



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

*Exciting Things Happening at WHS - See inside!*

*Newsletter — Fall 2020*



# Williston Historical Society Bulletin

Volume 47, Number 2

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“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

All newsletters 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)

## Renewal/New Membership

If you would like to renew your membership 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 or write us at Williston Historical Society, P.O. Box 995, Williston, VT 04595. Please include if you are interested in helping us in any of the following ways: Programs, Preservation, Hospitality, Publications, Oral History, Archive, Exhibits, Membership or other.

## **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 just reread by my president's letter from last spring when we were just entering this time of Covid 19. In the spring we had hopes of seeing a return to "normal" within a few months, but as the days wore on, we realized we were in this changed environment for the long haul. I am hoping that sometime down the road we can reschedule our guest speakers for their presentations when we can gather safely in person.

One of the victims of this year's events was the opening of the Williston Time Capsule. It was due to be opened again in 2020, with more artifacts to be added and then reclosed for another 10 years. We hope to make a great occasion of the opening one year late during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations 2021. This will also present us with the opportunity to add to the collection some documents and ephemera from this pandemic.

Although the Society has not hosted meetings, we have been busy working on the Photographic History of Williston. WHS member and author, Dick Allen, is using materials from our WHS collection, Town Reports, VT Historical Society, UVM Special Collections, Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com and residents (current and former). Thanks go out to the many folks who have contacted us with their memories and photos and especially to Dick who has been working diligently on this project. The book will be ready about a year from now.

The Board has also been working on new By-Laws since last fall. Note elsewhere in this newsletter the completed draft and directions on how to vote to approve or not.

We are happy to announce that the Board has directed that dues for the coming year shall be zero dollars. Encourage your friends and neighbors to join us and be sure to send you membership requests to Peter Callas, membership chair at [peter.callas@uvm.edu](mailto:peter.callas@uvm.edu) or fill in and mail the membership form found in this newsletter. We still need to keep a current list of members. As always, donations are gratefully accepted.

Brenda Perkins, President

# Annual Meeting

Our scheduled November 7, 2020 Annual Meeting will not take place as planned. To continue to keep everyone safe we will conduct our brief business via mail and email. You will find below two items to vote upon. First, a draft of updated By-Laws. Secondly, the slate of officers and board of directors for the coming year. Votes will be calculated as follows. No response, either by email or US Mail, will be considered a vote in the affirmative. If you wish to vote “no” to the By-Laws or any person on the slate of officers, you must reply by email or US mail no later than December 15, 2020 to [willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

**DRAFT**

## BY-LAWS OF THE WILLISTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY as of October 28, 2019

### PURPOSE:

The Williston Historical Society is established for the purpose of promoting, producing, interpreting, and preserving historical and educational materials, particularly as relating to the town of Williston, Vermont, and for any other lawful purpose for non-profit corporations.

### ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

1. Membership is open to any person interested in the history of the Town of Williston. Dues shall be determined periodically by the Board of Directors.
2. Annual dues shall be payable by November first (1) for membership until the following October thirty-first (31). Membership shall end if dues are not made by January first (1) of each year. A new member joining in October, November or December will have the dues paid applied to the following year.

### ARTICLE II: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. The Board of Directors shall consist of the Officers of the Society, as well as a minimum of two (2) additional Directors elected for staggered 3-year terms.
2. The Officers are elected annually by the membership and include the President, the Vice-President, the immediate Past-President, the Archivist, the Secretary, and the Treasurer (Secretary and Treasurer may be held by the same person.

### ARTICLE III: SCHEDULE AND QUORUM FOR MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

1. The Annual Meeting shall be held each year on a date set by the Board of Directors.
2. Regular meetings of the Society shall be held at least four (4) times each year, which number shall include the Annual Meeting.
3. Special meetings may be called by the President or Board of Directors, or upon petition signed by a minimum of five (5) current members.
4. Five (5) members of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum of the Board of Directors.
5. The Board of Directors shall meet at least quarterly.

### ARTICLE IV: DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. The President shall have the executive supervision over the activities of the society within the scope provided by these By-Laws. The President shall preside at all meetings and shall jointly, with the Board of Directors, report annually on the activities of the Society. The President shall appoint a membership coordinator and delegates not otherwise provided for.
2. The Vice President shall support the activities and programs of the Board of Directors and work with the President to promote the goals of the Society. The Vice President will assume the duties of the President in the event of absence, incapacity or resignation of the President.
3. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of meetings of the Society and of the Board of Directors.
4. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the safekeeping of Society funds and for maintaining adequate financial records. The Treasurer shall deposit all monies received with a reliable banking institution in the name of the Williston Historical Society, Inc. The Treasurer shall pay all accounts payable and approved by the President, collect dues, and submit an annual report to the Board of Directors by two (2) weeks prior to the Annual Meeting.
5. The Archivist shall oversee the Society's collection, support the activities of the Society in keeping with the "Duties and Responsibilities of the Archivist", consult with the Board of Directors as necessary and submit regular reports to the Board, verbally and/or in writing.
6. The Board of Directors shall be responsible to the membership and have the power to conduct the affairs of the Society between meetings of the Society. The Board of Directors shall decide questions of policy. The President and the Board of Directors shall jointly render an annual report at each Annual Meeting. In the event of an office being vacated, the Board of Directors will appoint a replacement to fill the office for the remainder of the term.

#### ARTICLE V: TASKS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors shall assume responsibility for the following, including delegating members as needed:

1. Publications: newsletter, occasional publications of special interest.
2. Publicity and media: website maintenance, social media, press communications, public notices of programs and meetings.
3. Programming: Organizing events, fund raisers, coordinating with other Historical Societies and the Town of Williston, and other activities that promote the purpose and goals of the Society.
4. Hospitality: Identify volunteers to provide assistance at events, refreshments, and public engagement.

#### ARTICLE VI: ORDER OF BUSINESS

The order of business at meetings of the Board of Directors shall be:

1. Approval of minutes from previous meeting
2. Treasurer's report
3. Archivist's report
4. Unfinished business
5. New business

#### ARTICLE VII: PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Robert's Rule of Order shall govern the proceedings of the Society at its meetings.

#### ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS TO BY-LAWS

By-Laws may be amended through a proposal to the Board of Directors by any member(s). The Board will bring proposed amendments to the Society's membership through written communication and a vote will be taken at the next meeting. Amendments will be considered approved with two-thirds of those present voting in favor.

Adopted 02/22/1974  
Amended 01/07/1977  
Amended 01/11/1982  
Amended 10/23/1989  
Amended 01/30/1989  
Amended 11/23/1998  
Amended 01/30/2007  
Amended 01/11/2014

## **Board of Directors and Officers**

The Board of Directors serve for a term of three (3) years. Steve Perkins has been nominated for another three-year term beginning in 2021.

2021 Slate of Officers:

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

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Photo courtesy of Cameron Clark

## **Burglaries Were a Constant Threat for Store Owners**

By Richard Allen

The store (now the Korner Kwik Stop) on the northwest corner of North Williston Road and Route 2 was owned and operated by Kenneth Aseltine from 1924 to 1963. Like the Warren store across the way, and the North Williston store, burglaries were common enough to have the owners, Charles Warren and Aseltine, install alarms.

No doubt Kenneth Aseltine took no pride in being targeted by an organized international gang of seven thieves in 1932. They took about \$2,000 worth of goods from Frank's Economy Store on North Street in Burlington and were arrested in Montreal where they had smuggled the merchandise. They were also charged with taking "gambling

machines" (later clarified as vending machines) from Clarey's Lunch on Elmwood Avenue in Burlington, dresses from a store in Morrisville, \$300 worth of merchandise from Hilaire's store in Hinesburg, and about \$150 worth from the Aseltine store. The *Burlington Free Press* article in 1932 gave full details of the cooperation, good luck, and fine detective work of Vermont and Quebec authorities in searching for the gang members and the stolen goods in numerous places on both sides of the border. Shortly after the Great Brink's Robbery in Boston in 1950, the *Free Press* chose to review the arrest of the 1932 gang, along with several other Vermont crimes that displayed "humor, glamour, and excitement." Apparently, the nicknames of some of the gang members gave the story a big city feel: "Patsy" Grazioli, Harvey "Underworld" Morin, and "Dynamite" Dunn of Burlington. The Vermont crimes could not compare to the Boston heist in terms of money taken (\$2.775 million) but were "fully as colorful."

In September 1935 thieves tried to enter the Aseltine store through the back but were deterred by a double door. So, they went around front to break in and passed the cigarettes, candy, and assorted items out through a broken window.

A September 1936 break-in at the Aseltine store netted the perpetrators a large and seemingly strange assortment of goods. "Fifty cartons of cigarettes, several pounds of marshmallows, a quantity of toothpaste, nearly 30 pounds of coffee, a number of pounds of lard, and several cheap watches," reported the *Burlington Free Press*. And money taken? Yes, fifty pennies from the cash register.

By 1940 Aseltine had a burglar alarm that saved his store from thievery. In February, the Yandow store in North Williston was hit first, but the nearly empty cash register foiled the thieves. Aseltine's alarm went off at 2:10 a.m. and he was soon on his way to the store. No merchandise was taken, so the assumption was that they were after the money. But again, an empty till spoiled their plans. A neighbor described how two men made their escape in an auto parked near the Village School.

Crime in small town stores was one of the challenges faced by the owners, but the loyalty and support of the local customers more than made up for it over the course of Kenneth Aseltine's 39-year operation of the store on the four corners in the middle of the village. In a circa 1939 letter to his customers he wrote, "It has been my honest endeavor all 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...in a very fine way and I want you to know that I fully appreciate it." He further stated that any profit he made would be "kept at home and paid out in the community in which it is made....this is what makes a community a good place in which to live."





## **Sylvia Warren and the Brick Church Renovation**

By Mark Hutchins

### *Editor's note:*

*Sylvia Warren (1886-1965) was quite instrumental during the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the town. Never married, she worked tirelessly as the town's librarian, postmistress, and conservator of the Brick Church. She was well-known and well-respected by locals. Jack Bradish was the postmaster who took the position in 1951 when Sylvia retired. He lived across the street in the large brick house in the southwest corner of the four-way intersection in the village. In 1963 Mark Hutchins was a Williston teenager spearheading the effort by the Federated Church youth group to save and rehabilitate the Brick Church. Today Mark is a retired architect living near Pasadena, California. Here is his remembrance about meeting the redoubtable Sylvia Warren.*

One day in late 1963, I received a phone call at home. On the other end of the line was an elderly sounding lady with a very determined voice identifying herself as Sylvia Warren and asked if I was "that young man who was organizing the clean-up at the Old Brick Church." When I acknowledged that fact, she requested me (actually she told me) to meet her the following Saturday morning at the old Warren Store, across from the Federated Church in Williston village. We set a time of eleven o'clock and she promptly hung up. She had not even asked my name!

I knew who Miss Warren was. In fact, if there was a form of Williston royalty, she was our Queen Mother. She had been the town librarian for many decades; in fact, had established the first library in 1905. A good many entertaining stories circulated around about her and her family was historic. The old Warren Store had been closed for many years. At one time it was one of the two principal stores in the upper village, the other had been in the Lyon's Apartment structure (still standing). At some point the town library had been housed on the entire second floor of the Warren Store until the present Dorothy Alling building was built. While I had never been in the store building, I had entered the long open carriage shed adjacent to it and admired the walls papered with old circus posters, even then in remarkably good condition and vibrant with colors.

Upon receiving the telephone call from Miss Warren, I called Reverend Ken Moody and related the call. He said I should meet with her and I had better be on time. She was a lady with a well-deserved reputation for manners and decorum. We also suspected she was of some means, but among us kids no one really knew too much about her. She was not seen much in public at that point.

At the appointed time, my father drove me to the old store. Reverend Moody met us there and shortly thereafter, Jack Bradish walked across from his house to see what was happening. When we told him, Miss Warren had requested the "meeting" he evinced considerable surprise since she had been somewhat of a recluse for nearly a decade. He told us she was in her late seventies at least.

Soon a large old black sedan, pulled into the yard in front. An elderly man was driving it and helped an equally elderly lady out of the back seat. She was surprisingly spry but had a somewhat unemotional countenance. As the only boy there she walked over to me with the help of a cane and without any preliminary courtesies she asked if I was the "Hutchins boy." I admitted to that fact, somewhat apprehensively. She nodded to me and then to Reverend Moody and Jack addressing them as "Jack" and "Reverend." She started towards a shed building attached to the back of the store, which had a door facing east. It had a large padlock on a hasp. As we watched, still puzzled about all this, she produced a huge ring of keys and started to try one after the other on the old lock. After many attempts, none appeared to work. She then turned to Jack and asked if he had a crowbar or "some such" at his place. Jack admitted he did and promptly left for a few minutes to fetch it. Upon returning, she told him to "get that lock off." With some screeching of wood and metal, he pried it off the door.

Miss Warren then had her "man" force it open and we all followed her into a medium-size room. Old filmy curtains hung in rags from a very grimy window but admitted enough light to see by. Among a few old boxes and crates were several large objects covered with canvas sheets.

She walked up to one of these and pulled off the covering to reveal a large old sofa. Quickly she started pulling off other covers revealing an old foot-pump reed organ, a red velvet topped pulpit, several small chairs, and an oval table with a marble top. Two low matching wood stoves stood next to each other without any covering but dust.

It was by now quite dusty and we all stepped out to let it settle a little. She turned to me and told me that we could take all this for our "project." I was still not sure what this was all about and she then explained that it was the original Brick Church pulpit furniture which her father [Charles D. Warren] had removed "way back when the church was closed up to keep it safe." He apparently was a church official and decided to keep it in the store supply room.

I remember we were overjoyed to see this furniture because we had found nothing in the church when we opened it earlier that year. She was gruff but responded to our gratitude by telling Jack to either get the furniture that day and transport it or "fix that lock you broke." Jack, sensing a little humor, quickly assured her he would get some men in an hour or so and move it all over to the church, which he did.

Meanwhile, she had become more conversational and asked me if I wanted to see the old store. Being me, and loving all kinds of closed old structures, I enthusiastically agreed, and we used a connecting door from the shed up several steps into the old store. It was lined with shelves and a few dangling old bare light bulbs hung from the ceiling. But utterly devoid of any furniture or anything else. She then pointed up the stairs and told me that up "there is the old library" where she had helped "educate many a young Willistonian over the years." I scampered up and she followed much more slowly and with some difficulty. I emerged into a large room the size of the store underneath. It was lit by large windows on the street front and the walls were lined with shelves. Other freestanding shelves filled the room, mostly empty. However, there were still large numbers of books scattered about and I picked up a few to glance at. Miss Warren told me I could take anything I wanted but I was too shy (believe it or not) to take advantage of the offer.

She told me, "You know, young man, that you can not move a person very far with a push, but you can move him a long way with a good book." I decided I liked her.

When we finally returned outdoors, she turned to me and said she was pleased at my efforts and was delighted to see the old church opened again. She said she used to attend that church as a little girl and remembered it well. I asked her if she might come over and see things as we progressed, and she promised she would indeed do so. With a few parting words, she was helped into the car and it drove off.

My dad was in a hurry to get home for some reason and Reverend Moody said he had things to do at the church. Jack said he would drive me home later, so I stayed and "guarded" the door while he went to his house to organize a truck and some help. I went back into the shed and was amazed to see everything in great condition. The only exception was the organ, which would not play. Eventually Jack returned with a pickup and we took two trips to deliver the furniture into the church. I think we were all grinning, pleased to see it set up where it obviously belonged. I, of course, had to scamper up onto the platform and gain the vista many a minister had enjoyed long ago. Speaking on high appealed to me.

True to her word, Sylvia Warren did visit one Saturday afternoon (our normal workday at the church) and spent an hour or so telling me about the church. We learned that the furniture was originally exactly where we had put it. The black horsehair upholstered "minister's sofa" was in the niche behind the pulpit up on the platform. The small table was down on the raised platform in front of the pulpit with chairs on each side. (This was used for communion). She said the sofa accommodated visiting ministers, etc. who shared the pulpit occasionally. The organ was always up in the balcony as far as she could remember it. She said it was not very loud and easily drowned out. She did not know how the two stoves could heat the whole room but said it was comfortable even in winter.

She went on to tell us about other things, but she was disturbed by the tattered remnants of the wall papering, carpets, and ripped pew upholstery. We sensed she was quite depressed standing quietly looking around. She would not descend into the basement, saying it was never used that she could remember and was always damp. She remembered Sunday school being in the balcony on occasion and "members' homes in town" more often.

Outside, she told me the carriage sheds had been torn down years ago, but I do not remember her saying when. You could drive down one side of the church and around and back the other side. She said kids over the years had "gotten in" and would ring the bell for a prank but the prank would be on them "one of these days when that thing comes down on all of them!" She also located the rough area on the northeastern side of the property where there were two "necessaries" or outhouses.

She told me that the church was used occasionally for a few years after it was closed, usually funerals, but attendance was exceedingly small. The Methodist Church was more comfortable, with electric lights and central heat. It also had a finished basement with a kitchen and bathrooms. The Brick Church was decidedly less accommodating. "But there were some who didn't like or accept the merger and stayed that way 'til they died off." She was surprised the "old place" was still standing.

I do not remember whether she attended the first services we held there that year and later. I also do not recall ever seeing her again thereafter before I moved away. But I will not forget the signal service her family rendered us in preserving the original furnishings so well. Or the little lady who was our direct physical link to the Brick Church when it was open. I greatly regret, being so young and inexperienced, not interviewing her more extensively. She probably retained many interesting stories and observations. Reverend Moody said he had interviewed her once for his book on Williston history and said she probably knew every story in town. Even after a truly short acquaintance I remain convinced she was an important figure in Williston's history. She deserves to be honored and I hope someday an appropriate way can be found to do so.



### **Mystery Photo**

Can anyone identify the two men in this photo?

Email answer to

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