

Built in 1916



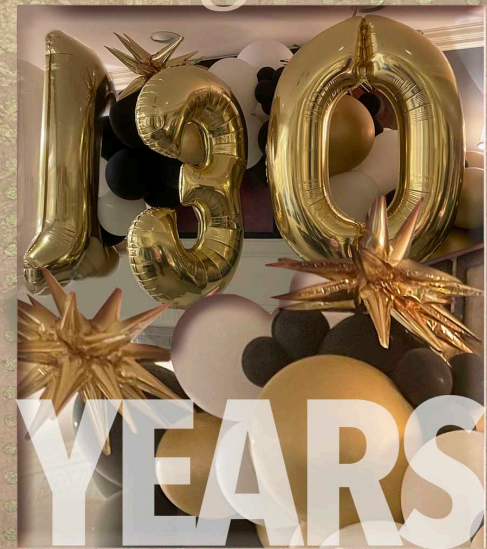
est. 1893



2023

Wenham Village

Wenham



YEARS

Society

Improvement

2023 Annual Report

The year was 1893. Queen Victoria was still on the throne of England and Grover Cleveland occupied the White House. The times were not good and a severe financial panic had gripped the country. Just ahead was the new, unknown 20th century.

A small group of women met and formed the Wenham Village Improvement Society. Neither the type of activity or the name, which sometimes brings a smile, was at all unusual in 1893. There were many such groups, only a few of which have survived.

**Among those that did, very few have had the stamina and spirit of WVIS. That is why we are so proud to be celebrating our 130th anniversary.**

*Dear WVIS Members and friends,*

**It is my pleasure to share with you our 2023 Annual Report, highlighting the work and contributions to the town and residents of Wenham, made by The Wenham Village Improvement Society over the past 130 years.**

The Wenham Village Improvement Society (WVIS) worked tirelessly in 2023 to support our mission. For those unfamiliar with our mission, I will share it here as it is laid out in our bylaws.

- ▶ Awarding educational scholarships to Wenham students;
- ▶ Maintaining the property owned by the Society;
- ▶ Supporting the Wenham Museum;
- ▶ Providing recreational, social, and educational programs for all Wenham residents;
- ▶ Awarding grants to local schools, town departments and non-profit organizations which serve the town;
- ▶ Preserving the natural beauty of Wenham.

In 2023, the WVIS dispersed \$10,000 to deserving Wenham graduates. Since its inception in 1951, the WVIS has granted over \$700,000 in scholarships!

The WVIS continued maintenance of the Tea House campus, which includes the Wenham Tea House building, Tea House Playground and Monument Street tennis and pickleball courts. The courts were recently resurfaced in 2022, thanks to generous CPC funds, and were full of activity this past season.

We take pride in supporting the Wenham Museum, which was under the WVIS umbrella until the Museum became its own nonprofit in the early 1950s. We granted the Museum \$25,000 in funds to support the launch of Camp Whirlygig, a brand new camp geared to young campers which fosters fun, friendship and curiosity.

The WVIS brought our community together in March to celebrate our 130 year history at our annual meeting, and at a lively pickleball and tennis event in May. We continued to support Community House concerts, the HW Pride Picnic and the League of Women Voters' Volunteer Fair.

In addition to fulfilling our stated mission, we underwent an extensive tenant search and are thrilled to welcome Plat du Jour to the Wenham Tea House!

The WVIS is a 100% women-led, all-volunteer organization founded in 1893. We are one of the country's few remaining improvement societies. We are looking forward to more great work in 2024. Join us!

*K. Sleeper*

Kristin Sleeper, President



# The Wenham Village Improvement Society was founded on April 8, 1893,

1 8 9 3

to undertake civic and philanthropic work by private

effort, "making the society a power for the best good of the town."

The Society **incorporated** December 31, 1913

In May **1912**, the **first Tea House** emerged with the aim of generating funds to **sustain the society's endeavors**. Miss Burnham assessed the cost to put the Old Harness Shop "in condition" at \$150 (\$4,600 adjusted for inflation), along with a monthly rental fee of \$5 (\$153). In its inaugural year, the Tea Room yielded a profit of \$500 (\$15,388), while the Exchange, serving as a place for Wenham and regional residents to consign their goods for sale, earned \$1371 (\$42,196).

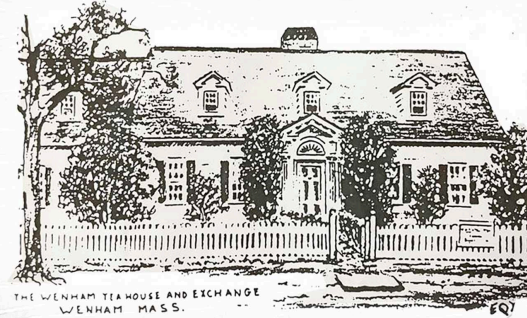


In establishing the Society, it was moved and voted that **any woman of good repute** may become a member of this Society by subscribing to its "Constitution and By-Laws" and the annual payment of 50 cents (\$15).



**Mrs. Edward B. Cole (Adeline Cole)**, served the Society for 63 years on a multitude of the Society's committees, especially those involving community improvement. A memorial stone in her name rests at the corner of the Tea House.

## THE WENHAM TEA HOUSE & SHOPS



THE WENHAM TEA HOUSE AND EXCHANGE WENHAM MASS.

**1915**, Miss Burnham suggested a **new Tea House be built**. The Tea House as it stands today was sited on the grounds of the "old Tilton place." With the land costing \$2500 (\$75,421), Mrs. Magee said, "we do need the help and cooperation, not of the few but of every member of the Society."

**\$5000** (\$150,842) **was borrowed as a mortgage**, and \$1000 (\$30,168) was raised through bridge parties, rummage sales, musicales, teas, food sales, an old-fashioned dance, tulip sales and porch sales.

The "new" Tea House opened in September 1916. Cooking, basketry, sewing, home nursing, and hooked rug classes were held there. During the winters it served as a **Community House** used by the Red Cross and the Girl Scouts; for entertainment and as a center for war knitting work.



**1901** It was voted at Town Meeting, April 11, to allow **WVIS to rename streets**, except Main Street, and that new guide boards would be put up. This included 34 new guide boards and **15 boundary boards** which marked the town limits on all the main roads.

In the early years, the focus was on community beautification and improvement, planting trees and maintaining attractive grounds around the village. The WVIS introduced cooking, sewing and manual training in the schools, and raised the standard of books and service in the public library.

# JOURNEY

The WWIS local history committee which formed in 1907, became the Wenham **Historical Committee**, an official committee of the WWIS, in January 1921, headed by Mrs. Edward B. Cole. A quilt exhibition was held in the Clafflin-Richards house, *accompanied by the service of tea and old-time dainties in the candle-lit dining room.* When the **Clafflin-Richards house**, one of the oldest in Wenham, faced demolition, members of the Historical Committee, which later became the Wenham Historical Association, purchased the house then asked the WWIS to take ownership, feeling it should be owned by a public organization.

WWIS assumed the title in early December 1921, with the Committee agreeing to "maintain the antiquarian atmosphere of the house," and the committee's collections.



Wenham Tea House, Wenham, Mass.



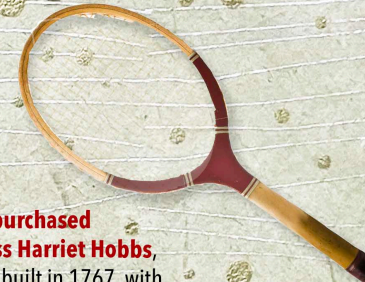
**The Tea House & Exchange** continued operation and expanded.

*excerpts, Boston Sunday Globe, January 20, 1991*

*"Years ago, long lines of black limousines pulled to the front of a white shingled home, just off the Old Bay Road. The ladies would step out, their hats, pearls, and their gloves were perfect. These late afternoon arrivals signaled the start of a most social occasion – teatime at the Wenham Tea House."*

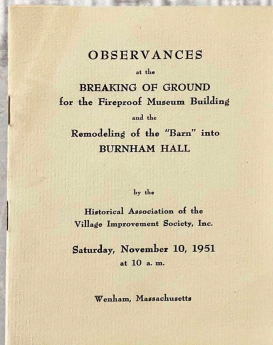
The Clafflin-Richards House

**1924** The **Sports Committee** started the **skating rink** in the swamp behind the Tea House. A winter carnival, hockey, and skating took place until 1970 when the town took over the property for a dollar a year and assumed the care. The first **tennis courts** were built in 1928 and 1934 for **the benefit of the town's residents**, then later a third was added in 1957. **1935** The **playground** was organized to provide summer recreation for all youngsters of the town.



Burnham Hall

**1935** The Barn, later known as **Burnham Hall**, was built to house the Historical Committee collections deemed unsuitable for the Clafflin-Richards house, and to expand the much needed space of the WWIS into a larger community gathering place. The WWIS Historical Committee had saved \$800 (\$17,792) over the years, and WWIS borrowed \$2000 (\$44,482) to get the project started. Timbers and braces were rescued from an old shed about to be torn down.



**1951** Ground-breaking ceremonies were held for **the future Wenham Museum** and for the remodeling of **Burnham Hall**, the former "barn" WWIS built in 1935.

**1952** The WWIS Historical Association incorporated under the name of the **Wenham Historical Association and Museum**. **WWIS transferred the deeds** for the Clafflin-Richards house, Burnham Hall, the land upon which they stood, and \$26,293 (\$305,135) for the building of a new fire-proof Museum building.



In 1944, the **WWIS purchased the property of Miss Harriet Hobbs**, an interesting house built in 1767, with the twofold purpose of preservation and protection. It presented to the town an attractive center around the church and because of its location, **completed the Tea House community unit** supervised by the WWIS.

*As with the tradition at the Tea House, so it was at the Hobbs House. Limousines arrived with passengers from Boston to shop the collections of fashionable apparel.*



The Wenham Village Improvement Society  
celebrates 130 years of civic and



philanthropic work  
made possible by the  
generosity of donors,

its members and its volunteers over the  
years, continuing to **make the society**

**“a power for the best good of the town,”  
and its residents.**

**WVIS is honored to be supported  
by the following:**

Sandra Ahman  
Anne & Curt Alboth  
Kirsten Alexander  
Bonnie Anderson  
Mary E. Anderson  
Anonymous (2)  
Michelle Bailey  
Anne Baker  
Barbara Black & Virginia Wallace  
Mark Bonin  
Natalie & Alexander Bowers  
Michelle Branciforte  
Roseann & Donald Brozenske  
Lana & Raymond Bucci  
Dianne Bucco  
Mary D. Buntin  
Janet Burt  
Brenda Campbell  
Aime Card  
Martha Carter & Mary Roickle  
Jennifer & Chad Caufield

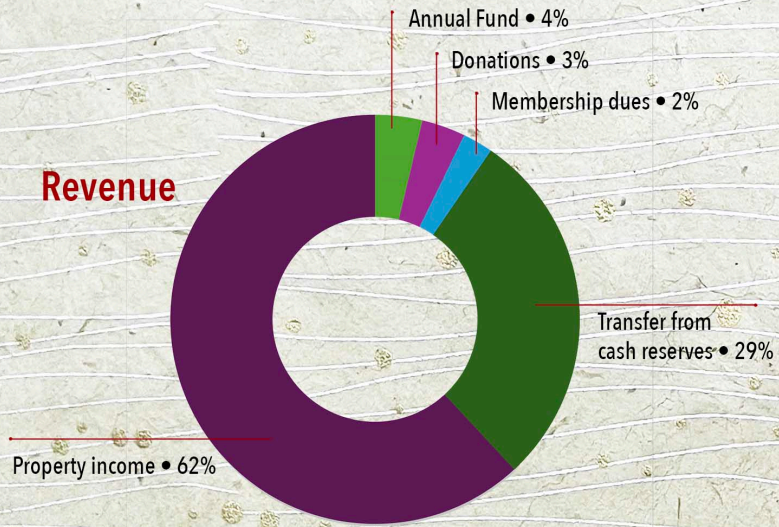
Suzanne O. Chansky  
Barbara G. Clark  
John Clay  
Julie & Peter Clay  
Barb Clayton  
Elizabeth Reynolds Colt (Buffy)  
Andra & Barry Consolazio  
Jacqueline M. Cooper  
Lisa Craig  
Althea & Jonathan Cranton  
Karen & Denis Curran  
Kristen & Gavin Danaher  
John DeLorey  
Amy & John Desimone  
Karen DiNapoli  
Dodge Family Charitable Foundation  
Juliana & Win Dodge  
Patricia Donahue  
in memory of Anthony & Edna Donahue  
Amy Drake  
James & Suzanne Dugan  
Charitable Fund

Deborah Evans  
Catherine Felton  
Joanne Frascella  
Lucy Sprague Frederiksen  
Maira Fredrickson  
Edward Frick  
Kathleen Galligan  
Amy Goldberg  
Lauren Goldberg  
Michelle & Christopher Granese  
Catherine & Scott Harrison  
Marina & George Hatch  
Alison & Niall Hawkins  
Christina Holz  
Michelle Horgan  
Joanne Howland  
Nancy Hughes  
Louise W. Huntoon  
Carole M. Hutchins  
Tracey Hutchinson  
Barbara & Richard Ireland  
Diane & Richard Jones  
Carin Kale  
Wendy Kenny  
Young Kyoung Kim  
Margaret King  
Max King  
Susan Koenig  
LuBeth Kuemmerle  
Donna Kyrouz  
Melissa & Jason Larocque  
Brenda Lau  
Tuyet Lech  
Tracy Liphardt  
Aila Loring  
Rosemary K. Loring  
Mardi Lowery  
Patricia & Michael Lucy  
Beverly & Scott Mackintosh  
Joanne & Leo Maestranzi  
Joe Maher  
Letitia Manning

Anne Marchant  
Stephanie Mark  
Peggy McNamara  
Cynthia & Paul Mears  
Bethany Minich  
David Molitano  
Sylvia Mulcahey  
Ashley & James Murphy  
S. John Murray  
Karen & Matthew Nevins  
Kelly Newton  
Gail Novak  
Ann & George O'Shea  
Patricia O'Shea  
Elizabeth & Sam Otis  
Kathy Palermino  
Jane & Dean Pedersen  
Jennifer & Christopher Perkin  
Constance Perron  
Chris Petrou  
Stephanie & Richard Quinn  
Janice & Mark Rand  
Kathy Ricker  
Richard & Jean E. Roberts  
Jill Romano  
Dacia & Jeffrey Rubel  
Barbara Russell  
Lea Rutledge  
Janet Sacco  
Joanne Schade  
Dianne Silva  
Kristin & Eric Sleeper  
Robert H. and Mary L. Smallman  
Charitable Fund  
Jane & Randy Smolik  
Susan Sommer  
Amy & Thomas Starr

Elizabeth Stone  
Lauren & Lawrence Swartz  
Esther & Thomas Tanous  
Carol Townsend  
Kristine Trustey  
Jen Tymann  
Elizabeth Tyminski  
Daphne VanNest  
Teresa & Aaron Von Staats  
Roberta & Bill Wilson  
Karen Wootton  
Christine Zampell  
Megan Zorn

## Revenue



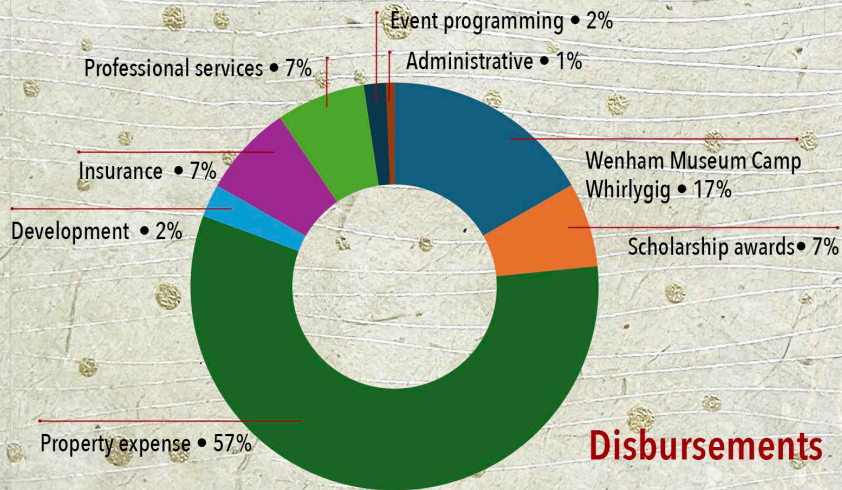
## Board of Directors 2024

### Executive Committee

- Kristin Sleeper, *President*
- Alison Hawkins, *Vice President*
- Aime Card, *Secretary*
- Maureen Maier, *Treasurer*
- Joanne Frascella, *Assistant Treasurer*
- Kirsten Alexander, *Membership*

### Standing Committees

- Kristin Sleeper & Alison Hawkins, *Building & Grounds*
- Kirsten Alexander, *Membership & Development*
- Joanne Frascella, *Finance*
- Peggy McNamara, *Historic*
- Max King, *Marketing & Outreach*
- Aime Card, *Nominating Programs, Open Position*
- Dianne Bucco, *Scholarships*
- Bethany Minich, *Member-at-Large*



## Disbursements