



Williston Historical Society Bulletin

Volume 45, Number 1

May 2018

“Every individual is an historical figure.”

Founded 1974

S. & J. Burroughs, Editors

WHS Officers

President – Brenda Perkins
Vice President – Meghan Cope
Secretary – Marlene Price
Treasurer – Jon Stokes
Archivist – Adriene Katz

Directors: Steve Perkins
Bob Bradish
Adriene Katz, Collections Manager/Archivist
Terry Macaig, Past President

Save the Dates

Saturday May 26 – 10:30am

Dorothy Alling Memorial Library

Tim Jerman, local historian will present stories and old photos of the Hubble's Falls area between Williston and Essex Junction.

Join us for this interesting presentation about our common history with Essex Junction.

July 3 – 7:00pm

Town Green

The Williston Historical Society hosts the annual
Ice Cream Social

September TBD

Watch for a family activity sponsored by the Williston Historical Society

November 3

Dorothy Alling Memorial Library

Tracy Martin, Historic Sites Section Chief will tell tales of Pres. Chester Arthur including his ties to Williston followed by information about the State Historic Sites program.

Please update your email address and phone number

If you have not recently updated your email address with the WHS, please do so by sending your current email address to Bob Bradish at robertdonab@myfairpoint.net or by calling him at 872-8775

I Remember...

Please share if you have a memory of growing up or living in Williston,
Send your memory to Jeneva Burroughs
momdad.burroughs@gmail.com.
or mail to 81 Peterson Ln. Williston, VT 05495

Report from the President

Dear Members:

The Williston Historical Society has had a busy beginning of the year:

On January 27th the Vermont State Archaeologist spoke to a gathering of local folks about early peoples who lived, hunted and fished along what are now Muddy Brook and the Winooski. The talk was precipitated by a donation of stone tools from the estate of Lynwood Osborne to the Williston Historical Society. These tools were handed down to Lynwood from his father who discovered them on what is now the Williston Golf Course.

On April 18 Kyle Obenaur, Historic Preservation Specialist for VTrans and Brennan Gauthier, VTrans Archaeologist presented: "The Men Who Move Mountains: The Building of the Interstate Through Williston" Kyle and Brennan facilitated a lively and interesting program on this great change to our landscape.

Coming up on May 26 local historian Tim Jerman will entertain and educate us with a program of pictures and stories about Hubbell's Falls, a common link with our neighbor, Essex Jct.

The Vermont Room now has changed. While the library installed new carpeting, the Vermont Room also got new carpeting and a new look. The room has been rearranged and has an open feel with a place to sit quietly and read as well as easy access to research materials and historic artifact displays.

WHS is growing, offering more programming and opportunities for delving into Williston history. Please look elsewhere in this newsletter for ways you can help out and connect with Williston past and present.

Brenda Perkins, President

Williston Historical Society Needs your help!

WHS is growing and would like **YOU** to take part in the fun!!

Are committees and meetings not your thing? We have many ways that you can contribute to WHS on a one time or “once in awhile” basis.

Contact us at willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com and let us know what your interests are and how you can help.

- Hospitality (arrange for and set up light refreshments during our programs)
- Ice Cream Social July 3rd (help pick strawberries, make sauces, or scoop ice cream)
- Publications (write or find articles for our newsletter published biannually)
- Oral History (interviewing and/or transcribing recorded history)
- Archive work (working under the leadership of our archivist, help with collection management, cataloguing, accessioning, etc.)
- Exhibits (working with WHS board members to arrange exhibits for July 4th and other events)
- Membership (Assist in maintaining membership rolls and recruiting new members)
- Funding (canvas local businesses and organizations for contributions)
- Like us on Facebook
- Contribute a favorite memory about growing up or living in Williston for inclusion in our “I Remember...” section of the newsletter



Talcott Farm artifacts: a summary of the stone tools

By Jess Robinson, VT State Archaeologist

Top Left- Jacks Reef Corner-Notched projectile point made from Western Onondaga chert. This projectile point type was produced from about 1500 – 1000 years before the present day. Some archaeologists believe that these points signal the first use of the bow-and-arrow by Native Americans in the region. The Onondaga chert from which this point was made outcrops periodically along an escarpment extending from southern Ontario and into western New York. It was traded widely across the Northeastern region during the Woodland period (ca. 3,000 – 500 years before the present day.)

Top Middle – Jacks Reef Corner-Notched projectile point made from local Champlain Valley chert. This point is smaller than the example on the upper-left but would have served the same purpose. It is made from chert that outcrops periodically in the central and southern portions of the Champlain Basin.

Top Right – A lanceolate spear point made from local quartzite. The form is somewhat anomalous, and It is not clear when in the past this projectile point was produced. The quartzite from which this point is made outcrops commonly along the central and southern spines of the Green Mountains.

Lower Left – a single-hole pendant made from a greenish, semi-precious stone. It might be local Vermont serpentine, but that identification is not certain. Pendants were items of personal adornment and were prized as items of exchange and prestige. Pendants are rarely recovered in Vermont. They were produced and worn during the time period when Jacks Reef Corner-notched points were made and may belong to the same site.

Lower Middle – This stone is unmodified but may have been carried as a personal totem. It

Lower Right – This artifact is a very small and highly polished celt made of an unknown, yellowish material. Celts were commonly hafted in a wooden handle and used for wood-working tasks. The extremely small size of this celt would have made it useless for any utilitarian task. Rather, it was likely made for a ceremonial purpose or as a personal totem. It cannot be determined when this celt was made but could also be related to the Native Americans that produced the Jack's Reef points.

Note: These tools may be viewed in the Williston Historical Society's Vermont Room located in the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library.

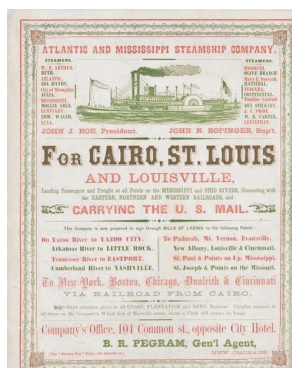
Update: Reed Brown Research and Publication

By Richard Allen

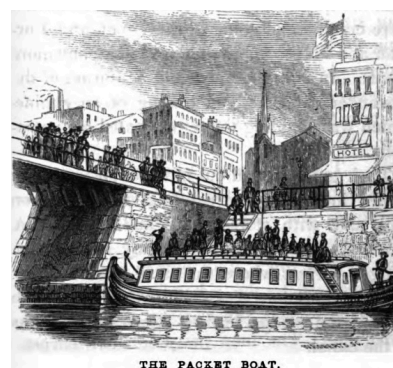
In early 2016 I started to examine Reed Brown's journal that contained a description of a trip he took in the fall of 1841. He headed to Washington to apply for a patent for his improved carriage springs, and then out to Akron, Ohio to get his brother Nathaniel out of jail. On his journey he took advantage of all the existing forms of transportation and was successful with the patent application and bringing his brother and family back to Vermont. After a long career in farming, Reed and his wife Electa purchased a business in North Williston and spent their final years there surrounded by an extended family.

The journal has been transcribed and set in a historical context that deals with such themes and events as temperance, presidential politics, the Panic of 1837, Erie Canal travel, migration from Vermont, and many other

currently the manuscript is undergoing editing by Alan Berolzheimer, Ph.D., an expert on antebellum America. The Williston Historical Society board has ge agreed to help with the financing of the publication of the Reed Brown story. Watch for upcoming details on the book release date.



Broadside for the Atlantic & Mississippi Steamship Co. ov New Orleans. (Duke University Libraries, DigitalCollection, Public Domain.)



Reed Brown traveled from Whitehall to West Troy, NY on a Champlain Canal packet boat on the 2nd leg of his 1841 journey. Located on the west bank of the Hudson River, West Troy was incorporated as a village in 1826 later included in the city of Watervliet.

Steamship Explosion Takes the Life of Williston Civil War Veteran and Many Others

by Richard Allen

The citizens of the Evansville, Indiana, were awakened on January 30, 1866 about 2:00 a.m. by a “dull, heavy sound and concussion that rattled windows and doors.” After daylight, a steamer was spotted floating down the Ohio River stern first. Rumors were flying; no one really knew what had happened. It was later determined that the steamer *Missouri* had exploded. At daylight the *Charmer*, with citizens on board, got up steam to survey the wreck. It was “a sight calculated to freeze the blood.” The *Missouri* had broken in two, partially sunk, with only the bow and stern above water. The center portion “was a mass of ruins.” There was not a soul in sight, but several packages of money were salvaged.

The second trip of the *Charmer* revealed that the decks of the wreck were below water by several feet. Traces of blood showed where passengers had exited through windows and the roof. The furniture in the ladies cabin was shattered. The entire texas was a “mass of splinters and rubbish.” (Wikipedia: “The texas is a structure or section of a steamboat that includes the pilothouse and the crew's quarters. It is located on the hurricane deck, which is also called the texas deck. This long, narrow cabin may be surmounted by the pilothouse.”)

The searchers could not find the register of passengers, but an estimated 25 passengers on board survived, and about 60 were lost. (*Evansville Daily Journal*, January 31, 1866)

The boilers had exploded when the *Missouri* was just below the mouth of the Green River as it was headed upstream. The *Dictator* was behind and immediately went to assist, and then proceeded to Newburg where two doctors helped with the “scalded and mangled” survivors. Captain Hurd and son were saved; but his wife was lost. Sylvester War, a porter, later criticized the crew of the *Dictator*, saying they did not stay alongside long enough to rescue people. It stayed just 15 to 20 minutes. There was no danger; they could have towed the wreck to shallow water, but now it had drifted downstream about 6 miles. (*Evansville Daily Journal*, Feb. 1, 1866)

The *Missouri* was a fairly new boat of the Atlantic and Mississippi Steamship Company, valued at \$125,000. It was nicely appointed, and a favorite of passengers. It was described as “magnificent beyond all conception” and “the finest boat afloat, not even excepting (her twin) the great *Mississippi*.” (January/February 2016 issue of *Evansville Living*, “Tragedy on the Ohio,” by Stan Schmitt)

The disaster could have been much worse, but about 150 passengers got off the boat at Cairo, Illinois, where the Ohio River meets the Mississippi. Most of the remaining deck passengers were contraband; this was a common definition of African-American slaves captured by Union forces or who had escaped to Union lines.

A Williston resident, on his way home from the army, lost his life in the *Missouri* disaster. Haskell Murray Phelps, born September 26, 1843, was the seventh child of Williston blacksmith, inventor, and stone dealer Hiram Phelps and Lucinda Murray Phelps. During the Civil War, Haskell was a private in Company H, of the 1st Vermont Infantry. For his second term, Phelps was mustered in September 1, 1862, as a sergeant in Company D, of the 10th Vermont infantry, and mustered out November 10, 1863. Phelps received promotion as a 1st Lieutenant, then Captain, in Companies C/F, of the 9th United States Colored Infantry. His last post was in Brownsville, Texas, after the war. He was probably considering the military as a career since he did not seek to return home immediately at war’s end.

On May 4, 1866, the *Burlington Free Press* printed a resolution from the camp of the 9th U. S. Colored Troops that with the death of Phelps the regiment had lost “one of its brightest ornaments, the army one of its most zealous, intelligent, and capable officers, society one of its most promising members, and his country one its purest patriots.”

In addition, Lieutenant Colonel G. M. Dennett, commanding officer of the 9th, wrote that Phelps “was a true type of an American soldier, brave, chivalrous, and generous, to a fault. He was never known to flinch or falter amid the most frightful carnage, and in camp or bivouac, his cheerful smile and amiable manners managed to keep our spirits up under the most discouraging circumstances.”

Dennett continued, "It seems peculiarly afflicting, that one, who was a mere boy, in the ardor of his patriotic feeling, sprang to arms when his country was in danger, and after passing safely through all the vicissitudes of an active soldier's life during such a terrible struggle as ours has been, while on his way to visit loved ones at home full of honors and high hopes for the future, should meet death in so terrible a manner."

The U. S. Colored Troops were instrumental in their service to the Union cause. Approximately 180,000 men, many former slaves, volunteered to fight; nearly 40,000 gave their lives. By the end of the war, African-Americans accounted for 10% of the Union Army. It was believed, at that time, that black troops were best supervised by white officers like Haskell Phelps. Vermont is credited with enrolling 120 black soldiers during the war.

The 1913 history of Williston recounts this episode from the Civil War:

A record exists of the first meeting called by the ladies of Williston for the purpose of preparing clothing and hospital stores for the soldiers. The following story shows the spirit of the times, when all other considerations were forgotten in the needs of the soldiers. One Saturday evening found the box which the Phelps family were preparing to send the next Monday still unpacked. The Phelpses were noted for their strict observance of the Sabbath, but on this occasion a sewing woman was engaged and all day Sunday the ladies plied their needles and the sewing machine hummed while the grandmother alternately worked and prayed of the five boys of the family who were at the front. (Page 55)

The family had three boys, two of whom served, Haskell, and Oscar, who was in the 13th Vermont Infantry from 1862 to 1863.

After Haskell's death, the Williston town meeting warning for 1866 contained this article: "...to see if the Town will vote to raise money to defray the expense of erecting a monument to the memory of our noble soldiers who have given their lives in their country's service."

The article was defeated, but a committee of three: Hiram Phelps (Haskell's father), school master J. S. Cilley, and Edmund Whitney, were appointed to study the issue further. The article passed in 1867, but the monument was never erected. (Page 60 of *The Williston Story*.) The current memorial between the Town Hall and the Town Hall Annex is "dedicated to those who served in the time of wars, national crises, military operations and peace during the 20th century."

Should the town of Williston reconsider a memorial to its citizens who died in the Civil War?

Williston Historical Society's New Grant Program (Application next page)

The Board of Directors is proud to announce its new grant program that is designed to encourage original research and projects based on the town of Williston. These projects might include a video, powerpoint presentation, models, maps, landmark identifications, articles or books.

Amounts up to \$500 will be distributed twice a year with applications due on April 1 and Oct 1. Multiple grants will be considered but the total will not exceed \$500.00 in any 6 month cycle. Students as well as adults are encouraged to participate in this new program. All of the completed projects and research will add to the existing knowledge base about our community. Grant applications are available at the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library, in our newsletter and on our website. (www.willistonhistoricalsociety.org)



Williston Historical Society
Grant Application

Purpose: To encourage historical research and projects based on the Town of Williston, VT (ex. Video, powerpoint, models, maps, landmark identifications, articles, books)

Amounts: Up to \$500 will be distributed twice a year with applications due on April 1 and Oct 1. Multiple grants will be considered but the total will not exceed \$500.00 in any 6 month cycle.

Selection: The WHS directors will screen all applications and select those projects to be funded. (Criteria to include: some aspect of Williston History not yet explored)

Grantee responsibility: To report back to WHS upon completion of research/project, provide an article for the newsletter and to give proper credit to WHS for either full or partial funding. When appropriate, the work will be presented at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Williston Historical Society. If a project results in a book, two copies will be provided to WHS.

Amount being requested: _____

Time line of research/project: _____ Expected completion date: _____

Budget: _____

Overview of project with expected outcomes: *(use back if necessary)*

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If Student: _____ Advisor's Signature _____

Williston Historical Society, P.O. Box 995, Williston, VT 05495
WWW: willistonhistoricalsociety.org
Drop box: Dorothy Alling Memorial Library, 21 Library Lane, Williston, VT 05495