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## Barbara Donahue, 87

Jan 11, 2017



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BLOOMFIELD, Conn. — Barbara Donahue, a writer, historian, and a fourth-generation Gilmanton, New Hampshire, summer resident, died in Connecticut Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2017, mercifully taken by a brain hemorrhage after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. She was 87 and surrounded by family.

Born Barbara Finlay and raised in Chicago, Ms. Donahue first found enchantment in Gilmanton in the late 1930s, when her mother, Jane Scriven Cumming, launched The Pine Tree Club, which saw Barbara and other local girls staging plays, picking blueberries, climbing trees and, in winter, sledding the steep, curving hills on what is today Route 107.



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Later, she became a board member of the Loon Lake Beach Club and, with her mother, created a beloved 1994 book, "Gilmanton Summers." She wrote frequently and eloquently about Gilmanton, and in one 1968 essay she rhapsodized, "Part of me will always be in Gilmanton, feeling worn doorsills beneath my bare feet, smelling the clean, strong scent of sun-dried sheets, and seeing forever the Big Dipper, sharp and clear over the north field."

Ms. Donahue attended Manhattanville College, in New York, and spent a decade working in New York as a magazine editor for Interiors and Seventeen.

In 1961, she married John M. Donahue, a lawyer, and settled with him in Farmington. Soon, she devoted herself to raising her three children. She returned to writing in the early 1980s and over the ensuing quarter century produced several books on Connecticut history, among them "Farmington: A New England Town Through Time," "Speaking for Ourselves: African American Life in Farmington, Connecticut," and "The African Prince and The Runaway Ship."



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Ms. Donahue is survived by her children, Bill, Jane, and Tim; and also by five granddaughters. Her family's house in Gilmanton is now home to the Scriven Arts Colony, which hosts poetry readings, film screenings, and other cultural events in the attached barn.

Ms. Donahue's family will celebrate her life with a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Peter Claver Church, 47 Pleasant St., West Hartford, on Monday, Jan. 16, at 10 a.m. A Gilmanton celebration of her life will take place next summer.

