

Hometown Volunteer Hero: Violet and Raymond Hopkins

By Missy Pilgrim

Violet and Raymond Hopkins have been active, passionate volunteers in the community for over three decades both individually and as a couple. GoLittleton.com would like to highlight their many wonderful accomplishments while donating their time, skills, and dedication to always helping to keep Littleton going strong.

Both natives to the area, Violet was born and raised in Bethlehem where she graduated from Bethlehem High School (after being reined their Winter Carnival Queen senior year). Ray was born and raised in Littleton, moved away to Connecticut briefly, then moved back and married Violet. They resided in the Apthorp area of Littleton where they still live today (in the same house they've called home for fifty-five years, and counting!). With Violet's encouragement, Ray received his G.E.D. from Littleton High School shortly after they got married. Violet worked for twenty-six years at the New England Telephone Company and then worked an additional seventeen years at the Littleton Stamp and Coin Company, retiring in 1997. Ray was in the National Guards for twenty-two years, retiring as a Sergeant, First Class in the 1980's. Throughout his service time in the Guards he was also employed full-time by the Littleton Water and Light Department. He continued to work for them for a total of forty years and retired the same day as Violet in 1997.

Though busy with their careers, both Violet and Ray still found time to volunteer, starting with their church in the 1980's. They have both been Trustee Chair People of the Methodist Church, Violet for six years and Ray for eight. Ray was also the Lay Leader of the congregation for eight years. He was then the Conference Lay Leader for the New Hampshire United Methodist Church (which included 112 churches in all). Then, in the 1990's, both Violet and Ray oversaw a four-year restoration project of the church's four largest beloved stained glass windows. With a lot of help, patience, and donations (from both church members and other members of the community), they worked to restore and replace the four windows, making the church a sight of beauty to behold on Main Street. (And they still wish to thank all those who helped them during this whole endeavor!) They are both still active members of the Methodist Church. Ray is also currently writing about the history of it in a monthly newsletter entitled *Did You Know?*

In the early 1990's Violet and Ray joined the Littleton Historical Society and soon realized their time spent there was a true passion. Violet was the curator and Ray was the President. At the end of the 90's the society had to close for three years due to not having a location to call home, and Home Health, Val Poulsen, and Steve Kelly each offered to store the artifacts and records the whole time. During the 90's and into the early 2000's Ray was also the President of the Littleton Community House for twelve years, and in the 2000's they were able to find some room there to reopen the Historical Society again. But then soon afterwards the Littleton Opera House reopened and they all realized the basement there would be the perfect permanent home for it—with a little fixing up. And once again many fantastic volunteers offered to help with the construction, painting, and moving of all of the materials, including the work-release prisoners of the Grafton County Department of Corrections (in North Haverhill) and Val Poulsen by lending his trucks and equipment. Once settled there Violet remained the curator for four more years until she retired in the late 2000's (with Dick Alberini then taking charge).

One of the many found memories Violet and Ray have of their time spent with the Historical Society was the discovery of an antique work sleigh in Deerfield, New Hampshire with ties to Littleton's past. It was made in the 1800's by the Ranlett and Harris Company on Mill Street. Violet and Ray raised enough money through donations to both buy and restore it. It can still be seen on display at the Littleton Historical Society today.

In 2004, Violet and Ray were jointly awarded the *Citizens of the Year Award* for all the wonderful volunteer work they have done for the town of Littleton. Then, in 2012 Ray was awarded the *Paul Harris Fellow Award* from the Rotary Club for his volunteer work and dedication of being a good citizen. Besides all of the past volunteer work he has done for the town, this honor was also because he has continued to find new ways to be of assistance as a volunteer, including working at the front desk of the Littleton Regional Hospital for the past twelve years and also currently assisting at the Littleton Senior Center as a site community volunteer.

Thank you, Violet and Raymond Hopkins, for helping to keep Littleton going and such a great place to live! From your joint efforts of doing all your wonderful volunteer work over the years you have helped in many ways, and a special thanks goes out to you both for helping to keep area residents as well as traveling history buffs informed about Littleton's proud history in the years ahead.