



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

Exciting Things Happening at WHS - See inside!

Newsletter — Spring 2021



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
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Membership Chair: Peter Callas
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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, P.O. Box 995, Williston, VT 05495 or notify us via email at willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Renewal/New Membership

We are pleased to announce that membership is now free. If you would like to renew your membership or become a member of WHS, please send an email to peter.callas@uvm.edu with your preferred contact information or write us at Williston Historical Society, P.O. Box 995, Williston, VT 04595. We need your contact information for our membership lists. 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.

A Photographic History of Williston

The Williston Historical Society is pleased to announce the upcoming release this year of a photographic history of the town by Arcadia Publishing. The photographic history of Williston has eight chapters and over 200 images reflecting the history of Williston in the 19th and 20th centuries. The book draws from the photographic collection of the Williston Historical Society, the Vermont Historical Society, Special Collections at UVM and from Williston residents, past and present. Richard Allen has included interesting pieces of local history in the captions and the chapter introductions. The book is now in production at Arcadia Publishing with a publication date in early August. Arcadia Publishing is the leading publisher of local history books in the United States. There are 47 Vermont titles in their Images of America series alone. We plan to have a process in place so that you can order an autographed copy(ies) from the historical society, a great way to support the society and owning or gifting this book.

Report from the President

Greetings,

As I am sure you have heard repeatedly, “What a year!” All our programming was put on hold as we complied with mandates for keeping everyone safe. The Board of Directors continued to meet via Zoom, discussing activities and programs we hope to sponsor when it is safe to gather again. One very exciting activity continued throughout the winter – progress on the publication of the photographic history of Williston. (Please see more information about the book in this newsletter).

The Williston Historical Society submitted images to the Vermont Historical Society for their exhibit “Lively & Local: Historical Societies in Vermont”. Thanks go out to Libby Tuthill Roberts and Kay Painter for permission to use their personal photographs and to Adriene Katz, WHS Archivist, who composed the narrative to accompany the images. We are now part of this exhibit on view through July 31 at the VHS Museum in Montpelier. Williston Historical Society is one of fourteen Vermont historical societies represented. This would make a fun day trip this spring! For more information you can go to <https://vermonthistory.org/exhibit-lively-local>

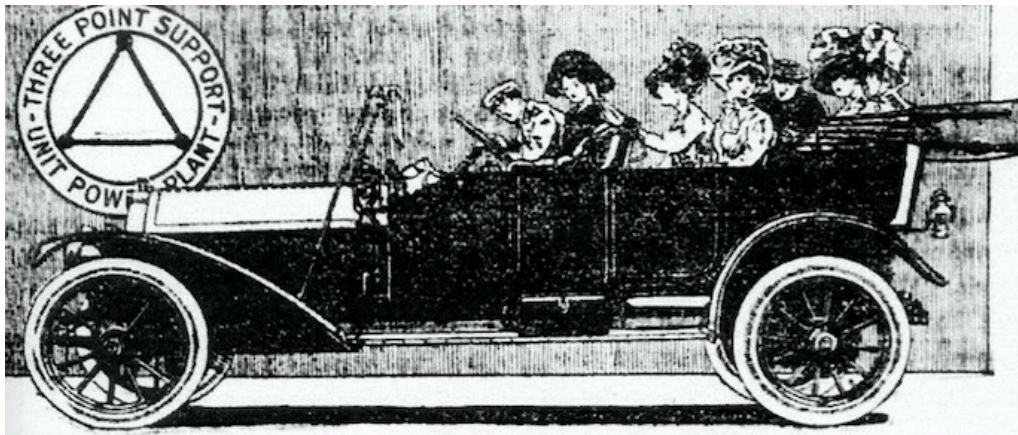
The WHS is planning on being a presence at the Williston 4th of July celebration if it becomes safer to gather and the town moves ahead with plans. We also have confirmation that most of our presenters from last year, who were cancelled due to Covid 19, are willing to offer a program this coming year.

We are always looking for volunteers to help in a myriad of ways. Please contact me at willistonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com if you are willing to be contacted when a volunteer opportunity arises.

Stay safe, stay well, and stay tuned for news and happenings of the Williston historical Society!

Brenda Perkins, President

2.



Stevens-Duryea Cars

“Built Round a Principle.”

Send for catalogue fully describing and
illustrating them to

STEVENS-DURYEA CO.,
Chicopee Falls, Mass.

E. D. WHITNEY,

Distributor for Vermont,

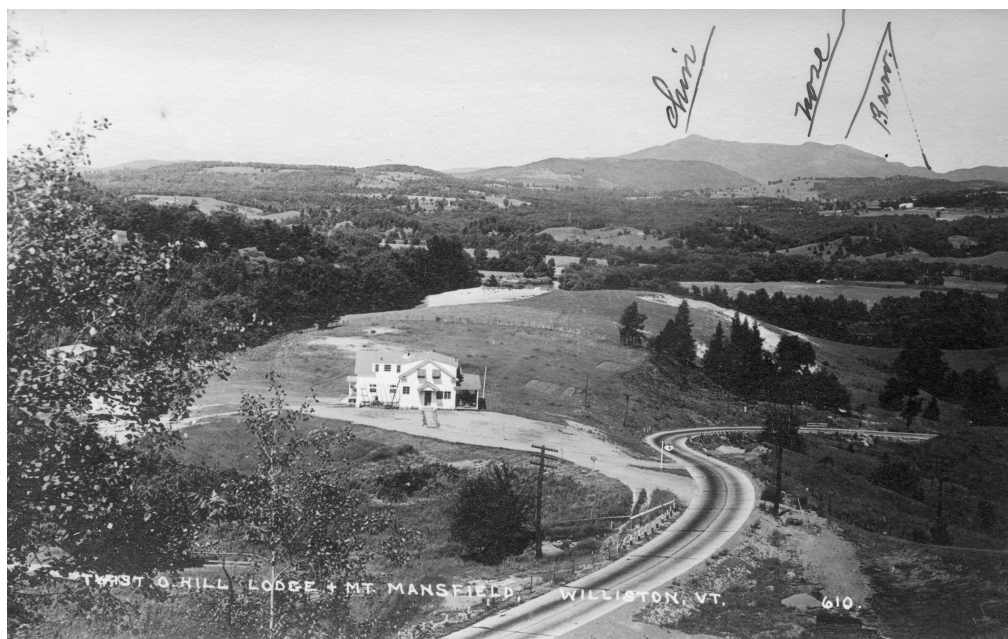
BRATTLEBORO, VT.

C. J. & C. S. WRIGHT,

Distributors for Chittenden Co

WILLISTON, VT.

This 1911 advertisement appeared in the *Burlington Free Press* and promotes Clinton and Clayton, the twin sons of Smith and Clarrissa Wright, as the first automobile dealers in Williston. Two years before a 1909 advertisement described the five models of the Stevens-Duryea line and listed the brothers as dealers with the promise “For minimum of up-keep expense and for everlasting peace of mind---a Steven-Duryea every time!” The company was located in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, and produced models between 1901 and 1915 and from 1919 to 1927. It is assumed that the brothers operated their dealership out of their home on Governor Chittenden Road, now the home of Jim and Lucy McCullough. (Clinton and Abbie Wright were the parents of Jim’s mother, Julia Wright McCullough.)



Living on French Hill in 1938

By Richard Allen

Would you imagine that living in Williston in 1938 was nothing but quiet rural solitude? Well, not quite. Route 2 passing through Williston was a major state highway. If you lived close to the highway you might have had some concerns about the hoped-for peace and quiet. According to one local resident, there were drawbacks to living on French Hill. Here is a description of the traffic reality in a letter written to the *Burlington Free Press*.

Chief of Police Regan presented checks to three Burlington men recently, winners in a contest for rules of safe driving. Nine miles away a contest is staged every day that has nothing to do with safe driving. The place is French Hill, Williston. At the top of the hill two gentle little signs, "Hill" on one, "Slow" on the other. Motorists never see anything but "Hell"---"Go"---and HOW! 24 hours a day. Down the hill they race---Up the hill they speed---crossing to beat a truck or three other cars. At the bottom, sixty miles [per hour] plus. At the top, no speed limit. Horns honk, cut-outs explode. Mufflers are useless, brakes screech. "How glad I am to reach French Hill every night," said a milk truck driver, "Believe me it is some joy to speed down." And he does it so he can be heard a mile away.

Unless one lives on French Hill, one cannot enjoy other people's love of danger and speed. What matters...that French Hill has the most beautiful view of the Green Mountains? All that matters there is a first aid kit and a prayer for the safety of all speeders, whether Vermonters or the desired and racing tourists---especially from New Jersey and Massachusetts.

Mrs. Ilse H. Andrews
The Limit, French Hill, Williston, Vt.

World War II Exhibit and Remembrance in Williston

By Richard Allen

On September 30, 1945 about 160 people attended a post-war exhibit and remembrance in the Chittenden Town Hall (now the Town Hall Annex.) According to the *Burlington Free Press*, the three town boys who died in service were the focus point of the displays. "The afternoon was dedicated to them and to the cause for which they so gallantly gave their lives." Later in the 1946 Town Report, there were five names of those "killed in action": Vernon Mace, Clarence Merchant, Clifford Tardie, Robert Merrill, and former resident Joseph Christmas.

Flags and cut flowers decorated the room and items and souvenirs from around the world paid tribute to the allied nations. Patriotic ribbon bows were given out to each family. Some school children acted as ushers and the sales of small flags and other items realized some money to be used for Christmas boxes for service members and an appropriate accessory for the town hall.

There were photographs displayed of the Williston residents who served in the war. It is thought that Sylvia Warren, the postmistress, was in charge of collecting these. The images were passed to the Clark family and were recently given to the historical society by Cameron Clark. We are currently researching biographical information on the 63 people depicted in the photographs. It should be noted that over one hundred names are listed on the Honor Roll in the 1946 Town Report.

Here are two examples from the photographic collection: Catherine Mary LaCasse and Robert Alberts:



Robert Harvey Alberts (1912-1975) was continually active in the Williston community, during and after World War II. In 1940, he wed Francese Nellie Morse. He enlisted in the Army in 1943, working as a transportation specialist. In March 1944, Robert held the rank of Corporal. By May, he was promoted to the rank of sergeant and stationed in England. In June 1945, he was stationed in Austria, and had earned a Bronze Star. Robert continued his military activities after the war in the Vermont National Guard. He was a member of the Williston Volunteer Fire Department, a letter carrier, and the caretaker at Lake Iroquois for a while.



After growing up on a farm in Williston, Catherine Mary Long (nee LaCasse), born in 1920, studied to become a private duty nurse. She graduated from Burlington High School in 1938 and Fanny Allen Nursing School in 1941. In 1943, she entered the Army Nurses Corps, where she achieved the rank of Lieutenant. During World War II, she met and wed her husband Captain Arvin Long when they were stationed at Camp Luna in New Mexico. Following the war, the Longs moved to Mississippi, where Mrs. Long resumed private duty nursing as one of the founders of the Jefferson Davis Memorial Hospital in Natchez until her retirement in 1974. The couple had 5 children. She died in 2017 at age 96.

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.
or mail to 81 Peterson Ln. Williston, VT 05495



Clara and Frank Metcalf appear in this undated photograph by L. L. McAllister.

(Courtesy of Joyce Goodrich)

The Lives and Times of Frank, Laura,
and Clara Metcalf
Of Taft Corners
By Jill Allen

The May 3, 1916 edition of *The Burlington Free Press* advertised land for sale at Taft Corners: “to settle estate, Taft Farm...117 acres good loam land on north side of road, 100 of which under tillage, balance good cut of hemlock timber with brook water...” This land would become the basis for the Metcalf farm.

No farm would be complete without a partnership like the one Frank (1887-1969) and Laura (1885-1952) began when they wed in 1911. A notice of Frank and Laura’s wedding appeared under the headline “Underhill,” announcing local travels made to and from the town by visitors: “Frank Metcalf and Miss Laura Goodrich were married last Friday evening [June 30] at the bride’s home in Richmond where they were taken by Charles Scribner in his automobile.”

Frank and Laura's marriage was unusual in that she worked outside the home after the wedding. As early as 1913, there is mention of her as a substitute teacher at "the graded school" in Williston, when the regular teacher was unable to work due to a fire at her home.

Frank was 30 when the first draft for World War I was required in June 1917. The cut-off age for the draft was 31, and he'd barely started his farm at Taft Corners. So why didn't he have to go to war? Research reveals Frank was likely exempt on the grounds that his dependent spouse, Laura, would have insufficient income to survive if he was drafted.

The acreage was far from the utopia portrayed in the newspaper. In 1917, there were no buildings on the 117-acre property, so Frank and Laura spent their first six months living in tents. With no structures and no reliable water source, the undeveloped state of the property might have tempted some men to join the war effort, but not Frank. Water could not be located, so Frank tried dowsing and used "a crotched stick" to locate two aquifers. What about the newspaper's promise of a "good cut of hemlock timber"? In reality, these trees took up valuable planting land. Undaunted, Frank "took his mower and cut down the hardhack which covered nearly half of his acres."

During their first season the Metcalfs' farm only produced beans and hay. However, the tradition of the overselling advertisement is as American as the success of pulling oneself out of dire straits through diligence and tenacity.

Indeed, the 1930 profile of Frank and Laura in *The Burlington Free Press*, clearly meant to boost spirits of readers in the Great Depression, reassures other locals that they can get back on their feet by following the Metcalfs' example. The article boasts that Laura taught from 1920 to 1924 to help pay off the home and put money toward "a real barn." (The newspaper implies Laura only had to teach for four years out of monetary necessity, after which she returned to the more socially appropriate role of farmer's wife.)

By 1922, the couple was out of debt. They had increased their dairy herd to 112 head and supplemented their income by renting out a neighbor's farm. By 1924, they purchased "a pleasure car" that doubled as a hauling/delivery vehicle and also bought various gas-powered dairy devices. Although Laura officially quit teaching in 1924, she started selling hens on the side. In winter 1925 and spring 1926, Frank, using a portable sawmill, began to clear the wood lot in preparation for the new barn. In March 1926, the couple's only child, an infant girl, died.

By July 1926, the new, much larger barn was erected, with the proceeds from two barn dances paying to shingle the roof. The barn came with modernizations like a hay fork and electric lights. The house now had two porches, a coal furnace, a bath, and electricity.

In 1939, Herbert Goodrich, Jr., Frank's great-nephew recalled, "I earned \$17 for a summer's worth of work on that farm and used it to buy my first bicycle...." He remembers wanting to participate in farm work but was prohibited by Frank from doing so sometimes.

In 1941, no doubt feeling his years, Frank placed a want ad looking for a "MARRIED MAN--On farm. Permanent. House, wood, milk and garden furnished." In 1942, at age 55, Frank was drafted for World War II, but didn't go because of his age.

Being prominent dairy farmers, Frank and Laura were continually active in the Thomas Chittenden Grange in Williston. Frank and Laura also found involvement in their local church, another social outlet.

In 1952, Laura died. It is worth noting that, in an era when women were expected to be homemakers and engage primarily in social activities with other women, Laura's obituary touts her education and her teaching career: "Mrs. Metcalf was a graduate of Richmond High School and Castleton Normal School, who taught in Underhill and Williston for several years."

In January 1953, Goodrich finally got to help his great uncle Frank. Remember that "new barn" finished in 1926? Well, 27 years later, Frank replaced the original ventilation system with new air ducts, and Goodrich got to "demonstrate the effectiveness of the new ventilation system." Frank asked Goodrich to run the farm, which he did until 1954.

While Frank and Laura were actively farming in Williston, the woman who would become Frank's second wife, Clara, was busy making a family with her first husband, Carroll Burns (1865-1943), in Jericho. Clara had wed Carroll in 1901, and they had two children, Edna and Earl.

Clara participated in farming-related activities while married to Carroll. During the 1920s and 1930s, she hosted many meetings of the Farm Bureau in her home. Home Demonstration Groups, organized by Farm Bureaus, in rural agricultural towns provided an opportunity for women to get together and socialize while learning something about farming. The linchpin of these functions was Home Demonstrations: presentations about a topic, such as canning, or making housework easier. Sometimes, the demonstrations were given by the local (male) agricultural agent and sometimes the women themselves presented. Clara was also a member of the Mount Mansfield Women's Club, a group who gathered monthly to listen to presentations about Vermont.

By February 1953, Frank and Clara were dating, according to this news item: "Mrs. Clara Bartlett and Mr. Frank Metcalf, of Williston, called on friends in this vicinity last Sunday." On April 8, 1953, Clara, 70, wed Frank, 66, in a small ceremony, accompanied by Clara's son from her first marriage, Earl, and his wife.

Two years later the couple sold the farm and moved to Essex Junction. They spent their remaining years together traveling to visit friends and family. Frank died at 82, and Clara outlived him by 11 years. In her later years, she was regularly active with the Essex Junction Senior Center.

The farm passed through several owners and eventually became the Hardscrabble Horse Farm across from Maple Tree Place. Today the land has been developed as Finney Crossing, a mixture of commercial and residential units.

The story of Frank, Laura, and Clara Metcalf represents the lives of three Vermonters in the twentieth century. No matter their successes or setbacks, the historical record shows them making the most of their years on earth.

Sources:

1. *Burlington Free Press*, June 13, 1930, page 3. This was a major profile of the couple and their success on the farm.

2. *As I Recall* by Herbert Goodrich, Jr. *My Life from 1929 to the Present As told by Herbert Goodrich, Jr.* Interviews conducted with Herb and Rita Goodrich, 2003 through 2007