



The Marlow Historical Society's mission is to preserve and illuminate Marlow's history

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Winter 2026

Former students of Marlow's two-room village school replied with such enthusiasm to our Facebook request for memories that it quickly became apparent while formatting this issue that their stories and photos would completely fill the pages. These recent recollections, and those gathered from an audio recording of the 2006 "Tales Out of School #4" roundtable event, bring to life the rhythms of school days from the 1930s to the 1960s. They are interesting, informative, endearing, sometimes surprising, and often quite funny. We thank everyone who responded and provided us with the opportunity to feature these stories that *preserve and illuminate Marlow's history*.



TALES OUT OF THE MARLOW VILLAGE SCHOOLHOUSE

After describing school-related meetings, committees, finances, property lots, buildings, and districts dating back to 1772, Elgin Jones ended the chapter on schools in his *History of Marlow, New Hampshire* with a bit of philosophy:

*This then is the story of the school district[s] and schoolhouses. **What a story the walls of the latter could tell!** What value that would be to us who are now trying to envision the scholars in happy childhood and eager youth. Earnest students have passed in and out for a century and a half and have gone into the world to make for themselves a name—some written high, some low, each, however, living his life as best he might.*

One of those schools, of course, is the village school #4. At the time it opened in 1852, there were eight schoolhouses throughout town. One by one—from 1871 to 1920—the other schools closed, merging into district #4; the two-room school remained Marlow's elementary school until the John D. Perkins Elementary School opened in 1973.

The village schoolhouse was heated by wood stoves right into the 20th century, and there were once outhouses out back, but over the 121 years the school was in operation, there were great innovations in technology and service: the first automobile arrived in town in 1900, steam and hydropower-generated electricity brought power to the village starting in 1917, and running water was installed in the school—but not until 1950!

No matter when students attended the village school, it seems likely that the many "*scholars in happy childhood and eager youth*" shared universal aspects of school life: learning, hard work, teachers both kind and intimidating, friendships, play, and certainly even some doses of mischievousness.



And while the schoolhouse walls have not talked, these themes are echoed in stories we have been able to gather through storytelling events, emails, phone calls, and social media.

From the "Tales Out of Schoolhouse #4" potluck hosted and recorded by the historical society in May 2006 came memories spanning the decades from the 1930s to the 1960s, as told by former students Ron Gorges, Marie Hartwell, Joe Marcotte, Vic Reno, Charlie Strickland, and Barbara Strickland Clark.

More recently, Regina Clark, Geoff Estes, Ronald Lake, Ellen Parker Rhodes, Joyce (Champney) St. Lawrence, Jack Strickland, and Jim Strickland responded to a 2025 Facebook request for stories.

Laughter and fond memories abound in all these recollections.

The School

Charlie Strickland was a student in the 1930s when, "We didn't have many modern conveniences." He remembers feeding the wood stoves and going next door to Ivan Huntley's place to pump water from a well, haul it in, and fill large jugs for drinking. "Most always, you know, we had school, no matter what, even the hurricane of '38. We had no heat in the winter time sometimes."

Charlie added, "Most of us lived right in the village. We'd all go home for dinner—most everybody. There were very few people that came on the bus, and they brought their lunch . . . those kids would stay even though they were in the first and second grade. They'd stay all day. [In] the first grade and second grade, you went home in the morning recess . . . They had that big break in the middle of the day. You could nap and do all that stuff."

Ellen Parker Rhodes: "When I started school in 1956, my two sisters [and I] . . . were all in Mrs. Gill's room. I was in first grade, Sharon in second, and Coralee in fourth. The desks were the old ones with the fold down seats in the front. The day started with the Lord's Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Mrs. Gill would pick someone to hold the flag. Then everyone was given assignments for each grade, all math or writing, etc. Everyone was given a pencil, eraser, ruler, scissors, and colored pencils at the beginning of the year. Paper was passed around for each subject. In the summer I would help Mrs. Gill sort and clean, where I could get extra paper, workbooks and crayons to play school at home. There was a teacher's room off her room where supplies were stored. Coat hooks were out in the hall and bathrooms at each end of the hall. The boys were on the south end and girls on the north."

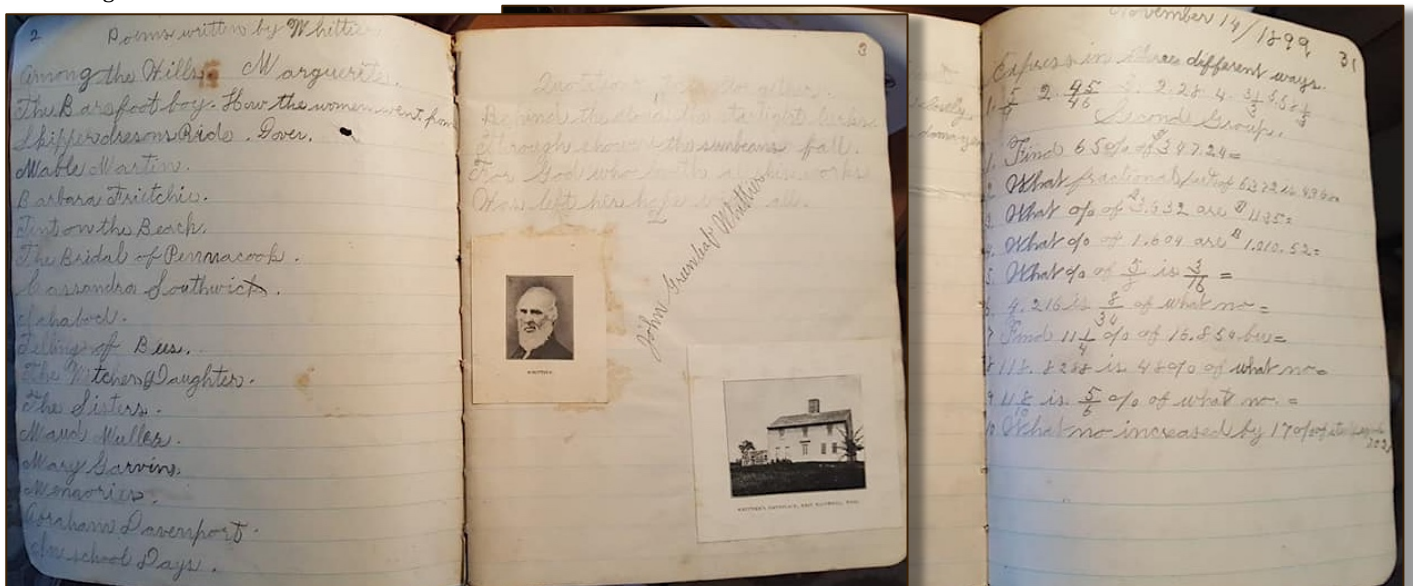
Geoff Estes, who attended 4th to 8th grades from 1957 to 1961, remembers that the "big room" for grades 1-4 was on the left and grades 5-8 were on the right.

Jack Strickland added that, "The Little Room at the school was so called because it was where the little kids were. It was actually the bigger of the two rooms!" He also remembered, "Off of the little room was a small supply room that also doubled as a time out room. That ended after Mrs. Gill caught Milton Davis eating the paste while on time out."

At least one former student could not wait to be old enough to join the other children at school. **Jim Strickland** texted: "When I was 4 or 5, I wanted to go to school so bad and be with the other kids. I had a small bicycle my grandfather [Berton Strickland] made me at his garage. I would ride that bike up to the school at recess time to play with the older kids. Then even during class time I would ride my bike back and forth in front of the school. The teacher reached out to my mom and asked that she keep me home! (Jim did eventually attend the school for all eight grades until going to Vilas High School in Alstead in 1960.)

Learning

When asked how teaching and learning was managed with so many grades together in two classrooms (the school included grades 1-8 until 1966 when students started to go to Keene after 6th grade), former students said they remembered listening "to what the older kids were doing."



Ellen Parker Rhodes recalls, "It was good with grade differences in each room as the older students could help the younger ones. We learned from each other and maybe learned to focus on our class."

Charlie Strickland explained that, "The two grades went together, like in fifth and sixth grade, that teach, like algebra. You had algebra one year . . . then you had geometry."

Marie Hartwell remembered a daily activity where Mr. Abbott would "put a diary on the board every day, the date, the temperature on Mount Washington; and he would write, and we'd have to copy it all into our notebook, and then we were supposed to add something on the bottom. I still have one if I could have found it, and I should have brought it. It's kind of boring, though, because we didn't write anything good."

Ellen Parker Rhodes mentioned that she still has her "every day weather charts from 1962 at the Marlow school."

Jack Strickland: "Mrs. Gill had dark wooden table up front by the blackboards. It was surrounded by little wooden chairs. It was the reading table where each grade went each day to take turns reading aloud." He added, "Typically in my years we had from 24-28 kids total in the room."

Jim Strickland recalled that he won a spelling bee in 4th grade which thrilled him.

Teachers

The teacher who was mentioned the most by former students, teaching over multiple generations, was **Mrs. Evelyn Gill. Vic Reno** declared, "I'd like to remember Mrs. Gill. I think a lot of people remember Mrs. Gill very fondly. She was an amazing person." **Regina Clark** commented, "I think every person that grew up in Marlow had Mrs. Gill for a teacher!"

In honor of her retirement, the Keene Sentinel reported on June 28, 1973:

After graduating from Keene High School in 1928 and Keene Normal School in 1930 Mrs. Gill taught a year in Charlestown and one in Marlow, then retired to bring up her family. She had married Edward W. Gill in 1931 and they have one daughter, Mrs. Darrell M. Flagg of Keene . . . She began teaching in Marlow again in 1944 and had been the school's principal for 15 years . . . Mrs. Gill also attended grades 1 through 8 in the Marlow school building.

Jack Strickland: "Mrs. Gill was also my dad's [Charlie Strickland] first grade teacher. She was only 17 at the time. She had not been to college yet. Took a sabbatical to go to Keene Normal school (Keene State) to get her teaching certification. She taught 4 grades, all subjects. No aid, no breaks. It was rumored she had a leather strap in one of her desk drawers for punishment purposes but I never saw it."

Joyce (Champney) St. Lawrence recalls, "I went to that school with my brother and sister. We had Mrs. Gill, the same teacher my dad had there too. That was about 65 years ago."

Ellen Parker Rhodes: "I had Mrs. Gill 1st through 4th. . . [She] lived just down the street and would walk up to the school. When the teacher spoke, all was quiet and we respected her. They would have a helper to stay and erase the chalk boards and what needed to be done at the end of the day. I stayed a lot!"

Geoff Estes remembered Mrs. Gill's strict side, recalling, "One day I was passing a note to Sally Sanders, or Roberta Rhoades, or a Parker sister. I don't remember what it said. Mrs. Gill caught me, made me bring the note up front and read it, then put it on the board. Then she told me to sit in the trash can next to her desk. It was terrible. Nobody ever forgot it!"

Several former students mentioned teacher **Marion (Truell) Sabin. Ron Gorges** shared: "Probably what I remember sticking my mind most was, I think I had Marion Sabin for four years that I was there. And I can remember, my first year would have been '41. And she came to school one morning and she was crying. And we learned that she had to say goodbye to her husband because he'd gone off to war. And I'll never forget that."

Charlie Strickland said, "Mrs. Sabin's first year she taught here was my last year up there. We kind of drove her kind of crazy there to start with."

8:30 AM 2:30 PM

Weather Record for Marlow N. H.

Date	Air Temperature	Wind Direction	Wind Speed	Sky Condition	Remarks
Oct. 15	50°	Southeast	Gentle Breeze	Partly cloudy	Sunshine 70 fallow
15	61°	South	Gentle Breeze	Clearer	Sunshine
Oct. 16	50°	Southeast	Gentle Breeze	Cloudy	None 24
16	67°	Southwest	Gentle Breeze	Clearer	Sunshine 24.5
Oct 17	59°	Northwest	Moderate Breeze	Partly cloudy	Sunshine 29.6 rising
17	62°	Northwest	Gentle Breeze	Clearer	Sunshine
Oct 18	36°	Southwest	Calm	Fair	Sunshine 29.8 rising
18	56°	Northwest	Calm	Cloudy	None
18	32°	North	Calm	Fair	Sunshine
18	65°	Southwest	Gentle	Fair	Sunshine
18	40°	North	Calm Breeze	Fair	Rain 29.40
18	58°	North	Calm Breeze	cloudy	Drizzle rising
18	50°	Southwest	Moderate Breeze	cloudy	Snow 29.45
18	32°	Southwest	Moderate Breeze	cloudy	Drizzle falling
18	32°	North	Calm	cloudy	Snow 29.4
18	40°	Northwest	Calm	Partly cloudy	Sunshine

Every day weather chart from 1962
Courtesy of Ellen Parker Rhodes



TEACHER HONORED — Mrs. Evelyn Gill, left center, recalls old times with some of 200 people at reception in her honor. (Photo by Hollis)

The Keene Sentinel, June 28, 1973

Barbara Strickland Clark shared: [I remember] "Mrs. Sabin . . . when she was Miss Truell. She was engaged to the fellow that ran the gas station She knew how much I liked music, and she took me home with her from school and took me to a music thing at college. I spent the night there and went back to school she was a very lovely lady."

Former students had mixed feelings about **Mr. Carroll Abbott** who taught grades 5-8 from 1948 to 1956. **Charlie Strickland** said, "One of the later teachers, he wasn't mine, was a Mr. Abbott they had up there. They hired him to come in and straighten things out."

Marie Hartwell had some unpleasant memories of Mr. Abbott: "He used to ridicule" her because her feet pointed inward. "I was so scared of him that I got so I'd go home . . . at lunch, and I just wouldn't . . . I didn't want to go back." She said her mother talked to him and, "he never made fun of me again. But I was sick to my stomach. I didn't want to go back there at all. He turned out to be alright. But we ridiculed HIM after a while."

Ronald Lake remembered **Mr. Hollis** in 4th through 6th grades. **Ellen Parker Rhodes** recalled **Mrs. [Dorothy] Wilson, Mrs. [Helen] Lynch, and Peg Stevens**.

Jack Strickland: "I had three teachers while in 8 grades; Mrs. Gill, 1-4, Mrs. Wilson, and Mrs. Stevens for two years each, grades 5-8."

Regarding Mrs. Wilson, **Joe Marcotte** recalled, "I won't say [she was] the worst teacher, but [she was] the one with the tighter hand If she liked you, you were golden. If she didn't, ohhhhh." **Ronald Gorges** added, "I did dream all the time, you know. If you didn't pay attention then, you know, they'd give you a crack. You could do that in those days."

Pranks and challenges with older students

The behavior of older boys in the 7th and 8th grades was sometimes difficult for teachers. **Vic Reno** remembered that after Mr. Abbott retired, "They were struggling to find someone that could handle the big boys in the big room. We were a tough group." He joked, "I mean . . . how many kids do you know [who] drive to school when they're in seventh and eighth grade?"

Charlie Strickland commented, "Mrs. Lynch. She straightened you right out. One of the best things to happen to you boys. The boys were just running wild up there before." **Geoff Estes** thought that Mrs. Lynch was mean.

Jack Strickland: "While I was in the little room they brought in a teacher named Mrs. Lynch to restore order in the big room. The story was that she took Dickie Thompson out in the hall and pushed him against the wall. His head hit the plaster wall and made a big crack in it."



Mrs. Gill and students - mid-1960s



Charlie Strickland remembered when he was a student: "The big room boys was to feed the two stoves. I'd say we were always fightin' which one would get the job each year. But they'd bring in the wood in the hall, and when the stoves needed tendin' to . . . we always used to try to THROW the wood right in, knock the bottom out of the stove, so we could go home early."

He also recalled that the "teacher always used to have an alarm clock. You'd always try and sneak up. The alarm would go off [when] it was recess time . . . [so] you'd sneak up and turn it ahead!"

Charlie's sister **Barbara Strickland Clark** added, "Charlie and Gordi used to get in a lot of trouble. I was in the same room with him once, and then once again, and I was so glad when he went to high school!"

Marie Hartwell told a story that her brother once shared that "some of the big boys" put a shotgun shell in the wood stove. "It would take it a while before it'd explode, you know."

Charlie Strickland added, "She talks about throwing shotgun shells in the stove. We used to take 22 bullets that had been shot. And take old wooden matches, cut off three or four heads of the matches. Stuff them in that 22 shell and crimp over the end . . . the panic bars that are on the doors, they got a little slot up there. And we'd put two or three of them [in] and the bells would [ring] when you'd go to recess, and BOOM and everyone'd run when they'd hit those things."

After much laughter, one of the men at the "Tales Out of School" event commented, "And you started the fire of 1941!", followed by one of the women asking, "Now you weren't one of those boys that they had to bring Mr. Abbott in for, were you?"

Charlie replied, "He came after. Long time after."

Lunch, Recess

Ron Gorges: "I do remember . . . school lunches could have started way back then [in the early 1940s] because at that time the government was giving stuff to the schools. I remember big cans of peanut butter. And peaches and butter. And big blocks of cheese."

Ellen Parker Rhodes: "We had a recess in the morning and milk to drink. Then lunch. I went home as we lived across the street. Afternoon recess we all went outside and played games. We could go all around the school house inside the fence. Some days we would walk up the road to the ball field on the other side of [Ivan] Huntley's house. There we would play softball. We had end of the year picnics there. We would walk up a path next to the road to get there. It was only a field, so we made our own bases to play ball. Between the field and the cemetery was an outcrop of rock ledges where we could also play tag around. That was long before the newer part of the cemetery was there."

Vic Reno: "We used to have snowball fights in the yard. You know, on the hill of snow. And, assuming it wasn't four feet of snow or something, we'd go up to the ball field in the fall and springtime and play. And I remember I would come back and I would stop and talk to Ivan [Huntley], who was sitting on his porch because he was so interesting."



Joe Marcotte: "It was, '62, '63, I guess, something like that. And it was in wintertime. What we used to do is take our clothes that we were going to wear to school the next day and fold them up and put them in the bed with us at the foot of the bed so the next morning [they] would be warm because we had no heat upstairs. One day . . . it was COLD! So I decided it would be a good thing, instead of getting in my long johns and everything, just to . . . leave with my pajamas that I had on [under my clothes]. So we went to school. We used to play king of the hill. And the only person that could take me down at that time was Billy [Willis]. And I was up there there just 'arr, arr, arr', doing what I do best. Here comes Billy! Well, he got me . . . and he pushed me, and I went over the fence. And when I went over the fence, I did not realize it, but I had ripped my pants. I walked around and came back in; [the other students] could see the little clowns on my pajamas. And they would NOT let me forget it."

Jack Strickland: "Recess was a fun time. Little room had recess from 9:45 to 10 and 1:45 to 2. Big room from 10 to 10:15 and 2 to 2:15. Lunch break was from 12 'til 12:45. Kids that went home to lunch couldn't come back on school grounds until 12:30, if I remember correctly. We played in small groups and some days played games that most of the kids played. One of the games we played was Rover Red Rover. We divided into equal groups. One group lined up, interlocking arms. They would yell, 'Rover Red Rover send Tommy right over,' picking one kid from the other group who would then charge the line and try to break through. If they were successful, they got to go back to their group; if not they became 'captive.' [One day] we were all lined up. 'Rover Red Rover send Julie right over!' (Julie Jackson, now Julie Pelletier). Julie smashed into our line, breaking through and continuing on to the chain link fence where she hit a post and broke off one of her front teeth. I don't think we were allowed to play that game any longer."

Jim Strickland: "I was fascinated watching Buzzy Sanders sketch and draw. There was a big tree in the middle of the playground that the kids played around (**Geoff Estes** also mentioned that tree). We played games like Red Rover and marbles. The kids in town, any that didn't ride the bus, had to go home for lunch. I would rush home, gobble down my sandwich, and rush back up to school before the required time. My mother was spoken to again."

Events and Graduation

Ellen Parker Rhodes saved many documents and photos from when she was a student at the village school, some of which she shared. She wrote: "Plays were put on every Christmas, and [there were] Valentine parties. We all made Valentine boxes and my mother made heart cakes for each room. The upper grades had dances and we could bring records we liked. Mostly rock and roll!" Ellen recalled a Christmas play that was about "Christmas in many lands." The whole school took part, and my mother made the costumes we wore."

Ellen also sent a picture of the 1964 "class will" and explained that, to add humor to the graduation, the teacher asked graduating students to create a will to pass down some of their classroom belongings or behaviors to the younger students. "The teacher thought it was a good way for each of us to relate to each other by remembering those little things. Some liked to talk a lot, borrow rulers, sit in certain places, etc. We each had to write what we would bequeath to a classmate. It's funny how I can remember and see us as we sat in the room looking at each other and coming up with the ideas we did. It made for an interesting graduation ceremony for our parents to hear. Also a lot of laughs. The class was small, so we all knew each other pretty well. Also it was our way of saying good bye!" *The will appears on page 6.*



1963 Christmas program
Courtesy of Ellen Parker Rhodes

Joyce (Champney) St. Lawrence also sent a photo and explained, "When we graduated from the 8th grade **Eileen Gendron** crocheted around a silver dollar and made it into a necklace. I still have mine. Those were the good old days."

There were even some brushes with fame!

Jack Strickland: "One of my earliest memories of the "Little Room" at the little red school house is when Virginia Sales (owned the Christmas Tree Inn at the time) brought Timmy's grandfather from the Lassie TV show [actor George Cleveland], and Smiley Burnett [Lester Alvin Burnett, popular American country music performer and a comedic actor in Western films] up to the school for us kids to meet! Virginia had occasional parts in the Andy Griffin show on TV."

Reflecting on the Marlow Village School Experience

One theme was clear from the shared memories: the Marlow Village School was remembered quite favorably.

Charlie Strickland: "I really did enjoy going to school because you had such a good time. And as I said, you would hurry up and get your own work done just so you could listen to the next group, and you were really involved in them. And I think we got a real good rounded education. But we did have a lot of fun too."

Ron Gorges: "I think there were a lot of people coming out of the school that were rounded. Did well."

Vic Reno: "You only go through a lot of these experiences once and it's hard to compare. I didn't have any other elementary school, but looking back on my long history of schooling, I loved to come to school in Marlow. It was a great experience. It was a great place to be. It was a great community. And we, in the little room, grades one through four . . . you could listen to what was going on. So you really had some advanced help from someone who was, you know, not beating you up at the time!"

Joyce (Champney) St. Lawrence: "School was only two rooms but you learned a lot from the other grades too. I loved it."

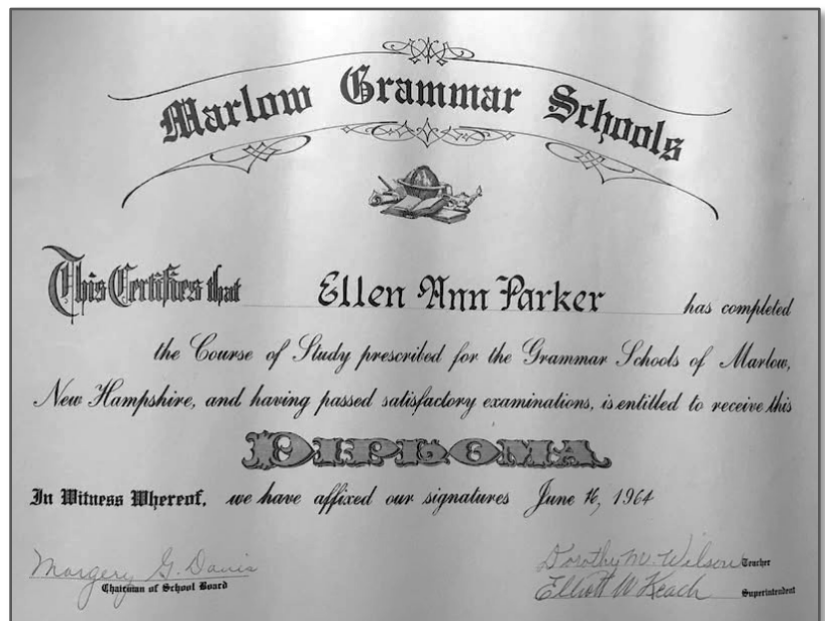
Ellen Parker Rhodes: "All are great memories and now with Facebook, some of us have reconnected."

Regina Clark: "I had some great times at that school."

We are truly grateful to all who shared their stories—they gave us some rich glimpses into what the schoolhouse walls might have said if they could speak!



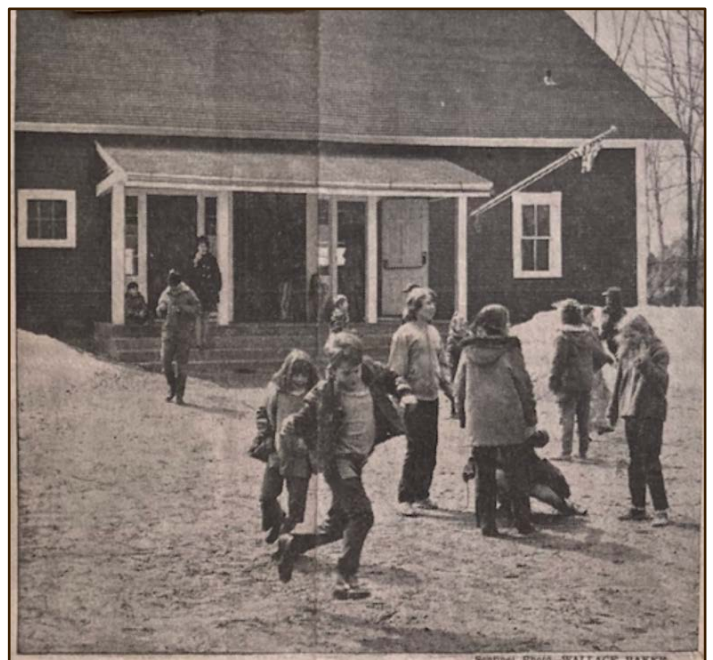
*Graduation gift - silver dollar pendant
crocheted by Eileen Gendron
Courtesy of Joyce (Champney) St. Lawrence*



*1964 diploma
Courtesy of Ellen Parker Rhodes*



*Robby Parker, George Sanders, and Shirley Sanders, 1964
Courtesy of Ellen Parker Rhodes*



The Keene Sentinel - April 6, 1972

Ellen Parker

CLASS WILL

MARLOW SCHOOL ***** CLASS OF 1964

We the class of 1964, do will and bequeath the following:

I Georgianna Coddling, will 10 pounds of my weight to Billy Fowler.

But don't get as fat as I did.

I Charles Andrews, will my ability to make the teacher holler, to George Sanders, even though he does a pretty good job of it by himself.

I Ellen Parker, will my ruler to Shirley Sanders. Don't try to get my name off. I had a hard enough time putting it on.

I Stephen McDougle, will my ability to get good marks in math to my brother Kevin, you'll need them, remember those hours after school?

I Lisa Aho, will my English book to Joe Marcotte. Remember the answers I underlined are in pencil.

I Georgianna Coddling, will my A's or F's to Kevin McDougle. Take your pick.

I Charles Andrews, will my old desk to Robby Parker. Hope you can fit all your things in it. I couldn't, but it's near the book case and perhaps you can get away with stuffing them in there. (I didn't)

I Ellen Parker, will my math book to Jack Strickland, You can start where I left off and good luck.

I Stephen McDougle, will my place in the back row to Henry Pletznor, don't let the teacher catch you talking. You'll need a good tall person in front of you.

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I Charles Andrews, will my assignment book to Robert Chambers, that is the one I never kept, If you can find it.

I Ellen Parker, will my straight A's to Robby Parker, That is the A's I never got.

I Stephen McDougle, will my old pens to Billy Willis, you might have to put new refills in them. So they will write.

I Lisa Aho, will my secret on how to keep ^{quite} ~~slight~~ slim to Cathy Perkins, although you don't need it yet.

Signed this sixteenth day of June in the year of our Lord 1964.

Witnessed by:

- (1) Magilla Gorilla
- (2) Mush Mouse
- (3) Woody Woodpecker
- (4) Yogi Bear

1964 Class Will
Courtesy of Ellen Parker Rhodes

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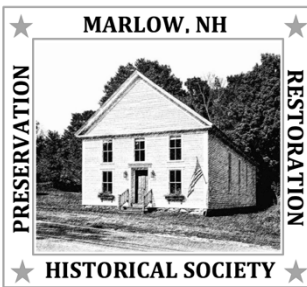
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Marlow Historical Society
Founded in 1976

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Help preserve local history
for future generations.
Please consider including
the Marlow Historical
Society in your legacy
planning.



1957 MARLOW PTA SUMMER CARNIVAL

Keene Evening Sentinel Wednesday, July 3, 1957

Marlow Carnival Nets \$46.45 Profit

MARLOW, July 2— The PTA carnival Saturday netted a profit of \$46.45.

Mrs. Frances Livesey, chairman, planned many novel features including spun candy for the children and the very popular Treasures-in-the-Sand and both attractions came in for a lot of attention from the youngsters. The food table, attended by Mrs. Merle Thompson and Mrs. LeRoy Mosher, was well patronized as were the pop corn and soda pop machines.

Charles Strickland supervised games for children during the afternoon and Mr. and Mrs. Frances Livesey ran a record hop at Grange Hall during the evening.

Serving on the committee with Mrs. Livesey were Mrs. Paul Burns, Mrs. Merle Thompson, Mrs. Linwood Gorges, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Strickland, Mrs. Hal Compton, Mrs. Gustave Zeller, Mrs. George Sanders, Mrs. Ernest Knight and Mrs. Ronald Henderson.

