

Barbara Sanborn Transcript

Note: Two interviews were recorded by Wilmot Historical Society volunteers and made into one video. The first interview with Barbara was filmed on October 12, 2018 at Barbara's house on Pancake Street, and the second interview was on May 5, 2019 at Lindy Heim's house at 55 Campground Road. Long-time friend, May Jones, was at both interviews.

Memories of Wilmot with Barbara Sanborn

After living in two other locations in Wilmot Flat, from 1963 to 1966 Barbara and her husband Paul purchased the current post office building and moved her family into the top floor. Her husband Paul served as the Postmaster and Barbara ran the Sanborn Village Store on the first floor. In this documentary Barbara tells stories of being adopted at a young age, raising her family in Wilmot, and her love of quilting.

Lindy: Hello. I am Lindy Heim from the Wilmot Historical Society, here with Judy Hauck [videographer], to interview **Barbara Sanborn** and **May Jones** to chat with them about their lives in Wilmot. The first chance we had to chat was last fall [October 15, 2018] at Barbara Sanborn's house on Pancake Street.

Barbara: Every town practically had a Grange Hall, because the entertainment feature was there, and they'd put on movies, you know, for kids. The Grange itself is a whole institution. It was a beautiful functioning thing. And they would show quilts.

I made quilts. I had to bring my quilts over, and we had a quilt show. At the end of the summer they had canning shows. You brought food that you had processed, and they won prizes. The biggest pumpkin or the biggest this or...

Grange encouraged people at home growth of your own produce, and they continued that theory. I don't know what they do now, but it was what you can grow, and how you feed your family.

May: And at the end of the season, they usually had an auction for all the vegetables and stuff that were in there.

They couldn't sell or do anything [with the vegetables] they put there. Then they'd have an auction, and everybody would bid on them and whatever. Then they'd go home with their vegetables.

Barbara: Yeah. But the Grange was institutionalized in the sense that it provided a certain depth of entertainment, which was appreciated by families; mostly families.

May: They used to have bid whist games.

Barbara: Yeah. Yup.

May: Card games and stuff.

Barbara: And they always ran a Ladies Sewing Group that made things for sales to promote the churches or whatever organization they were. And those funds did. The Baptist Church here on Village Road—the original one burned and then another fire later. The one I knew as a child...that one burned. And so, the one that is there now I didn't know anything about, because they rebuilt it when I wasn't around. The sewing group raised money to help rebuild the inside—like the chairs and the benches and things like that. So, the Ladies Aid, the group that was originally a sewing thing, they raised funds to help. And that's what some of these groups were for – to help.

Lindy: So, the Ladies Aid, I know, was begun in the 1800s...

Barbara: Yes

Lindy: ...and has been running continuously since then. In the beginning they were raising funds to help rebuild that Baptist Church?

Barbara: Yes, yes! And, of course, it wasn't much, but then the cost of building wasn't as much as you think of it now. It wouldn't be two hundred fifty thousand dollars to put up that structure. It probably didn't even go to one hundred thousand. It was probably closer to fifty thousand because you had volunteer labor.

May: Just like the fire house.

Barbara: And then you had timber companies that had reaped timber from your own lands and stuff. They don't do that now.

Lindy: The plays that you talked about, they often were fundraisers as well?

Barbara: Yes, oh yes! We did those for years. Freedom Acres...the girls you know up on the mountain, Donna [Niles] and Kay [White]. Kay was the director of most of them, and I was her stage manager. I did all the work. Then I did a couple without Kay, because you know, we get older. So we had fun. We raised a lot of money with the ticket sales and then we put out a little booklet with advertisements from all the companies local. And if anybody had the job —like, if May was working somewhere—she'd get her boss to contribute, and everybody was in there. And it was nice. Those funds...you paid for that...and then the admission funds, plus hilarious entertainment.

May: Oh boy – and just amongst ourselves.

Barbara: Yes.

Other things went on in there [the WCA building] too. They had the little library in one section of it.

But also, anybody could put on anything, and we'd all go. The whole neighborhood would go, because it was so interesting. That's when it was 700 and 900 [the estimated population].

We all knew each other or, if you didn't you knew that her grandfather was so-and-so or her mother was so-and-so, you did know them, because there were relationships.

We never lacked for entertainment. It never occurred to anybody to say, "oh, we don't have anything to do." Nobody was ever bored, because everybody was busy. You had to do all your family things, your children, and so forth.

And now, of course the kids are inside. That's what I meant – you don't see kids [she closes her fists and points her thumbs upward, jiggling them as if she is playing a video game] – because they're not outside. If they're inside doing something, which is doing their homework on the computer, this is fine, I understand it, but we miss seeing them.

Lindy: So back to that building where you put on the plays. What was the function of the first floor, because the productions were on the second?

Barbara: Well that [on the first floor] was a big dining room and big kitchen. They put on a lot of meals there. Oh yes. They had a library in one corner, and so forth...

May: Pancakes breakfasts and everything else went on there.

Barbara: Yeah. All kinds of stuff went on in there, and it was beautiful. Everybody went. I don't care what group it was.

Lindy: Were kids included in the production?

Barbara: Oh yes. My Judy was in one. Andrew Cioffi, of Cioffi's Restaurant, was in one of them. So, yes if we needed a kid – oh God the kids would be thrilled to death with the grown-ups, going up there and rehearsals with all these grown-ups. Oh, they loved it.

[Transition to the next interview at Lindy Heim's home on Campground Road on May 5, 2019.]

Barbara: My name is Barbara Laughy Sanborn. Laughy was my maiden name, and I was born in Wilmot on what is now Village road in the village. And my mother had ten children all together, and my father had left my mother, you know how they do, and left her with no income. So most of us children were put on the state welfare system; I was a foster child. I was alone in a home, and the other kids were kind of bunched up in homes. So I actually was the only one that felt abandoned, in the sense that the home I went to, I had no relatives or anything. I was there for ten years, and then I ran away when I was 16 and came back to Wilmot, because the woman who had adopted my mother was still here, and so I came to live with her.

My mother's name was Lena Mae and she was born a Blanchard in Vermont, but my so-called grandmother was a Morey here in Wilmot. She was married to a Morey in Wilmot. Then she went to Vermont and adopted my mother from a home, an orphan's home in Vermont, and brought her here. I had tracked my mother finally in my 30s. I went to Vermont, and I found the home where she was placed by her father. My mother had lost her mother, and the father just turned the kids over to an orphan's home. He just went on his way. Eventually, they [the home] adopted out those children, and I found some of my mother's brothers and sisters—not to get well acquainted. I just located them. But at least I did find where my mother came from. That started me working on genealogy. I love genealogy.

Meanwhile, my mother had passed when she was forty-two—in 1945. I had known that, but I had not met any of my brothers and sisters in all those years. I finally located some of them, and it was interesting, because we weren't raised together, so we were different—like cousins that all have different ways of coping.

Then I met Paul, who lived two doors up, and we were married we were eighteen. We were married for sixty-two years and had three children in Wilmot. I have five grandchildren, all born in Wilmot, and all happy and well-educated and doing their thing in other states. And wonderful, wonderful.

Lindy: Do you mind telling me your age today?

Barbara: No, I am 86, last February. And I love it when they say, “give me your birthday date” —2-4-33. I mean it's a great thing to remember, and I can always remember it.

Now in Canada, my cousin took us all out for a reunion in 1993 to meet some of the old cousins, and they pronounce it [her maiden name], “Locky” [Law-khee] like a Scottish “Locky.” They tried to get us to change it [from “Laffy” as Barbara's family pronounced it], but my grandfather immigrated into Canada from Ireland, and he's the only one out of their 12 children that came to the states. The rest went across Canada, and all stayed there and built whatever. Of course, you give them your name, and somebody says, “what's your name?” and he'd spell it, and they'd say “Laughy.” They never said “Locky.” We didn't know that it was pronounced that way until we got to Canada. Beautiful people up there.

[Laughy, pronounced Laffy, is Barbara's official maiden name. When her family immigrated to the states the spelling was a guess, as was often the case. She is saying that in Canada her name is pronounced *Law-hee* and in Scotland something like *Lock-key*.]

Lindy: So you have Canadian heritage for sure?

Barbara: Yes. Well, it all came from Ireland. My great-grandfather immigrated to Canada with all his family, and they built, and you know. We saw places with names on them, and it was wonderful.

I lost a little of the abandonment feeling, that I had a lot of family out there, even though I didn't know them all. But I didn't feel quite so bad. But every once in a while the little girl in me still feels abandoned.

May: Well, we love ya!

Barbara: You never really get over some of the early things, so I made sure my children never felt abandoned. And my grandchildren, I took care of all of them. I babysat them all, because I didn't want them to feel abandoned, anywhere.

Lindy: That was a tough start.

Barbara: Yes, it was, but what it gives you is a better thought of how families should be and how my children should be, and my grandchildren.

Lindy: You shared some pictures with the Historical Society...

Barbara: [1st photo] This was a little house we lived in called *By-A-Rock*. All my children were born there. I think it's still called *By-A-Rock*.

[Photo 1: Paul Sanborn on ladder at their *By-A-Rock* house. When Barbara and Paul purchased this house there was no indoor plumbing – they had an outhouse. Now owned by Barbara Carrier.]

Barbara: [2nd photo] That's another Sanborn house. We moved up there when Judy, the third child, was a baby. It was painted like a grey. My in-laws had owned it at one time, so when it came for sale again we grabbed it. Paul remember being there, and we loved it.

[Photo 2: house on the corner of Shindagan and Village Road; facing Village Road. After Barbara and Paul left *By-A-Rock* they bought this house. Now owned by Amy Gignac and Justin Ferren.]

Lindy: Where was it located?

Barbara: Right there in the village. And we lived there until we bought the store and the Post Office, next to the Community Center.

Barbara: [3rd photo] Oh and that's my barn on Pancake Street. That's where we had the animals. We raised sheep and chickens and pigs.

[Photo3: Barbara's Pancake Street house and farm; purchased in 1966.]

Barbara: [4th photo] There's my daughter Judy. The sheep loved her. One was a ram with curved horns, he loved Judy!

[Photo 4: Judy, Barbara's daughter, Judith Sanborn Shedd, at the Pancake Street farm. Now owned by Elizabeth Harper and David Patrick.]

Barbara: [5th photo] That's my firstborn grandson Melvin, in my garden out back, learning how to walk in the rows between the veggies.

[Photo 5: Melvin, Barbara's grandson, in her garden on Pancake Street.]

Lindy: So when you lived at the store you lived upstairs?

Barbara: Yes.

Lindy: And what was that like?

Barbara: Terrible. Well sometimes it was wonderful. We'd have people walk in at all times of the night. If they were out of gas, well, you'd have to help them.

[Photo 6: Sanborn Village Store and the Post Office. After the house on Shindagan/Village Road they bought this place and ran the Store and the Post Office from 1963-1966.]

Lindy: What are your favorite stories of the Sanborn Store?

Barbara: My husband was the postmaster. And he went fishing for a long weekend. I was left with my three kids and the store and the Post Office, and I wasn't really thrilled. Peter was a teenager, probably 16 or 17, and he would come in to help me. He worked for us part-time.

I was really hustling around one day and probably not very friendly to anybody working for me. So, I said to Peter, "where's my broom"? And he says, "you're riding it."

Lindy: Barbara you are leaning against one of my favorite possessions, which happens to be the Bicentennial quilt that was raffled off during our big celebration here in Wilmot in 2007, which I was lucky enough to win. I believe you are the sole person who made it.

Barbara: Yes, I did, and it was just some scraps that I had. I love scrap quilts because you get the variety of color and you take the pattern and you could do anything with it. And then you do the hand quilting afterwards—after you put the layers together—and this is all done by hand. It was just a wonderful thing to do. I loved it. I was at peace with the world when I was quilting.

Lindy: And what is this pattern called?

Barbara: This is called a *Nine Patch*, but it [actually] is a twelve patch. It basically is a nine patch as it started out three-by-three, and then I just made it bigger, so it's a four-by-four. But it's called a *Nine Patch*.

Lindy: We're gonna call it an "expanded" Nine Patch.

Barbara: Yes, very good, yes. And the quilting part, you just make it up. You take a piece of something and you draw around it with pencil and then you just quilt around it.

I raffled another one that same day and Mary Gutsell won it, and that was the sunshine little girl with a hat. And that was wonderful. Then for the Pine Hill Cemetery I did three, because we were trying to clean the old stones and repair some of the old stones, and our committee was very busy working at the stones, and it raised the necessary money that we could do that.

My mother has been buried there since 1945, she was forty-two when she died and I was twelve, so I very much like that cemetery. I have two brothers that are buried with her. That was my special place, that cemetery with my mom, as a little girl. And even as a twelve-year-old, I knew it. And always when I ran away and came back to Wilmot, that was the first place I went.

Lindy: So these two brothers were two of ten kids?

Barbara: Yes. Yes. Well one was a baby, one was nine-years old, and then my older brother, the firstborn, John W. Laughy Jr., was in the Navy, and he was killed and then he was brought back too, when I was 15. Shortly after that, when I was 15½, I left the foster home and came to Wilmot and went to Andover High School and finished my education.

Lindy: How long do you think it took you to make a quilt like that?

Barbara: People ask me that. Well, you don't sit down and work twelve hours a day on a quilt. You put your vegetables on to cook, and you go over here and you're quilting, and then when they're done you fix your supper, and then you back over here and you quilt. It's probably six to eight weeks dedicated. That's your main thing you're doing. You're not painting a room, to take up a lot of your physical time, you're sewing. I have tons of materials still.

I did the Pine Hill Cemetery genealogy, because we had a lot of trust funds. They weren't in the names of the people that were buried there. So it would be like Seth Thomas for instance, but his it was his daughter who was married to a Mackenzie that was buried there. So see, it didn't make sense, so I had to go through the whole thing, figure out who they were, what family the girls came from, because genealogy is based on males. It's the male's names. The poor ladies, once they get married, they're—you know—so I had to track them down that way, and I did. So we found all the trust funds and who they covered, so that if a stone gets broken, that trust fund might help pay for that stone.

Lindy: Now, you and Judy Rayno helped put the pieces together for the...

Barbara: Yes, Luan Clark actually brought it to me and said, I had so much going on at that time, so I asked Judy because she's also quilt-gifted, and she said sure she'd do it. So we picked out the material and she'd shape them up, because everybody had made each square, and they were different sizes. People made a little bit bigger, a little bit smaller, so she had to reshape everything so they were the same size to fit.

Lindy: Then you two picked out some fabric to bind each of the squares.

Barbara: Yeah, and it was beautiful – and it went with the old [pieces].

The only thing that she did that disappointed me was the names were on pinned little pieces of paper with a tiny, tiny pin way back, and she took them off and then embroidered their names. She threw the papers away. But I wanted them. So when she got all done I said, “where are my papers?” And she said, “Oh, I threw them away.” I said, “Oh! Oh! Oh!”

Lindy: That is considered the Bicentennial quilt, but it was actually a gift for the Clark family a long time ago.

Barbara: Yes

Lindy: Then it was put together for the Bicentennial in 2007 by Barbara and Judy. The Bicentennial one and the Kay Butler one have been stored archivally now by the Wilmot Historical Society. We have directions on how often we can bring them out of storage, which is only two months out of the year. [as a preservation caution]

Barbara: Kay Butler’s quilt had been used in the family, whereas the one that we did, Judy Rayno did, is all new pieces – new old pieces. So it hadn't been used, didn't need repair. But Kay Butler’s did, because it had been a family quilt from her grandmother.

Lindy: It actually had cutouts at the corner of the bed stand, which is an odd shape. Doug McDonald was kind enough to build us a stand that has been polyed [polyurethane finish] so it won't leach any wood resins on it. We have white cotton gloves, so all of us are going to, when we attend that meeting, treat it archivally like we've learned. And we will be able to see and even touch up close with those gloves on, those embroidered names.

Also, Luan Clark from Andover [donor of the family quilt to Wilmot Historical Society and member of the family who put the quilt together] has provided us with pictures¹ of almost all the people who signed that quilt.

Barbara: Widow Sanborn, the old Sanborn lady, lived in my [farm] house because there was an old, old deed to my old farm that we had, and it was to a Widow Sanborn and it was her. And she was one of the ladies that signed the quilt. And the Clark family lived up the road, just two houses up.

Lindy: Yes, most of the signatures² are actually from widows [of the Wilmot Baptist Church]. I think it’s called “Friends and Family Signature Quilt.

¹ Lucinda Sanborn 1883 – Believed to be one who started the quilt by asking friends and family to contribute squares. Lucinda Fernald (1831-1906) lived in her home on Pancake Street in Wilmot.

² Additional resources: *Wilmot Friends and Family Signature Quilt* and *Signature Quilts of the WHS*.

Barbara: Yeah. I had to laugh they wouldn't call her by "Mrs." she was "the widow." That's how they've termed widows in those days. Evidently it lowered her esteem somewhat, because being a widow was not a "Mrs." any longer.

Lindy: So are you still quilting?

Barbara: Somewhat, yes, but I'm losing some of my good vision for colors and my hands aren't as nimble as they were.

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Credits

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Photography

The Congregational Church of Wilmot, New Hampshire

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WilmotNH_CongregationalChurch.jpg

Family Signature Quilters

Courtesy of Luan Clark

Music

Fresh Air Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com)

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