Our yesterdays

By WARREN D. HUSE

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125 YEARS AGO (1887)
from The Laconia Democrat
The Belknap Mill was “to erect a goodsized three story brick building in the Belknap yard to be used as a dye-house, etc. Work is to be commenced at once.” Note: This was the long building, next to the river, downriver of the Esty (later Sakansky and, still later, Gilbert) Mill. It was razed during Urban Renewal. The Boston & Maine Railroad took formal possession of the Boston & Lowell Railroad and its branches, Oct. 12. “If we understand the situation correctly, Laconia is now located on the White Mountain Division of the Lowell System of the Boston & Maine railroad.”

100 YEARS AGO (1912)
from The Laconia Democrat
The Up-in-Town correspondent reported “the lower end of Leavitt park is being slowly but surely completed, but it is a long ways ahead to look for its finish. It takes a lot of time and work to move the earth by cart loads, to fill up and level off a rough piece of ground like the Leavitt park.” Charles Wilcomb, a former resident of Lakeport, “had been in town for a few days in the interests of the museum at Oakland,"
Cal., of which he is curator; he has just returned from a trip to northern Europe; one of his side trips was a visit to the land of the midnight sun.”

75 YEARS AGO (1937)

from The Democrat & The Citizen

Gen. William F. Knight “had the pleasure of cutting four birthday cakes, opening boxes of flowers and other gifts” on his 90th birthday, Oct. 13. Note: Knight’s honorary title derived from his appointment from 1895 to 1897 as quartermaster general on the military staff of Gov. Charles A. Busiel. Knight never served in any army nor in the Marine Corps. He was a longtime merchant and banker and a former mayor of Laconia. (LD)

50 YEARS AGO (1962)

from The Laconia Citizen

The Motorcycle Committee of the Greater Laconia-Weirs Beach Chamber of Commerce had exceeded its goal of $3,000 for the 1962 Motorcycle Week and had forwarded the funds to William Scheitinger, president of the New England Motorcycle Dealers’ Association.

Laconia Business and Professional Women’s Club named Dr. M. Alice Normandin its Woman of the Year. At 6:30 the next morning, “Dr. Alice was backing her car out of her driveway on Skyline Dr., Gilford and on her way to make a call. Life was back to normal for the silver haired woman physician who has endeared herself to the Lakes Region and whose achievements were recognized,” Oct. 10, “at a dinner at the Laconia Tavern hotel.”

Bruno Jacob of Racine, Wis., executive secretary of the National Forensic League, was in Laconia, Oct. 15, to present the award as the leading chapter in New England at Laconia High School assembly. “He said that the only other chapters to win the award four times were Enid, Okla., and South St. Paul, Minn., both larger schools.” The award was received by LHS Principal
Donald Piper. Mrs. Ruth Estes, speech and
debate coach was on leave because of her
health and was unable to be present, but Jacob called at her home to congratulate her.
Men’s judo classes opened this week at
the Laconia YMCA with Haven Sanborn as
instructor. He had just returned to Laconia
after three years in the Marine Corps, serving mostly in Hawaii and Okinawa.
Mayor J. Oliva Huot, Democratic candidate for Congress, was pictured riding a
donkey at the Sandwich Fair.
Grossman’s held a grand opening, Oct.
12, of its new distribution center on Blaisdell Avenue, next to the Laconia Milling Co.
State Sen. Edith Gardner sawed a board to
open the center. “Before the day was over,
early 800 people had visited the store.”
Manager Bill Patterson “reports 735 doughnuts were consumed and 30 gallons of cof-
nearly 800 people had visited the store.”
Manager Bill Patterson “reports 735 doughnuts were consumed and 30 gallons of coffee by opening
day guests who inspected the
new building with its over 10,000 square feet
of floor space. The store is the latest of its
type constructed with steel frame and plywood roof and siding.

25 YEARS AGO (1987)
from The Laconia Citizen
The state Department of Revenue Administration had set the city’s tax rate at $49.77
per $1,000 of assessed valuation. “The 1987
rate is $1.37 — or 2.8 percent — higher than
last year’s rate of $48.40.”
Some 40 Massachusetts Avenue area residents had organized the city’s first Neighborhood Watch
Program. Persons who attended an organizational meeting at Leavitt Park House “voiced concern
about speeding, unleashed dogs, and vandalism. Laconia Police Detective and Crime Prevention
Officer David Gunter and Cpl. Christopher
Cost addressed those issues.”
Lakes Region Family Service Association
Inc. had established a fund in memory of
board member and former Laconia Police
Department Patrolman Debra L. Bieniarz,
who had died the previous month at age 29
from a brain aneurysm. Mrs. Bieniarz had
also served the agency as a member of the
Domestic Violence Advisory Committee
and was instrumental in raising funds for
the agency’s domestic violence shelter. “The
fund will support educational projects
aimed at increasing awareness of domestic violence; with the ultimate goal being to
provide an alternative to violent behavior.”
Howard C. Hunt, 99, a resident of the city
since 1941, died, Oct. 13. He had worked for
Scott & Williams for many years, serving
as safety director. His last employment was
as a draftsman for Vernitron, where he
worked until his 84th year. Earlier, for 20
years, he had been in the hotel business between Florida and New England.

10 YEARS AGO (2002)
from The Citizen
About a half-dozen volunteers from the
Laconia Main Street program, as well as
Executive Director Francoise Elise, “spent
a good part of their Wednesday evening assembling scarecrows in the basement of the
Laconia Congregational Church,” Oct. 9.
“The scarecrows, which are stuffed with
newspapers and wear clothes and other
items donated by local businesses, are part
of a promotional campaign to bring people to downtown Laconia. Main Street
Chairman Warren Clement hopes to have
50 of the scarecrows in place by Halloween,
some as early as next week.”
Portable space heaters and coats were
the order of the day at Laconia District
Court as the city and state worked to replace a broken furnace there. “Nonetheless, the court has
been and will remain
open,” Court Clerk Diane Lane said.
Lakes Region Day Care Center moved
into a new home at First United Methodist
Church, Gilford.
Giggles and Grins, a new family resource
center of the Lakes Region Community Service Center, opened at 20 Canal St.
Cantin Chevrolet was building a new collision and repair shop on Mechanic Street.
Equipped with shovels, clippers, gloves
and plenty of warm clothing, members of
Opechee Garden Club had “been weathering the crisp fall mornings to spruce up the
gardens at the Laconia Public Library and
prepare the land for plantings in the spring."

The 24th annual quilt show of the Belknap Mill Quilters Guild was held this weekend at the Winnipesaukee Expo Center. "The guild, which is comprised of more than 100 members, celebrated its silver anniversary as an organization this year while holding the quilt show for the first time at the Expo Center ... The quilts in the show received not only local, but global attention as a number of visitors and tour buses stopped by the Expo Center."

After 42 years, the oldest art gallery in the Lakes Region was closing its doors. Through Oct. 12, the Loran Percy Art & Crystal Gallery on Route 11A was holding an estate sale featuring the oil paintings of the Late Loran Percy as well as a 25% off sale on the crystal works of his daughter, Susan Percy-MacDonald." Started in a garage in 1960, the gallery featuring Loran Percy’s paintings "moved to its current location in 1970 and 11 years ago became an ‘art and crystal gallery’ when Percy-MacDonald began to exhibit and sell her wares which also include paintings, there."

Johnson & Dix’s Mobil "On the Run" convenience store celebrated its grand opening off Route 106 at the Belmont-Laconia line. The 4,000-square-foot store "is owned by Johnson & Dix, an oil and propane distributor out of Lebanon which operates a total of 15 convenience stores throughout New Hampshire and Vermont."

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