



Williston Historical Society Bulletin

• Volume 43, Number 2

October 2016

“Every individual is an historical figure.”

Founded 1974

S. & J. Burroughs, Editors

Save the Dates

Sunday, November 13 - WHS Annual Meeting

1:00pm

Dorothy Alling Memorial Library

Library Lane, Williston

Officers

President: Terry Macaig
Vice President: Brenda Perkins
Secretary: Marlene Price
Treasurer: Jon Stokes

Director

Stephen Perkins
Adriene Katz, Collections Manager/Archivist
Bob Bradish

WHS Needs You!

WHS Annual Meeting Agenda

Election of Officers and Board member

Brain storm for upcoming events.

Program -- “Show & Tell”

Bring an historical artifact to share.

Tell a short story of a Williston happening.

Share a personal memory of what it was like growing up or living in Williston.

Light refreshment

Report from the President

Dear Members:

The Williston Historical Society had an active summer. We participated in the EXPO 2016 historical event in Tunbridge on June 18-19. On July 3rd we held our traditional Ice Cream Social under sunny skies. This event doesn't draw the crowds that we used to have but we did make a profit. On the Fourth of July we had a float that was well received.

We are interested in your ideas for our member meetings. please send your thoughts on subjects for programs, lectures and performances and/or if you wish to volunteer to

macaig@msn.com or call 878-3872

adriene.katz@gmail.com or

brendaperkins135@yahoo.com

The Williston Historical Society has a new and improved web site up and running. It is in its infancy, so check frequently for changes and additions! Find it at willistonhistorical.society.org

Terry Macaig, President

Please update your email addresses and phone numbers

If you have not recently updated your email address with the WHS, please do so by sending your current email address to Bob Bradish, who is now maintaining the membership list. You can do this by sending an email to Bob at robertdonab@myfairpoint.net. or by calling him at 872-8775.

I Remember...

...riding the school bus, not the bright yellow buses of today, but a converted green panel truck with wooden benches on each side. I can still see the bus coming up North Williston hill, the well-loved bus driver, Gladys Larrow, smiling as she stopped to pick me up. We shared a birthday and exchanged cards for many years long after I had left school.

–Jeneva Peterson Burroughs

If you have a favorite memory about growing up or living in Williston, please send it to:

Jeneva Burroughs

momdad.burroughs@gmail.com.

or mail to

81 Peterson Ln.

Williston, VT 05495



The streetscape in the early part of the 20th century.

Left to right, the current Town Hall (1860), the current Town Hall Annex (1842), the now gone 1844 Meeting House, and the third brick Williston Academy, built in 1869 and destroyed by fire in 1949.

The Hiram Phelps Ledger and the Brick Meeting House

By Richard Allen

In the spring of 2013, Karen Reed, the daughter of Howard and Terry Carpenter, gave the Williston Historical Society a business ledger kept by Hiram Phelps (1801-1892). Phelps was born in Connecticut, but lived the majority of his life in Williston. He married Lucinda Murray, the daughter of Selah and Dorcas Murray, in 1827. Hiram and Lucinda had seven children between 1831 and 1843.

Hiram's business ledger, covering 1825 to 1844, is a fascinating look into the early economic history of Williston. Hiram started as a blacksmith, shoeing horses and oxen, making halter rings, tongs, and hinges, mending wagons and yokes, and repairing scythes.

Sometimes Hiram bartered blacksmith work or allowed people to recycle their "old iron" with him, which then garnered credit on their accounts. When he received currency, he was often paid in dollars, but there are a few references to shillings.

The ledger also details Hiram's other sources of income. In the early years he seemed to be a partner in a still and dealt in quantities of brandy. He also sold "bottles of smoke." According to Thomas Kelleher, historian and Curator of Mechanical Arts at Old Sturbridge Village, "creosote, a.k.a. oil of smoke, [was] a common toothache remedy in the 19th century." In addition, he became a dealer of pipestone and gravestones. Later, in the 1882-1883 *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Chittenden County, Vermont*, Hiram, then in his 80s, was listed as a retired wheelwright and painter, as well as a farmer with 25 acres.

Phelps and the brick meeting house

Phelps' ledger gives insight into the construction of the 1843-1844 Williston brick meeting house. Hiram first mentioned this project on November 25, 1843 when he met with men from Barre, Shelburne, and Milton. In January of 1844, he valued his time spent transporting bricks at \$1.50. In February, he spent a half day hauling lumber. In March, he was "procuring lumber and stone, \$1.00." Hiram also traveled to Charlotte several times, once "to see the mason about the work." Work on the meeting house continued into July and August, and Hiram's expenses increased when he was using his team of horses or oxen.

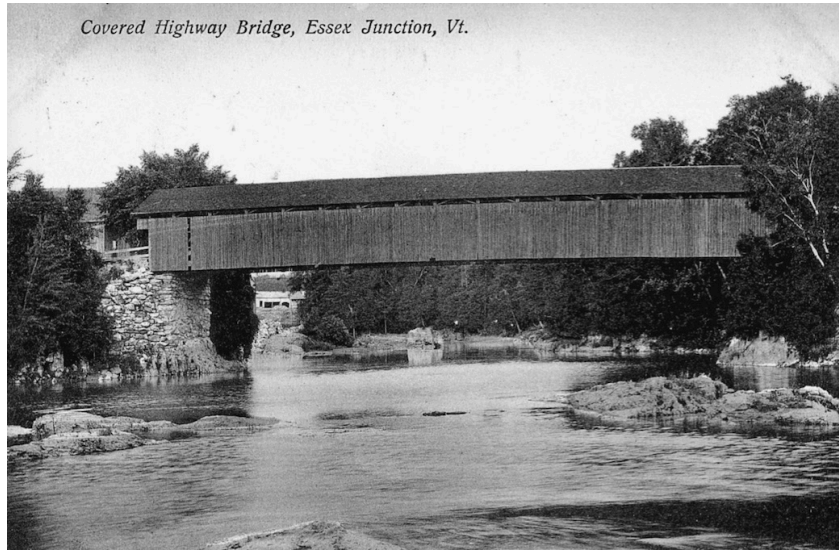
Hiram's labor contributed to a stately neo-Classical structure. The meeting house exemplified the Greek Revival style, with its low-pitch roof, a wide, white-painted entablature, and wide brick corner pilasters. This style reached the apex of its popularity in Vermont from about 1830 to 1870, according to Devin Colman, the Vermont state architectural historian. Thus the meeting house was not only beautiful, but also fashionable.

Look Around Essex and Williston, Vermont claims that the Universalists began worshipping in the meeting house in 1844, probably in the fall. Presumably town meetings also occurred here for much of the building's life. This booklet also states that the building was torn down in the 1940s and its bricks used in the construction of a building at Shelburne Museum. This date of demolition is probably wrong, however, since there is a photo of the Williston Fire Department, founded in 1949, storing their equipment in the meeting house. The meeting house was likely taken down in the 1950s.



The 1844 meeting house was used by the fire department in the 1950s.

Though the brick meeting house no longer stands, it may still be counted, along with the Brick Church, the Town Hall, and the Town Hall Annex, as one of the historic and attractive public buildings that have served the citizens of Williston over the years.



Covered Bridge at Hubbel's Falls

Notice to Bridge Builders

The undersigned committees of towns of Williston and Essex, will meet at the Inn of H. Stanton, in Essex, on Wednesday the 24th day of May next, to receive and examine sealed proposals for building a substantial arched covered bridge across Onion River near Hubbel's Falls, to be finished by the first day of October next. Proposals will also be received for finishing the same by the first day of June, 1849.

For further information inquire of E. G. Stanton, Essex.

W. H. French, H. Stevens, D. A. Murray, committee for Williston. G. Whitney, E. G. Stanton, Bryant, committee for Essex.

[This notice appeared in the Burlington Free Press, April 28, 1848.]



Power House Dam Bridge
Built the spring of 1927 by Betty Bradish's father.
It survived the November flood.
Removed in 1986



Information on Essex-Williston Town Line Sign from inside the covered bridge.

By Gordon M. Lane, Barre, Vt., and Betty Lane Bradish, Williston, Vt., Son and daughter of A. B. Lane

June 21, 1991

Early in June, as we were trying to get the garage –across from 36/38 Highland [Avenue in Barre]-cleaned somewhat, we discovered this old town line sign. It seems certain that it was put there at the time-1927-that our father, A.B. Lane, contractor, was building the steel truss bridge over the Winooski River on present Route 2A. It became known as the "Power House Bridge." This old steel bridge was replaced with a new, greatly improved bridge in 1987- the third, at least-bridge at this gorge site. [Local historian Jerry Fox's research notes the earliest bridge at this location was built by Daniel Hurlburt in 1808. The 1808 bridge was replaced by "a two lane bridge composed of two spans of Burr arch - trusses with a center pier set on a rock in the middle of the river... At the end of July 1830 both sides of Lake Champlain were assailed by a 100-year flood. Following a week of oppressive heat and humidity, rain began falling on Saturday, July 24. Over the next several days 7 inches of rain fell on the valley with over 3 1/2 inches just during the 26th! On July 27th John Johnson recorded that the Essex Bridge Company's major asset was 'carried away by a freshet such as was never before known.'"]

With the help of the Vermont Department of Transportation's Bridge Division, and the Green Mountain Power Corporation, which has the dam and power house at the site, we determined that the pre-1927 bridge was an old covered bridge-building date unknown. [The date mystery was solved by the Burlington Free Press notice; the covered bridge was erected in 1848.]

The sign was apparently the target of early graffiti writers, and it is very interesting to examine them. "E. M. Boyle, March 23, 1924" appears in the lower left corner; also two names and dates in 1919, just to the left of the first E in ESSEX; "M. J. O'Keefe, Stamford, Conn." appears above "LINE", showing that this sign was not only of local interest. Closer examination is sure to discover many interesting names, or other items. Just now spotted a "NEWARK, N.J." (between the X and WIL?).

A look on the reverse side reveals a few, much plainer contributions "E.L.M. April 20, 1924" and "Harold H. Viele Essex Jct. Vt." who even gives his address at "Box 255."

It is unfortunate that someone showed up with a crayon, and scrawled enough to obscure some of the writing.

The old sign also received attention from "hunters" attested by the fact we have two shotgun blasts clear through the weary old sign, as well as several probably 22-caliber bullet holes. A whittler even attacked it, on edge below X-WIL.

We have failed, until now, to mention the little rhyme, lower left under "ESS—"which reads: "A man's ambition must be small, to write his name on a ? bridge wall," a variation of the older rhyme, relating to the "outhouse" wall.

We believe the final resting place of this old sign should be near its place of use; if it has historical value, fine, if not, 'twould burn very well.

Additional information added by Richard Allen