

Yarmouth Historical Society presents The Wellcome Prize for Student Historians

The Trustees and staff of Yarmouth Historical Society are pleased to present The Wellcome Prize, a history competition open to high school students in Maine. Students are invited to undertake original historical research about a local history topic related to Cumberland County and write a research paper or create a film about their findings. Entries will be judged on the quality of research and effectiveness of communication. The three winners in each category will be asked to present their work to the public in November 2026. **First prize winners will receive \$1000, second prize \$500, and third prize \$250.**

Eligibility: Any high school student residing or attending school in Maine is eligible to enter. **Entrants should be current high school students (grades 9-12) during the fall of 2026.**

Timeline: Papers and films may be submitted any time between April 1 and October 1, 2026. Winners will be announced on Wednesday, October 14, 2026. Winning students will present a talk on the evening of Wednesday, November 18, 2026. Start time and format (in person or online) will be determined in the fall. See below for further submission details.

Topic: In order to maintain a strong connection to local history, please limit paper and film topics to subjects related to Cumberland County, Maine. Past winners have included a paper on the arrival of the Interstate in Yarmouth, a biography of prize namesake Elsie Wellcome, and a documentary about the Great Portland Fire. We encourage all entrants to consult their local historical societies and/or libraries for appropriate archival materials and resources. Papers and films must be the original work of the student entering the competition. Sources must be cited. Rights to music, archival footage, or copyrighted content in films must be cleared.

Film length and submission: Films should be 8-10 minutes in length. Student filmmakers may choose to work in teams (prize money would be split among members). Yarmouth Historical Society may choose to download and/or share any submitted film on our website or social media channels. Films must be submitted via email with a link to the film by 5:00 pm on October 1, 2026. Please email submissions to Katherine Worthing: kworthing@yarmouthmehistory.org

Paper length and submission: Written papers should be between 1500 and 2500 words and should include citations and a bibliography of sources consulted. Yarmouth Historical Society may choose to publish any submitted paper in a future newsletter or publication. Papers must be submitted via email by 5:00 pm on October 1, 2026. Please email papers to Katherine Worthing: kworthing@yarmouthmehistory.org

Judging and Prizes: Papers and films will be judged by members of Yarmouth Historical Society's Program Committee using the attached rubrics. Prize winners will be notified by email on Wednesday, October 14, 2026. Winners will receive their prize money after the presentations on Wednesday, November 18, 2026.

Presentations: The three prize winners in each category will be asked to present their work to the public on Wednesday, November 18, 2026. Writers should present their research in a 10-15 minute talk; filmmakers should be prepared to present their films and speak for 5-10 minutes about their process. As this is part of our annual Lecture Series, the presentations will be open to the public. Students may use PowerPoint or other visual presentation tools during the talk.

Background: The Wellcome Prize is named after Elsie Wellcome (1893-1918). Elsie was raised in Yarmouth, attended local schools, and became an involved community member as a young person. She joined the Village Improvement Society, participating in town-wide beautification efforts, and spoke out in support of women's suffrage. Sadly, Elsie died of influenza at the age of 25 in 1918.

Questions: Please contact Katherine Worthing, Executive Director of Yarmouth Historical Society (kworthing@yarmouthmehistory.org).

**The Wellcome Prize for Student Historians
Paper Judging rubric (for reference)**

Title of Paper _____

Student # _____

Proper length. (1500-2500 Words)

- Meets requirement
- Too long
- Too short

Mechanics

- Paper uses proper punctuation, varied sentence structure and new paragraphs for new ideas
- Paper uses proper punctuation but uses simple sentences and does not use new paragraphs to express new ideas
- Paper has errors in punctuation, lacks sentence structure and does not have any paragraph definition

Topic Choice and Development

- Topic grabs interest of the reader and will have appeal to a varied audience as it relates to Cumberland County
- Topic is interesting but lacks strong connection to Cumberland County
- Topic lacks significant interest

Use of Archival Evidence

- Topic is well researched and well developed and utilizes archival material well
- Paper shows evidence of relevant research and limited use of archival evidence but lacks detail to be fully developed
- Paper is not detailed enough to illuminate the topic and does not use archival evidence

Citations

- Paper is thoroughly and properly cited
- Paper is minimally cited
- Paper is cited incorrectly or not at all

Bibliography

- Bibliography is varied and extensive
- Bibliography is solid
- Bibliography is minimal

Presentation Potential

- Topic is presented creatively and references thorough archival work, lending itself to a 10-15 minute presentation
- Topic is presented in a thoughtful manner
- Topic is not engaging

**The Wellcome Prize for Student Historians
Film Judging rubric (for reference)**

Title of Film _____

Student # _____

Proper length. (8-10 mins)

- Meets requirement
- Too long
- Too short

Format

- Film is properly formatted and easily presented
- Film has some presentation issues, but generally succeeds
- Film is poorly formatted

Tone and Structure

- Film is engaging, clear, and employs a structure that supports and illuminates the main theme
- Film introduces interesting ideas, but lacks clarity and organization
- Film lacks a clear theme and meaningful structure

Topic Choice

- Topic grabs interest of the viewer and will have appeal to a varied audience as it relates to Cumberland County
- Topic is interesting but lacks strong connection to Cumberland County
- Topic lacks significant interest

Use of Archival Evidence

- Topic is well researched and well developed and utilizes archival material well
- Film shows evidence of relevant research and limited use of archival evidence but lacks detail to be fully developed
- Film is not detailed enough to illuminate the topic and does not use archival evidence

Citations and Credit

- Film credits sources clearly
- Film credits some sources, but lacks consistency
- Film does not credit sources

Presentation Potential

- Film is presented creatively, lending itself well to an engaging 5-10 minute process presentation
- Film may lead to a good presentation
- Film does not support an engaging presentation