



Williston Historical Society  
P.O. Box 995  
Williston, VT 05495

*Exciting Things Happening at WHS - See inside!*

*Newsletter — Spring 2020*

## Williston Historical Society Membership and Renewal Form

Dues are for a calendar year. A new member joining in October, November or December will have the dues paid applied to the following year.

**INDIVIDUAL @ \$5/YEAR**

**FAMILY @ \$10/YEAR**

**Donation for the support of WHS programs and Projects \$\_\_\_\_\_**

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Email:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to save paper and costs by receiving the newsletter by email at the address above.

### I am interested in helping with:

- \_\_\_\_ Programming
- \_\_\_\_ Hospitality (light refreshments for programs)
- \_\_\_\_ Ice Cream Social (July 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- \_\_\_\_ Publications (writing or finding articles for our newsletter which is published biannually)
- \_\_\_\_ Oral History (interviewing and/or transcribing recorded history)
- \_\_\_\_ Archive work
- \_\_\_\_ Exhibits
- \_\_\_\_ Membership

Please attach this form with your dues payment and mail to:

**Williston Historical Society**

**P.O. Box 995**

**Williston, VT 05495**



# Williston Historical Society Bulletin

Volume 47, Number 1

May 2020

“Every individual is an historical figure.”

Founded 1974

S. & J. Burroughs, Editors

## WHS Officers

President – Brenda Perkins  
Vice President – Meghan Cope  
Secretary – Cameron Clark  
Treasurer – Jon Stokes  
Archivist – Adriene Katz

Directors: Steve Perkins  
Peter Callas  
Stacey McKenna  
Terry Macaig, Past President

## Save the Dates

In compliance with the “Stay Home” order due to the Corona Virus Pandemic there are no planned events at this time for the Williston Historical Society.

## WHS Newsletter Change

This will be the last hard copy Newsletter to be sent to Williston Historical Society members. All newsletters in the future will be sent digitally to member’s email addresses. Please verify your email address by sending it to our Gmail account (below). If you wish to continue receiving the Newsletter by USPS mail, please either mail your request to: Williston Historical Society, PO Box 995, Williston, VT 05495 or notify us via email at [willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

## I Remember...

Please share if you have a memory of growing up or living in Williston. Perhaps this is the time to write down your thoughts about living through a Pandemic! Send your memory or thoughts 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 Williston Historical Society Members,

I am writing this letter in a different world than we lived in at the time of my last communication in the fall of 2019. None of us had any idea about how our lives would change in just a few short months. This has been a good time to reflect on our collective and individual history. Because we are living in such an unprecedented period in all our lives this becomes an historical saga to be looked back upon as we move ahead. Take time to document what is happening around you and with you for future historians to study.

Looking back on our year, the Society presented five well received programs which included Jason Smiley - The Devils Cabinet: The Eddy Family of Spirit Mediums, WCS 4<sup>th</sup> Grade student project: Williston Landscape Change, Carleton Young - Voices from the Attic: The Williamstown Boys in the Civil War, Meghan Cope - Poor Farms and Orphanages: The Precarious Lives of Children in Poverty in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Vermont, and Cameron Clark - Archives in the Attic: The History of the Chittenden/Clark Farm. In addition to our programs we spent a sunny morning last spring cleaning up around and in the Stovepipe Corners Schoolhouse, hosted a successful July 3<sup>rd</sup> Ice Cream Social and held open house on July 4<sup>th</sup> at the old Schoolhouse.

Over the summer of 2019 the board welcomed Bella Frederico as an Historical Sites Intern under the sponsorship of the UVM Geography Department and with funding from The Glass Internship Award. With supervision and guidance from board member, Meghan Cope, an interactive digital map of historic Williston sites was produced. To access this fascinating project, go to [willistonhistoricalsociety.org](http://willistonhistoricalsociety.org) and click on 'Interactive Map of Historic Williston Sites'.

With an eye to keeping everyone safe and following the recommendations of Gov. Scott and the Vermont Department of Health we will roll out our other planned programs with caution and reschedule Dick Allen's presentation on 'Notable Figures in Williston History'. As of this date we have scheduled open house at the Stovepipe Schoolhouse during July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities, programs 'Rescuing a lady: A Firsthand Account of the 9-year Project to Restore the Statue of Liberty' on July 15, 'Eyesight and Insight: A Lens on American Art' on September 15, and 'The Best Laid Plans of a Town Manager Go Oft Awry' on November 7.

Three important pieces of information: We will not be doing the July 3<sup>rd</sup> Ice Cream Social. The social will now be undertaken by the Williston Federated Church. We will be concentrating on an open house at the Stovepipe Corners Schoolhouse and refreshments sold throughout the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup> outside the Schoolhouse. Secondly, this newsletter will be going digital! To save on the expense of mailing and producing hard copy the WHS Newsletter will be sent to all members via email. You will find more specific information on the Newsletter delivery change elsewhere in this bulletin. Lastly, we are in the process of creating and publishing a photographic book on Williston history. Check out the article in this newsletter.

We are always looking for new members as well as folks to help in small ways. Contact us at [willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping in any way. Check out our website [willistonhistoricalsociety.org](http://willistonhistoricalsociety.org) and be sure to like us on Facebook

Brenda Perkins, President

# **Williston Historical Society Will Produce A Photographic History of Williston**

The Williston Historical Society has teamed up with Arcadia Publishing to produce a photographic volume on Williston history. It will feature the historical society's collection of historic photographs and ephemera. At the same time, we are seeking photographs from the public, Williston residents and non-residents, that would illustrate many aspects of our town's history.

We would like to cover all facets of Williston history: schools, churches, businesses, industries, buildings, recreation, celebrations, transportation, public agencies, prominent citizens, family life, everyday activities, etc. Besides photographs, we are interested in old business cards, advertisements, announcements, and such.

The photographs and documents will be scanned and returned to the owner. Original (black and white or color) photographs produce the best results. The owners must sign a release giving the society permission to reproduce the photographs.

We are seeking pre-1970 photographs, though there is some flexibility in that requirement.

Besides the historic photographs, we want to provide accurate and detailed captions. We are especially interested in photographs with as much background information as possible: who, where, when, why, etc.

Not all photographs submitted will be reproduced in the book. Such factors as quality, relevancy to the themes of the book, and the amount and accuracy of the information accompanying the photographs, will all play a part in the final decisions.

Arcadia is America's leading publisher of local and regional history books. Since 1993, when the *Images of America* series began, Arcadia has produced hundreds of titles from all parts of the United States, including 110 in Vermont. The book will be available for purchase in 2021.

If you would like to help, please contact:

Brenda Perkins, president of the Williston Historical Society

879-1533

[brendaperkins135@yahoo.com](mailto:brendaperkins135@yahoo.com)

## Williston Historical Society

### Permission to Use Photographs and Documents

I, the undersigned, give the Williston (Vt.) Historical Society and Arcadia Publishing permission to reproduce and transmit the photographs/documents described below. This includes electronic, mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any informational storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented. I understand the images may appear on the internet through the Williston Historical Society and/or Arcadia Publishing.

The Williston Historical Society has my permission to use these photographic images/documents in their newsletter, in future books and publications, in displays, and in any form, they may judge appropriate to their mission. The photos and documents will be returned to their owner, unless gifted to the society.

I understand I will be given an appropriate citing in any future use and in return I do not expect and will not demand any financial remuneration.

Description of photographs/images/documents:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Print name \_\_\_\_\_

For the Williston Historical Society:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Print name \_\_\_\_\_

# Eagle Hall Timeline

By Richard Allen



A close-up view of part of the decorative border on the Eagle Hall sign.

Williston Historical Society collection.

By Richard Allen

In 1886, thirty years after this Williston landmark burned down, a local history stated, "It was for many years one of the best hotels in the county. Four and six-horse teams and stages passed very frequently along the turnpike road, and the passengers and drivers were accustomed to stay overnight at Eagle Hall." (*The History of Chittenden County*, ed. by W. S. Rann, page 714)

From roughly 1827 to 1856, Eagle Hall stood on the northeast corner of what is now Williston Road and North Williston Road, the present location of the Federated Church. It was ideally situated to serve travelers going east and west on the Winooski Turnpike (now Route 2).

**1827.** Benjamin Going placed the following announcement in the *Sentinel and Democrat* newspaper in February:

## **Eagle Hall**

The commodious house for PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT, erected the past season in Williston, bearing the above name, is now open for the reception of company. Every possible exertion has been used by the proprietor to render this spacious buildeig [sic] highly convenient and useful. It is fitted up with extensive dining and promenade rooms, and pleasant drawing and lodging rooms. The house will be kept by the subscriber, who pledges himself to bestow his zealous exertions for the comfort as such as favor this establishment with their patronage.

**c. 1830.** David French was associated with Eagle Hall (John Wriston: *Vermont Inns and Taverns, Pre-Revolution to 1925: An Illustrated and Annotated Checklist*).

**1831.** Jim and Lucy McCullough possess an intriguing invitation to a "Union Ball." "*The managers request the attendance of M. (iss Ann Butler) [?] at the Tremont Hall, on Thursday the 22d instant, at three o'clock, p.m. Managers: Nath'l Parker, Jonas Chittenden, Rollin Gleason, Elijah Cockle. Williston Dec. 17, 1831.*"

Paul Carnahan and Marjorie Strong of the Leahy Library at the Vermont Historical Society researched what kind of event a "Union Ball" might have been and offered that it could have "something to do with the militia." For example, a "Grand military and civic ball, the first union ball of the Columbian Blues and Franklin Guards," was held in March 1838 in New York City. There are also references to union balls for firefighters, policemen, and railroad workers.

"There were practical reasons to hold these events in the afternoon: daylight and farm chores. This was an agricultural economy in the 1830s. People weren't bound by the schedules of factory owners, but they were restricted by the patterns of nature and the requirements of agriculture. Sunday was the only special day of the week, so a dance could be held on any other day of the week. There was still daylight during the afternoon and if the dance ended in good time there might still be enough daylight to finish the evening chores." (*Email from Paul Carnahan to the author, May 3, 2019*)

"Tremont Hall" was another name used for the Eagle Hall building. The operators were probably playing off the reputation of the Tremont House in Boston that opened in 1829 and gained the title of the first modern hotel with "luxurious firsts: free soap, locked guest rooms, bellboys, a reception area, and perhaps most important of all, indoor plumbing." (*Boston Magazine, "Throwback Thursday: When the First Modern Hotel in America Opened in Boston" October 15, 2015*)

**1837.** Eagle Hall hosted the Chittenden County Whig Convention on July 10<sup>th</sup>, "for the purpose of nominating two persons to represent this County in the State Senate." These "freemen" opposed the "present National administration" of Martin Van Buren. Several Probate Court hearings were also held at the hall in this year. (*Burlington Free Press.*)

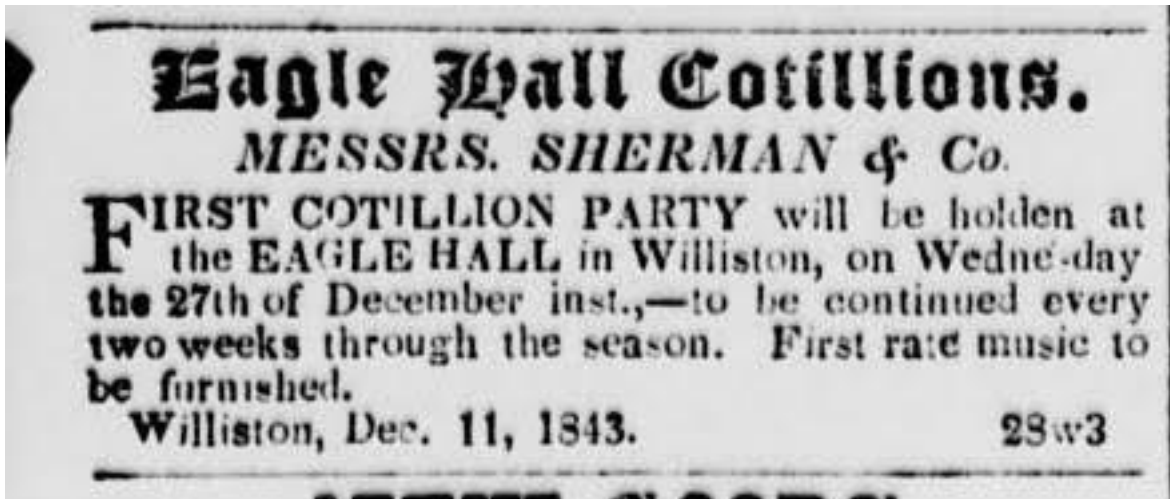
**1839.** Dr. Carl Volk from Germany "tenders his medical services to the inhabitants of Williston and vicinity. His intention being to settle permanently amongst them. He hopes to be favored with their patronage. His office is at the Eagle Hall kept by Mr. Raymond..." (*BFP, November 15*)

**1841.** David French, in conjunction with Eagle Hall, is mentioned in the Williston Land Records (Vol. 9 pages 60 and 133).

**1842.** An auction was announced for November 25 at Eagle Hall for "the effects of Simeon Covill of Burlington. One ox cart, one horse cart, one harness. Also, a cooper's shop situated on land owned by Solomon Miller in Williston. Also, one pew no. 45 in the Brick meeting house in Williston." (*BFP, November 18*)

**1842.** David French and Luther Hall, July 5, Eagle Hall transaction. (Williston Land Records, Vol. 9, page 161)





A notice of the upcoming cotillions to be held in the Eagle Hall in Williston in 1843.

**1843.** The Eagle Hall cotillions were announced by “Messrs. Sherman and Co.” “The first cotillion party to be holden at the Eagle Hall in Williston, on Wednesday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of December inst. to be continued every two weeks through the season. First rate music to be furnished.” (*BFP*) A cotillion was a formalized dance popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It later became associated with training young girls to assume the proper manners and deportment required to enter society.

**1844.** “Chittenden County Mass Convention! Rally, Freeman, Rally! The WHIGS of the County of Chittenden...are requested to meet at the Hotel of David French, in Williston, Wednesday, the thirty-first day of July...at TEN o’clock...to nominate candidates for Senators...Let us have a rally that will do honor to the proud fame of Old Chittenden.” (*BFP*, July 26)

**1844.** David French and John Peck are involved in a transaction of 2 acres. Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> (*Williston Land Records, Vol. 9, page 384*).

**1845.** Another Whig Convention was held at the “Tremont House” in Williston. (*BFP*, June 27)

**1847.** The Chittenden County Agricultural Society Board of Managers met at Eagle Hall on January 26, to determine the “premiums” that would be paid to presenters at the show and fair scheduled for September. Williston was represented on several committees: David A. Murray (cattle); Zenas Skinner (Merino sheep and wool); Jonas G. Chittenden (Saxony sheep and wool); and C. W. Brownell (swine); (*BFP*, March 26)

**1848.** This ad appeared in the *Burlington Free Press* on May 19<sup>th</sup> and provided some details on the building. “For Sale or Rent. The large commodious brick hotel, in Williston, well known as ‘The Eagle,’ is now offered for sale, on terms most advantageous for the purchaser, or will be leased for a term of years. It is in thorough repair, and has a supply of purest spring water, running into the kitchen, and to the barn. For particulars, inquire of the proprietor on the premises. D. French, Williston, April 4, 1848.

**1849.** Stephen Seaford was connected to Eagle Hall. (Wriston)

**1853.** During the years there were several notices that Probate Court would meet at the Eagle Hall. For example, on March 21, D. A. Murray “would render an account of his administration” of the estate of Royal M. Beach. (*BFP*, March 11)

**1856.** On April 26 the Eagle Hall burned down while James Hurlburt was the proprietor (Wriston).

“Sunday, 27th April, 1856—a fire commenced at 9 this morning in the Eagle Hall at the village...which before it was stopped consumed the said hall with the barns, corn house, etc. and also the joiners shop standing on the premises at a little distance. No insurance. The furniture together with the cattle and most of the grain in the corn-house was saved. Owing to the wind from the south, the dwelling house and barns owned by Rockwell Morton took fire and were burned to the ground. Most of the furniture saved. Insured for \$1771. The barn lying still further north & near the house of H. Charles to whom they belonged also took fire and burned together with one horse. The house was in considerable danger. There was \$600 insurance on the whole.” (From the diary of Leonard Pape, quoted in the Williston Historical Society newsletter, Vol. 10, no. 2, March 1983.)

*The Burlington Free Press* reported “the destructive fire” started “in the roof (from the chimney it is supposed)” and the building “was entirely consumed with its barns and out-buildings.” It was also noted that Morton’s place was a quarter of a mile away.

**1861.** April 6. A. B. Simonds sold the Eagle Hall land to Leet A. Bishop and Jason Clark for \$200. (Williston Land Records. Vol. 12, page 242)

**1867.** Methodist Episcopal Church [now the Federated Church] construction begins on the former Eagle Hall land.

**1869.** Church dedicated on October 6. (*Look Around Essex and Williston*, Chittenden County Historical Society.)

**1870.** October 21. Leet A. Bishop of Jericho and Jason Clark of Williston sold the land to the Methodist Episcopal Church for \$400 “on which their new church stands.” (Williston Land Records. Vol. 13, page 471)

The Williston Historical Society has a badly faded wooden sign from the Eagle Hall. The lettering is hard to decipher, but the decorative border is prominent. Typical of recycled building materials in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sign (9 ft 4 ¾ inches long x 16 inches wide) could have served as a floorboard at some time, leading to its degradation.

Eagle Hall served the community in a wide variety of capacities. It was a landmark in town, as witnessed by the businesses that stated their location in reference to it. Besides providing room and board for travelers, it was also used for political conventions, legal proceedings, auctions, meetings, social events, and a medical office.