



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

Exciting Things Happening at WHS - See inside!

Newsletter — Fall 2022



Williston Historical Society Bulletin

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“Every individual is an historical figure.”

Founded 1974

S. & J. Burroughs, Editors

WHS Officers

President – Brenda Perkins

Vice President – Aron Merrill

Secretary – Cameron Clark

Treasurer – Jon Stokes

Directors: Peter Callas

Stephen L. Perkins

Stacey McKenna

Archivist/Collection Manager – Adriene Katz

Publication Chairs: Jeneva & Stu Burroughs

Membership Chair: Peter Callas

Past President: Terry Macaig

Upcoming Events

Annual Meeting

Sunday November 6 at 2:30 in the Community Room of the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library we will hold our Annual Meeting. I encourage you to attend if able. We will be voting on two board positions. Cameron Clark and Stacey McKenna have both agreed to serve another term on the board and are running unopposed. We will also vote in the slate of officers for the coming term: Brenda Perkins-President, Aron Merrill- Vice President, Cameron Clark- Secretary and Jon Stokes- Treasurer.

The business meeting takes only a few minutes after which we are pleased to announce that Stephen Mease, Williston resident, author, and photographer, will present a program on his recently published book: *Champlain Valley Fair*.

Renewal/New Membership

The Williston Historical Society is continuing to offer free membership. **We still ask that you renew your membership each year** so we can keep a count and make sure we have current contact information. To renew or become a member of the Williston Historical Society please send an email to peter.callas@uvm.edu with your preferred contact information. You may also write us at Williston Historical Society, P.O. Box 995, Williston, VT 05495. We are always looking for folks who would like to be a more active member by volunteering for events or projects, so please indicate such on your membership email/letter.

Report from the President

Dear WHS members,

Another pandemic year has passed, and our hopes are that things are finally easing up! The WHS Board of Directors has kept busy over the past months offering new programming in collaboration with the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library. In June Dick Allen led a walking tour of the historic village including the Stovepipe Corner Schoolhouse, the Old Brick Church, where Trustee Jack Price shared the history. From the church they walked to the Slate Barn house, the old Lantman house, ending at the village four corners.

On October 27, again in collaboration with the library, the society sponsored a cemetery walk. Attendees walked from the parking lot behind the Korner Kwik Stop to the Chittenden Cemetery where students of Aron Merrill and the Spark program at Williston Central School presented costumed skits about different “residents” of the cemetery. We are very appreciative for the support and continued relationship with the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library and staff.

The society participated in the Town’s Green Up Day/Town Fair celebration on the town green. We opened the Stovepipe Corner Schoolhouse for tours. The turnout was very positive and we plan to continue to participate if the town continues to sponsor the fair in the future.

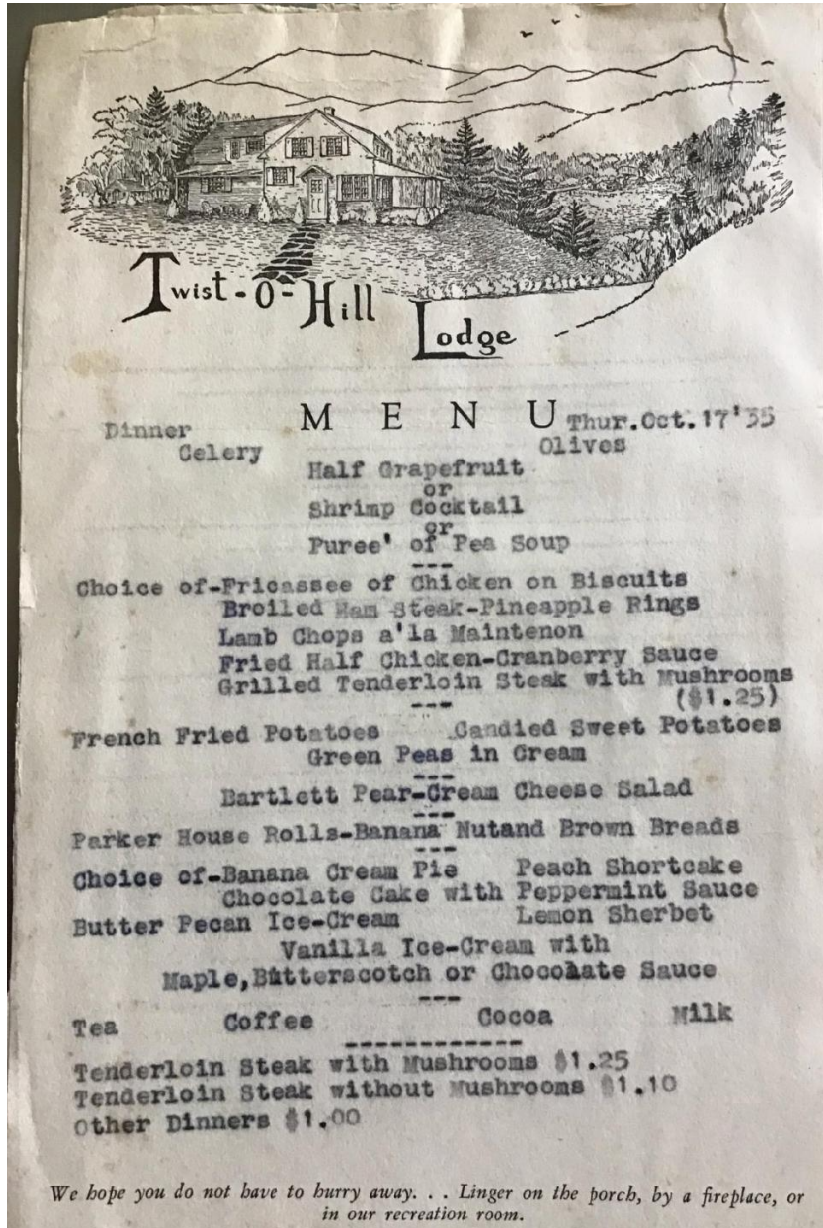
On July 4th we again opened the schoolhouse. This year we featured some of the “Williston Past and Present” photographs produced by students at Williston Central School. Again, many visitors were welcomed deeming the effort a great success.

Many thanks go out to our behind-the-scenes contributors. Peter Callas – membership, Jeneva and Stu Burroughs – newsletter editors/publishers, Steve Perkins – webmaster, Meghan Cope – Facebook coordinator, Dick Allen – author and historian, Adriene Katz – Archivist and Stacey McKenna – gardener extraordinaire who has faithfully beautified the area around the Stovepipe Corner Schoolhouse and the Thomas Chittenden Statue and has become the liaison with the Observer for stories in the Past and Present Column. Hopefully I have not forgotten to mention others who are such an essential part of the Williston Historical Society. If I have, please pardon my oversight.

Brenda Perkins, President

Twist O'Hill Lodge Revisited

By Richard Allen



The October 17, 1935 menu for Twist O'Hill Lodge

Twist O'Hill Lodge opened in 1931 and was probably named for the curves in Route 2 as it snaked up and down French Hill. It was a popular local spot for dinners, meetings, wedding receptions, and served tourists for many years.

Some new sources of information about the lodge have revealed details from 1935 and 1943. The October 17, 1935 menu featured appetizers, soup, chicken, lamb, and steak dishes. Also available were French fried potatoes, candied sweet potatoes, green peas in cream, a Bartlett pear cream cheese salad, along with rolls and bread. Dinners were priced at \$1.00, except tenderloin steak was \$1.10 without mushrooms and \$1.25 with. The management stated, "We hope you do not have to hurry away...Linger on the porch, by a fireplace, or in our recreation room."

The *Vermont Hotels Tourist Homes and Cabins, 1943* was published by the Vermont Publicity Service, Department of Natural Resources. This 100-page booklet had many listings stating they would not open that year due to the impact of gasoline rationing on travel. Some advice was offered for travelers intent on visiting the state: "There are good train and bus services to Vermont. Vacationists are urged to start trips where possible in mid-week to avoid congestion. It is also desirable to make reservations in advance at hotels and tourist homes."

This was the 1943 description of the lodge and the only accommodation listed in Williston: *Misses Marjorie and Barbara Luce, Mrs. Anna L. Maxwell proprietors. (May or may not be open in 1943.) On U.S. 2 and on point of land overlooking Winooski valley and wonderful panoramic view of mountain range. Near 3 golf courses, 1 within a half mile. Main house and cabins accommodate 40 or more persons. New building with modern equipment, electricity, bathrooms, fireplaces, large well-equipped porches. Interesting furnishings of early American type. Beautifully furnished rooms with twin or double beds at rates a little higher than cabin prices. Comfortable cabins of 1 or 2 rooms; with toilet rooms and showers. A very delightful 4-room cottage for families or groups. Season, late May to Columbus day. Garage. Afternoon tea, dinners, and parties are specialties. Rates, reasonable, by meal, day, or week.*

Williston is on a plateau commanding unique views of the Winooski valley with Mt. Mansfield and other high mountain peaks in bold and rugged background. It is on U.S. 2, east of Burlington. Federated Church. Settled in 1774. Population 1021.

In 1968 the lodge and grounds were turned into Pine Ridge School for teenage boys with learning disabilities. Today the New England Training and Sending Center for Church Planting and Revitalization makes this their headquarters.



Federated Church Minister F. Kennon Moody Remembered

By Richard Allen

Reverend Moody served as minister of the Federated Church in Williston from 1958 to 1963 but his impact continues to this day. He co-authored a history of the town and was instrumental in encouraging the teens who took on the clean-up of the Brick Church. Mark Hutchins recently wrote, "He can be credited with reviving the moribund and declining congregation of the Federated Church when that congregation was assigned to him as his very first parish. He and Mary [his wife] were in their late twenties and his intellect, humor, and energy caused a major revival and growth in that organization."

For the Williston town meeting on March 3, 1959, a warning was given: "Will the town vote a tax on the Grand List to pay for completing and publishing the Town History, and if so, how much?" It was approved, with the amount of the funds left to the discretion of the select board. Ken Moody and Floyd Putnam took on the research and writing. When published, they admitted their result emphasized the very early history of the town, leaned toward the role of religion during that time, and contained a minimum amount of information on the Chittenden family due to the "excellent sketch" on Thomas Chittenden in the 1913 historical booklet put out by the Williston Historical Committee for the 150th anniversary of the town charter. Reprints of *The Williston Story* by Ken Moody and Floyd Putnam are available for sale (\$10.00) at the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library. The proceeds benefit the Williston Historical Society.

With the support and encouragement of Reverend Moody, Mark Hutchins spearheaded the effort to clean up the Brick Church in the early 1960s. In an October 20, 1964 letter to Mark, Reverend Moody said, "It is difficult to express accurately the excitement I felt when I heard during the summer that the work on the church was continuing. As you know, the restoration of the building was a dream that I had long shared with you. That you were able to communicate your dream and desires to the rest of the group, and they in turn were able to communicate the dream to the community at large, is certainly, no less than a minor miracle. I stand in admiration and awe as I comprehend what you and the group have done there..."

...What are any future plans you might have for the church now that things have progressed this far? It was always my dream that the place could be used for occasional worship services, perhaps even concerts, and plays, and partially furnished with items that have a historical value to the residents of Williston..."

As Reverend Moody dreamed, the renovated Brick Church, now town property, has served many groups over the years and remains a stately presence in the middle of the village historic district.

F. Kennon Moody died on April 11, 2020. His obituary from the *Poughkeepsie Journal* detailed his continued active life in the Hudson Valley of New York after leaving Williston.

"Ken was a master storyteller who took twinkled-eyed enjoyment in telling tales about himself and his friends and family, the most memorable of which centered around life in Cotton Valley, Louisiana, where he was born in 1933.

Ken graduated valedictorian of his High School and attended Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana, earning a B.A. in history before heading north to New Haven, Connecticut, where in 1958 he received a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School. Ken and Mary married later that year and moved to Williston, Vermont, where Ken became pastor at the Federated Church and both of their children were born.

In 1963, Ken and Mary moved to LaGrangeville, New York, where Ken served as the pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church. While at Trinity, Ken worked with a group of parishioners to launch Dutchess Rural Housing Corp, a non-profit that built homes for low-income families. In 1970, Ken left Trinity to join the South Forty Corporation, a non-profit organization focused on assisting prisoners and recent parolees, where he developed a college program for inmates and taught at Green Haven Correctional Facility. After several years, Ken left South Forty for Dutchess Community College, initially as a history professor (both at Green Haven and on campus) and ultimately as Dean of Student Services. While at Dutchess, Ken obtained his Ph.D. in American History from SUNY Albany, where he wrote his dissertation on Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In his retirement, Ken rekindled his passion for history and FDR, acting as a professional Roosevelt researcher and assisting writers of all stripes. He contributed to more than a dozen books, a PBS special, and ultimately authored his own book, *FDR and His Hudson Valley Neighbors*. He spent many hours with his beloved daylilies, hybridizing new variants, and became a Master Gardener through the Dutchess County Cooperative Extension. Together with Mary, Ken became an active traveler, going to Scotland, Ireland, France, Republic of Georgia, Kenya, Serbia and Greece as well as taking multiple trips to South Africa. From the time he left Trinity, Ken and Mary were devoted members of the Freedom Plains Presbyterian Church.

Throughout his life, Ken was devoted to community service, volunteering to serve on a host of boards, including the Mental Health Association of Dutchess County, United Way, the Arlington school board, and the Dutchess County Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Ken also assisted Mary in her long-term involvement in CROP, where he served for many years as the chair of the Dutchess County chapter.”

World War II Veterans Remembered, Part IV

As described in the Spring 2021 newsletter, the historical society has received an album of photographs of Williston World War II veterans from Cameron Clark. Here are two more examples from the collection: Howard Casey and John Bradish.

Howard P. Casey

Howard P. Casey enlisted in 1941 and was a corporal in the field artillery in the Pacific. He was recognized for Asiatic-Pacific theater service, good conduct, American defense service, and awarded a Bronze Star for the campaign on Guadalcanal. He served for 34 months. In 1945, he received an honorable discharge and wed Irene Carver. He was employed by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company. Casey died in 1948 at age 30, leaving behind two sons.



John (Jack) Bradish

In 1931, John (Jack) Bradish attended the Naval Academy and graduated from UVM. He met his wife, Betty Lane Bradish, while at college, and they wed in 1936 and eventually had four boys. At the time of his wedding, Jack served as lieutenant direct sales officer at Fort Ethan Allen. In 1939, Jack and Betty settled in Williston. During World War II, he was in the Army in the North African and European theaters and was promoted to major. From 1945 on he remained active in the Army Reserves, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel.



The Urie Farm in 1964

In 1946, Carl and Gertrude Urie bought their farm from her parents, Howard and Annie (Caswell) Merrill. It was located at the corner of North Williston Road, Mt. View Road, and Governor Chittenden Road. The approximately 180-acre SquareWoods Farm supported a top-flight registered Guernsey herd. In 1964 Carl Urie was also the Winooski District Supervisor of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Department. This position led to a visit by R. M. Towne, the Work Unit Conservationist, on August 7th. A series of photographs were taken to publicize the work of the USDA and recognized Mr. Urie's public service. The Williston Historical Society recently purchased ten of the images. (For more details on the history of the Urie Farm, see pages 65-66 in *Images of America: Williston*.)



Carl Urie shows off his "contented registered Guernsey herd at milking time." Son Seth recounted that "by the mid-1950s, through careful breeding practices, they had developed a very successful herd. My Dad being a UVM Ag grad, reveled in beating out the UVM herd at cattle shows around the state and at the Eastern States Exposition. They took a lot of pride in their herd and rightly so. The farm office was covered in ribbons and trophies for their exceptional cows."



Daughter Marcia Urie drives part of the Guernsey herd to pasture. This photo looks to the northwest with Governor Chittenden Road in the background. Just to the left of the elm tree stands the Stovepipe Corner School at its original location in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Mt. View Road and North Williston Road. All the Urie barns and outbuildings located on the east side of North Williston Road are gone, but the house still stands at 943-945 North Williston Road as Two Acre Farm.



This small house was located between two former churches, the Methodist Church (now the Town Hall Annex) is evident on the right. The Universalist Church (now the Town Hall) is not shown in the photograph, would have been on the left. It was eventually purchased by the Chittenden Camp of the Modern Woodman of America. (Courtesy of Cameron Clark.)

The Chittenden Camp of the Modern Woodmen of America

By Richard Allen

A local camp of the Modern Woodmen of America (M.W.A.) was established in town in 1906. This national “member-owned fraternal financial services organization” was founded by Joseph Cullen Root in 1883 in Iowa to provide financial security with life insurance and social connections for its members. Their website states the unique name “was inspired by pioneer woodmen. They cleared forests to build homes and communities and provide security for their families...Root, felt this was the perfect symbol to illustrate his goal of clearing away financial burdens for families.”

Local camps, or chapters, formed across the country, and the Chittenden Camp, Number 12,415, was located in Williston. Camps from nearby towns like Richmond, Jericho, and Underhill aided in the installation of the new unit. It was immediately successful and purchased the former Methodist Church (now the Town Hall Annex) as recorded on December 21, 1906. In the early 1900s the building was referred to as the Warren Block for it was owned by Charles Warren and was often used for temporary housing. The upper floor was converted into meeting rooms for the Chittenden Camp, and the town library and King’s Daughters occupied the lower floor. By 1916 the chapter had 108 members. The building was called the M.W.A. hall well into the 1930s.

The M.W.A. played a vital role in the town’s social life with dinners, dances, and entertainment. The installation of officers provided a chance for people to socialize and celebrate as described in this note in the *Burlington Free Press* on December 18, 1918, “Chittenden Camp...have elected these officers for the ensuing year: Consul, Eugene Hanson; clerk, C. J. Austin; advisor, William Grey; escort, W. D. Kendrew; banker, M. E. James; watchman, A. O. Porter; sentry, Grant Miles; trustee for three years, W. M. Chapman. After there was an oyster supper and smoke talk. During the year 1918 the camp has taken in 16 new members and reinstated two former members.”

On May 10, 1919, the *Burlington Free Press* announced the M.W.A. “purchased the little house standing between their hall [Town Hall Annex] and the Universalist Hall [Town Hall]. They intend to make it over into a barn and woodshed.” This repurposing of the house reflects the original rudimentary construction of the building. Today, Williston’s war memorial stands where the house was located between the two brick buildings.

The good times rolled on. On January 20, 1927, the *Burlington Free Press* noted that “Chittenden County [sic] Camp...held their annual installation of officers last week Wednesday evening at the M.W.A. hall. E. F. Hanson performed the installing ceremonies. The officers for the coming year are Consul, Victor Charland; clerk, Charles Miles; adviser, Harley Bing; escort, Jason Clapper; sentry, Grant Miles; watchman, Emerson Miles; trustees, James Smail, C. G. Austin, and Eugene Hanson.

There was a chicken-pie supper served to the member[s] and their families. Dancing was enjoyed afterward. Music was furnished by the following: Floyd Putnam, violin; Clarence Christmas, cornet; Marion Porter, violin; and Helen Putnam at the piano. There was a large attendance regardless of the bad weather.” The dances would raise money for the local drill team. To witness a unique show of Modern Woodmen in drill formation, check out this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGziZo9umuA>

As to the identity of the two men in the image, it is possible they were members of the Chittenden Camp. Today, the Modern Woodmen of America, with about 740,000 members, continues to serve its original purpose of financial security.

How Williston Responded to Homelessness in the 19th Century

By Richard Allen

The Long Depression spread across the nation in the 1870s and Vermont experienced the impact of the accompanying unemployment and the general economic downturn. Workers who lost their jobs hit the road and Williston countered with an early version of a homeless shelter to take care of the transient population.

Homelessness, evident by the number of “tramps” traveling through towns, increased and became a problem. In 1876, Smith Wright, Williston’s Overseer of the Poor, was baffled by the upsurge in vagabonds. “Owing to some cause to me not known, there has been a large number of persons called Tramps, not less than 125 the past year that have made application and have been admitted to the [Poor] Farm to stay one night, which has been a source of great annoyance and expense to the [Poor Farm] Association. It is to be hoped that some way be devised to abate this growing nuisance.”

The town’s solution was described in the *Burlington Free Press* on April 29, 1878. “Williston has had an elegant sufficiency of tramps, the past Spring and Winter. A small house was built for their accommodation, and a stove put in; and when the eleemosynary* put in this appearance (which he did on almost every day of the season in predatory bands from four to a dozen) he was escorted to the shanty, given flour, meat, etc. and allowed to make up his own bill of fare and to remain overnight, the door being locked in the morning. This arrangement is said to have worked very satisfactorily.” The reference to “predatory bands” probably reflects the reaction of the citizens to men seeking food and shelter throughout the town.

* -related to or dependent on charity



The Greek Revival house at 7865 Williston Road

The “shanty” was located across from the 1842 Town Hall on property owned by John L. Hewitt. Overseer of the Poor reports reveal Hewitt was paid \$5.00 to \$8.00 per year rent for his land to host the “tramp house” that served the town roughly from 1878 to 1882. The Hewitt house (c.1842) is at what is now 7865 Williston Road, across from the armory and west of the Brick Church. According to the 1973 booklet, *Look Around Essex and Williston, Vermont*, this was originally a Brownell house. “It has served as the town clerk’s office, a plumbing and heating supply business, and...a real estate office.” The 2006 *Historic Williston* brochure refers to it as the Deal House and notes the classical details in the Greek Revival architecture.

Locating the shelter in the middle of the village would have made supervising and provisioning the house easier for those in charge. This location would have also relieved the Poor Farm, that was on what is now River Cove Road, “a source of great annoyance and expense” in having to deal with the influx of tramps.

The Overseer’s 1877 report noted 166 tramps “were accommodated at the Poor Farm...155 of that number were sent from Essex, the remainder from...Williston.” In 1879, the number had dropped to 115. In 1880 provisions were furnished for 23, in 1881 it was 24, and 11 in 1882. There is no mention of the tramp house in the next several years reflecting the improving economy.

It is interesting to note that the challenge of providing for the homeless has not changed much. Witness the ongoing debate in Burlington and other cities over encampment sites and shelters for those in need.