	291
Median Housing Unit Value, 1990	\$110,600
Median Rent, 1990	437
Median Gross Rent as % of Household Income, 1990	26.0%

sources: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990
crs.uvm.edu

SECTION 3. EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 3.1- Employment

Total Employment (1990) (persons 16yrs and over)	882
Percent Working in Town of Residence (1990)	60.8%

Table 3.2- Occupation Characteristics (# persons in field)

	1980	1990
Executive, Administrative, Managerial	104	117
Professional Specialty	128	123
Technicians, and related support	12	8
Sales	84	189
Administrative, clerical support	98	109
Private Household Service	6	2
Protective services	12	7
Non-protective, non-household service	158	174
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	36	30
Precision production, craft, and repair	118	137
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors	63	34
Movers	36	45
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	27	45

Table 3.3- Industry Characteristics

Employed Persons aged 16 and over	1980	1990
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	22	20
Construction	85	115
Mining	-	0
Manufacturing, non-durable goods	27	18
Manufacturing, durable goods	130	62
Transportation	16	21
Communications / Public Utilities	16	31
Wholesale Trade	10	25
Retail Trade	201	246
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	42	82
Business and Repair Services	17	29
Personal Services	130	95
Entertainment, recreation	-	73
Health Services	25	32
Educational Services	101	88
Other Professional, related services	38	67
Public Administration	22	16

Tables 3.1-3.3 sources: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980, 1990

* Categories combined in 1980 U.S. Census:

Personal services combined with entertainment, recreation services

Mining combined with agriculture, forestry and fisheries

Note: see *Change in Number of Jobs 1990-1999* map on next page.

SECTION 4. NATURAL RESOURCE BASE

“Wilmington lies at a junction of valleys in the rough shape of a cross, a picturesque village of homey wooden houses in the miscellany of domestic building with many second-story porches overhanging the streets and four church spires above the shingled roofs” (Bears 1996).

Wilmington, one town north of the Massachusetts border, four east of the New York State line, and three towns west of the Connecticut, lies centered in the Deerfield River valley. A square town, Wilmington is blessed with a diversity of terrain; at least ten mountains over 2000 feet and three potable bodies of water, the most significant of which is the Harriman Reservoir, an enhancement of the Deerfield river created during the depression with significant federal input (see *Wilmington Infrastructure* map on 3rd page). The reservoir created Lake Whitingham, and the area affords access to the artificial lake. Nearby, Molly Stark State Park contains 158 acres and the 2,438-foot Mt. Olga.

Table 4.1- Natural Resources and Geographical Features

Land Area (acres)	26,023
Land Area (square miles)	39.9
Water Area (square miles)	1.9
Percent Conserved Lands, 1999	9.1%
Change in Forest Land to Developed Land, 1970-90 (acres)	122.5
Change in Forest Land to Non-Forested Land, 1970-90 (acres)	12.0
Change in Non-Forested Land to Developed Land, 1970-90 (acres)	3.8

source: crs.uvm.edu

Protection Efforts in Wilmington

The Forest Service cannot buy or sell land but is capable of swapping. The agency exchanged 6 parcels during 1986-87 and has probably done much more since then. The largest parcel swap through 1989 was the exchange of 700 acres of the former Martin farm in Rochester for 231 acres at Haystack Ski Area in Wilmington. The other five parcels exchanged in 1986-87 amounted to about 200 acres. Also see Peru for a description of another pending deal.

The Deerfield River conservation easement involves nearly 16,000 acres of land around the Somerset and Harriman reservoirs, which will be protected under an agreement among the state, an electric utility, and the Vermont Land Trust. This is an effort to respond to tremendous pressure to develop the state's lakefront property. Harriman Reservoir has one home on its shore and Somerset Reservoir has none. The deal will allow the Pacific Gas and Electric Generating Co. to keep generating hydroelectricity on the Deerfield River. The land will continue to be used for logging and for recreation, but the conservation easement will prevent development of the land. It is the third-largest acquisition in the Vermont Land Trust's 23-year history. The agreement allows for clean energy generation while protecting habitat for black bears, loons, peregrine falcons and plants in the area.

Other Places...

The above constitute nothing more than a sampling of the significant natural resource characteristics of Wilmington. Other areas of interest throughout the town include Lake Raponda, Sylvan Lake, Haystack Pond, Crystal Lake, and Haystack Mountain. Haystack Pond and Lake Raponda are shown on the *Wilmington Infrastructure* map on the 3rd page.

SECTION 5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Human and Social Capital

Every town enjoys the existence of individuals who possess unique talents and expertise (human capital); and organizations, institutions, and activities that provide connections and solidarity between residents (social capital). Following is a quick list of some of the human and social capital characteristics of Wilmington:

- Major Jonathan Childs was a Revolutionary War hero, who no doubt set a tough standard for his progeny, many of which are still prominent in the life of the town.
- Clarence Budington Kelland studied in Wilmington, and it is said that the town is where he cast Scattergood Baines, the original of his widely known characters (Bearse 1996).
- Today Wilmington is home to Skip Morrow, a singer turned cartoonist. His *The Official Why I Hate Cats Book* was on the New York Times Bestseller List for more than a year in 1980-81 (Smalleer 2001, 9).
- There are two schools in Wilmington, Deerfield Valley Elementary School and Wilmington Middle-High School. The middle-high school moniker is “The Warriors.”
- Wilmington is the host of the annual Deerfield Valley Farmers Days.

Table 5.1- Income and Poverty

Annual Average Wage, 1998	\$19,336
Median Family Income, 1979	\$15,308
Median Family Income, 1989	\$32,581
Household Income, 1990	\$27,335
Annual Average Unemployment Rate, 1998	5.3%
Poverty Rate, 1979	12.7%
Poverty Rate, 1989	5.9%
Persons for whom Poverty Status was Determined, 1990	1,928
Child Poverty Rate (persons 18 years or under), 1989	5.5%
Elderly Poverty Rate (persons 65 years or over), 1979	15.9%
Elderly Poverty Rate (persons 65 years or over), 1989	8.0%
Percentage of Households with Public Assistance Income, 1979	11.4%
Percentage of Households with Public Assistance Income, 1989	4.6%

Table 5.2- Educational Attainment (# persons)

	1980	1990
Percent with less than a high school diploma	18.5	13.9
Percent with high school diploma or equivalent	35.0	34.4
Percent with Associate degree or some college	21.8	25.4
Percent with Bachelors degree or higher	24.7	26.2

sources: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980, 1990.

SECTION 6. COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

In an effort spearheaded by Dave Larsen, local teacher, and with no small amount of assistance from Sonia Alexander, Wilmington Town Manager, the town of Wilmington invited the VT Council on Rural Development to begin a dialogue addressing important issues in the community. In March 2001 the Council began a series of community visits, bringing in various people from across the state representing many areas of interest and expertise. Participants listened to town members and formed a set of community priorities. On April 30, 2001, participants and town members in a community meeting established a final list of priorities. These Priority Challenges are listed below:

- **Education Issue** – Explore options for acquiring capital funding to deal with facility deterioration and space deficiencies at the high school. Address funding needs to provide adequate programs and courses beyond minimum standards for Wilmington children
- **Act 60 Issue** – Determine whether there are possible actions to convince the Legislature to re-evaluate Wilmington’s “gold town” designation, reduce its contribution to the “sharing pool”, or separate capital expenditures from the sharing pool.
- **Community Center Issue** – Continue efforts to establish the teen, day care, senior and other community-based activities center. Build in possibilities for regularly scheduled out-posted social and employment services on site.
- **Economic Development Issue/Growth/Non Growth Issue** – Reach consensus as a community to determine where the town wants to go. Expand on tourist-based economy to create a year-round appeal and bring in other businesses. Establish same hours for all businesses and extend beyond 5:00 PM. Plan for controlled positive growth. Act 60 and high taxes discourage growth. There is a low number of full time residents and a lack of good paying jobs to retain young people in the community. A subgroup under Economic Development will look at: **Downtown Beautification and Parking.**
- **Elderly Services Issue** – Improve services and living opportunities. Wilmington needs an elderly housing facility to allow elders to stay in the community. Volunteer coordination is needed to help elders with paperwork and accessing needed services. These services need to be drawn in to the community.

SECTION 7. ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The following tables and graphs contain information on transportation, taxes, and countywide population trends.

Table 7.1- Wilmington Local Transportation Patterns

Travel time to work (minutes), 1990	14,051
Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) for State & US Highways, 1998	57,269
Change in VMT for State & US Highways, 1986-1998	7,534.5
Total Number of Accidents, 1997	16
Number of Accidents involving fatalities, 1997	0
Population which Work in town of residence, 1990	613
Commuters who Drive Alone, 1990	690
Commuters who Carpool, 1990	113
Commuters who use Public Transit, 1990	9

source: crs.uvm.edu

Table 7.2- Property Valuation and Taxation

Average Residential Value (Single Family Res. on less than 6 acres), 1998	\$95,193
Effective Property Tax Rate (Rate per \$100), 1998	2.03

source: crs.uvm.edu