

# Wilmot Historical Association

## Jack McAuliffe Interview Sept. 5, 2014

In 2014, the Wilmot Historical Society interviewed a few current and former Wilmot, New Hampshire residents and recorded stories of their lives in Wilmot.

In this interview Jack McAuliffe (JM) shares stories of his youth including taking us back to the Depression when his family drove from California to Wilmot.

Jack tells his guests, Liz Thompson Kirby (LK), Chuck (CT) and Jackie Thompson (JT), and Cinematographer Lindy Heim (LH), about many of his experiences in Wilmot in grammar school through high school.

Jack, who was born in Owens Mouth, California on June 20, 1924, died in Bradford, New Hampshire on November 19, 2015 at the age of 91.

Interview takes place in the home of Lindy Heim

Introductions –

LH: This is Liz Kirby and her brother Chuck Thompson. (Chuck's wife Jackie Thompson is sitting next to him.)

This is this the fifth of September 2014 and the Wilmot Historical Society is recording Mr. Jack McAuliffe from Gilford formerly of Wilmot.

Wilmot Historical Society Presents  
Memories of Wilmot with Jack McAuliffe

Interview-

JM: The Depression came along in 1929 and I remember father and mother talking afterwards. Mr. Jeffries had come out and he called my father over to his car and they sat in his car for a long time talking.

The gist of it was that the Depression had hit Mr. Jeffries and it hit him hard. His bank was not doing well and he was probably going to lose this estate out in La Cañada [Now called La Cañada Flintridge, located near Pasadena, California] and the best thing my father and mother could do, he said "I'm not firing you, but," he says "I think you should be looking for some other employment as soon as you can."

Mother and Dad talked it over. Dad was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, so he always wanted to come back East and farm, so he talked mother into it.

They had a 1926 Nash sedan and Dad said, "Well I'll fix it up, so we can camp." So he built a box to go on a running board and that held the tent poles.

That was on mother's side. On the driver's side, we mounted a felt-covered water can that you soaked with water when you filled it in the morning. As you drove down the road the evaporation cooled the water in the can. (Laughter.)

CT: That works very well.

JM: Yes, it worked out well.

CT: Yup.

JM: Then on the back he built a trunk and we kept our food in there. Then the tent was rolled up and packaged and put in the back seat along side of me. So the car was all rigged out to do these things.

We would drive off in the morning and drive until we got either to a campground or a place beside the road to camp we'd just pull over, pitch the tent, and camped.

LH: My goodness!

JM: His goal was to try to visit as many of the national parks as he could on the way back east.

When we left La Cañada, we went to Sequoia. Then we went to Mount Shasta and I had my sixth birthday on Mount Shasta.

LH: Oh my goodness! That's wonderful!

JM: Then we went to Seattle and the Black Hills, Devils Tower, Mount Rushmore, we pretty much covered the big places.

LH: What an adventure for a six-year old--for anyone!

JM: It was about I think the 25<sup>th</sup> of August that we landed here in the North Wilmot. My father had made contact with a real estate agent over in Hopkinton. I don't remember his name, Simonds, I think, he was with the Strout Agency. And this farm was in the process of being foreclosed on. Fellow by the name of Bill Hayes up in Elkins owned it, and it had been given to him by Mrs. Kimball. He had sold it to a fellow named Barteaux. Barteaux didn't have very good means of living I guess. He didn't have a job. It was Depression time.

My parents agreed to buy the place for the magnificent sum of \$3,000.

So, we moved in, and I started school that fall, Langley school first grade. So that's how I got here.

LH: Now whereabouts was the house located?

JM: As you go up the (Tewksbury) hill, you come to a place where there was the old what we called the back road, used to go back down and around and it came out by the sand pits.

LH: OK. Ah, now you're talking coming up the hill, now was that...

JM: You leave the church and head back towards the...

LH: Towards 4A?

JM: Yeah, towards 4A.

LH: Okay, that's up over...

JM: And you go up a fairly steep grade there, it's pretty narrow.

Then it kind of flattens off. Where it flattens off, on the right-hand side, there's quite a dense grove of poplar trees and stuff there in the cellar hole. It's only about a third of the way up to the cemetery. Yeah, we could look right down at the church.

The church was moved back in 18, 1850, or 51. It was built I think around 1829 or 1826. A man by the name of Josiah Stearns designed that church and built it and he also built the Methodist Church at Wilmot Center which burned.

LH: That's right.

JM: The Methodist Church at Wilmot Center was almost identical to the one at North Wilmot. So he used the same plans.

JM: Walter Walker's got pictures of it. It was an 11-room house. (Jack counts the rooms on his fingers.) There were seven rooms downstairs. Seven or eight and four rooms upstairs. There was a peculiar thing about that house; I still want to do some investigation and do some measuring on the foundations up there. Because in looking at a picture of the house, from the south side, you've got the main house and then you have a long woodshed and then a barn that's attached at the far end.

In this long woodshed, as it comes out from the house, there's a change in the roofline. The roofing materials seems to be the old fashion split shaved shingles for the first I would say 10 or 12 feet, then it's the regular style shingles after that.

In thinking about the layout of the rooms in the house around the kitchen things are very strange there. There was a set of stairs that went from a little bit of a square hallway just outside the kitchen door, towards the woodshed, that went down cellar. Also in the kitchen was another set of stairs that were on top of the stairs and went to the second floor in a woodshed.

And then in back of the kitchen cupboards, on the north side, was a little room with no

windows. And then next to it was another room that was kind of L-shaped and that had one window.

LH: My goodness!

JM: So it was all kind of cut up in there. And in looking at it and thinking about the way it was planned, I think what happened was that there was another house there and then George Tewksbury, when he decided to build his new house, built the new one right around the old one.

LH: My goodness!

JM: And he enclosed some of these rooms and some of them he left. That's why it's so, so messed up.

The first Tewksbury was Henry. Henry Tewksbury came from Weare, New Hampshire, and he bought the farm from a fellow by the name of Jabez Morrill.

Now if you look in Wilmot history, Jabez Morrill shows up in several different places in early Wilmot history. I take it that he must have been probably connected with the early grantees and he was either an agent for them or something, because he was buying and selling a lot of property.

Henry Tewksbury bought this property. There was, as near as I can find out, there was a set of buildings down in the southeast corner and the only thing that's left there now is a well.

Henry, I think built the first set of buildings up where the farmhouse was, and a barn, and he lived there through his lifetime. Then he received a life tenancy from his son Stephen Tewksbury who maintained it for the rest of his life. Stephen Tewksbury was George Tewksbury's father and the farm passed along to George Tewksbury somewhere after 1865 or 1870.

I think the buildings, the last set of buildings, was built around 1876, because George Tewksbury's daughter, Belle Pedrick, used to come visit in summertime.

And she used to tell about when she a little girl that her father worked all one winter. He went out to timbers for the barn and he had them all cut and marked, and pegged and mortised and so forth to frame up in the spring when the weather got better so they could put the barn up. And she remembers them putting the barn up.

LH: My goodness! Belle came to visit in the summertime. How old were you at that time?

JM: I was about, this was in the 30s, I was about

LH: 10ish?

JM: Yeah about 10 or 12 years old. Twelve.

LH: Alrightly.

JM: She and her husband lived over at Bridgewater. There was a Lee Pedrick here in town that was her brother.

LH: Yes there was. Oh, that was her brother?

JM: Yeah. That was her brother-in-law. Fred Pedrick was her husband. Now they were, caretakers on some estate, out at Newfound Lake. I don't know just where it was, but that's what they did.

But she used to come every summer usually around Memorial Day and for a ways afterward and decorate the graves, stop and visit.

LK: Where was your school located?

JM: It was located down there at ... do you know where Leona Stewart lives?

LK: No.

JM: That was the schoolhouse.

LK: That was the schoolhouse.

JM: It's on the east side of the road.

LK: How did you get to school? It was a bit of a ways from where you lived out of that school?

JM: Well that was a controversial thing. We were just a little bit on the two lines. A child who lived two miles or more from school was entitled to transportation. So up towards Piper Pond we had the McArthurs and we had the Hill family. The Hill's, I think there were seven children, the McArthurs, there was Douglas, and Etah, and Pete was the father.

Some of the time Pete MacArthur had the school bus contract. Sometimes Ed Collins had it, who lived with Clara Langley. And I think my father had it two years winter times and when my dad had the school bus, I rode with him.

When Pete MacArthur was the school bus driver, I rode with him. When Ed Collins was, I didn't. Ed had a small car.

LK: You were the oldest in your family so you didn't have any older siblings going to school with you there did you?

JM: No. No, I got two brothers. Bill was born in 1931. Tommy was born in 1933.

JT: Was Annie Wittemore the only teacher in that school at the time?

JM: Oh yeah it was just a one-room school.

JT: So, how many years was she your teacher?

JM: One year.

JT: Why? Where did you go after that?

JM: I stayed in school but there was, Annie went to the North Road school and they hired a Doris Smith to teach at the White Pond School. Doris Smith became Mrs. Sawyer.

JT: That's right.

JM: Mrs. Curtis, she came from Littleton.

JT: How did Annie manage to teach all the different grades? Did she give you some work to teach you, give you some work to do, and then go on to another student?

JM: She would, she would have arithmetic problems and stuff like that and a whole bunch of papers and stuff to add up or divide or subtract and do those numbers. And, she would start with probably music in first grade with their reading. She had on the board "See John run" or "See..."

JT: "See Spot..."

JM: "See the rabbit run" and all that sort of stuff.

LK: What did you have in the way of schoolbooks?

JM: Books?

LK: Yes, schoolbooks?

JM: We had books for most every subject.

LK: Did you?

JM: We had math books, we had English books, we had geography. They taught geography in those days.

LK: That's right.

JM: I think some of the time we had civics. We had history, mathematics.

LK: Any science?

JM: English. Yup, general science. Yup.

LK: That's an awful lot of different subjects to be covering for eight different grades, isn't it?

JM: It was. But, you know, the remarkable thing about it was you would learn from the grades that were behind you as you sat there at school. They were being taught stuff and by the time you were there you were kinda half familiar with it, so it was absorbed much easier.

LK: And the children knew that they had to pay attention to what their work was and take care of their stuff while she was teaching someone else.

JM: That's right. Yup. Yeah. We would have assignments. We might have to be writing a theme or doing an English exercise, mathematics exercises, stuff like that.

LK: Did you have . . .

JM: Penmanship.

LK: Oh, of course. Oh penmanship, absolutely.

What did you do at the holiday time? Did you have like a Christmas program that you put on for your parents?

JM: Well we used to have it up at the church. They used to have a little Christmas party up there. We had a Christmas tree. We drew names. We went up, a couple of days before and decorated the tree. Somebody, my father or somebody would cut one and bring it in and set it up. And so we had that ready. And we would play games.

LK: What were some of the games you played?

JM: Drop the handkerchief.

LK: And did you have poems or recitations that you learned and Christmas carols to sing?

JM: Everybody had to learn to speak a piece. Yeah. Of course as you went along, later years it got so you were doing, on Memorial Day, you were doing stuff like Lincoln's Gettysburg address. "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this

continent” I can give you the whole thing.

LK: I’m sure you can. Those things stick with you.

JM: They do. It is remarkable how well they stick with you.

LK: And it’s remarkable how much of this you remember. I am absolutely amazed.

LH: Yes. Yes, it is.

LK: This is wonderful. Anything special, anything special that happened during that first year of school that was unusual or that you specifically remember?

JM: Yes. This will amuse you. Long in late October, it was a cloudy day and it was cold, and we were sitting there in school in the afternoon, and of course I’m a California kid, I was sitting there looking around, all of a sudden it started snowing. I looked out the window and I said, “Miss Whittemore, what is that white stuff coming down?” It was snow. First snow I’d ever seen.

LK: Oh my, and you did it in school. Well now this, I believe, was her first year of teaching.

JM: It was.

LK: She had just gotten out of Keene Normal School that previous June and started teaching in September. So I gather that she pretty well had her act together and did a pretty good job of giving you a good foundation?

JM: She did a very good job. I was very fortunate. I had her and then I had Doris. Doris was a very serious person. And, she was really dedicated, but she was very strict also. She did her job and she did it very well, both she and Annie. I’ve got to hand it to them they really started us off well.

LK: Oh. So, so fortunate.

JM: Yup.

LK: I know at that time, if the teachers didn’t live nearby, sometimes they would board with the parents of the students.

JM: Well, I think Annie probably boarded at Atwoods.

LK: At Atwoods.

JM: Atwoods usually boarded the teachers because they were close by.

LK: So you got through first grade and then you did grades two through eight still at

Langley School?

JM: No. Two through five.

LK: Oh, all right.

JM: Then when I got to fifth grade they closed the school...

LK: They closed the school when you were in...

JM: and they put us all over to the North Wilmot School, and there I was entitled to transportation. So, Howard Atwood was the school bus contractor, so he used to take us to school. We had, oh it must have been ten or twelve kids in school.

LK: Who was the teacher then – did you tell me?

JM: That was Marjorie Pinard. She was Marjorie Ford in later years. Maurice Pinard's sister lived down in South Danbury, half way down. The next year I had Bernice Ulman, she was from New Boston. The last year I had Lorna Tibbetts who became Mrs. Amos Johnson.

LK: Tell me about what happened when you got ready for high school.

JM: When it came time to go to high school. Of course living up there in North Wilmot it was twelve to fourteen miles to Andover high school. Our folks got together with Fred Lajoie. And Fred had two, Lillian and Alice - the two older girls. And they had located an apartment down in Andover in the Robie House, which is the last house where you get to the railroad tracks on the right as you go down that street.

And, it was owned by a wealthy family because the interior was all hardwood oak woodwork that had little stained glass windows with designs in them and so forth on the second floor (inaudible). It had a full kitchen up there. So it was agreed that I would bring what food I could. They would bring what food they could. And, the girls would cook, and I would help with the housework and that sort of thing. And we stayed in that apartment. Mr. and Mrs. Robie had the place, the downstairs, the first floor. So that's the way we did the first year.

LK: You were a freshman in high school, right?

JM: I was a freshman. They were seniors. They graduated. So, what to do next year? Well, their son Freddie was a freshman, I was a sophomore, and, so my father and Fred Lajoie went downtown and they inquired around and they found a fellow by the name of Kenniston . He lived right across the river in Andover and had a big chicken house.

Out back of his house he had a brooder house, and for so much a month, I think around \$10 a month, we could rent the brooder house, so, that was what we did. We rented this

brooder house. We put in a sheet iron stove and we did have, I guess we put in a sink and a couple of beds, and a table, chairs and so forth and an old ice box. We went down there and we, Freddie and I, boarded ourselves. Our mothers would cook what they could for us. That would last us, you know, until maybe Wednesday. Thursday, Friday, we were on our own with what leftovers we might have.

CT: And how old were you at that time?

JM: Well, we, I was a sophomore, so I was fifteen.

CT: fifteen.

JM: He was fourteen. So we had to learn to cook. Quite often, of course, the end of the week you'd have leftover this and leftover that. So Freddie says, "I'm going to make a stodge." So he took everything, leftovers, put it all together, and put it all on the stove. Warmed up. We ate it! So that was our abode for that year.

So, we had a bunk up and a bunk down, upper and lower. We had a table. We had a little two-burner, one of these, remember these oil burning stoves? You burned kerosene in them?

LH: Yes.

JM: If you opened them up too much you had *beaucoup* soot and flames--we had that!

(Laughter.)

JM: We had a little sink, you know, and we lugged water from the faucet outside of his house. We had a little necessary house out in back of the chicken house. So, that was how we got through the...

LK: Through your junior year. Didn't it get pretty cold?

JM: Oh yeah we had a sheet iron stove and every week when the folks came down they'd show accounts for wood, slab wood and so forth, so we'd burn wood, we had a wood fire. Of course the darn fire would go out about 2 o'clock in the morning and so it would get pretty cold. But that's all right. That was how we went to school.

So, the last year I had my car. So I drove my car to school from home.

Lots of times, nights, I used to go with Morris Pinard, he worked for Stew McKensey in the store. And he used to deliver groceries to all the people around. They'd call up and they'd order groceries, boxes of them, and he'd take the little truck, and we'd go deliver them to different houses. East Andover, West Andover, all over town. I used to ride around with him and help him load the groceries.

CT: Did you have any jobs after school?

JM: Well this was one of them. I used to, I think I got 25 cents an hour or something like that.

LK: What year did you start Andover High?

JM: 1940. No, 1938 I graduated from grammar school at the North Road. That fall I went to Andover. I graduated in '42.

LK: Okay, so September 1938 you started at Andover. Okay

CT: That's quite a jump from Andover High School to Cornell. How did you...did you go to the university first and then Cornell?

JM: I went to the University, yes. And, I was a student at the University when I joined the Marines in December. Then the Marine Corps, they let me finish that year of school, and I didn't know what was going to happen; they wouldn't tell you.

Then in July of '43, I got orders to report to the Fargo building in Boston to the Reign Office down there, so I did. There was a whole bunch of guys coming in. They loaded us on a train, didn't tell us where we were going, and the next thing I know we were in Grand Central Station looking all around.

They let us back on the train. We wound up in Ithaca, New York, Cornell University. There was a Marine detachment; there were about 300 of us. They housed us in a couple of fraternity houses that they had commandeered from the fraternities I guess. And that was where we stayed.

LK: Do you remember any of the teachers that you had at Andover High School?

JM: Oh sure. George Corson. He was in headmaster in later years. He was a shop teacher to start with. Randolph Howell. He gave me a private course in solid geometry over at his house when he was disabled with asthma so bad that he couldn't work. Very nice guy.

Then there were two Jewish men from New York, Samuel Dietch and, I can't remember his first name, Mr. Kaufman. They were the math and science teachers. Thelma Dearmond was the home economics teacher.

LK: What courses did you take? Did you take a college prep program or...

JM: No, just general courses.

LK: General? So you took shop?

JM: Shop, science, math. I had these private courses from Mr. Howell in solid geometry, plain geometry, and that sort of thing. Algebra. Advanced algebra.

LK: Oh, you got a very broad education at Andover High School. Very comprehensive.

JM: Well they did a good job.

LK: Yup.

JM: Yup

LK: Yup. For sure.

LK: Now how many people were there in your class?

JM: We had 29 in that class. We were a fairly large class.

LK: I guess so! That was when you started?

JM: Yup. We didn't have very much attrition.

LK: You didn't?

JM: No. We lost, I don't know, two or three. We had a couple come in, so we graduated with about the same number we started.

LK: You graduated in '42?

JM: Yes.

LK: From what we can find out there was not any yearbook in 1942. With no yearbook, it was really hard to find this out.

JM: I can imagine it must've been. You didn't have a roster then.

LK: No, that's how come you had fallen through the cracks with us, because we did not know that you were in that class because we didn't have any documentation.

Do you remember the 1938 hurricane and how it affected you folks?

JM: Yes I do. 1938 I had a bicycle and I used to ride my bicycle over to the North Road School. That was my last year in school. When that hurricane came we didn't know anything about it. It was one of those evenings when it was muggy out and it was warm and so forth. In our little house we didn't have too good of ventilation, so my father opened the door, we had a screen door, we sat there and had our supper, and the door was open. I can remember him remarking something about "well it's kind of windy out."

JM: The wind was blowing from the east right over the roof of the house. Of course we

were, there was kind of a ridge behind us.

LK: That was in September wasn't it?

JM: Yes. So we didn't pay too much attention to it. The next morning I got up, I got ready to go to school, I got on my bicycle, and I started riding off. I went down by the church; turned right, and started down towards Fran Langley's.

I was going over Hobbs Hill Road, it was that way. Well, I got down into the woods and all of a sudden there were a couple of trees on the road. So I get off the bike and walk around through the woods with the bike and get back on it and I'm peddling along and all of a sudden there's a mess of trees in the road. So many that I couldn't get around them.

So what am I going to do? So, I said, "I guess I'll go back and see my dad" and so I went back and I said to my father, I said, "you know I can't get to school today," I said, "the trees are all filling the road down there and," I said "I couldn't get my bicycle through them.

So," I said, "I came home."

"Well," he said, "there must've been a pretty bad wind last night."

So then they checked the telephone, the telephone was dead. He said to me "yeah I guess there must've been..."

So that's how we knew we had a hurricane. Barely knew it, but it sure did some damage. There were places in the woods where there whole patches of trees that were just flat.

LK: I have heard that the Kimball place was pretty badly affected by it.

JM: They lost a lot of shingles, a lot of roof, and so forth. Yeah. Dad worked up there afterwards. Charlie Abbott came down and got him asked him to come and help and so forth.

LK: Tell us about Mrs. Kimball and Charlie Abbott.

JM: Yup.

LK: Mrs. Kimball lived at Big Breezy. I understand that Charlie Abbott was her chauffeur. Is that correct?

JM: Yes. Charlie was, I guess he was kind of an orphan child or something. He came to them as a teenager. I would expect that probably at that time Mr. Kimball was living. After Mr. Kimball died, Charlie kind of became her major domo, or left-hand man or right-hand man, chauffeur, roustabout, general helper, advisor, you know, that sort of

thing.

If there was anything being done, any work being done by other employees, he supervised it. He was also her chauffeur. He had a cabin identical to Mrs. Kimball's cabin, right next to it up there. And his wife and his two daughters -they lived in that cabin.

So, wherever Mrs. Kimball went, Charlie drove her in the Cadillac. At first when they first moved in, they had a, I expect it must have been around a '28 or '29 Cadillac. Then they bought a '34. I think. And then in '30 '37 or '38 she bought a big Buick, the biggest Buick they made. Huge thing. I remember Charlie was a very conscious individual. Every corner he came to he'd blow his horn.

So you'd hear this horn tooting all the way down by Fran Langley's and you knew Charlie was coming with Mrs. Kimball's car.

LK: So, even after her husband died she was able to continue living up there...

JM: She lived in Brookline Mass. in the wintertime and they moved down there. Charlie and his family moved down, his girls went to school there and so forth.

LK: When I spoke with Fred this morning, he said he had heard stories about how they plowed the road. He said the road was very steep and he said to ask you about how they went about plowing out your house in the wintertime.

JM: Well, used to have what they called the Back Road. You went by the church, heading towards Piper Pond. Now, as you get up there, you would cross a bridge, then you come to Hannah Hill Road goes up into Fowler Town. On the left was our Back Road. That road went around and it came out right in front of our buildings up on the hill. The grades were pretty easy, so they used to go around that way with the plow and plow that out and then they plowed the hill downhill. They never plowed Tewksbury's house.

The first year we were there, they had an old wooden plow made out of planks that they dragged around with three teams of horses. That was 1930-31. That summer George Stearns worked all that summer building the plow and he built it out of wood all bolted together with two-by-sixes I believe. He had wings on it. He had a nose on it, a V-nose, and it was a kind of a frame, and there was cranks to move the wings up and down. And, they used to put 3 or 4 teams of horses on the front of that thing and the horses would wallow through the snowdrifts and plow roads.

Well they dragged that around for a couple of three years. I think it was around '33 or '34, the town voted to buy a tractor and a plow. So they bought a 3-track tractor and a Sargent plow. The tractor cost \$5,000 and the plow cost \$3,000. The plow had two stations on the sides of it with little cranks to crank the wings up and down. It also had another one in the center of the windows to crank the nose of the plow up and down, which was the vent. and it was shared with the driver.

The first crew was three men on the back, one man driving, and an assistant driver in the front. Five guys. Well, I guess the selectmen decided this was a little expensive. So, the next year they cut the crew down. They wound up with two guys on the back, one guy in the tractor.

CT: I remember that. I remember the old 3-track.

JM: And, uh, that old tractor was pretty good. It did a good job, but every once in a while Jack Laughy used to run it. He'd get up on Kearsarge Mountain and he'd take the clutch out.

JM: He burned the clutch out and he'd be he'd be three-four days up there putting in the thing. (Laughter.) The rest of us, we went without.

LK: What happened in mud season?

JM: We stayed home.

CT: Not much.

(Laughter.)

JM: You didn't go anywhere.

## **CREDITS**

Memories of Wilmot  
Presented by  
Wilmot Historical Society

Featuring Jack McAuliffe

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