



Members Quarterly Newsletter

Issue LXXII
3rd quarter, Sept. 2025

www.pittsfieldhistory.com

Pittsfield, New Hampshire—The Gem of the Suncook Valley
Liz Dimmick, editor

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Goodbye Summer

Time to put away the flip flops and swimsuits; time to grab the sweatshirts and jackets. But it was a highly active summer for the Historical Society, thanks to many volunteers and board members.

Again, Lyman Park and the museum were planted, mulched, and watered. Our stately yellow building on Oak Street is now becoming a landmark for those entering the town. People check out the sign to see when town activities are scheduled. (We try to keep it up to date.) And it is also a place where young people can check for the latest information on the library's "Story Walk." The information is located on the main doors to the building.

Attendance at the second Sundays' Open House has been steadily growing when you might think it would decline during the summer. But people are stopping by, asking questions, and admiring all the displays and information presented.

And, of course, the Historical Society is always part of the town's events! The Craft Fair, held during the Suncook Valley's Rotary Balloon Rally, was moved this year to the tennis courts. It was a success! There were concerns that people would walk by and not stop. But stop, they did. The weather was beautiful, and people were enjoying the day and the activities.

During Old Home Day, held in conjunction with the school's Homecoming Weekend, the Society had not one, but two booths at Dustin Park! We had our traditional booth where we answered questions, displayed and sold some items and raffle tickets, and then one board member set up another booth with a delicious array of baked goods. Summer is good! The museum was also open during the festivities, and we had a steady stream of visitors.



You may have noticed a slight change in our program schedule. Normally, we don't have programs during the summer, but in August the Society had a joint presentation with the *Pittsfield Players* at the theatre. Early members of the *Players* reminisced about the start of the theater and the fun and tribulations that occurred. No dressing rooms, climbing a steep flight of stairs to audition, and, of course, some stage mishaps. They were and are a determined group that has provided Pittsfield with excellent and varied entertainment.

It was a fun-filled summer!

Historical Society's Facebook Page

Have you seen it? The Society has an active Facebook page. Please check it out to learn many interesting facts and stories about Pittsfield. ***Pittsfield NH History***

History of the Pittsfield Rotary Club

Did you know that the Rotary started in Pittsfield on December 2, 1946? And since that time, the Rotary Club members have completed many projects in the town and have donated thousands of dollars to various organizations.



Former Rotarians, Stan Bailey and Art Morse, will present highlights of the early history. Please join them to hear about this vital and long-standing organization.

Wednesday, October 22, 2025
6:30 pm
Pittsfield Historical Society
4 Oak Street

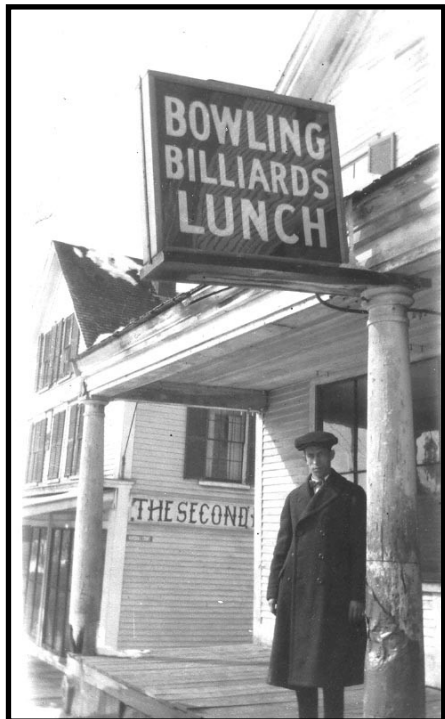
It's free and open to everyone!



Raffle Winner!

The winning ticket was sold at the Balloon Rally! This was the first time this person had attended the Balloon Rally and thought it was a wonderful event.

The winner was very pleased and excited



Bunny's Bowling Alley
16 Main Street

Main Street: The North Side

The north side of Main Street is the theme for the 2026 calendar. It explores the "north" side of the street featuring even-numbered addresses.

It is a visual tour of the "mainly" businesses that flocked Main Street, beginning at the bottom of what is known as Factory Hill—site of the dam/waterfall—to the Tuttle Mansion, at the corner of Main and Carroll streets.

Twenty-nine images highlight the older buildings and their transformation over the years. It is a wonderful journey of Pittsfield's Main Street.

You can purchase the calendar at the Town Hall, Josiah Carpenter Library, and, of course, at the museum. It only costs \$15 and it is a wonderful gift to yourself or others.

Episcopal Church



Eerie Happenings in Pittsfield

As Halloween approaches, our thoughts turn to make-believe witches, ghosts, and eerie happenings. But according to some townspeople these sightings aren't in our imagination but actually occurred. Here's one story to ponder!

Little Red House on the Canal

The most repeated story of witchcraft in Pittsfield began in 1835—before the Civil War. There was a little red house on the island between the canal and the river by the first mill on Joy Street. It was owned by James F. Joy, son of the pioneer cotton mill owner James Joy.

James F. Joy was a renowned corporate railroad attorney. Not one to be associated with eerie stories. He wrote an article for the *New Hampshire Patriot* explaining the mysterious happenings at the Red House.

To support his claim, he stated that many people witnessed these strange occurrences. It was also stated that people came from 30-40 miles around to see the sight.

Peltiah Priest lived with his wife and a servant girl and another family in the house. Mr. Priest was employed at the Joy Scythe Factory nearby. One night, Mrs. Priest awoke and ventured to a far part of the house. She heard footsteps following her and someone whispering. No one was there.

The following day, the saga of the doorlatch began. A small room with only one door that was frequently accessed was the scene of the mysterious happenings. Inside the room, there was a button of wood attached to the door by a screw through one end over the latch. By turning the button, it would hold down the latch and lock the door from the inside. The door kept locking repeatedly with no one inside, so the room had to be accessed through the window. First it was thought that the screw was loose, and the button dropped. The screw was tightened, and it still happened. Then a nail was used to keep it open, but it was either drawn out or broken—and the door was then locked. The nail was found on a shelf on the opposite side of the room.

For several days, there were other strange occurrences. The silverware was laid on the table in preparation of a meal and when Mrs. Priest turned her back, the silverware was scattered on the floor. Plates also fell. One time there was a stack of plates with two larger ones on the bottom of the stack. One of the bottom ones slid out—without a sound—and fell on the floor. A pie crust disappeared, some newly sliced bread ended up in the garbage can.

Also, when the servant girl went into the basement with a candle, it went out. Every time it was relit, it was extinguished. Even with a glass lantern protecting the flame, it went out.

In the end, an old white-haired man spoke with Mrs. Priest about the happenings. When they finished with the conversation, the man arose and stated they would occur no more. He then went to the pond and knelt—seemingly to pray—and immediately disappeared. No footprints could be found! And the various activities ceased.

For years, the place was known as the “Witch-House,” and was one of the oldest houses in town. In the 1850s, it kept boarders and roomers who worked in the Cotton Mill. By 1901 it was unfit for habitation and was finally torn down, the remains being fed into the boiler of the Cotton Mill.

Thanks to Larry Berkson for providing this information

Opportunities to Tour the Museum

The museum is open on the second Sunday of each month. (Weather permitting.) Please join us between 1 and 4 pm. However, if this doesn't meet your needs, please call the museum at 603-435-8004 to arrange a time. Remember, the museum is open most Tuesdays between 9 am and noon. Here is the schedule for the remainder of the year.

Oct. 12

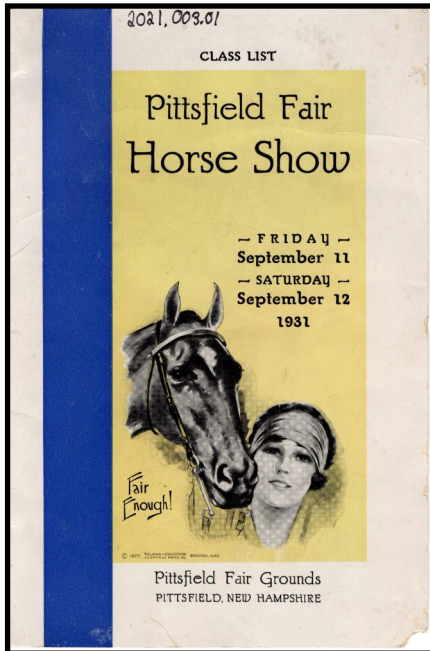
Nov. 9

Dec. 14

Agricultural Fairs

Local fairs are another sign of fall. Some are named after towns: the Hopkinton Fair or Deerfield Fair. Some larger states have state fairs: New York or Minnesota. Pittsfield also had an agricultural fair. As early as 1810 groups of farmers gathered for various discussions and held events to display their produce and livestock. However, these events were not considered fairs, but an idea of what could happen in the future. So, it was no surprise that in 1851, the Suncook Valley Fair Association was established.

Although people wanted a fair, it was difficult to obtain a consensus for its permanent location. Discussion on location and cost began in 1875, though nothing significant was done until 1883. But again, people were indecisive. Finally, in 1889 work began on what was called the Charles Ferrin lot on Concord Hill Road where Dunkin Donuts is currently located.



Fairs were held from 1889 to 1899 and then nothing. No fairs were held between 1900-1924. It could have been a lack of money, manpower, or interest. The first comprehensive fair held after this hiatus was in 1925 and the last fair was a four-day event in 1949.

However, in looking through the Society's files on fairs, I found some interesting facts and stories. There are numerous catalogues for the Pittsfield Fair Horse Shows. In the 1932 horse show, held on September 9 and 10, there were 34 exhibitions, from Gentlemen's Driving Horse to Novice Saddle horse. The museum has a display of the various ribbons distributed.

Front-page headlines in the September 10, 1937, issue of *The Valley Times*, a local newspaper, indicated the fair was an exciting event. **Pittsfield Fair Attracts Large Crowd; Featured 4-H Clubs This Year.**

The 13th annual Pittsfield Fair was held in 1937, and it was a two-night and three-day event. The news reporter was especially impressed with the 4-H club activities and viewed them to be the best in the Fair's history!

Other exhibits included a display of the newest designs in automobiles and trucks; The Merrimack Farmers Exchange had an extensive display of Farm Machinery, and music was provided by the 172nd Regiment Band of Manchester, to name just a few of the activities.

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Larry Berkson, Pittsfield's Historian, has published a detailed history of fairs in his book, *Pittsfield's Agricultural Fair*, which is available at the museum.



"Fall is proof that change is beautiful!" unknown

