



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

*Exciting Things Happening at WHS – See inside!*

Newsletter — Spring 2023



# Williston Historical Society Bulletin

Volume 50, Number 1

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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

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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 Dates/Events

May 6 -- Stovepipe Corner's Schoolhouse will be open during the Clean-up Day Town Fair.

May 20 -- Antique's Road Show with Merrill's Auction Gallery

Williston Federated Church, Fellowship Hall 2-4 PM.

Attendees may bring up to three items (\$5 each item) to be appraised.

June 4<sup>th</sup> – Essex Historical Society open house & sharing day for local Historical Societies.

July 4<sup>th</sup> -- Schoolhouse open to the public with activities for youngsters & adults to enjoy.

## 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](mailto: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.

## **Report from the President**

April 2023

Dear WHS members,

As I look out over our pastures it appears that spring is finally on its way! The sheep have been sheared, lambs are due at the end of April, the daffodils are poking up through the debris of winter and the birds are singing each morning. Life is good!

For two days in March Jack and Marlene Price and Steve Perkins and I began the task of sorting through our collection. Many items had no provenance or were not identified in our out-of-date database. Others were in too poor shape to save, and many had no ties to Williston History. We used a simple grading system with guidelines taken from The Vermont Historical Society's "Evaluating the Collection for Possible Deaccession" to categorize what we would be keeping and what would eventually be deaccessioned. We have some more objects and many photographs and paper documents to still evaluate. Once we have completed this task, we will be putting our collection into a cloud-based database accessible to anyone wanting to do research.

Spring into early summer will be a busy time for the Society. On May 6, we will have the Stovepipe Corner's Schoolhouse open during the Clean-up Day Town Fair. May 20 will see the return of our 'Road Show'. Folks may bring up to three items to be appraised by members of the Merrill Auction House. Keep an eye on your email for more information on this event. June 4<sup>th</sup> the Essex Historical Society is sponsoring an open house and sharing day for local Historical Societies. We will have a display there along with other Town Historical societies. On July 4<sup>th</sup> we will again have the Schoolhouse open to the public with activities for youngsters and adults to enjoy.

Looking ahead to fall, we have plans for some interesting programming, so stay tuned!

Brenda Perkins, President WHS



"On a jagged point high above Lake Champlain, Mrs. C. H. Eckhardt (right) and Mrs. L. G. Long scan blue Burlington skies for signs of marauding planes. They were on the two to four shift yesterday afternoon, manning one of the thousands of secretly-located United States Army observation posts scattered along the coasts and boundaries of the United States." (Burlington Daily News, July 1, 1942) This not-so-secret post was on the Ethan Allen Tower in Ethan Allen Park off North Avenue.

## Civilian Plane Spotter Posts in World War II

By Richard Allen

During the early days of World War II there was a concern that the U.S. mainland could be attacked by long range bombers. One response to this threat was the establishment of the Aircraft Warning Service in May 1941. The Ground Observer Corps, made up of civilian plane spotters, was part of the service that provided raw information on the flights of all aircraft. The volunteer spotters had to be trained to recognize, by sight and sound, the many different aircraft, foreign and domestic.

Spotter posts were established up and down the east and west coasts of the nation as well as in the interior. Two volunteers were on duty for a two to four hours shift so that the post was occupied twenty-four hours a day. In Vermont plane sightings were recorded in a logbook and sent by phone to a filter center in Albany, New York. The service operated under the direct command of the Army and was dependent upon town selectboards for the allocation of funds to outfit the posts.

There were a number of spotter posts in Chittenden County. The two in Burlington were in the bell tower of the Old Mill building at UVM and on top of the Ethan Allen Tower in Ethan Allen Park. Shelburne Point, as well as Richmond and Jonesville had posts.

The town report stated that the Williston post was established on April 12, 1942. The first one was a shack at the top of French Hill. Later a filling station was moved up the hillside and renovated by local citizens. It was sited where the northbound lane of I-89 is today, east of Johnson Lane (see map). The Thomas Chittenden Grange sponsored the post and donated money from a scrap drive that paid for phone costs. Volunteer labor was credited with "making the building winter-tight and comfortable, with electric lights, a new boardwalk across the front, new insulation, and [the] interior newly decorated," according to the Burlington Free Press on November 17, 1942.

Emerson Miles, Jr. recalled some of the details. "Mr. [Raymond] Preston of Burlington was chief instructor and in charge of manpower twenty-four hours a day. I don't believe he had any problems with volunteers, but if he did, they would let a 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grader go up with a senior member and this gave them experience. We had to take a course in plane spotting and get to know all the planes by sight. This meant our passenger planes as well as military, German, or Japanese, etc. [We] also had to tell what size plane, number of motors, wing (simple or double), [and the] time and direction of flight. There was an amplifier system in the building to pick up sounds. We could even pick up Freeman Lashua walking on Route 2 going to work on Lester Johnson's farm."

In March 1943 spotter training was offered at the Williston town hall by 1st Lt. Preston Syme from the First interceptor Command Headquarters in Albany, NY. The sessions were also held in a handful of other northern Vermont towns. In early June 1943 the Burlington Free Press announced that the lane leading from Route 2 south to the observation post was now fenced in and is "open for use by plane spotters only. The observers will find this a great convenience to be able to drive right to the door." Also, that month, the reorganization of the Williston post was announced with an officer in charge for each day: Sunday, Raymond D. Preston; Monday, Al Pillsbury; Tuesday, Mrs. Walter Doenges; Wednesday, Mrs. Howard Mace; Thursday, George Talcott; Friday, Marshall Kranz; and Saturday, E. F. Hanson.

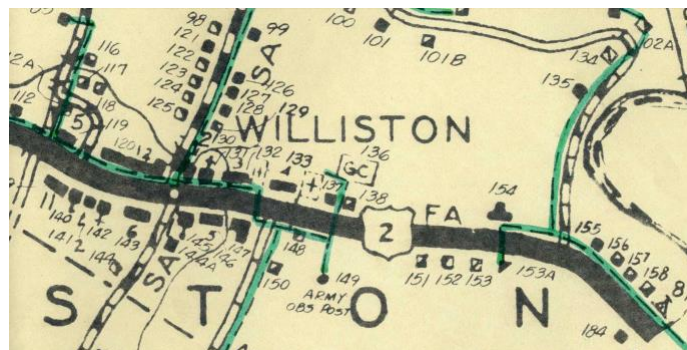
There were also side benefits to the posts. A Shelburne farmer was saved from losing a barn to fire and a Williston man was notified of a horse caught in a fence. Spotters could obtain gasoline without a ration card to drive to their post. Williston spotters were recognized with pins they could wear with pride.

The Burlington posts were located in rather unique quarters. The Ethan Allen Tower was winterized with an insulated one room shelter, anchored against the wind with construction by volunteer labor and at a cost of \$120 for materials. Double windows were installed to prevent frosting, as well as heavy ceiling and wallboard. The 10'x 9' shelter was electrically heated. "Observation Post 2-H" offered a spectacular view of Lake Champlain to the west and the Green Mountains to the east.

The posts also served as social connections for the spotters. Post 2-H held a gathering that featured "moving pictures" of World War I scenes and a presentation by the district supervisor. Spotters from other posts were invited, refreshments and dancing rounded out the evening.

The Old Mill Tower at UVM had a taxing approach with 129 steps to the top. Simplex heaters were installed and the windows, that had screens to keep pigeons out, soon had glass. Challenges included the smoke from the chimney that bothered the spotters and gusty winds that made the tower sway. A solid floor was laid, the bell support was removed, and a table put in its place. Coats were donated to fight off the drafts. The walls were decorated with the list of planes training at the airport. A 24-hour watch was in effect with 42 spotters, and 7 substitutes. Women took the 2-hour day shifts in pairs, which could include students.

The plane spotter posts were downgraded in October 1943 and put on standby. There were about 7,500 observation posts nationwide serving 43 filter centers. It would no longer be a 24-hour service for the civilian part would be for emergency use only. In May 1944 the War Department ordered the inactivation of the Ground Observer Corps and the Aircraft Warning Corps.



This 1944 Rural Electric Lines map of Williston shows Route 2 as a thick black line running through the village. The "Army Obs Post" is at the bottom center.



## How Times Have Changed!

This is a letter and price list which Ken Aseltine sent to customers when he became associated with the IGA (Independent Grocers Association) in 1941.

The letter was typed and reproduced, but hand addressed to his patrons and personally signed. Mr. Aseltine purchased the store in September of 1924 and sold it in May of 1963. It stood at the corner of Williston Rd (Rt 2) and North Williston Rd in the building where the Korner Kwik Stop is now. The Aseltine home stands just west of the store. Mr. Aseltine died in 1985.

Miss Sylvia A. Warren  
1941  
Town

February 17,  
Williston, Vt.

Dear Miss Warren:

After having been in the business of conducting a retail store here in Williston for a little more than sixteen years, I feel it only just and right that I should write my many friends and customers and thank you for the loyal support that you have given me during this somewhat long period of time.

It has been my honest endeavor all of these years to give good value for money received and to merit a large portion of the business from my home town people. You have patronized my store, and have done the job, so far as I'm concerned, in a very fine way and I want you to know that I fully appreciate it.

I am now operating my store under the IGA plan, the whole purpose of which is to give my many customers better value for the money which they have paid out.

We all appreciate that merchandise, food products especially, is sold today at very small margins of profit and, therefore, in order for us to stay in business, it became necessary some time ago that we increase our volume. We feel that the only way we could merit any increased volume is by giving our many customers lower prices or prices at least as low as prices that are made by large organizations.

I am including with this letter a list of our everyday low prices. These prices, of course, are subject to market changes because war conditions affect some things and it may be necessary to occasionally advance or lower the price of some individual article; but other than that, the list enclosed is our everyday low prices and you will find this merchandise in our store at these prices at all times.

This, however, is only a small portion of the items on which we are quoting everyday low prices. Everyone knows that it is necessary that we increase the volume of business in our stores. This we could not expect except that we lower prices and keep them there at all times. It is impossible for us to enumerate all the good values that we have and that we are going to have from now on, but we would appreciate it if you would come into our store, look same over, ask for prices on any item you wish, bring the enclosed list with you if you would like to do so, and if you help us it puts us in a position to help you.

Remember that my store is a home-owned, independent store. No one outside has any interest in same whatsoever. If I am able to make any profit by your patronage the money will be kept at home and paid out in the community in which it is made. I am sure you will agree with me that this is what makes a community a good place in which to live.

Again, I want to thank all of my friends for the very fine patronage that you have given me during the past sixteen years and assure you that is will be my earnest desire to merit the same the coming year only by giving you low everyday prices on merchandise that you wish to buy.

Very sincerely yours,  
Kenneth M. Aseltine

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Kellogg's All-Bran	Lge.pkg.	\$.19	Old Dutch Cleanser	3 cans	\$.20
* Corn Flakes	Two 8oz.pkg	.13	Palmolive Soap	2 cakes	.11
* Pep	2 pkg.	.21	Rinso	large pkg.	.17
* Rice Krispies	2 pkg.	.21	Lux	2 lge.pkg.	.39
* Shredded Wheat	2 pkg.	.19	Lifebuoy orLux Soap	2 cakes	.11
Post Bran Flakes	pkg.	.10	Ivory Flakes	2 pkg.	.39
Quaker Puffed Wheat	2 pkg.	.15	Gold Dust	Large pkg.	.15
Quaker Puffed Rice	2 pkg.	.19	Ivory Snow	Lge pke.	.20
Wheatena	pkg.	.21	Oxydol	Lge pkg.	.17
Swansdown Cake Flour	pkg.	.21	Selox	2 pkg.	.21
Post Toasties	2 pkg.	.13	Camay Soap	2 cakes	.11
Wheaties	pkg.	.10	Ivory Soap	5 med.bar.	.23
Cream of Wheat	pkg.	.23	Ivory Soap	3 lge bar.	.23
Grapenuts	pkg.	.13	Guest Ivory	2 bars	.09
Aunt Jemina Pancake	pkg.	.11	Oakite	2 pkg.	.21
Maxwell House Coffee	1b.can	.25	Chipsa Flakes-granules	2 lge.	.37
Sanka or Kaffee Hag	1b.can	.29	Bon Ami Powder	can	.10
Instant Postum	8 oz.pkg	.39	Crisco	1-lb.can	.16
Baker's Cocoa	1/2 lb.can	.09	Spry	1-lb.can	.16
Baker's Chocolate	1/2 lb.cake	.15	Karo Syrup	1 1/2#can	.14
Hersey's Chocolate	1/2 lb.cake	.11	Knox Gelatine	pkg.	.19
Rumford Baking Powder	12-oz can	.21	Ovaltine	8-oz.pkg.	.34
Davis OK Baking Powder	12-oz can	.13	Minute Tapioca	8-oz.pkg.	.10
Royal Baking Powder	12-oz can	.33	Campbell's Tomato Soup	3 cans.	.20
Calumet Baking Powder	12-oz can	.13	Franco-Am. Spaghetti	3 cans.	.25
Campbell's Chicken and Mushroom Soup				2 cans.	.21
IGA Pork & Beans with tomato sauce	Three 16-oz.cans.	.19	IGA Baking Chocolate	cake	.14
				Used where quality counts	
IGA Cream Cereal	pkg.	.15	IGA Rice Puffs	2 lge pkg	.17
IGA Wheat Puffs	pkg.	.07	IGA Cocoa	1-lb. can	.13
IGA Cleaner	tall can	.05	Sno-Kreem	3-lb. can.	.43
IGA Gelatine Dessert Powder	3 pkg.	.10	IGA Pad-L-Jar Mustard	9-oz.jar	.09
IGA Salt	2-lb.pkg	.07	IGA Biscuit Mix	lge pkg	.25
Free runing or Iodized				Once tried, always used.	
IGA Light 'N Fluffy Cake Flour			IGA Condensed Chicken & Mushroom		
	lge pkg	.15		2 cans	.19
IGA Milk	4 tall can	.25	IGA Condensed Tomato Soup 3"	6.19	
Royal Guest Tea	8-oz. pkg.	.39	Peak Orange Pekoe Tea	8-oz.pkg.	.35
IGA Soap Flakes	2 lge pkg.	.35	IGA Soap Grains	Two 24ozpkg.	.31
IGA Spaghetti	No. 1 can	.08	Sally May Beauty Soap Bar		.05
IGA White Floating Soap	4 med.bar.	.17	IGA White Floating Soap	3lgebar.	.20
IGA Corn Flakes	Two 8-oz.pkg.	.13	IGA Grape Juice	pt.btle.	.15
Royal Guest Coffee				1-lb bag	.21

Fit for a king



## Marvin W. Chapman

By Richard Allen

The Williston Historical Society has this postcard in its collection with a cancellation date of February 3, 1912. It was mailed with a one-cent Benjamin Franklin stamp. The image is of Marvin Wright Chapman and his wife, Dora R. Chapman, dressed in their finest outfits. Mr. Chapman chose his one-horse buggy in front of his North Williston house as a fitting setting for this formal pose of a prosperous farmer. The house was located near the end of Chapman Lane at what used to be the Chapman farm. George A. Chapman established the 300+ acre farm in the early 1840s and five generations lived there until the property was sold in the 1980s. The house was moved to the west along Chapman Lane to be the home of Daniel and Ellen Fontaine.

Marvin Chapman was born in Jericho on September 14, 1846, the son of George A. Chapman and Mary Wright. At age 18 he moved to North Williston. Mr. Chapman was married three times. He and Lucy A. Thompson married on March 27, 1870. She died January 31, 1873. Mr. Chapman was then married on April 14, 1875, to Lucia B. Johnson, who was born July 4, 1853, and died October 31, 1884. He subsequently married on September 16, 1897, Dora M. Read, who was born in Shelburne August 6, 1866, a daughter of Horace S. and Ann E. (Fish) Read. (Source: Pages 749-750 of *Family and Genealogical History of the State of Vermont, Vol. II*, Hiram Carleton, ed. 1903)

This is a rare personal postcard that was produced by a traveling photographer or taken with a Kodak Model 3A camera giving the consumer the ability to produce their own postcards. It was not meant for widespread public distribution but rather family use. The message on the back is addressed to Miss Pearlle Sears of Morrisville, Vermont. She was invited to a surprise birthday party for Frank who was turning 28.

Readers interested in learning more about this section of Williston and the Chapman family can seek out *North Williston: Down Depot Hill* by Richard Allen. (The History Press, 2011.) <https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/Products/9781609491895>





KKK headlines that appeared in the *Burlington Daily News* on May 23, 1924

## **‘Weird Spooks,’ The Ku Klux Klan in Williston**

By Richard Allen

The Ku Klux Klan was organized after the Civil War to terrorize Blacks, keep them from voting and minimize their political and economic power. Shootings, lynchings, and cross burnings were common practices. A series of arrests and financial problems led to the gutting of the group in the early 1870s.

But in 1915 the Ku Klux Klan was reorganized in Georgia and recruitment for local units spread throughout the country, particularly in rural areas. In the 1920s membership peaked, including several thousand in Vermont. The Klan railed against Catholics, immigrants, organized labor, Jews, as well as Blacks. The members were white Protestants. They did burn crosses, some even on the Burlington breakwater. Seven crosses were burned in Montpelier at one time, one on the steps of the Catholic church. The traditional white robes and hoods were part of the mystique of the group and often resulted in comparing them to ghosts or spirits. Recruiting was carried out by newspaper advertising, pamphlets, and meetings.

The meetings held in fields with speakers had religious overtones with hymns and prayers. Attendance was often checked by the demand to display an invitation. Chapters were organized in Springfield, Barre, Montpelier, and Northfield, among other Vermont towns.

The recruitment in Burlington included the Klan’s wish to rent the hotel in Queen City Park for the summer of 1924. The Burlington Free Press expressed a rather cold shoulder. “There is no reason for welcoming them even that near to Burlington. Perhaps the Spiritualists, who have held undisputed claim to Queen City Park for several seasons, will have something to say about this matter. If we were to choose, we would prefer the Spiritualist ghosts, to those of the Klan. The former are supposed to have had some of the evils of this earth removed before they return to visit us.”

One of the biggest “conclaves” occurred in May of 1925 at the Lamoille County Fair Grounds where about 5,000 men and women of the Klan gathered on a Saturday afternoon and evening according to the hyperbole of the Burlington Free Press. A parade of about 500 participants dressed in robes wound their way through the streets of Morrisville. Followed by speeches at the fairgrounds and the initiation of new members, three crosses were ignited, the tallest “towering 65 feet” in the air. Fireworks closed out the evening. The article was laudatory noting no “disorder” and that “everything moved with precision.” The “leading businesses” decorated their stores for the gathering and welcomed the patronage. The hospitality was praised by the attending Klan members. These gatherings with parades and picnics served as a social outlet for the attendees and the cross burnings added to the excitement.

In May of 1924 the Klan made an appearance in Williston, as noted by the Burlington Daily News, "Weird Spooks Annoy Women at Williston." At night automobile lights were seen on a "secluded" farm road. People with flashlights were controlling parking. County authorities were contacted and advised of the situation. The mysterious group seemed to be "gathering for no purpose of good...[with] the impression that demon rum was, perhaps, once more flowing from the spigot of wooden kegs, like in the pre-Volstead days." (This was a reference to the Volstead Act passed by Congress to carry out the prohibition of alcohol as stated in the 18th Amendment that was in force from 1919 to 1933.) Officers "stealthily" approached the parked autos to observe the action and determine if any laws were being broken.

"Seeing that there was no hilarity indicating the possible presence of liquor," the officers confronted a "sentry. By "displaying the shining badge" of a deputy sheriff, the argument about their admittance was short lived. It was claimed to be "just a meeting." And it was soon revealed that it was a meeting of the KKK. Quickly Edward L. Rash, an auto salesman from Kentucky who had been recruiting in Vermont, stepped forward and confirmed the information.

Rash was told he was scaring some local women and that fences had been damaged. Rash dismissed the charges and said the gathering was "as quiet as a prayer meeting." The newspaper article continued, "The neighbor and owner of the property soon appeared and accompanied the officers back to the farmhouse and assured the women that the meeting was peaceful and was being held on his land not hers, only a few rods from the main highway but protected from peering eyes by trees and banks." The meeting apparently ended with no violence or arrests.

This article first came to my attention in the Dorothy Parker Alling scrapbook in the Williston Historical Society collection. It was clipped and mounted without comment. This perhaps gives us some idea of the identification of the "frightened women" and the location of the KKK meeting. Dorothy, aged 21 in 1924, along with her mother and two sisters, were part of the Miller family of Maple Hill farm on what is now Industrial Avenue and Route 2. (The Miller farm was noted for its market gardens and greenhouses that provided produce for Burlington. All traces of the farmhouse and outbuildings are gone.) At the time there was plenty of open farmland in this Muddy Brook section of Williston suitable for such a meeting.

It is interesting to note that the newspaper did not identify the sheriff deputies or the women, probably upon a request for privacy. It appears the recounting of the story was by the deputies directly to the newspaper and the placement on the left side of the front page satisfied the sheriff's need for publicity. I have not come across any other mention of the Ku Klux Klan in Williston, so perhaps this was the extent of it.

The Klan underwent fiscal shenanigans, internal dissension, violence, and loss of political power that all led to decreasing influence on the national scene. Vermont newspapers editorialized against the Klan and some municipal laws were passed to prohibit the wearing of masks in public. A break-in at Burlington's St. Mary's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception resulted in charges against several Klan members, added to their woes, and decreased their popularity in the state. By the end of the 1920s its presence in Vermont was just about over.

Readers interested in more details on the Klan in Vermont can consult Fiery Crosses in the Green Mountains by Maudean Neill, available in the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library. The Vermont Historical Society webpage has information on the Klan: <https://vermonthistory.org/kkk-in-vermont-1924>.