

The Murdock-Whitney House

Janet Ouellette

There is a jewel at the corner of Front Street and Lincoln Avenue in Winchendon, Massachusetts. Rather than an ornament to be worn, it is an attractive reminder of the beauty of a by-gone era when businessmen and entrepreneurs would build houses not only as residences but as places of social importance. The Murdock-Whitney House is framed by an expansive porch on both the Front Street and Lincoln Avenue sides, giving it in today's parlance 'curb appeal'.

Recently, members of the Wachusett Writers and Poets Club enjoyed an hour and a half guided tour provided by Mr. Don O'Neil, President of the Winchendon Historical Society. He shared with the group the history of the house and its relationship with the industry in Winchendon during the early twentieth century. The original main portion of the house was built in 1830 whereas the addition was built in 1900. For both constructions, attention to detail was evident. Japanese vases adorn a dining room table while a leaded candelabra adds additional elegance to the lovely setting.

At the front of the house, in the music room, the original chandelier hangs in silent repose. In a corner there is a glass harmonica ready to produce delicate sounds for an adoring audience. The room features cherry wood and a pocket door which separates the room from a front hallway. The door has mahogany on one side and oak wood on the other side to match the wood in each room or foyer on either side of the door. Other fascinating touches could be enjoyed in each of the twenty-two rooms of the three story house. A second floor guest bedroom featured a display of fans from around the world, complete with an explanation of 'the language of fans'. On the third floor was a beautiful doll house with marvelous detail. Of particular interest was a large square bathtub in the master bath, one of seven bathrooms in the house.

Since the house now belongs to the Winchendon Historical Society, other rooms are reserved for various Winchendon interests. There are rooms dedicated to the high school, veterans, and toys and games produced in Winchendon during the manufacturing heyday. There are so many items to see, so many descriptions to read that one hour is too brief a time. Repeated visits are recommended.

More information is available at the Society's website.

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