

PLAINFIELD CELEBRATES ITS 250TH ANNIVERSARY

The weekend of August 12, 13, 14 marked the 250th anniversary of the granting of a charter by Royal Governor of New Hampshire Benning Wentworth to a group of fifty-six proprietors from Plainfield, Connecticut. The charter granted a township of 22,300 acres along the eastern bank of the Connecticut River which would be called Plainfield, New Hampshire.

In the months leading up to August, 2011, the Plainfield 250th Anniversary Celebration Committee worked hard to set the stage for the celebration. We started meeting two and one-half years before the event, meeting monthly during the final year of preparation. We decided on a logo - designed by the late David Smith and completed by his son Tim Smith - and discussed various types of merchandise to sell. We took samples of our memorabilia (T-shirts, hats, bags, McNamara milk bottles and license plates, all with the logo on them) to Town Meeting for pre-orders. We asked for appropriations of \$3500 a year for two years to provide seed money for our program. Steve Taylor put together a commemorative program, complete with a town history timeline, and arranged for a town photo on the 4th of July. Two members regularly attended Vital Communities meetings of other "Middle Grant" towns to plan complementary activities during our mutual anniversary year. Professor Jere Daniell of Dartmouth came to town in April and gave a well-attended lecture on the town charter, presenting the historical backdrop for our semiquincentennial.

Our celebration began late Friday afternoon, August 12, with an Ice Cream Social at Christ Community Church featuring music provided by the *Upper Valley Chordsmen*. At dusk, following the concert on the church lawn, bagpiper David Fielder led a large parade of people marching north on Route 12-A to Plainfield Village, their way lit by torches burning along the side of the road. When they arrived in the village, the *Newmont Military Band*, paid for by a gift from the PES Class of 2012, provided a stirring concert of band music from the late 19th century for those gathered under the tents at Smith's Auction Gallery or visiting the Open House at the Plainfield Historical Society.

A very busy Saturday began with a pancake breakfast at Plainfield Community Church. The Philip Read Memorial Library sponsored a wonderful marionette show at the town hall for a delighted audience. Down the street, the Plainfield Historical Society was hosting a commemorative stamp cancellation program. A special envelope with a cachet of the Town Hall was offered for sale with the special Plainfield logo as the cancellation mark on the stamp. At lunchtime, in Meriden Village, the firemen resurrected their Lobster/Chicken Barbecue for the occasion and it sold out on lobster. The town recreation committee led period children's games on the KUA field adjacent to the fire department with equipment courtesy of Billings Farm Museum in Woodstock, Vermont. The First Baptist Church in Meriden hosted an antique car show which attracted

many. There were tours offered of the Kimball Union Academy campus. Another group of people hiked to French's Ledges. The Meriden Library hosted a kite-making workshop for children and the Good Humor Man showed up at the library offering ice cream treats for the children. The Aidron Duckworth Museum hosted "Arts and Artistry of the Past, A Celebration of Plainfield's 250-Year History," not only on this weekend, but the entire month of August. Later Saturday afternoon there was an Alumni Reunion for former students of Plainfield schools; this special reception was held at the Historical Society building. In the early evening a square dance was held at the Town Hall, followed by the Full Moon Dance which featured the local band *No Sudden Moves*.

Sunday began with a breakfast hosted by the Meriden Congregational Church, which was followed by a joint church service held at Flickinger Arts Center on the KUA campus. Many people participated in the service: Mr. Allen Burns from Christ Community Church; Rev. Suellen Leugers, Plainfield Community Church; Rev. John Gregory-Davis, Meriden Congregational Church; and Rev. Harold (Dewey) Jones, First Baptist Church of Meriden. A group of community members sang as a choir, David Fielder played the bagpipes, and Joy Hutchins played the hand bells, accompanied by Helen Davidson on the piano.

Sunday afternoon began with a re-enactment of the charter signing at the Town Hall. Ray Reed served as emcee and facilitated the program. We were favored by the appearance of King George III (Greg Marshall); Governor Benning Wentworth (Bill Chappelle) and Mrs. Wentworth (Laine Gillespie). Several local dignitaries spoke at the ceremony and made presentations: Executive Councilor Ray Burton; Senator Matthew Houde; and Representative Andy Schmidt. Representing the town of Plainfield, Connecticut, were Selectman George and Mrs. Madeleine Krecidlo, who shared a proclamation and several gifts with our town. The program concluded with items being placed within a time capsule which is stored in the Philip Read Memorial Library for posterity and will be opened in August 2061. A surprise addition to the time capsule was a pocket copy of the U.S. Constitution, autographed and donated on the spot by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer!

There was a brief ceremony held at the Plainfield Village Cemetery in honor of all the citizens who have lived in town. Several people were in costume of the period of 1761 and the committee placed a bouquet of flowers at the memorial stone of John Stevens, the man who negotiated with the governor's representatives in Portsmouth for the original proprietors and was one of the earliest settlers in town. The honor guard for the program was provided by the Sons of Union Veterans, Major McKinley Camp #9.

The weekend celebration culminated with a picnic and corn roast at the Plainfield Elementary School. We were serenaded by the *Upper Valley Community Band*

while we waited for the fireworks display. In spite of a forecast for storms over all of New England, the rain held off over the picnic area. At dusk, we were rewarded with a spectacular fireworks show that will long be remembered by those who were in attendance.

In 1961, the Bicentennial Committee wrote that their celebration “took a lot of work by a lot of people” but that “the Town turned out in fine shape and put it all through.” It’s nice to know some things haven’t changed. Without the help of a long list of people, groups, and businesses (see the September 2011 *PlainFacts* for a complete list), we would not have had such a wonderful weekend. It worked because so many volunteers donated so much, crowds of people showed up at the events, and the community spirit shown was exceptional. The committee wishes to thank everyone who participated and helped make this weekend worthy of the momentous occasion that it was - a commemoration of 250 years of history and a celebration of the community that we call home.

Margaret Drye and Dewey Jones , Co-chairs

250th CELEBRATION INCOME/EXPENSE SUMMARY

Income

Town Appropriation-2010	\$3,500
Town Appropriation-2011	\$3,500
Tasker Fund	\$500
GIFT PES class of 2012	\$650
Sale of Merchandise	\$11,473
Total Income:	\$19,623

Expense

Entertainment	\$3,331
Printing/Postage	\$2,990
Merchanise	\$5,084
Food	\$431
Fireworks	\$3,500
Equipment/Misc	\$867
Total Expense:	\$16,203
Returned to general Fund	\$3,420