

Rye History Rocks

Short Histories Offered to the Public on Many Aspects of the Town's Past

Alex Herlihy, Town historian, May, 2023

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A. Introduction

What is one way to make history more accessible? Put it in thematic, concise, short history topics and make sure those topics are appealing such as the History of: Native Peoples, First Settlement in 1623, Shipwrecks, Taverns and drinking, Golden age of resort hotels, Surfing, Goss Farm, the list is endless.

All articles are written by me unless otherwise noted. Much of this material was cut and pasted from the draft of my new history: (Rye, New Hampshire: A Town at the Crossroads of American History) which will be published later this year or next year. As a retired teacher of American history, it is only natural for me to provide context and commentary on many of the topics where it seemed appropriate. I welcome other perspectives.

History is not usually presented in such convenient and digestible form. Ordinarily one would have to go to the index on a town history and piece together information from multiple pages over time and then create a coherent narrative on any given topic. Portsmouth historian J. Dennis Robinson told me the list below is unique and should have great appeal because where else could you find such random topics as: the Farragut Hotel, salt marshes, surfing and 1623 Thomson settlement? The topics below, taken as a whole, go a long way toward a comprehensive history of Rye.

Most of the 80+ topics are ½ to 3 pages, with longer ones noted. Rye Junior High was the inspiration for this list because in 2022 they asked me for a variety of Rye history topics from which they could choose to work on. I visited many classes to work on this Rye history in the winter of 2023. The schools now have these documents and now the wider public is welcome to them.

The public is encouraged to edit and make additions to these histories or offer ones they have created in which you will be the author. If you are interested in a topic that is not on the list, I will create a document with the information I have and send it to you. This process enlarges the scope of who is

reading, researching, writing and publicizing Rye history to the community and beyond. On line possibilities abound, such as Rye history blogs, etc. Soon I will create my own web site for Rye history.

For most of these topics there are often photos to go with them, from the Rye Historical Society web site under the "resources" tab – image catalog (www.ryenhistoricalociety.org) and other sources.

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B. Sources Consulted

History of Rye NH, Langdon Parsons, 1905. The author organized his book thematically, see table of contents below. The book is available to read on line. Parsons has many primary sources in his book and his thematic format has helped inspire my "Rye History Rocks" project, because I have found it so easy to consult his important work over the years

Bill Varrell – three books, Tom Clarie - two books, other local history books, town reports from 1863; Tom Clarie's research on historic newspaper archives from late 1800s/early 1900s, Portsmouth Herald articles about Rye from mid 1900s to present, my experience as a Rye native born in 1945; primary source records and other published and unpublished material in town museum/Rye library; oral history from town residents, etc.

Rye Historical Society web site - www.ryenhistoricalociety.org

Excellent materials here, primary and secondary, click on the three parallel bars on the right and then click the tab: "resources"

Rye Library - the NH Room where the big oval table is, has all published books on Rye history, mentioned above as well as unpublished material.

Town of Rye web site: "Rye, NH" click on: "Find it Fast," for some good links to groups in town like Rye Civic League and Rye Historical Society. The "Archived Town Reports" starting in 1869 is excellent - these primary sources provide a history of the political life of the town, year by year.

C. Table of Contents – Alphabetical listing

First document - Introduction to Rye history: a five- version overview that includes two short paragraphs of geography and history, a list of themes, five- page time line, one page overview, 2 ½ page narrative history. It is good to consult this document as well as delving into the specific topics below.

Rye History Topic	Time frame
African Americans	comprehensive over time
Aging communities	recent study of towns like Rye in NH
Anniversaries/holiday observances	comprehensive inclu. mil., pol., social etc.
Atlantic and Farragut hotels	1840s – 1880s
Businesses in Rye	1950s
Baseball	from 1800s
Battle of Rye Harbor	part of War of 1812 (1814)
Carberry’s store and beyond	1920s to present
Central Cemetery	from 1893 when it was established
Center school (RJH) property history	from 1800s to present
Childhood memories of 1890s	by Emma Foss, Central Road
Churches	from the first in 1726
Citizen petition to renovate Town Hall	1975
Coastal tour	film narration Bass Beach on No. H. line to Odiorne Pt.
Diary of Supply Foss Trefethen	excerpt from late 1850s/early 1860s
Diary of George Lang	1871-1901 excerpts over time
Drake House hotel	from 1873 to present

Drinking/taverns/alcohol abuse	comprehensive
Dumping and recycling	comprehensive
Education/schools	from first schools in 1800s to present
Eel Pond	comprehensive
Families of 20 th c.	1900s
Fire -fighting/fire dept	comprehensive
Farming	comprehensive
First Light Infantry	in Rev. War 1770s and revival in 1970s
Fishing	comprehensive
Five century Marston house	1600s, 1700s, 1800s; moved to Rye: 1975, 2005 additions
Founding Families	from 1600s and 1700s (43)
Golf	late 1800s - present
Goss Farm	from 1600s to the present
Graveyards/burial grounds	60+ at former family farms
Green, Harry and Charlie	“Townies” of Rye in early/mid 1900s
Growing up in Rye Center, early 1800s	researched and imagined essay by Jessie Herlihy
Herlihy, Jessie	1930s – 1989
Herlihy, David	1939 - 2015
Hotels of Rye	from 1846 to 1920
Houses built before 1901	approx. 317
Housing developments	Straw’s Pt./ Concord Pt communities in 1800s to present
Laighton family on shoals	from 1839 to death of Oscar Laighton in 1900s
Lafayette Road	from 1600s “Long Lane to Lafayette Hghy. in 1825 to present
Land conservation	early efforts, conserv. com., land trusts, donations, easements
Landmarks	natural and built environment
Life- saving stations/shipwrecks	1872 – to 1930s
Maj. John Parsons	in Florida mid 1800s
Mills	from late 1600s into 1800s
Native Peoples	1600s

Natural & cultural hist inventory	comprehensive list
NH state facilities in Rye	1960s: two beaches, two state parks, one harbor marina/pier
NH National Guard	Camp Winant 1920s/30s, the artillery unit in Rye every August
Odiorne Pt 1623 settlement	David Thomson and others by J. Dennis Robinson
Odiorne Pt time line (1 p./ 24 p	from 1600s to present
Oil refinery battle in Rye	1973/74; RHS pub. book "Rye's Battle of the Century," Lisa Moll
Parsons family descendants	Langdon Parsons from the 1600s to late 1900s
Parsons Park	late 1970s, grassroots effort save 50 acres- public land in center
Policing	from 1800s to present
Quiz on Rye History	from Rye history time line
Restaurants/snack bars	starting in 1920s
Revolutionary War	39 who died/ 121 served
Rye Historical Society	from its founding in 1976
Rye Beach Precinct bldg.	from 1919, meeting rm. 2 nd floor, fire station/ PO on 1st
Rye Center	comprehensive
Rye Civic League history	from 1968 – 1993 and 2009 to present
Rye, East Sussex, England	by their museum director Jo Kirkham
Rye Harbor	comprehensive
Rye Public Library	from 1911 to present
Salt marsh restoration	near Rye Harbor 2001 – 2005
St Louis connection to Rye	late 1800s to present
Stores/gift shops, etc.	from early 1800s to mid-1900s
Straw's Point community	inventory of houses starting in 1870s
Studebaker family letters	from WWI era; 1917 house on Blvd. by Church Rd.
Sunken forest	from 4000 years ago; recent sightings
Surfing	from 1960s to present
Tallman, Louise	Rye historian from 1960s to 2011
Town govt/ civic engagement	comprehensive
Town Hall	from 1873, former Meth. /Episcopal church built in 1839

Town museum	c. 1930 antique shop, mid 1900s apt., 2002 Rye Town Museum
Town reports	from 1863 to present – a history of town govt year by year
Trolley in Rye	from 1899 to 1925
Water	surface and underground
Walker, Jess – WWI vet	1900s
War monument in center	built in 1919 with names of those who served in most of wars
World War I	those who served including 3 who died
World War II	244 who served plus narrative history

D. Rye History Topics by Category

Topics	Category	Time frame
_____	_____	_____

Accommodations

Atlantic and Farragut hotels	1840s – 1880s
Drake House hotel	from 1873 to present
Hotels of Rye	from 1846 to 1920
Boarding houses	from mid 1800s – into 1900s

Burial grounds

Graveyards	60+ at former family farms
Central Cemetery	from 1893 when it was established

Businesses

Taverns/Drinking problems	comprehensive
Restaurants/snack bars	starting in 1920s
Businesses in Rye	1950s
Carberry's store and beyond	1920s to present
Stores/gift shops, etc.	from early 1800s to mid-1900s

Diaries

Diary of Supply Foss Trefethen	excerpt from late 1850s/early 1860s
Diary of George Lang	1871-1901 excerpts over time
Other diaries	late 1800s/early 1900s

Education

Center school (RJH) property history	from 1800s to present
Education/schools	from first schools in 1800s to present

Farming

Farming	comprehensive
Goss Farm	from 1600s to the present

Fishing

Rye Harbor	comprehensive
Fisherfolk	over time

Houses

Houses built before 1901	approx. 317
Five century Marston house	1600s, 1700s, 1800s; moved to Rye: 1975, 2005 additions
Housing developments	Straw's Pt./ Concord Pt communities in 1800s to present
Straw's Point community	inventory of houses starting in 1870s
Manchester colony	from 1920s
Concord Pt community	from late 1800s

Isles of Shoals

Overview of history	from early 1600s - present
Laighton family on Shoals	from 1839 to death of Oscar Laighton early 1900s

Military

Battle of Rye Harbor	part of War of 1812 (1814)
Walker, Jess – WWI vet	1900s
War monument in center	built in 1919 with names of those who served in most of wars

World War I	those who served including 3 who died
World War II	244 who served plus narrative history
NH National Guard	Camp Winant 1920s/30s, the artillery unit in Rye every August
First Light Infantry	Rev. War 1770s and revival in 1970s
Revolutionary War	39 who died/ 121 served

Natural areas/conservation

Eel Pond	comprehensive
Natural & cultural hist inventory	comprehensive list
Salt marshes & restoration	near Rye Harbor 2001 – 2005
Water	surface and underground
Sunken forest	from 4000 years ago; recent sightings
Land conservation	early efforts, Conserv. Com., land trusts, donations, easements
Parsons Park	late 1970s, grassroots effort save 50 acres- public land in center
Geology of seacoast	

NH state Facilities in Rye

Odiorne Pt State park	c, 1961
Ragged neck state park	c. 1950s/60s
Jeness state beach	1962
Rye Harbor State pier	1962
Wallis Sands State Beach	1964

Odiorne Pt 1623 settlement	David Thomson and others by J. Dennis Robinson
Odiorne Pt time line (1 p./ 24 p	from 1600s to present

Organizations

Rye Civic League	from 1968
Rye Historical Society	from its founding in 1976
Town museum	c. 1930 antique shop, mid 1900s apt., 2002 Rye Town Museum
Darning Needle Club	
Grange	
Lions	
JOUAM	fraternal group - Jr order United Am Mechanics

People

Families of 20 th c.	1900s
Founding Families	from 1600s and 1700s (43)
Childhood memories of 1890s	by Emma Foss, Central Road
Green, Harry and Charlie	“Townies” of Rye in early/mid 1900s
Herlihy, Jessie	1930s – 1989
Herlihy, David	1939 – 2015
Maj. John Parsons	in Florida mid 1800s
Parsons family descendants	Langdon Parsons from the 1600s to late 1900s
Growing up in Rye Center, early 1800s	researched and imagined essay by Jessie Herlihy
St Louis connection to Rye	late 1800s to present
Tallman, Louise	Rye historian from 1960s to 2011

Studebaker family letters	from WWI era; 1917 house on Blvd. by Church Rd.
Varrell, Bill	Town historian (3 books) 1960s - 2007

Roads

Original paths of native people

Lafayette Road	from 1600s "Long Lane to Lafayette Hgwy. in 1825 to present
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Original roads of Rye	up to 1904
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Washington Road	name changes over time
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Building Ocean Blvd.	1902-1904
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Sport

Baseball	from 1800s
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Golf	from late 1800s
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Surfing	from 1960s to present
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Town Government

Citizen petition to renovate Town Hall	1975
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Dumping and recycling	comprehensive
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Fire -fighting/fire dept	comprehensive
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Policing	from 1800s to present
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Town govt/ civic engagement	comprehensive
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Town Hall	from 1873, former Meth./Episcopal church built in 1839
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Town reports	from 1863 to present – a history of town govt year by year
Rye Beach Precinct bldg.	from 1919, meeting rm. 2 nd floor, fire station/ PO on 1st
Rye Public Library	from 1911 to present

Misc. – one topic only

African Americans	comprehensive over time
Aging communities	recent study of towns like Rye in NH
Anniversaries/holiday observances	comprehensive inclu. mil., pol., social etc.
Churches	from the first in 1726
Coastal tour	film narration Bass Beach on No. H. line to Odiorne Pt.
Landmarks	natural and built environment
Life- saving stations/shipwrecks	1872 – to 1930s
Mills	from late 1600s into 1800s
Native Peoples	1600s
Oil refinery battle in Rye	1973/74; RHS pub. book “Rye’s Battle of the Century,” Lisa Moll
Quiz on Rye History	from Rye history time line
Rye Center	comprehensive
Rye, East Sussex, England	by their museum director Jo Kirkham
Trolley in Rye	from 1899 to 1925

E. Table of contents of: *History of Rye NH* by Langdon Parsons, 1905

Note – this is a thematic history, not chronological; it is accessible on line;

Much of the information in these chapters is summarized in the above topics or can be quickly retrieved

Discovery and Settlement

The Parish of Rye

Rye Boundaries

Population

Some old residents and where they lived

Ferries, Bridges and Roads

Schools and schoolhouses

Inns, Taverns and Hotels

Rye as a Summer Resort

Town affairs – government

Ecclesiastical – churches

Industrial and Misc. inclu. anecdotes

The Isles of Shoals

Indians – wars between settler colonists (Britain) and native peoples (France)

Rye in War Times from 1740s

Record of town officers

Genealogy – info and anecdotes

Marriages and Deaths

Note – there are many short bios that could be created on a variety Rye people from the past

There are potentially hundreds of other topics for which short histories can be created, either by me or others knowledgeable about a topic. This material will soon be consolidated on my own web site: Rye History Rocks and links to it will be on RHS web site, RCL Civic News and other web sites in town. Rye history Rocks will also be promoted on social media.

Remember – e-mail me for any document you want and it will be sent to you promptly. alexherlihy@comcast.net