



# Williston Historical Society Bulletin

Volume 46, Number 1

May 2019

“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

**Wednesday May 15 – 6:00 pm**

**Williston Central School Auditorium**

***Williston Landscape Change Project***

Video documentary and photos by WCS students

**Wednesday July 3 - 7:00 PM**

**Town Green**

***Annual Ice Cream Social***

Hosted by WHS during the Williston Town Band concert

**Tuesday September 10 - 7:00 PM \***

***Carlton Young presents***

***Letters from the Vermont Brigade***

See more on this program in the President's letter.

**Sunday September 22 - 2:00 PM\***

***Poor Farms and Orphanages:***

***The Precarious Lives of Children in Poverty in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Vermont.***

Prof. Meghan Cope presents her research into the records of “The Home for Destitute Children” located in Burlington. Interesting stories will unfold, some of which have Williston roots!

**Saturday November 9 - 10:30 AM\***

**Archives in the Attic:**

**The History of the Chittenden/Clark Farm**

Join us for a fascinating look at discoveries from the attic of this old farmhouse.

*A brief Annual Meeting will be held prior to the start of this program.*

\* Held at the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library

## **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](mailto: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](mailto:momdad.burroughs@gmail.com).  
or mail to 81 Peterson Ln. Williston, VT 05495

## **Report from the President**

Dear Members,

Williston Historical Society, founded in 1974, has been through active as well as dormant years. We are currently working toward an historical society that is diverse in its programming and offers flexibility to those interested in volunteering. To that end we are forming fewer committees and moving toward more general activities that encompass the varying schedules and interests of our members. These volunteer activities/jobs may be stand-alone, one time endeavors or on-going work that can be done at the convenience of the volunteer. Check out the list of job possibilities in this newsletter and how to sign-up. Please note that signing up does not commit you to any job. It just allows us to contact you when a job you are interested in pops up! It is your option to say "yes" or "not at this time". So please consider adding your name to our list of potential volunteers.

We have some great programs lined up for the rest of this year. On May 15 at 6:00 PM in the Williston Central School Auditorium, The students of Mosaic House will present their Landscape Change Project. Read the article in this newsletter about the exciting things these students have done comparing the old to the present Williston.

We are privileged to have Carleton Young of Pennsylvania, speak to us on September 10 about letters discovered in his parent's attic. The collection of about 250 letters were written home by two Vermont brothers as they fought in the Civil War. These brothers were members of the Vermont Brigade, the only brigade in the Union Army consisting of men from only one state. Stayed tuned for more information and check our website - [willistonhistoricalsociety.org](http://willistonhistoricalsociety.org) periodically for upcoming programs. You can also pick up our blue, half-page program list at the library front desk or the Vermont Room.

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.

### List of Volunteer Opportunities

- Workday organization for Schoolhouse clean-up and repair
- Provide refreshments for programs/events
- Write articles on anything of interest related to Williston and its history - distant past or not so distant past!!
- Assist with programming - ideas for presentations, speakers, field trips, etc.
- Make model of Eagle Tavern sign
- Transcribe historical documents (at home at the discretion of the archivist)
- Publicity - send notifications of upcoming events to local paper, other historical societies, front porch forum, etc.
- Become a board member! (Meetings lasting approximately an hour usually meet every other month.)
- Help out when schoolhouse workdays are announced
- Work as docent at schoolhouse open house events
- Help organize and set-up Vermont Room collection displays
- Assist with cleaning out and cataloging collections closet
- Help with identifying unlabeled pictures
- Learn computer program "PastPerfect" and begin entering collection data
- Research for out of area requests for family history/homes/etc.
- Help organize membership drive

If you would like to be listed as a possible volunteer for any of these jobs, please send your contact information (and how you would prefer to be contacted) and the job(s) you are interested in to: [willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

Please also use this email for any questions you may have.

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### Williston History Quiz

1. Who granted the Williston township to Samuel Willis and 64 others?
2. To whom was the 23,000 acres of land that became Williston granted?
3. What Williston resident established a third political party in Vermont?
4. What denomination built and worshipped in the Old Brick Church?
5. The brother of what famous explorer once preached in the Old Brick Church?
6. Who was the first "settled minister" in Williston?
7. Who is considered to be the "first citizen of Williston"?
8. What Willistonian built the first cold storage plant in the United States?
9. What house in Williston Village is one of the Chittenden houses?
10. For what was Martin Chittenden assessed a special tax?

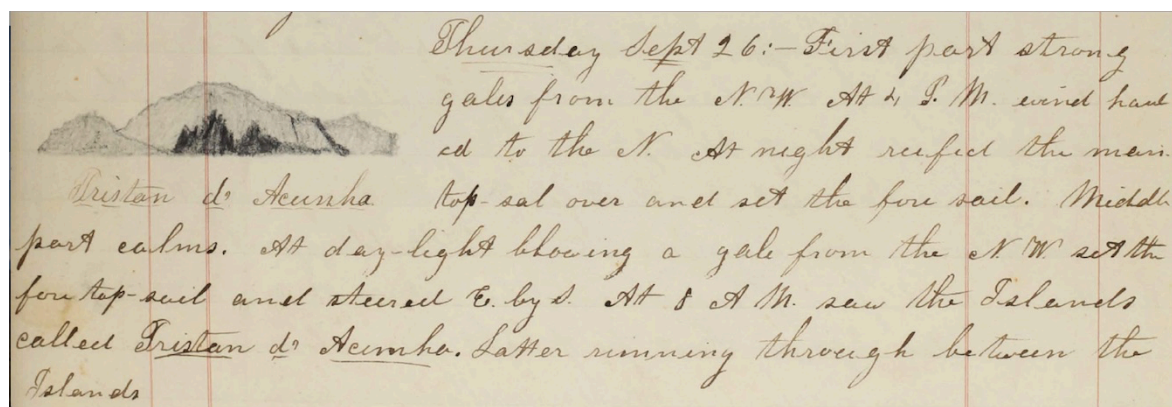
Answers can be found on p.7.

## Ongoing Research: Cousin Charles Continued the Brown Family Legacy of Travel and Journaling

By Richard Allen

When historians investigate 19<sup>th</sup> century social life in Williston, they inevitably turn to the diaries of Lucia Brown Pinney Darling (1833-1920), which are available in the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library.

Another family member who kept an interesting record was Reed Briggs Brown. His journal of his 1841 trip to New York City, Washington, D. C. and Akron, Ohio is part of the Williston Historical Society collection. He wanted a patent for his improved carriage springs, and was concerned about his brother who was incarcerated in Ohio. (See *Reed Brown's 1841 Journey: American Through the Eyes of a Vermont Yankee*, by Richard Allen.) Reed's cousin and Lucia's brother, Charles L. F. Brown, wrote about his travel that literally took him around the world. Charles left Williston in 1844 to board a whaler, the *Pocahontas*, in Tisbury, Massachusetts on Martha's Vineyard. The voyage was into the Atlantic, South Pacific, and Indian oceans. The journal of that trip is owned by the New Bedford Whaling Museum; and the Williston Historical Society board generously provided the financial support to obtain a scanned version of the journal that can now be transcribed.



Charles Brown also included land sketches in his journal. On page 22 we get his artistic impression of "Tristan de Acunha," a volcanic island in the South Atlantic. Image courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

Charles was a very accomplished and literate writer. His penmanship is neat and very easy to decipher. Unlike his cousin Reed, his spelling and vocabulary were highly developed. He quotes poets, the Bible, and fills his entries with historical, geographical, and natural history references. The 1844-1846 journal also contains some sketches of land forms and a graphic record of the whales taken and the amount of oil realized from each.

Charles describes his motivation for his far-reaching journey: "When a mere schoolboy, storeing [sic] my mind with knowledge from Peter Parley's travels & strutting about with an assurance that I had a clear view of the whole world. I often boasted of my mastery over Parley's wonderful travels and works." (Peter Parley was the pen name of Samuel Griswold Goodrich, who along with his brother, wrote books for young people that "embraced geography, biography, history, science and miscellaneous tales." Wikipedia)

Charles continued: "A few years passed by and a thought came into my mind---maybe I can find something new, in some corner of the globe, if I could get there. Ah! That was the difficulty, and a problem, 'the rule of three' could not solve. A curious idea for me, a green Vermonter, to take a trip around this world, thought many with myself. My health was poor at the time and I made up my mind to try the realities of sea life. Through the advice of a friend, I went to Tisbury.... I procured a berth on board the good ship *Pocahontas* for a whaling cruise around the world. " (Quote from the C. L. F. Brown 1844-1846 journal, pages 100-101, courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum)

**"Whales taken on board ship *Pocahontas*"**



This record of the 38 whales taken during Charles Brown's 1844-1846 voyage appears inside the back cover. Twenty-four sperm whales (facing the left side of the page) and 14 right whales resulted in 1,100 barrels of sperm oil, 950 barrels of whale oil, and 9,000 pounds of whalebone (baleen), according to Mark Procknik, librarian at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. The number inside each stamped image is the number of barrels from that whale. Whale stamps were hand-carved out of wood or bone, dipped in ink, and used to keep a visual record of the ship's haul. Image courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum

The New Bedford Whaling Museum library states the Brown journal "...includes descriptions of types of whales (blackfish, finback, killer, right, and sperm whales) seen or taken, accidents and death at sea, cruelty and punishment on ship, indigenous people, shipboard medicine; and whale stamps, drawings of whales and anchors, profile portraits, inventories of whale oil and bone, record of ships spoken to, and narratives of whalers on board. Other places represented include Faial Island, Flores Island, Macauley Island, Raoul Island (Sunday Island), Papeete, Otahuhu, and Auckland."

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As his journal of the *Pocahontas* trip is transcribed over the ensuing months, the adventures of a Williston man before the Civil War will be revealed in greater detail. Whaling was a major economic driver on the east coast of America at this time. In 1844 the important whaling ports in Massachusetts were New Bedford and Nantucket. Sag Harbor on Long Island and Groton, Connecticut were also major ports. The whales were taken for their oil which was used first for superior candles and eventually lamps, providing light for the Industrial Revolution.

After the initial 1844-1846 trip on the *Pocahontas*, Charles experienced the rigors and adventures of whaling on at least four more voyages. Like so many others, he was drawn to the gold diggings in California and settled down there for many years. The discovery of gold in California was a serious blow to the whaling industry. Whaling ships sailed into the San Francisco harbor and were abandoned as the crew headed inland to the diggings. The specifics of Brown's life between 1846 and 1860 are revealed in a later journal that was passed down through the family, and made available to me during my Reed Brown research.

Charles La Fayette Brown was born on July 26, 1825 in Williston, the son of William and Amanda Brown. He favored his middle name as two words and is listed as C. L. F. Brown in most of the records. His parents chose the middle name after the Marquis de Lafayette who passed through Williston on the Winooski Turnpike about a month before Charles' birth. As a hero of the American Revolution, Lafayette was touring through all the existing 24 states in 1824-1825 at the invitation of President Monroe and Congress. Lafayette was feted with banquets, receptions, military honors, parades, and speeches. The Vermont leg of the tour lasted two days, June 28-29. While in Burlington, he laid the cornerstone for the reconstruction of the Old Mill Building on the UVM campus.

The life of Charles L. F. Brown, one of Williston's true adventuring spirits, will be the subject of future research.

For further recommended reading see *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America*, by Eric Jay Dolin. New Bedford Whaling Museum: <https://www.whalingmuseum.org/>

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### The Story Behind the Williston Historical Society Insignia

Nancy Stone, local artist and former member of WHS contributed the drawing of the Old Brick Church which graces our newsletter. The insignia first appeared on our newsletter in 1974.

## **Williston Central School Collaborative**

WHS is excited to partner with students from WCS comparing historic place photos by re-photographing same sites and doing video documentary of interviews with long time Williston residents.

Students in Becky Martell and Dawn Elliott's fourth grade classes have been working on a yearlong Williston history project. A film documentary and a photographic retrospective is the result of their hard work; the public is invited and encouraged to attend the premier presentation of their efforts on May 15, 2019 at 6 pm at WCS.

To begin their work, the students searched the archives of the Williston Historical Society (WHS) with the help of Brenda Perkins, President of the WHS, to find old photographs of the town and surrounding landscapes. Then, with the help of Andy Duback, a WCS parent and professional digital multimedia expert, small groups of students journeyed to these same areas and took photographs of how the scenes appear now. The students then worked in these same teams to write their observations about each pair of photographs, comparing the "now" vs. "then".

In addition, the students interviewed several long term Williston residents to gain their perspectives about changes in the town and surrounding landscapes, and their memories of growing up in Williston. The students had to formulate the questions and conduct the discussions with the residents themselves. These conversations form the basis of the documentary.

Dawn Elliott, one of the teachers leading the project, said that one of the goals of this undertaking was to help the students make connections to their community. Elliott explained, "We wanted the students to see Williston and how it used to look and imagine what it might look like in the future." She said that the students were surprised as to how quickly things can change.

Sarah Mason, a lifelong Williston resident who was interviewed by the students, echoed this sentiment. She explained to the group of students interviewing her that when she was a child, she could ride her bike on Route 2 to Taft Corners without worrying about the traffic; Mason said the children were amazed by this. She also showed them many items from WCS when she was a student there. After learning that each classroom only had one computer, the students were dumbfounded. Mason said "I hope they learn that the world is always changing."

Stella Soucy, one of the students involved in this project, said that this project helped her "appreciate what we have now vs what people didn't have back then. Cameron Juiffre, another learner on the project, said that "it was cool seeing how Williston used to be and compare it to today."

*Please join these hardworking WCS students on May 15, 2019 at 6 pm at the school to see the documentary and view the photographs. Refreshments will be served, and an RSVP is not required.*

**Answers to Williston History Quiz:** **1.** - Gov. Benning Wentworth; **2.** - Samuel Willis and 64 others; **3.** - William French; **4.** - Congregationalist; **5.** - David Livingstone; **6.** - Rev. Aaron C. Collins; **7.** - Thomas Chittenden; **8.** - Smith Wright; **9.** - Formerly the Tuthill house; **10.** - a gold watch.