

# The South Weare Improvement Society

## 100 Years Old

February 25, 2016, marks the centennial of the incorporation of the South Weare Improvement Society (SWIS). Frank L. Eastman, Mabel D. Eastman, and Allen W. Sawyer met at the office of Louis B. Wyman in Manchester on February 24, 1916, to draw up the document of incorporation, and it was signed by the Secretary of State the following day.

Before this organization was formed, the village of South Weare had no meeting place. A tavern, school, stores, and homes were the sites of Literary Society debates, band practice, entertainment, and Grange meetings. Then Nellie Osborne's will bequeathed a legacy in memory of her husband Wellman, who wished to benefit his native place. SWIS formed to make use of the money, and with additional donations from South Weare citizens, a community meeting place—**Osborne Memorial Hall**—was planned. The organization purchased land owned by George Hazen; and Albert Farmer, Sr., built the hall. On Wednesday, April 27, 1921, the building was dedicated to Mr. Osborne with afternoon exercises, an evening concert, supper, and dancing. Tickets, including a war tax, cost 55 cents per couple for the concert and dance, and 50 cents per plate for the supper.

Osborne Memorial Hall nicely fulfilled its function as a community hall throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wyoming Grange #54 found a permanent home. Many danced their Saturday nights away to the music of a live Weare band. Celebrations of every kind occurred, as well as plays and other performances. Late in the century a group made the hall a meeting place for their church.

The 1990s saw Osborne Hall in decline. However, the South Weare Improvement organization still had a treasurer, Verna Martin, and a secretary, Mildred Hall. Mildred had the keys to the building, and as the century turned the corner, she gave a new group, some of whom were also Weare Historical Society directors, a tour that fostered a new generation of SWIS activity.

The rest, as they say, is history. The South Weare Improvement Society has worked for the past 15 years to restore the hall. With hard work, donations and dues, bequests and other gifts, thanks are due to the many who have helped with, or supported, the repairs and renovations to further the promise of this community meeting place and historic landmark. Although the building's needs are still many, the main floor and stage are being used for a variety of functions beyond the organization's use for meetings, bingo, yard sales, antique appraisals, and open house. Events have included youth bands; anniversary, birthday, and Christmas parties; a wedding, baby shower, and holiday dinner; and yoga. The main floor is being restored to its original beauty.

Osborne Memorial Hall is now open throughout the year, thanks to the new heating system. Rent this ample space with a stage and accessible bathrooms for your special occasion. Bingo will resume on Saturday, March 19, and SWIS will participate in the Town Wide Yard Sale on Saturday, June 4. Since this is a banner year for the South Weare Improvement Society, please watch for a special event to mark the organization's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

If you wish to help in any way to further work on the historic Osborne Memorial Hall, please contact President Rad Betts at 529-7282, become a member, or mail a donation to South Weare Improvement Society, PO Box 392, Weare, NH 03281. Dues and donations are tax deductible and members receive a ten per cent discount on rental fees. (Family, \$15; Individual, \$7.50, Senior/Student, \$5; Business, \$25; Heirloom Apple Recipe Book, \$10 & \$3 postage)



**Osborne Hall after completion c. 1920-21; vehicle is probably that of Albert Farmer, Sr.  
Photo (post card) donated by Albert's grandson, Frank Farmer,  
at the South Weare Improvement Society's Open House 9-29-2012**



**Osborne Hall decorated for a party, 2015, photo from SWIS archives**