



Founded 1974

## Williston Historical Society Bulletin

Carol Stewart, Editor

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"Every individual is an historical figure."

### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT — ANNUAL MEETING

Please join us at the Old Brick Church on Williston Road, Wednesday, January 21, 2009. Members and guests are welcome.

#### **Pot Luck Supper at 6:30 PM**

Please bring a main dish, salad, or other accompaniment to share. Dessert and beverage will be provided.

#### **Entertainment to follow supper at 7:30 PM**

"Old time rules will prevail: the fiddle contest in Vermont"  
Adam Boyce, from the Vermont Humanities Council, Presenter

#### **Business Meeting to follow**

Election of Officers, open to nominations from the floor. Discussions. Payment of dues will be accepted.

### **A Plea . . .**

It's that time of the year again in the WHS cycle: time to pay dues, time for the annual pot luck supper, and time to elect the Board of Directors. Arrangements have been made for what promises to be an excellent program of entertainment, as mentioned above.

This organization endeavors to stimulate interest in local history, a definite challenge as large numbers of our citizens are new to the community. Sixty percent of our membership paid for Lifetime Memberships sometime in the past and may not have continuing interest in the Society and its activities. Members rarely answer when we request updates so we are not really sure of their continuing interest. Only 9 (non-Board) members provided e-mail addresses for a distribution list—which could be an effective means for communicating. Those who pay annually register interest by paying each year.

Any organization requires "warm bodies" to be successful. In the Williston Historical Society much of the time it seems the same people do all the work; consequently new folks don't get known as they would if they participated. We don't know who you are . . . Members, we want to get to know you. We want your interest and ideas.

Please join us at the Annual Meeting and bring a guest with you. Help us in the process of revitalizing our Society. For more information please call **Carol Stewart at 878-4135**.

## *Did you know?*

- The Annual Vermont Historical Society “History Expo” at Tunbridge will not be held in 2009 due to funding shortages.
- 2009 is the Quadri-centennial Year for the Exploration of Lake Champlain, and for the exploration of the Hudson River as well, by their eponymous explorers. For more information please visit the website at  
<[http://www.stateofvermont.com/vermont\\_information/lake\\_champlain\\_400.htm](http://www.stateofvermont.com/vermont_information/lake_champlain_400.htm)>
- Board member Bob Bradish and Archivist Steve Robinson are working with Deb Roderer at the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library on a Disaster Plan for the items in the Vermont Room upstairs, as well as for the entire library. Where possible Steve is digitizing items (text and pictures) from the collections on CDs for future reference.
- Bob Bradish is also working on an index to Thomas Chittenden’s Town, which should make it more useful for researchers.
- A fire destroyed the Williston Academy in 1949, dramatizing the need for a fire department. Howard P. Lunderville and Roland Osborne organized twelve firemen into the Williston Volunteer Fire Company at that time. There were five calls the first year.
- Construction of Interstate Highway 89 was begun in 1952, slicing Williston in two and concentrating growth in the northern and western sections.

## **September Member Meeting**



Twenty-five members and guests came to the Isham Family Farm for an afternoon of lively music and dance on Saturday, September 13. Ginger and David Isham had only recently reclaimed their barn space having donated it as an ongoing garage sale to raise money for Katrina relief, conducted by members and friends of the Williston

Federated Church. David and Duncan Yandell, the father and son team known as "The Cape Breton Fiddlers," shared with us the history and distinctive features of this music, demonstrating a wide variety of moods and tempos as they played. Most of us *did* actually perform the line dance as instructed by the pair, having a lot of fun in the process. Refreshments were served. The Yandells appear in the area and are well known for their entertaining programs. We are sorry more of you did not get to share in the fun!

## **LIVING HISTORY – A VISIT WITH RUTH PAINTER**

Just mention Ruth Painter's name in any company and someone will know just who you mean. A member of the Williston community since the early 1950's, she and her family have contributed in many ways to its energy and growth.

Discovering northern Vermont on their honeymoon, the Painters drove through Williston and both remarked how nice the community—especially its school— was. They were, of course, seeing the new school we now know as Williston Central School, which had been built after the Williston Academy burned in January of 1949. Herb and Ruth returned to Burlington in their 1941 Ford coupé, with their baby daughter. In 1950, times were tough but Herb had a job as an accountant with General Electric and later at UVM. They lived in a 3rd floor walk-up for almost 2 years before moving to their own house in Williston. It was an agriculturally-based community and they liked the pace and the way people seemed to look after each other. A plus was that real estate prices were more affordable "away from the city." In 1954 Williston had a population of 1800 and many farms. Howard Lunderville was both the Chief of the Volunteer Fire Department and the Chief of Police—there were 2 policemen. The Painters became friends with the Tuthills, Yandells, Mercias, Swifts, Carpenters, Helen Oustinoff, and the Fontaines—many of whom moved to Williston in the post WWII period.

More children arrived—there were 5 altogether. When they first moved into their house Ruth remembers both a shallow well and a cistern, between which they could switch when one or the other stopped running. In 1955 they dug where a "deviner" indicated but finally resorted to a drilled well in 1956. Water troubles were a significant part of those first few years.

She believes Williston Central School's programs were excellent. Parents and faculty were close; many of the teachers lived in town. The PTA was active and vibrant and served the community of students and children in many ways. They raised money to buy the extras not in the school budget. Ruth volunteered in the library.

Social life for couples at that time included the Federated Church and its Couples Club and the North Williston Ski Association. With other members of the community, Herb Painter was active in the promotion of community-sponsored recreational activities; he was instrumental in starting tennis and ice hockey programs, and the town band. Ruth and Herb opened a cross country ski shop in their garage in the early 70's. In addition to equipment sales they engaged with other Williston parents in fostering youth XC ski programs.

In 1968, Howard Delano and Gardner Hopwood purchased the Twist 'o Hill Lodge on French Hill for the purpose of establishing a residential school for adolescents with learning difficulties. The curriculum was based on the Orton-Gillingham method of phonics which incorporated a "1-on-1" approach with individual students. They decided to train college-educated women who had no preconceived notions about remedial education. Ruth joined other women whose children were growing up and moving on. Betty Bradish, Mary Tuthill, Grace Farley, and Jean Foss were among these new tutors. Pine Ridge School still uses this method.

Interest in local history grew in the '70s as the Bicentennial year of 1976 approached. The Williston Historical Society held its first meeting in January of 1974. Ruth and Herb, like many of their contemporaries, became charter members. Ruth says that over the years she has held every office except Treasurer.

Ruth was widowed in 1989 but has continued to broaden her interests. As a Master Gardener she volunteered in many Williston projects. She has an abiding altruistic spirit. Her interests include housing, peace and justice, and hunger—to name a few. She notes that even while Williston has experienced population growth with burgeoning commercialization the feeling of community has remained, especially in the "historic village" where the Painters settled. She points to the high degree of interest in the WING project currently underway. [Williston In the Next Generation]

Last Fall Ruth moved from her home in the village, but she retains the memories, friendships, and connections of more than 50 years in Williston.