

An interesting peek into Dartmouth's past is available at Russells Mills Schoolhouse

Saturday

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DARTMOUTH — An interesting exhibition of photographs and artifacts titled "Dartmouth: Experience Your Heritage" is on display at the 1871 Schoolhouse at 1205 Russell's Mills Road in historic Russell's Mills Village every Sunday afternoon (1-4 p.m.) until late September. Admission is free.

By ROBERT BARBOZA DARTMOUTH — An interesting exhibition of photographs and artifacts titled "Dartmouth: Experience Your Heritage" is on display at the 1871 Schoolhouse at 1205 Russell's Mills Road in historic Russell's Mills Village every Sunday afternoon (1-4 p.m.) until late September. Admission is free.

The exhibition is divided into six themes: Farming, Fishing, and Forestry; and Boats, Bicycles, and Buggies. The displays will give visitors a glimpse into centuries past with rare representations of local industries and recreational pastimes integral to Dartmouth life.

Packed with local historical artifacts, the schoolhouse exhibit is dedicated to Horace B. Wildes, a Dartmouth resident who generously donated some of his personal photographs to the show to help tell the story of a family that once thrived in Padanaram Village. Wildes and his rare and important images of Dartmouth's bygone days of the late 19th and early 20th century are an inspiration to local residents, and help breathe life into that era of town history.

The curators of the exhibition also want to thank other families and businesses who contributed to the show: Alderbrook Farm, the Crosby and Delano families, Robert Egan, Brenda Jacques, Paul E. Levasseur (Historical Pathways), Lee Marland, Wilson "Skip" Mull, the Russell family, John Nicolaci Jr., Robert Tate, the Vincent family, and New Bedford Antiques.

The artifacts displays include a turn of the century gleaning rake used to gather cut hay, from the Horace Wildes collection; a sign and photographs of the R & G Fishing Tackle Shop that once stood on Smith Neck Road; and an extensive photo display on logging in the 1960s through today, courtesy of the Delano Sawmill owners and Paul Levasseur.

Exhibition co-curators Diane Gilbert of the Dartmouth Heritage Preservation Trust and Sue Guiducci of the Dartmouth Historical & Arts Society said they planned the special show to coordinate with Dartmouth's ongoing 350th birthday celebration.

"We wanted this exhibit to be about the whole town, and not specifically about one village or another," Guiducci said.

"The six themes of the exhibits — farming, fishing, and forestry; plus boats, bicycles, and buggies — seemed to really reflect the people of Dartmouth through the years," she added. "We still have farming, we still have fishing, and there are still sawmills... it has all continued to the present day."

Gilbert neatly summed up the combination of local history items and rare family photos as "inconic artifacts and iconic images" that tell the Dartmouth heritage story. "Most of these photos have not been seen by the public before," she noted.

The schoolhouse will be open to visitors every Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. at no charge, and during the Russell's Mills Village Rural Community Fair and Dartmouth 350 celebrations on Sept. 5 and 6. The Sunday schedule continues on Sept. 14 and 21 as well.

You can also make an appointment for special viewing by contacting curators Diane Gilbert at (508) 965-7265 or email _____, or Sue Guiducci at (508) 990-2854 or email _____.