

## SECTION 1. TOWN ORGANIZATION

The option to settle Wilmington was originally granted by N.H. Governor Benning Wentworth on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1731. Wentworth chartered Marlboro, a town adjacent to the east, on the same day. The French and Indian Wars and other factors slowed settler mobilization, and the area was not significantly inhabited within the specified five year period. Wentworth granted the land for a second time, 12 years later on June 17th, 1763. Recipients of the second grant were entirely different from the initial grantees and included some of Massachusetts' most distinguished families.

Apparently these grantees were well organized; a census taken in January of 1771 reported 71 inhabitants including 14 heads of families. Having achieved a critical population mass, the town has witnessed decades of growth, reaching 1,000 inhabitants by 1800 and never suffering significant declines. Settlement clusters have emerged and declined in several spots around the town. For instance, 170 years ago the town center was closer to the top of Lisle Hill Road, a mile from the present nexus. At present, the most significant and stable cluster appears to be along the western junction of Routes 9 and 100. While the civil structure of villages in Vermont vary considerably, Swift reports no significant village level organization in the town throughout its history, save two neighborhoods that for short periods of time offered federal postal service.

**Table 1.1- General Town Characteristics**

Year(s) Granted	1751, 1763
County	Windham
Settlements and Neighborhoods	East Wilmington, Haystack, Medburyville, & Raponda Turn
No Incorporated Villages	

SOURCES: Vermont Place-Names: Footprints of History, Esther M. Swift, Brattleboro, VTS. Green Press, 1977  
Vermont YearBook, Chester, VT: The YearBook  
Wilmington Town Offices

### **What is in a name?**

The original grant creating this town gave it the name of Wilmington in honor of the English nobleman, Spencer Compton, first Earl of Wilmington (1673-1743). Compton had held various offices and for a brief time had been England's Prime Minister. It is likely that Compton's influence helped earn Wentworth the colonial governorship of New Hampshire in 1741. However, the second group of grantees, with strong Massachusetts allegiances, introduced the name Draper for the second grant, thereby honoring John and Richard Draper, well know father and son printers from Boston. John Draper (the father) had become publisher of New England's oldest newspaper the NewsLetter, and after his death, son Richard expanded it into the *Massachusetts Gazette* and the *Weekly NewsLetter*.

Ironically, subsequent settlers didn't like the Draper name and began calling it Wilmington. No official action has ever been made but the name Wilmington has been established through custom as opposed to law.

### **Historical Chronology**

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- 1731 - Initial granting of this area by New Hampshire's Governor Benning Wentworth in April.

- 1813 - Frank Hastings Hamilton is born in Wilmington. Hamilton went on to serve as a surgeon in the Civil War and later organized the U.S. General Hospital in New York. He was President James Garfield's personal doctor.
- The Civil War leaves one in ten Vermont farms vacant. In the period following the war, Swedes move to Wilmington, Weston and Vershire to work on farms.
- 1921 - The Harriman Dam is built and forms Lake Whitingham, which becomes the largest body of water entirely within the state's boundaries.
- 1964 - Haystack Ski Area is built.
- 2001 - The VT Council of Rural Development is invited to begin a series of visits aimed at addressing important issues within the community.

Chronological materials drawn, in part from Susan Kelley, "Our Towns: Vermont 1791-1991, Bicentennial Year Series, Burlington Free Press, 1991.

**Table 1.2- General Town Planning Characteristics**

<i>Vermont Forum on Sprawl</i> Category	1 – Traditional Center
Town Plan	Yes – expires August 2003
Zoning Ordinance	Yes – including Village Design Control
Subdivision Ordinance	None
Septic Approval Process	Must be designed by VT-Licensed Engineers
Flood Hazard Conditional Development	Flood Hazard Area Regulations
Development Review Board	None

sources: crs.uvm.edu  
Wilmington Town Offices

[Table of Contents](#)

Next: [Human Resources](#)