**CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES**

**Celebrations and Observances –** Worcester’s past has featured a grand series of public events which evoke fond memories even in this far-removed century. These have included Old Home Days; Fourth of July celebrations; visits by evangelists, performing troupes and circuses; and parades on special occasions such as on Hallowe’en in the Worcester hamlet and on Thanksgiving Day in East Worcester.

One regular occurrence was “Saturday Night in Worcester,” a unique summer tradition of evening band concerts in front of the Worcester Inn during which stores were open; street vendors sold popcorn, cotton candy and other treats; cars lined the streets; and everyone came to town to greet friends, shop, eat ice cream, get haircuts, listen to music and go to the movies. The Worcester Brass Band, the Boys Band, and later the school band, were the main attractions.

Unique celebrations occurred during the United States Centennial and Bicentennial in 1876 and 1976, and on the occasion of the town’s sesquicentennial (1947) and bicentennial (1997) observances.

Storied features of past life have been the picnics, socials, clam bakes and community gatherings held outdoors at such places as Robinson’s Falls, Cook’s Grove, Caryl’s Lake and Saints’ Rest. These activities have faded beyond the memory of anyone now breathing.

Many traditional public events still take place, however, including the annual Memorial Day ceremonies and the relatively recent “Worcester Days,” begun in 1967. This annual summer event is different each year, but some features have been parades, band concerts, skits, street bazaars and sidewalk sales, fireworks, a chorale and square dances. The East Worcester Dog Days Sale-a-Thon, with its lawn and food sales, began in 1993.

The Strawberry Festival, held each year on the lawn of the Presbyterian Church, has included -- beside food and congeniality – band concerts and a wide variety of vocal music presentations.

**Community Organizations** – The Wieting Opera House, built in 1910 and given to the community by Hellen Wilder Wieting, continues to host movies, theatrical productions including summer stock, and community gatherings. Its basement, formerly the site of a gymnasium for the school basketball team, now contains the Worcester Woman’s Club rooms. The Worcester Free Library and the Daughters of the American Revolution occupy separate portions of the building.

The Woman’s Club itself sponsors a variety of community activities such as plays, craft shows, book reviews, smörgåsbords, and its own centennial celebration in 1985. The Free Library has its own programs, such as a children’s library, a story hour and storytelling, computer and printing demonstrations, and craft instruction. Its main reading room also hosts community meetings.

There is a variety of other organizations that have enriched the community. Some in the past have included the Amateur Dramatic Association, Thespians, Masons, Grand Army of the Republic, Women’s Relief Corps, Red Men, Maccabees, Fortnightly Club and Friendship Group. Prominent current groups are the American Legion and its Auxiliary, the two fire departments and their auxiliaries, the Grange, Rotary, SNPJ, Girl and Boy Scouts, 4-H, Tri-Valley Players and the cemetery associations.

**School and Sports** – Worcester Central School students enjoy a wide variety of courses and extracurricular activities such as the band, chorus and choral groups, orchestra, clubs and organizations, local history class, plays, dances, musicals, variety shows and the summer recreation program.

Beside the school athletic teams, which have won championships in baseball, football, basketball and soccer, there have also been adult leagues featuring Worcester baseball and basketball “town teams” for more than the past century. There are currently youth baseball leagues, adult softball leagues, and a community swimming pool. The Town of Worcester owns a recreational facility at Legion Field, where it has constructed a softball field and an outdoor pavilion. The town projects additional improvements in years to come.

Bowling lanes existed at the Wieting and the Worcester Inn for a number of years between 1914 and about 1980.

**Historical Society and Town Historian** – The Worcester Historical Society, Inc., founded in 1970, has a full range of historical and genealogical resources that are available to the public, including:

* *The Worcester Times* newspaper on microfilm, as well as a microfilm reader;
* a full library of Worcester and Otsego County resource materials;
* a card file of Worcester cemetery burials;
* genealogical files for many local families;
* scrapbooks and clippings kept by local persons;
* internet connection to historical and genealogical resources;
* safe storage for rare materials and storage space for display items;
* a local historical museum;
* a sales area for historical books, maps, post cards, posters, philatelic cachets and other memorabilia; and
* availability of the Town of Worcester historical collection through the office of the Town Historian.

The Society also sponsors regular programs and presentations on historical subjects and publishes a newsletter.

The Town of Worcester appoints a Town Historian and a Custodian of Historical Records each year in January, who carry out duties set forth in state law. In addition to responding to public requests, the Historian carries on research and maintains the town historical collection. The town government has generously supported such historical activities as publication of *Officers of the Town of Worcester* and *A Bicentennial History of the Town of Worcester*, the town bicentennial celebration and the local cemetery survey.

**Church Activities** – All the churches in town have affiliated service organizations and carry on local outreach. They also sponsor socials, organ recitals, community dinners, youth groups, ecumenical religious observances and many similar events. Churches in the Worcester hamlet have formed a respected community chorale which performs at local functions and hosts an annual Christmas Cantata.

**Newspapers** – The Worcester and East Worcester hamlets have supported various newspapers in the period from 1875 to 1986, although the only local coverage now appears in out-of-town papers and in monthly publications such as *The Hometown AD\*Vantage* and the school newsletter.