

THE MILFORD HISTORIAN

Where Milford's Past Meets Milford's Present

FREE MILFORD NH, AUGUST 17, 2026 12 PAGES

Vietnam Memorial Honors Veterans

Most veterans memorials ask us to remember. Milford's new Vietnam Memorial also asks us to understand.

Tucked behind the town's World War II Memorial just off the Oval, the new monument isn't immediately obvious to passersby. Visitors have to step beyond the older memorial before discovering a quiet circular space where every wall, pathway, engraving, and date has been included with a purpose. Rather than simply honoring those who served, the memorial invites visitors to spend a few minutes exploring one of the most complicated chapters in American history.

Plans for a Milford Vietnam Memorial first took shape in 1999. Over the next quarter century, committees formed, plans changed, fundraising continued, and more than once it appeared the memorial might remain little more than drawings on paper. Today, after twenty-five years of persistence—and around \$150,000 in private donations—the memorial is finally ready to welcome visitors.

As committee chairman Jerry Guthrie puts it, the memorial has always had one central goal: "to tell the story of the Vietnam years."

Appropriately, the memorial is laid out like an open book. Its two granite walls resemble facing pages.



Jerry Guthrie and Adam Medlyn put in some volunteer elbow grease.

One tells the story of the war in Vietnam while the other follows events unfolding back home in America. Between them runs a bluestone pathway representing the Pacific Ocean. The walls separate at a 17-degree angle, recalling the 17th Parallel that divided North and South Vietnam. Even the walls themselves are divided, reflecting the reality that both Vietnam and the United States experienced deep divisions during the war.

Around the memorial, a timeline traces the Vietnam years through events both overseas and at home. Battles and developments in the war appear alongside anti-war protests, political upheaval, and cultural moments such as Woodstock.

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Sugar Street Buns Opens on the Oval

Alyssa Guzman did not grow up in Milford—or even New England. But the first time she saw the Milford Oval, she knew almost immediately that she wanted to make Milford home.

She and her fiancé had been living in Boston, where Guzman worked at the Four Seasons, and were looking for a place to settle down and, eventually, open the bakery she had long dreamed about. A local real estate agent took them around southern New Hampshire and showed them a house just a couple of minutes from downtown Milford.

Then they drove through the Oval. "We both were like, 'Oh my God, this is it,'" Guzman recalled. "'This is it. We have to build the shop here.'"

They loved the house, too, and eventually bought it. But Guzman remembers walking back to the Oval, visiting a few of the shops and feeling that Milford offered something she had been looking for.



Alyssa Guzman outside the future home of Sugar Street Buns on the Milford Oval. Photo courtesy of Adartse Productions.

It took about a year for the right storefront to appear. Guzman pursued two other spaces around the Oval, but neither worked out, and she eventually expanded her search to downtown Manchester.

"I wanted someplace where I can know all the locals coming in and really feel that community," she said.

"It wasn't the same feeling," she said.

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EDITORIALS

Week of August 17, 2026

A Place for Milford

For nearly two centuries, if you wanted to know what was happening in Milford, there was one place to begin: the pages of the Milford Cabinet. Generations of residents opened its pages to read about town meetings and school concerts, baseball games and church suppers, new businesses and old friends. They debated editorials, wrote letters to the editor, celebrated weddings, mourned neighbors, and watched the town change one week at a time. More than a newspaper, it became part of Milford's shared memory.

The way we receive information today looks very different. News now reaches us in dozens of places—through websites, social media, text messages, and conversations that often happen in separate corners of the community. We know more than ever, yet we sometimes share less of the same story.

The Milford Historian isn't an attempt to recreate the old Milford Cabinet, nor could it be. Those days belonged to another era. But we do believe one of its best ideas is worth preserving: that a town is stronger when it has a place to celebrate its history, share its stories, and understand how yesterday shaped today.

That's the purpose of this newspaper.

Our focus is history—not because we believe the past was somehow better, but because it helps explain the present. Every building on the Oval, every neighborhood, every business, every debate over growth or preservation, every tradition we still enjoy today has a story behind it. Understanding those stories helps us better understand the Milford we inherited and the Milford we are building together.

You'll see that mission reflected throughout these pages. We've revived the spirit of William Ferguson's beloved Rambling Reporter, brought back Thumbing the Files to revisit the headlines of years gone by, and begun our ongoing Mapping the Oval project, which aims to document the people, places, businesses, and forgotten corners that have shaped the heart of Milford. Along the way you'll also find Then & Now photographs, the Town Hall Notebook, Stories from Stone, Spartan Spotlight, a community calendar, and other features designed to connect today's Milford with the stories that came before.

Some of those stories will be serious. Others will simply be fun. We hope you'll smile at an old advertisement, recognize a long-forgotten storefront, remember a teacher or neighbor, or discover a piece of Milford history you never knew before. Every town has stories that quietly disappear as memories fade. We'd like to save a few of them while we still can.

A town understands itself best when it remembers where it came from.

That's the spirit in which *The Milford Historian* is published. We hope it becomes a place where longtime residents and newcomers alike can explore Milford's past, appreciate its present, and take part in preserving its future.

Welcome to the first issue. We're glad you're here.

Letters to the Editor

What Do You Think?

Email your letters to editor@milfordhistorian.com. We will feature selected writings in a future edition of the *Milford Historian*.



FROM THE EDITOR

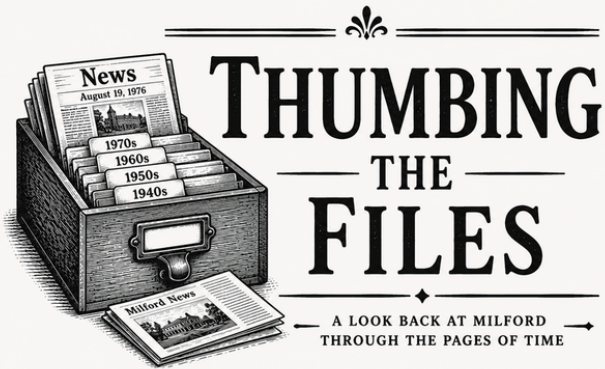
THE MILFORD HISTORIAN

The Milford Historian
Week of August 17, 2026

The Milford Historian is an independent publication dedicated to connecting Milford's past with its present. Our mission is to preserve local history, celebrate today's community, and encourage residents to share photographs, memories, and stories for future generations.

Editor-in-Chief: Matt Bowling
Managing Editor: David Palance

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50 Years Ago – August 15, 1976

Looking back a half century to the week of August 19, 1976, the Milford Cabinet had just about everything: vandalism, beauty queens, grocery bargains, Hurricane Belle—and, for reasons known only to the Board of Selectmen, an unusual amount of discussion about bathrooms.

Vandalism in town was clearly the story of the month. It dominated both the front page and the opinion page, where one column began with the memorable line: "There is something sad about vandalism. Sad, and at the same time infuriating." The examples seemed endless. The Oval drinking fountain was smashed for the third time that year, dressing rooms at the Keyes Field swimming pool were repeatedly damaged, gravestones were tipped over, and the American flag was stolen from the Oval. The editorial summed up the town's frustration with what it called the "frustrating, infuriating question: Why?"

Town officials had apparently reached their own conclusion about who was responsible. After repeated vandalism at Keyes Field and on the Oval, selectmen announced, "Until they decide they can act like ladies and gentlemen, the benches are to be removed." One park-goer could only shrug after the benches disappeared: "I guess I'll sit on the ground."

Fortunately, not all the news was discouraging. The Hutchinson Homestead on North River Road received national recognition as a "Landmark of American Music," honoring the Hutchinson Family Singers, Milford's famous musical family, during the nation's

Bicentennial celebration. It was one of only four such sites recognized in New Hampshire.

Preparations were already underway for the Hillsboro County Fair, where young women ages 16 to 22 were invited to compete for Fair Queen. The winner—and "her court"—would be announced on opening day so they could "reign for the duration of the fair." County fairs still have tractor pulls and fried dough. Teenage Fair Queens? Not so much.

Meanwhile, Hurricane Belle had the Cabinet staff briefly wondering whether the newspaper would be printed at all. With the paper's editor paddling down the Allagash River, staff members found themselves spending "several fascinating hours planning how a newspaper might be printed from hand-scrawled rather than type-set galleys." Fortunately, Belle gave Milford the slip, the lights stayed on, and everyone, as the editorial put it, "waded to work."

The Board of Selectmen spent at least one meeting discussing matters at opposite ends of the plumbing system. Selectmen wrestled with where Hampshire Hills Health Club should put its sewage while finally settling another issue much closer to home: where to install two long-awaited public restrooms. The verdict: the custodian's closet.

The advertisements in that week's paper offered their own glimpse into everyday life in 1976. Down at Violette's Market, porterhouse steaks were going for \$1.99 a pound, New York sirloin for \$1.79, and "Plum o' Rama" selections were just 39 cents a pound. Over on the car lot, one leasing company knew just what "Mr. Businessman" needed. That turned out to be a brand-new Chevy Monte Carlo for \$159.59 per month. Meanwhile, newcomers to town were welcomed the old-fashioned way. A Cabinet advertisement featured a smiling Welcome Wagon hostess with a simple greeting: "Hello, stranger."

So there you have it: the week of August 15, 1976—vandalism, a near-miss hurricane, county fair beauty queens, bargain steaks, and altogether too much discussion about using the facilities. □



One of our favorite Milford Cabinet advertisements from the 1950s. Calling itself a "friend of the family," the paper reminded readers that a local newspaper was more than a source of news—it was part of everyday community life. The *Milford Historian* hopes to carry forward that same spirit while telling Milford's stories in a different way.

A Building Full of Dreams

Today, the old industrial building beside Keyes Memorial Park is hard to imagine as a symbol of promise. Its windows are covered with plywood, graffiti marks the walls and weeds grow along the edge of the building and through cracks in the pavement. It has sat unused for 11 years.

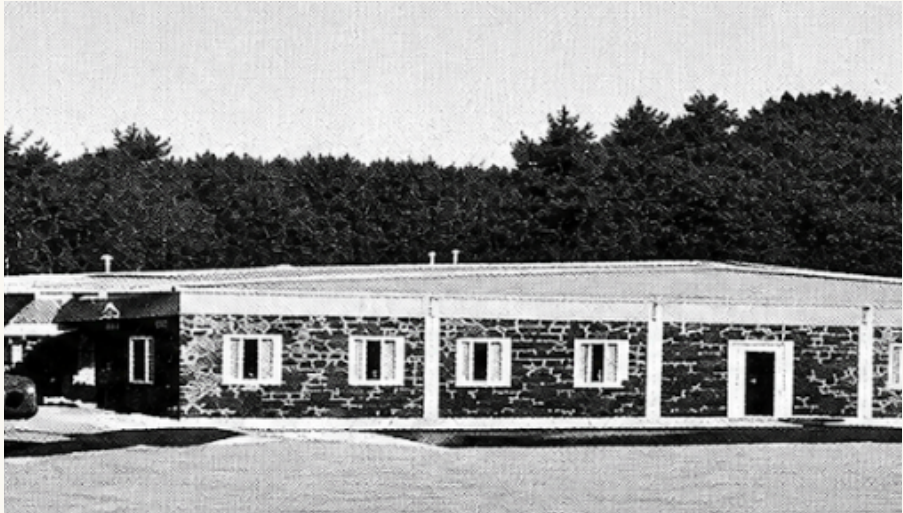
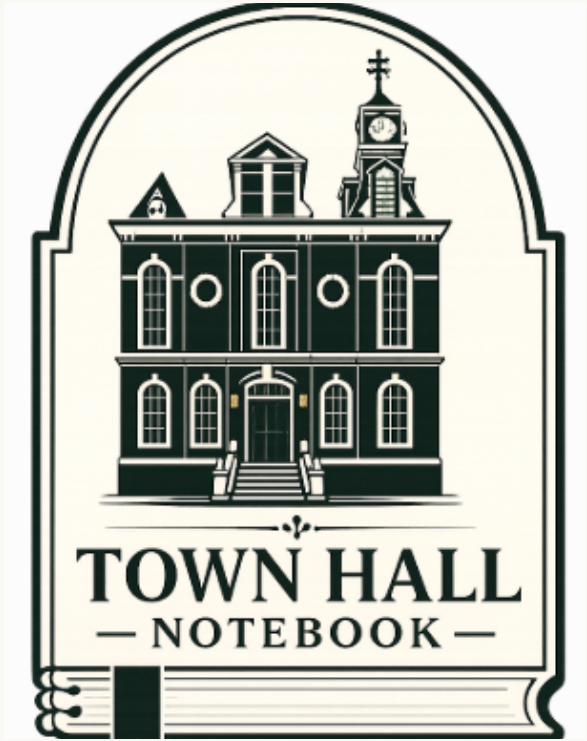
The picture was considerably different in March 1964. “Quietly, without much fanfare, a new industrial building has taken shape in Milford,” the Milford Cabinet reported that spring. The 10,000-square-foot building, tucked between the Souhegan River and Elm Street near what is now Keyes Memorial Park, was a “modern, colonial-front structure” already occupied by three small industries.

“It is clean; there is little noise and no smoke,” the newspaper reported, describing the building as typical of the small, modern light industries then reshaping New England manufacturing. But the new building represented more than floor space and machinery. “A lot of dreams have gone into that building,” the Cabinet wrote.

An even more ambitious dream belonged to Chester C. Akeson and his son Alan, who built the structure after their former Permatech Diamond Tool location on Middle Street became crowded and inefficient. They saw the building as the beginning of a small industrial park, eventually surrounded by a cluster of modern plants that would bring “diversity and strength to the town.” The industrial park never took shape, although the Akeson company remained in Milford for decades.

By 2015, the building's story had taken another turn. The town purchased the property, but the aging industrial building has remained unused. The Recreation Commission is now confronting demolition costs that may be approaching \$500,000. A multigenerational community center has been proposed for the site, but for now its future remains unclear.

More than 60 years after the Cabinet described a clean, modern building filled with promise and dreams, it is difficult to see much of either behind the boarded-up windows.



The Elm Street building in 1964. Milford Cabinet, March 12, 1964.



The Elm Street building today, boarded up. *Milford Historian* photo.



The east side of the Elm Street building today, covered in graffiti. *Milford Historian* photo.

Parking Back in the Spotlight

Downtown parking is back on Milford's priority list.

At its March meeting, the Economic Development Advisory Council spent considerable time discussing parking and identified it as an issue to focus on in 2026. The town plans to revisit earlier parking studies and map existing and potential spaces, while a new parking subcommittee took a driving tour of downtown and the Oval in June. The possibility of a small downtown parking garage has even been raised.

If the problem sounds familiar, it should. For more than 70 years, Milford has been trying to figure out how to keep enough parking available around the Oval—and how to keep the same cars from occupying those spaces all day.

In 1951, a committee of Union Square merchants led by pharmacist Ray Dyer concluded that “parking meters are the only way to control our traffic and parking problems.” The Town Meeting nearly unanimously agreed, despite the strenuous opposition of legislator and Ober clothing store owner Fred Wadleigh, who called the meters a parking “tax” that would take away one advantage enjoyed by Milford merchants.

The new meters allowed two hours of parking at five cents an hour—or a penny for just 12 minutes. A year later, the committee declared them “successful far beyond our expectations,” saying they had eliminated all-day parkers and generated revenue.

But the meters became less popular and less profitable as Union Square storefronts emptied and shopping centers touted free parking. By the 1990s, a new generation of downtown merchants wanted them gone.

The meters eventually disappeared, but one complaint proved remarkably durable. “There is frequent criticism of merchants and clerks who occupy spaces” all day, the Milford Cabinet reported in 1951. In 2018, Union Street Grill owner Kevin Stephens struck a familiar note: “When business owners take up parking spaces on the Oval, it's ridiculous.”

The debate, it seems, has come full circle.

Have a Story Idea?

Is there a current Milford issue, project, or town decision you'd like to see explored in a future Town Hall Notebook?

Email your ideas to editor@milfordhistorian.com.

Roger McAllister: The War Comes Home

By Matt Bowling

From *On and Off the Oval*

The spring of 1965 was a turning point in support for the war in Vietnam. For the first time, large swaths of the American public began to question the wisdom and purpose of a war in a little-known Asian country where our national interest was unclear. The fate of one local boy—24-year-old Sgt. Roger McAllister—would soon stir that debate in Milford. First, in April, a nationally printed Associated Press story on the horrors of the war featured McAllister prominently. Then, just a few weeks later, McAllister became the first Milford boy to die in Vietnam.

Roger McAllister of 37 Clinton Street was a native of Milford. His mother, Addie Martin, worked at the Hitchiner Manufacturing Company for 30 years, while he and five brothers and sisters attended Milford schools. As a teenager, McAllister served at the Milford Observation Post and then joined the Army before graduating with Milford High School's Class of 1958. After service in Kentucky and Germany, he was shipped off to Vietnam as a radio specialist with a special forces unit of the 82nd Airborne. He was soon fighting the Vietcong in the jungles of Asia.

His war experience became front-page news in Milford — and across the nation — when an Associated Press reporter found him in deep distress near Tay Ninh in April 1965. Journalist Horst Faas interviewed and photographed McAllister in a state of extreme heat exhaustion as ants crawled on his face and enemy fire sounded nearby. He and his fellow Pathfinders had been dropped into the jungle to establish a landing area for helicopters. With nearby streams dried up, his unit was desperate for water as they crawled through Vietnam's spiny bracken. The AP wire story featuring McAllister's condition was picked up by national papers and made a particular impression on Milford Cabinet readers. Emerging from what Faas described as "a near-coma," McAllister told Faas: "Just imagine, there's now snow in New Hampshire." Although he continually vowed to go on ("I've been to jungle schools before I came over here," he informed the reporter), McAllister soon collapsed and was airlifted to a medical hospital.

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Roger McAllister in Vietnam. Courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Wall of Faces.



The Milford Post Office soon after opening. Courtesy of the Milford Historical Society.



The Milford Post Office today. *Milford Historian* photo.

Milford Then & Now: The Milford Post Office

In the late 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt's "alphabet soup" of federal agencies was going full steam, putting unemployed Americans back to work and spending New Deal money on local projects.

Even reliably Republican Milford got in on the act.

The town's new \$76,000 post office was federally financed, though Milford granite and brick gave it some local flavor. Washington even helped decorate the place. Swedish immigrant Philip von Saltza was paid \$700 for "Lumberman Log Rolling," his WPA mural that still hangs inside.

More than 500 people turned out before the post office officially opened. Republican U.S. Sen. Charles Tobey of nearby Temple praised the democratic nature of the postal service: "Whether you have three million or three cents, you can purchase a stamp." There was some irony in Tobey saying this inside a building paid for by Roosevelt's New Deal; he would become an outspoken critic of FDR and the growth of federal government.

Politics, however, could wait.

That evening, Milford residents danced inside the new post office to Savage's Orchestra. Anyone familiar with the post office lobby today may wonder exactly how much swaying was possible.

When the post office opened for business, dancing gave way to stamps and money orders. Arthur Dutton purchased a 3-cent stamp, and the first money order was made out to Joseph Shaughnessy.

And so, after the speeches, flags and dancing, Milford's new post office got down to the everyday business of delivering the mail.



Mapping the Oval is an ongoing project to create an interactive map of downtown Milford, connecting today's buildings, businesses and landmarks with the stories, photographs and people that shaped them. Each issue of the *Milford Historian* highlights one location while adding another pin to the growing online map.

The Milford Inn

When a Sunday evening fire heavily damaged the Milford Inn in May 1959, not everyone saw it as a great tragedy. The late 1950s were an era when old buildings often disappeared with little ceremony, and plenty of people were happy to replace aging landmarks with something newer and more modern. Standing on Union Square since 1786, the inn—known over the years as Buxton's Tavern and later Hotel Howison—had certainly seen better days. One of Milford's oldest frame buildings, it had long since ceased to attract travelers and instead housed mostly single male boarders.

Looking back more than 60 years later, though, it's hard not to wonder if Milford gave up something it would now treasure. Today, towns like Concord and Groton proudly anchor their downtowns with beautifully restored colonial inns. A restored Milford Inn would almost certainly have become one of the architectural showpieces on the west side of the Oval.

Then again, history rarely gives us a clean choice. The old inn's footprint also includes today's Riverhouse Café, and suggesting Milford trade away its "damn good grub" would be asking an awful lot in the name of historic preservation.



Above: What do you recognize? Many familiar Milford landmarks can still be spotted in this historic downtown view. Courtesy of the Milford Historical Society.



Adam Medlyn of Medlyn Monument and Jerry Guthrie removing the glue after sandblasting the image.



Aerial view of the memorial. Photo by Matt Lewis.



The Vietnam Memorial Dedication on November 11, 2025. About 300 people attended the dedication despite the freezing temperatures. Photo courtesy of Jerry Guthrie.

Vietnam Memorial (continued from page 1)

Taken together, the design reveals a memorial that is remarkably thoughtful in both its symbolism and simplicity. Rather than relying on grand monuments or elaborate sculpture, the committee created a memorial that invites visitors to explore, ask questions, and better understand the Vietnam years.

The storytelling may eventually extend beyond the granite itself, with plans for a QR code linking visitors to songs from the era, Vietnam War films and documentaries, and information about veterans who served in Vietnam and later made Milford their home. The memorial also includes a few distinctly Milford touches.

Much of the granite was recycled from the former Garden Street School, while additional Milford granite was brought back home for the project. In the Granite Town of the Granite State, that seemed especially appropriate. The memorial also includes the names of Milford veterans who served in Vietnam, while four trees and plaques honor the four Milford servicemen who lost their lives during the war, including Roger McAllister, who was killed in Vietnam in 1965. His story is told elsewhere in this edition of the Milford Historian.

Beyond the around \$150,000 raised through private donations, the Town of Milford supplied materials and labor, local companies donated granite and transportation, and volunteers contributed countless hours over the years.



Milford DPW Director Leo Lessard looks over plans for the monument with Jerry Guthrie. Photo courtesy of Jerry Guthrie.

Asked what moment from the twenty-five-year project he thought he would remember most, Guthrie recalled the dedication ceremony. As Taps echoed across the memorial, those gathered spotted an eagle circling overhead. The moment has stayed with Guthrie ever since.

There will undoubtedly be other such moments as visitors discover the memorial for themselves. Some will come to remember a family member, a friend, or a fellow veteran. Others may stop to follow the timeline, study the images, and learn a little more about the war and the country that struggled through it. If the committee has accomplished what it set out to do, Milford's new memorial will be a place not only to remember, but to better understand. □



Above: Alyssa Guzman prepares pastries before opening Sugar Street Buns.



For decades, Milford residents shopped for clothing at Savages.



Sugar Street Buns prepares to open on the Milford Oval. *Milford Historian* photo.

Sugar Street Buns (continued from Page 1)

The same day she turned down the Manchester location, the former Chaotic Lily storefront on Union Square became available. She called immediately, saw it the next day and knew it was right.

That storefront is now preparing for its next chapter as Sugar Street Buns, where Guzman plans to serve cinnamon buns and other treats. But she is not the first shopkeeper to see something special in this particular corner of the Oval—or to value the kind of relationship with customers that a downtown shop can offer.

To understand the parallel, it helps to go back a few decades.

For decades, the same location was home to Savage's Clothing. Irving Savage opened the business shortly after World War II as an Army-Navy outlet, selling Army blankets, canteens, lister bags and other surplus goods. By the 1970s, the store had shifted toward men's clothing, specializing in dungarees, work shirts and even the "Sta-Prest" slacks advertised in the newspapers of the day. In 1971, the familiar sign projecting from the front of the building was painted green and given a new message: "Savages Clothing." Irving's son-in-law, Fred Boulter, took over the business in the late 1970s. By 1989, however, shopping habits had changed. Regional malls were drawing customers away from downtown stores, and Boulter also cited the familiar problem of parking around the Oval.

Still, the mall was not for him.

"It's nice for shoppers to have a place to go where they can say, 'Hi Fred. How are you?'" instead of getting that cold feeling," he told the Nashua Telegraph as Savage's prepared to close.

Thirty-seven years later, Guzman arrived at the same storefront with much the same idea. She had come to Milford looking for a place where she could know the locals and "really feel that community."

Her road to Milford began in southwest Florida, where Guzman grew up in the kitchen of her Puerto Rican grandmother. Her grandmother had studied baking and cake decorating in Puerto Rico and, after moving to Florida, continued making wedding cakes and traditional Puerto Rican desserts from her home.

It was a different sort of bakery from the one Guzman is preparing to open on the Oval. There was no storefront. People simply called the house.

"People would call her and say, 'Ana, I need a cake,'" Guzman recalled. "She would just make it."

Guzman was one of 13 grandchildren, and the children did not go to daycare. They spent five or six days a week at their grandmother's house, often all day. While her cousins found other things to do, Guzman kept finding her way into the kitchen, becoming her grandmother's unofficial assistant.

"I was always in the kitchen with her," she said. "I absolutely loved it."

She knew early that she wanted to become a pastry chef. A month after graduating from high school in 2018, Guzman moved to Chicago for an intensive six-month program at the French Pastry School. She later worked for noted chocolatier Norman Love in southwest Florida, in fine-dining restaurants and eventually at the Four Seasons in Boston.

After eight years working in pastry, Guzman had made everything from bonbons and sorbet to elaborate plated desserts. But when it came time to open a bakery of her own, she kept coming back to cinnamon buns.

(Continued on page 10)



Roger McAllister. Courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Wall of Faces.



Roger McAllister in uniform. Courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Wall of Faces.



Home Delivery

Have the *Milford Historian* delivered to your mailbox each month.

Email editor@milfordhistorian.com for subscription information.

Roger McAllister (continued from page 4)

On Mother’s Day, five weeks later, Roger was back in action when his unit was ambushed in fighting west of Saigon. He died of a gunshot wound to the head and hemorrhagic shock. His mother learned of his son’s fate when a Sunday telegram reached her at a Mother’s Day church picnic. McAllister became the first New Hampshire soldier to die in Vietnam, and as the Cabinet pointed out, “His death suddenly brought the war in that far corner of the world very close to home.”

Accounts of the jungle chaos contributed to a sense among some that the war was an unwinnable quagmire. For others, it only strengthened their patriotic resolve. Writing in the Cabinet Op-Ed page on May 13, Milford resident Gerry Styles penned a “Tribute to a Soldier” and contended in the article’s headline that “Sgt. Roger McAllister Died to Keep the Vietcong out of Milford.” Asking the same question as an increasing number of Americans: “Just what do you figure he died for?” Styles provided an answer the Pentagon surely would have approved. “Sure as hell not for the fun of it. He died so that you could continue to live in relative peace right where you are. So you could buy another sweepstakes ticket, go down to the VFW tonight or sit in your own backyard with a cold beer and listen to a steak sizzling on your outdoor broiler.”

The following week former resident Dale Stover offered a blistering 3-column response: “The writer (Styles) believes that this man’s death ought to spur us to offer more American lives in the hope of killing even more Asians. I, for one, am not at all happy with the notion that we are killing Vietnamese so that Mr. Styles can enjoy his evening beer.” He went on: “That Americans are fighting in Vietnam to keep the Vietcong out of Milford is pure emotional fog. No one can possibly believe with any seriousness that the Vietcong represent a military threat to the US with our nuclear stockpiles.” It was the start of a debate that would rage in both Milford — and the country at large — for nearly a decade.

Perhaps lost in the discussion over what the soldier’s life “meant” was the soldier himself. In 2018, when the Faces Never Forgotten project was attempting to assemble photos of every Vietnam veteran who served, they could not find an existing picture of McAllister. A search led to the Cabinet, on to the Milford Historical Society, then to McAllister’s nephew, then to his son, and finally to a couple photos — which can be found here. Indeed, it was only after the passions surrounding the Vietnam War had cooled that the story of Roger McAllister could once again be viewed through the life of the soldier himself, rather than the arguments surrounding the war. □

Do You Know Milford?

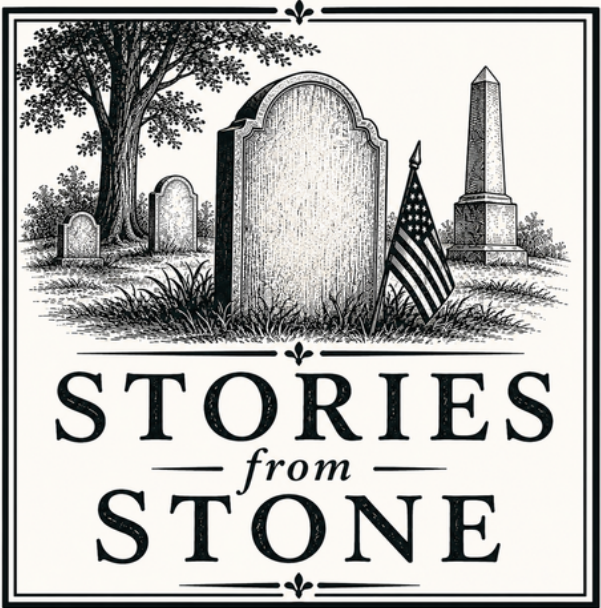
A.

B.

C.

D.

Think you know Milford? Identify these four close-up photographs and email your answers to editor@milfordhistorian.com. Everyone who correctly identifies all four will be recognized in the next issue of the *Milford Historian*.



BY DAVID PALANCE

The smallest grave marker in Milford is found in the Elm Street Burial Ground. Barely larger than a dollar bill, the small brass marker bears only the name Caleb Jones and two dates. It stands beside the grave of his daughter, Elizabeth.

So where is Caleb?

According to *The Granite Town*, Caleb Jones arrived in the area before the American Revolution. He first worked as a laborer on the farm of Benjamin Hopkins, who settled here in 1745. Caleb eventually married Hopkins' daughter, inherited the property just to the west, and established his own farm, all before Milford was incorporated in 1794. At the time, the land was still considered "county land" rather than part of any town.

An 1873 newspaper account tells of Caleb's determination to vote at Milford's first town meeting. According to the story, he carried a bedroll to the Hopkins farm several days in advance so he would be certain to cast his ballot.

Life on the frontier looked very different in those days. The Massachusetts border had not yet been established in its present location, extending north to the Souhegan River. Caleb's northwest property corner sat near what was once known as Dram Cup Hill, later remembered by many Milford residents as Twin Tows ski area. The nearby crossing became known as Jones Crossing, named for both the covered bridge that once stood there and the colorful Caleb Jones himself. Today, most people simply know the area as the site of Market Basket.

Caleb died in 1805. The story of his unusual preparations for death was told in a published account of Milford's 1894 centennial and later repeated in the town history. Caleb planted a cherry tree on his farm, carefully tended it for years, then cut it down and milled the lumber into boards. From those boards he built his own coffin.

Although a small brass marker in Elm Street Burial Ground commemorates Caleb Jones, his actual burial place is believed to remain on his old farm—today beneath the Market Basket property—making his grave one of Milford's most unusual final resting places.



THE PAST IN PLAIN SIGHT

Ever notice this old stone watering trough that stands at the corner of Union and Elm? It dates back to 1926, when it replaced an earlier iron version that was originally part of the haphazard triple-intersection traffic pattern in Union Square.

Before automobiles took over, public watering troughs were as common as gas stations are today. Farmers, delivery wagons, and travelers depended on horses, and towns provided places where animals could stop for a drink after pulling heavy loads. Many troughs were also designed with smaller basins near the bottom so dogs could drink as well.

Milford's trough disappeared for several years after being auctioned off and taken to Hillsborough. Local historian Winifred Wright eventually tracked it down and helped raise the money to bring it back home.

Today, a plaque at its base commemorates her efforts to preserve this small but meaningful piece of Milford's past.



The Union Square watering trough on the Oval in years past (left) and today in front of the Community House (right). Historic photo courtesy of the Milford Historical Society. Modern photo: Milford Historian.

What Do You Think?

Have you spotted another piece of Milford history hiding in plain sight?

Email your ideas to editor@milfordhistorian.com. We may feature selected suggestions in a future *Past in Plain Sight*.

ON & OFF THE OVAL

BY MATT BOWLING

Discover the stories that inspired The Milford Historian. *On and Off the Oval: Adventures in 20th Century Milford* features 50 illustrated stories exploring Milford's people, places, and forgotten moments.

AVAILABLE LOCALLY AT:

- Union Coffee Company
- J.M. Princewell
- Hayward's Trading Post
- Trombly Gardens
- County Stores





Aug 19

Summer Concert Series | 7:00-8:30
Emerson Park
(The Party Crashers)

Aug 17 &
Mondays

Movie Mondays | 2:00-4:00
Wadleigh Memorial Library
Sirat, Arco, and more (library closed for Labor Day)

Aug 22

Wildflower Festival | 12-9pm
Keyes Field Stage
Plants, food trucks, art vendors, live music

Aug 26

Summer Concert Series | 7:00-8:30
Emerson Park
(Studio Two - Beatles Tribute Band)

Sep 7

Labor Day Parade at the Oval
"Happy Birthday America"

To include your event in our next issue (Sept. 15-Oct. 15), email editor@milfordhistorian.com

Sugar Street Buns (continued from page 7)

That focus will be reflected in her own menu. The shop will offer four or five buns at a time, with sweet and savory choices. Guzman has already created everything from a pumpkin caramel bun to pepperoni pizza and spinach-and-artichoke versions. A few other baked goods, including gluten-free choices, will be available, but this is, after all, Sugar Street Buns.

Some of her grandmother's influence may find its way into the pastry case as well. Guzman hopes to experiment with Puerto Rican and tropical flavors, although she is still learning that New Englanders can have rather firm ideas about which flavors belong to which seasons.

Guzman also wants the shop to feel connected to the town she chose. Milford artists Sarah McCarthy and Elizabeth Scargill are creating artwork for the bakery, and Guzman hopes to give other local artists and small businesses space to show or sell what they create. Another corner will hold a free lending library with books for adults and children.

In many ways, Milford had already begun returning the enthusiasm Guzman felt on that first drive through the Oval. Other business owners offered advice, and town officials went out of their way to guide her through the process. Guzman described the building inspector as "ridiculously helpful," showing up at prospective locations to walk her through what each would require.

"The town totally took me in," Guzman said. "I didn't expect such a warm welcome."

Now she hopes to return some of it.

"I want to help people as much as everyone has been helping me," Guzman said. "I want to be involved in the neighborhood, the community ... and I really want to be a part of Milford's growth."

In 1989, Fred Boulter valued a store where customers could walk in and say, "Hi Fred. How are you?" Nearly four decades later, Alyssa Guzman came to Milford looking for a place where customers might not remain strangers for long.

The Oval, it seems, still has room for that kind of shop. □

SPARTAN SPOTLIGHT



The Class of 1976

From parades and Pep Rallies to Prom night and everyday moments in between, these candid photos from the 1976 yearbook capture life at Milford High School.

Recognize anyone?
Let us know!

*From the 1976
Milford High School
Spartan Yearbook*



Recognize someone?
We'd love to know who they are. Email editor@milfordhistorian.com.



With a tip of the reporter's cap to Bill Ferguson, who rambled these same Milford streets for the Cabinet years ago.

Recreation directors probably carry around an idealized version in their heads of a summer evening at the local park. On a recent visit to Keyes Park, I stumbled onto a scene that likely comes pretty close to that vision.

With a few minutes to spare before my nightly Boys & Girls Club pickup, I wandered across the footbridge over the Souhegan. It was nearly 5 o'clock in the evening, and the park was hopping. The pickleball courts were full, there was some sort of cookout going on by the picnic tables, kids were trying out the slides, and teenagers were showing off at the skate park.

The scene was in sharp contrast to the summer of 1976 featured in the Thumbing the Files roundup elsewhere in these pages. Keyes Park was busy then, too, but not always in ways town officials appreciated. In a single week, new lamplights were smashed, pool loudspeakers were ripped from their mountings, and somehow, tennis nets wound up floating in the Souhegan River.

Fifty years later, the pickleball craze seems to have brought new energy to the courts, while Keyes Park itself has found new footing. At least on this particular evening, the park looked a lot like what those who planned it probably had in mind.

All in all, a fitting scene for a fine summer evening.

Pickleball, it seems, has become the Ultimate Frisbee or badminton of the 2020s. As with those sports in the '70s and '80s, it seems like suddenly everyone and his brother is suddenly out on the pickleball courts.

The Rambling Reporter has tried his hand on the court for the past few years and, despite a name that can be slightly embarrassing to say aloud, has come to appreciate the game's unusual appeal.



Pickleball at Keyes Park on a recent night. Photo: Milford Historian.

Pickleball seems especially well designed to narrow the athletic gap. Sure, there are professional players and even leagues you can watch on YouTube, but in your average two-on-two match at the park, the sport has a certain leveling effect.

Last week, I was paired with an older gentleman and, after a few points, I soon realized he was basically as good as I was. He kept hitting forehand winners down the line and using a spin serve that was giving considerably younger opponents fits. Finally, I turned to him and asked, “Nick, how old are you anyway?”

“Eighty-three,” came the reply.

Such is the curious leveling effect of pickleball.

Milford residents have been keeping score in the Great Empty Storefront Game for years.

A new restaurant sign appears on a marquee and everyone makes plans to check the place out. Brown paper goes up somewhere else, and people begin predicting the downfall of the Oval.

I found myself doing my own informal count during a recent walk downtown. There are a few empty storefronts, and because they are on the Oval, they seem to attract more attention. A vacant unit in a strip mall is a vacant unit. An empty window on the Oval can become a discussion about the economic health and survival of downtown Milford. There was a time when the Oval had the kind of lineup of businesses you might expect to find in Bedford Falls. There was the required movie theater, a bookstore, an ice cream shop, a record store, a pizza joint and a working gas station. Most of these businesses existed at the same time, something that is difficult to picture now.

The economic world has changed. Walmart and Target are just a drive down 101A and offer (under one roof) most of the things people once went downtown to buy. The modern Oval has adapted. Restaurants, bars, barber shops, antiques, collectibles and boutiques now make up much of downtown — basically things that cannot be found on Amazon or in the big box stores.

On weekend mornings, the breakfast crowd can make the Oval feel downright busy. Sunday's Ice Cream opened last year and Milford celebrated. Sugar Street Buns is preparing to open and there is similar excitement. When the pet store closed, the score went the other way.

The former Rite Aid up on the hill remains empty, and the BP gas station has been sitting unused for years. Both seem to count heavily in our unofficial standings.

The good news is that, despite the ups and downs and the ebbs and flows, the Oval always seems to find its way back into the game.

Working on the story of Milford's Vietnam memorial elsewhere in this edition led me to think about a difference between my generation and those that came before it. Most of us grew up with the luxury of assuming our lives were our own to plan.

For much of the 20th century, young American men could not make that assumption. World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam each interrupted the plans of a generation. Not every man served, of course, but the draft cast a long shadow over the plans of young men.

Those of us who came of age after the draft ended inherited a different assumption. College could lead to a career. A career could lead to a bright future. We could plan years ahead with little reason to imagine the federal government might come calling.

Most of us probably never thought of that as a luxury. It was simply the world we knew.

The wars continued, and Americans continued to serve and die in them. But for many of us, military service became something we effectively outsourced to other people — volunteers who accepted an obligation the rest of us were free to decline.

The freedom to chart our own lives has been a remarkable gift. Standing before a memorial filled with the names of men who did not always have that freedom is one way of being reminded that their sacrifice was a gift to all of us. □

Your Turn:
Which vacant Milford storefront would you most like to see occupied?
Email your answer to editor@milfordhistorian.com. We may feature selected responses in a future *Rambling Reporter*.



Milford would surely benefit in finding a new tenant for the Rite Aid overlooking the Oval. Photo: Milford Historian.

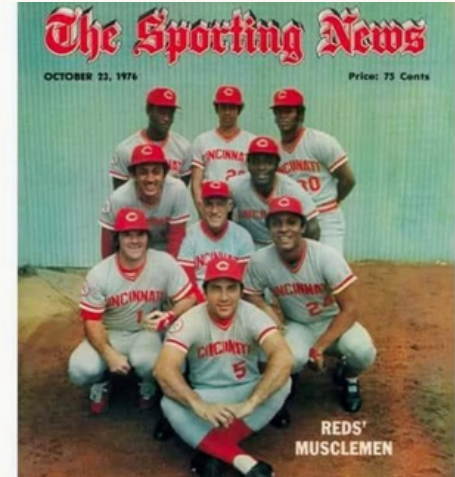


The former BP station across from the post office also deserves a new tenant. Photo: Milford Historian.



nielsen's NATIONAL TV RATINGS		
TOP 5 PROGRAMS 1975-76 SEASON		
1	All in the Family	CBS
2	Rich Man, Poor Man	ABC
3	Laverne & Shirley	ABC
4	Maude	CBS
5	The Bionic Woman	ABC

MILFORD TIME CAPSULE • AUGUST 1976



This week's Milford Time Capsule drops us into the week of August 17, 1976. At the top of the Billboard chart was Elton John. Naturally. By the middle of the 1970s, nearly everything he touched seemed to turn to gold—or, in the record business, platinum. This time he had paired with Kiki Dee for “Don't Go Breaking My Heart,” a simple duet with the remarkable habit of moving into your head and refusing to leave. America offered little resistance. It spent four weeks at No. 1.

Our Nielsen chart shows the most-watched programs of the 1975–76 season, with All in the Family still on top. By August, viewers were deep into that nearly forgotten American institution known as the summer rerun. With only the three major networks and the dreaded UHF dial to choose from, people sometimes did the unthinkable and watched Archie Bunker a second time.

There was live television that week. The Republican National Convention opened August 16, with Gerald Ford fighting off a serious challenge from Ronald Reagan. Ford, who had passed through Milford during the New Hampshire primary campaign six months earlier, survived. Reagan would have to wait four years.

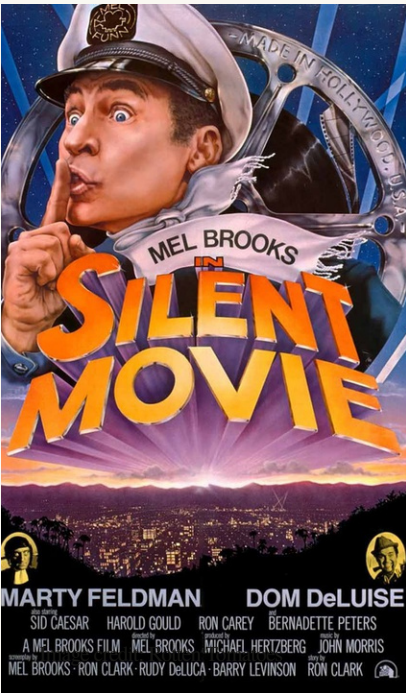
At the movies, Mel Brooks' Silent Movie led the box office, proving once again that the biggest movie of the moment isn't always the one remembered 50 years later. The fourth-biggest film was Disney's Gus, the story of a Yugoslavian mule recruited to play professional football. No comment necessary.

At the pump, Americans were paying an average of about 63 cents a gallon for gasoline. It is the sort of price that tends to catch the eye when it turns up in an old photograph or makes the rounds on Facebook. Adjusted for inflation, however, those 63 cents had roughly the buying power of \$3.70 today. The most popular car in America wasn't a Corvette, Mustang or Cadillac. It was the perfectly ordinary Oldsmobile Cutlass.

At Milford's A&P, bottom round roast sold for 99 cents a pound, while rump roast could be had for \$1.39. Old supermarket advertisements are filled with cuts of meat that sound considerably more direct about which portion of the animal you are about to eat. We cannot recall ever purchasing a rump roast, but Milford apparently needed to know the price.

Baseball fans were watching the Big Red Machine rolling toward a second straight championship. Rose. Morgan. Griffey. Foster. Bench. Pérez. Concepción. At some point, reading the Cincinnati lineup card simply became showing off. The Reds would sweep the Yankees in the World Series that fall.

Elton John. Archie Bunker. The Big Red Machine. A football-playing mule. Somehow, it all made perfect sense at the time.



At the BOX OFFICE	
TOP 5 MOVIES	
1	SILENT MOVIE
2	THE OUTLAW JOSEY WALES
3	THE OMEN
4	GUS
5	FUTUREWORLD / THE EXORCIST (re-release)



Billboard HOT 100			
FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 21, 1976			
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHART	TITLE—Artist
★	1	8	DON'T GO BREAKING MY HEART — Elton John & Kiki Dee
★	2	8	YOU SHOULD BE DANCING — Bee Gees
★	3	8	LET 'EM IN — Wings
★	12	12	YOU'LL NEVER FIND ANOTHER LOVE LIKE MINE — Lou Rawls
★	7	11	I'D REALLY LOVE TO SEE YOU TONIGHT — England Dan & John Ford Coley