

WATERBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



SPRING 2022

Volume 23, Number 1

Historical Society Publishes New Book About Waterbury in the 21st Century

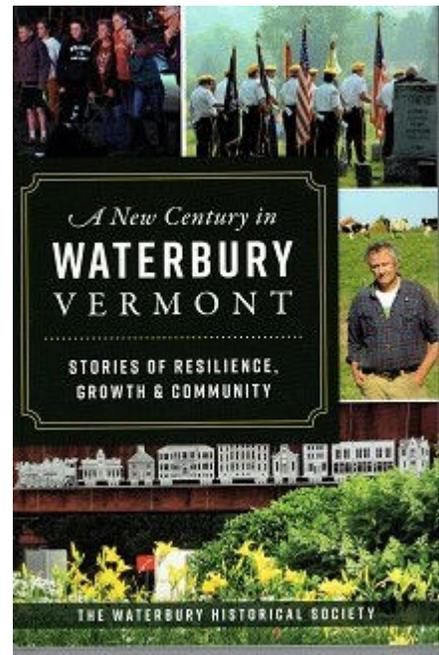
By WHS New Book Committee

The Waterbury Historical Society's new book "A Century in Waterbury, Vermont: Stories of Resilience, Growth and Community" is now available!

Told by members of the community in their own words, this collection of stories gathered by the Waterbury Historical Society captures the spirit of Waterbury from 2000-2020. "These stories show Waterbury's capacity to constantly reinvent itself in the face of enormous challenges while always staying grounded in the values that have drawn residents, businesses, and visitors here for over two centuries. I love how this book reminds us that Waterbury's future will be a thriving one because of our history," said Waterbury Historical Society President, Cheryl Casey.

Books are available for purchase for \$25.00 from the Waterbury Historical Society every Wednesday starting February 23 from 1-3 PM at the History Center in the municipal complex. Cash and check accepted only. Books can also be purchased by contacting waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com. Proceeds from book sales support the Waterbury Historical Society.

An online exhibit to accompany the book recently debuted on the historical society's website, with an expanded collection of essays and photographs submitted for the project. The digital exhibit can be viewed at <https://www.waterburyhistoricalsociety.org/blog>



History Day Prize Honors Jack Carter



By Cheryl Casey

The Friends of the Vermont State House have named their annual Freedom and Unity Civics Prize in honor of Jack Carter, former curator and board member of the Waterbury Historical Society. Carter passed away suddenly in June 2021.

Each year for Vermont History Day, the Friends present a monetary award to two projects, one each in the junior and

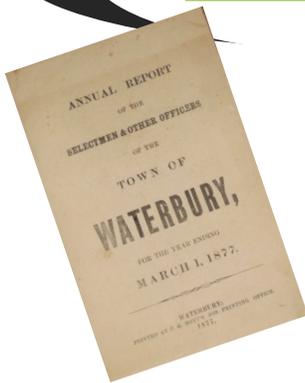
Continued on page 2

Jack Carter walks in Waterbury's 4th of July parade in this undated photo from the WHS archives.

In This Issue

- In memory of former Board member Steve Van Esen
- Donations
- Waterbury students reflect on pandemic life
- Upcoming program
- Bob Jones resigns from Fire Department
- A Note of Interest: VT's first license plates

Free Duplicates



Duplicates of **historic Town Reports** are available for the taking on the second floor of the History Center. We are unable to store so many additional copies. These Town Reports are fascinating windows into different decades of life in Waterbury. We invite community members to peruse them and take some home to keep!

Join our Program Committee

Be a part of sharing the Waterbury history that excites and inspires you!

Contact waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com for more information and to sign up today.



Bob Jones Resigns From Fire Dept. After 54 Years of Service

By Cheryl Casey

Bob Jones, of Waterbury Center, has announced his resignation from the Waterbury Fire Department at the age of 87. Jones verbally delivered the news to Fire Chief Gary Dillon after a regular department meeting on February 8.

Born in Rutland and raised from the age of six on Loomis Hill in Waterbury Center, Jones spent three years as a firefighter in Michigan before returning to Vermont and joining the Waterbury Center Fire Department in 1968. There he worked his way up to Assistant Chief in 1990 and then Chief from 1991 to 1999.

In 1971, Jones spearheaded the organization of the Waterbury Ambulance Squad, serving as its first president and training the first cohort of volunteers. His commitment to community public safety runs wide and deep.

After retiring from fighting fires, Jones remained active in the department. One of his primary duties was to schedule and coordinate rentals of its five tents.

Jones is only the third member of the department's "Half Century Club," the elite few who achieved at least 50 active years of service. His resignation comes after 54 years with the fire department.

History Day Prize Honors Carter

Continued from page 1

senior age divisions, "that best express the spirit of the Vermont motto - Freedom and Unity - as practiced in an open government and with civic engagement for all people," according to the prize description on the Vermont Historical Society website.

In an email forwarded to the historical society by Carter's partner, Ted Schulteis, Friends Trustee John Dumville, of South Royalton, wrote, "We are awarding the prize in memory of Jack, who was very involved as a judge for History Day and an advocate for civic education so that school kids learn how our democracy works."

The prize is also named in honor of Bill Haines, of Worcester VT. Haines, who passed away in 2017, was a long-time educator and activist for civics education.

Vermont History Day is April 2, and the in-person state contest will take place at University of Vermont's Dudley H. Davis Center.



Bob Jones celebrated becoming a member of the fire department's "Half Century Club" in 2018. Photo courtesy Cheryl Casey.

In Memory... The following contributors have donated in memory and celebration of beloved WHS members who have passed:

In memory of Jack Carter

Donald Schneider & MK Monley, \$35

VT Driver & Traffic Safety, \$35

In memory of Calvin Dow

Claire Williams, \$100

In memory of Judy Ather & Sharon McMahan

Susan Chalmers, \$50

In memory of Steve Van Esen

Multiple anonymous donations—\$555

Annual Appeal... The following contributors have donated as part of our annual appeal, which ensures WHS can continue to produce quality programming and access the necessary resources for digitizing, maintaining, and showcasing our collections.

Bob Ayers
Elizabeth Bordeaux
Joe Camaratta
Karen Carpenedo
James & Loretta Casey
Stephen & Joanna Caswell
Susan Chalmers
Jill Chase
Eileen Chittick
George Clement
Dave & Darlene Cutter
Clem & Donna Despault
Barbara Farr & Marc Metayer

Andrea Mosbacher
Joanne Goyette
Robert & Kathy Grace
Harold & Shirley Grout
Ron & Marge Gulyas
Brian & Janet Harwood
Joe Heintz & Christina Pellechio
Ralph & Penny Holibaugh
Pauline Lemery
Al & Sandy Lewis
Brian Lindner
Kathleen Lumbr
Bob & Norma McLeod

John & Merrill
Mark & Bonnie Morse
Herschell Murry
Judith Poirier
Meredith Rogers
Ed & Susan Rau
Charlie & Margo Sayah
Lawrence Sayah
Don Schneider & MK Monley
Dale Smeltzer
Chris & LeeAnne Viens
John & Val Vincent
Claire Williams

New Members

Gail Deuso
Hyde Park, VT

Ralph & Penny Holibaugh
Waterbury, VT

Welcome!



Steve Van Esen: Remembering the Champion of Waterbury's Economic Future

Editor's note: The following article was initially published in the Waterbury Roundabout and Waterbury Reader, week of February 21-27, 2022.

By Cheryl Casey

Some might say it was the perfect match.

At a time of year when we celebrate and share love, it seems only appropriate that we acknowledge the love and commitment one man had to Waterbury and its future.

Stephen Van Esen, who passed away—rather, “tipped over,” as he instructed family and friends to call it—on December 21 at age 85, moved to Vermont in 1977 after falling in love with the place while visiting for a ski trip. Having discovered his other passion, real estate, several years earlier, Steve combined his loves and established Vermont Realty Exchange in Waterbury.

A businessman first and foremost, according to those who knew him best, Steve recognized many of the possibilities Waterbury had yet to realize, given its location and proximity to destinations like Stowe, Burlington, Montpelier and the Mad River Valley.

“A lot of what Waterbury is today is because of what Steve did,” said State Rep. Theresa Wood, D-Waterbury. Steve’s partnership with Ed Steele “poised Waterbury for what it is now and for its future,” she added.

Steele, who grew up in Waterbury and had become a successful businessman and developer in the area, was Steve’s business partner and friend. Together, they worked to rehabilitate and develop various properties in Waterbury, sharing a vision for putting Waterbury squarely on the map. To them, Waterbury was “a diamond in the rough,” explained Wood.

Waterbury Town Manager Bill Shepeluk remembered meeting Steve in the late 1980s and found him “a fairly aggressive developer” who “always seemed to be in Ed’s shadow.” As a “local boy,” Steele was well-known and well-liked, and behind the scenes was “where [Steve] liked to be,” said Shepeluk.

Wood referred to Steve as Waterbury’s “silent mentor” who “liked to have his fingers in a lot of things,”

from being a founding member of the Waterbury Area Development Committee (now a subcommittee of Revitalizing Waterbury) to attending every meeting of the Waterbury Rotary Club.

Big ideas for a small town

One of the most significant of those things was the development of Pilgrim Park and the Green Mountain Coffee Roasters facility, in which friend Paul Willard called Steve “instrumental.”

In a 2016 oral history interview for the Waterbury Historical Society, conducted by Jane Willard, Steve dismissed any notions that he was particularly instrumental in that deal. According to Steve, GMCR owner Bob Stiller reached out to him in 1981, with “a very plaintive phone call on a Sunday afternoon.”

Stiller had recently bought the beginnings of the coffee company, Steve recalled, and was trying to get things going in Waitsfield.

Steve explained, “[Bob] wasn’t getting any help from Waitsfield, and so as a consequence, reached out a little further to Waterbury. The message said, ‘Do you know where I can find 1,500 square feet of commercial space?’ And needless to say, I couldn’t get back to him fast enough.”

Initially, GMCR was located at 40 Foundry Street before eventually moving to the newly built larger commercial facility at Pilgrim Park in 1991.

Not all of Steve’s ideas for Waterbury were well-received, and Shepeluk noted that Steve was “underappreciated for that vision he had.” Shepeluk recalled one

particular idea for a parking garage on Main Street next to the then-TD Bank building that would have moved the nearby municipal offices on the top floor.

“Everyone, including I, told him that was the stupidest idea ever,” admitted Shepeluk. “But if we had done that, we wouldn’t have been flooded out of our space,” he added, referring to how floodwaters from Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 rendered the town offices a few doors away unsalvageable.

Would Steve’s plan have worked? “Probably,” Shepeluk speculated recently. “Now what do we have there? A parking lot you have to pay to use.”

Continued on page 5



Steve Van Esen in his real estate portrait in 1996. Photo from WHS Archives.

Remembering Steve Van Esen

Continued from page 4

Vision for the future, honor for the past

As Steve in his real estate dealings looked ahead to Waterbury's future, he became more interested in learning about the town's past.

In the present, Steve knew Waterbury was perfectly located and had great potential for a robust economy. "He then realized that back in the day, Waterbury was also ideally situated" for business, tourism, and a thriving community, said Shepeluk.

Friend Jane Willard recalled that after she interviewed Steve for the historical society's oral history project: "Steve said, 'I want to immerse myself in Waterbury history.'"

And immerse himself he did, joining the historical society board of directors, conducting his own research, and collecting what Waterbury artifacts he could. By the time he tipped over, Steve had built quite the collection. Shelves in the front room of his home held binders of meticulously preserved and organized documents—from postcards and photographs to hand-written invoices—dating back a century or more. Old maps, architectural plans, and aerial photographs were framed on his walls or stacked next to the shelves.

In 2020, Jane Willard decided to bring Steve into a new book project that she was overseeing, along with Laura Parette for the Waterbury Historical Society. He co-authored a chapter about Pilgrim Park with longtime friend and assistant, Beverley Young, and contributed to the book's preface. Titled "*A New Century in Waterbury, Vermont: Stories of Resilience, Growth, and Community*," the book has just been published, and Steve was able to read the final manuscript.

"He was so proud of the book and so proud to be a part of Waterbury," said Jane Willard.

Just one of the locals

For decades, Steve was such a consistent presence in the daily life of the community and patron of the local businesses that lifelong local resident Wood can't even remember when exactly she first met him. "For me, he's just kind of been around for a long time," she confessed.

For many years, Steve and Ed Steele lunched at Arvad's (now McGillicuddy's), where Shepeluk would occasionally join them. Paul Willard would often meet Steve for a cup of coffee at Aztlan's Foods on Foundry Street where owner Fred Dominguez would make Steve breakfast nearly every morning. Steve could also be found enjoying coffee and friends at the Waterbury Train Station or KC's Bagels, or wine and friends at the Rotary Club's summer Concerts in the Park.

Steve often used coffee hours to comment on local



Steve Van Esen at Waterbury Town Meeting in 2011.
Photo by Gordon Miller/courtesy of Waterbury Roundabout

government. "He loved challenging the selectboard," Jane Willard recalled. "He offered an informed perspective and was very interested in infrastructure."

Shepeluk puts it more directly. "He didn't suffer fools well," the municipal manager said, describing Van Esen as not "impressed" with local government. "He wanted [government] to support business, but he participated from the outsider-looking-in perspective," Shepeluk said.

Wood likewise said she got frequent earfuls about what the state legislature should be doing.

The local man of mystery

For all of his friends and connections around town, Steve could still be a hard man to figure out. And he seemed to like it that way.

Shepeluk admitted that he didn't know Steve well for a long time. "I feel badly I wasted 25 years or so of my time," he said. "I found he was an engaging, interesting person, and I regret that I didn't get to know him earlier."

Continued on page 6

Remembering Steve Van Esen

Continued from page 5

Wood said, "It was sometimes difficult to get to know who the real Steve was. He liked when people didn't know what to make of him, and cultivated a sort of mysteriousness about him."

Often, people were thrown by Steve's sense of humor, which was wickedly off-color. Wood recalled how he would forward her jokes for her to share at Rotary Club in her role as sergeant-at-arms, and she usually couldn't bring herself to retell them. "He was not a PC kind of guy and he didn't care," she laughed, "and you couldn't always tell if he was serious. He liked the shock factor just to see what people would say."

Paul Willard said, "I had a lot of interactions with Steve. Most everyday was lighthearted." Jane Willard added, "He did love to laugh."

At the start of his 2016 oral history interview, when Jane Willard asked where he grew up, Steve quipped, with a straight face, "I haven't yet." And then he burst into a boyish smile and chuckled.

Steve also loved flowers. Shepeluk recalled admiring for many years the banks of daffodils Steve had planted on Foundry Street. During her oral history interview, Jane Willard asked Steve what his favorite flower was. "You know, those white things they use at funerals," he replied. Lilies.

Notably, every person interviewed for this article declined to share their favorite "Steve story" because they found it highly inappropriate for print.

Wood said that "Steve knew people perceived him as somewhat of a curmudgeon. But that wasn't the true him. He cared so much."

Off-color humor or curmudgeonly persona aside, it seems the community knew how much Steve cared and it cared in return. Last year, when the Rotary Club organized a meal train for Steve convalescing at home after cancer treatment, many people volunteered, some even multiple times.

According to Jane Willard, "The general meal train consensus was along the lines of 'I really don't know Steve too well, but I'd like to provide that nourishment.'" The generosity wasn't lost on Van Esen, either, Jane Willard recounted. "Steve really benefited from that company, and he still had so much more to say" she said.

Born in Manhattan, New York City, on July 10, 1936, Steve grew up in White Plains, New York, graduating from White Plains High School. He started in his career as a photographer running a camera business in Manhattan in the 1960s which he sold when he moved to Vermont in the late 1970s, first to Moretown, according to his obituary. He later planted roots in Waterbury and stayed to the end, tirelessly working to polish and set the town as a crown jewel of Vermont.

"He was wheeling and dealing until he wasn't able to anymore," said Wood.



**Jazz Funeral Procession &
Memorial Mixer**
Saturday, May 21, 2022
3pm - 6pm
Under the Tent at Pilgrim Park
Waterbury, VT

Please join family and friends as Steve brings us together one final time to share stories, laughter, and possibly a tear or two.

NEXT MEETING AND PROGRAM



**April 30, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.
St. Leo's Hall, Waterbury
Featuring the history of
Don Fields & His Pony Boys**

Please join us for this captivating presentation by Skip Flanders and a live fiddle performance!
This program is free and open to the public. Donations are appreciated.

Pandemic Perspectives Part 3: Waterbury Youth Share Lessons, Experiences From Life in a Pandemic

Liam Cleveland, age 11

Here I will be telling you about my COVID-19 experience. During the beginning of the pandemic, some of the things that I didn't like were that I did not get to see my friends like I used to. I didn't get to have a 10th birthday party with my friends.

Instead my mom organized a surprise birthday parade. The local fire department and even the police drove by my house with their lights and sirens along with a long line of my family and even some friends. I still got to see everyone as they drove by and honked and waved out of the windows at me. For the rest of 4th grade, I had to do remote learning at home. It was stressful to learn how to work Zoom calls and learn math over the computer.

Fourth Grade is the last year at TBPS. I had been looking forward to the Step Up day events and Graduation to celebrate leaving TBPS and going to CBMS. The hardest part was I did not get to see my friends in the summer. With all the bad things I experienced, there were many good things too. One good thing is that I got a new puppy during the Covid-19 pandemic, and he's a farm dog so he is very energetic, and with being home and remote learning I could play with him to tire him out.

I found that I liked remote learning once I got the hang of it because I was home, didn't have to wake up early, and when I worked hard I could finish my school work early and play video games or I could go outside and play. I could also eat food whenever I needed instead of waiting for snack time or lunchtime like at school.

Editor's Note:

As part of the new book project on Waterbury in the 21st century, the book editors put out a call for students' responses to the following prompt:

*How will you describe this time to future generations?
What important aspects of this experience should be remembered and shared?*

Continued on page 8

SUBMIT CONTENT

To submit a letter to the editor, stories, or photos for an upcoming issue, email the editor at communitymgr.whs@gmail.com or send by post to:
Dr. Cheryl Casey, 1389 Kneeland Flats Rd., Waterbury Center, VT 05677.

Quarterly submission deadlines: February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15

Waterbury Kids Reflect on Pandemic Life

Continued from page 7

Leah Dunster, age 11

Dear Future Generations,

The good things that have happened in 2020/2021 are: We got a better president, the vaccine, we're able to be with at least one household and we can go to school. Not only were there good things, there were also some bad things like in March 2020 we got a call and it said we couldn't go to school because of covid, we weren't able to see are family, we weren't aloud to leave our house unless it was for groceries and there were a lot of deaths. Some important aspects that people should know is if another pandemic happens be safe and always wear a mask.

Riley Erwin, age 11

Emotional Rollercoaster

The pandemic has been an emotional rollercoaster, but the best part has been more time with family. Having more time to be creative. But there have been bad things like staying six feet apart and not being able to see friends or my family who live in different states. The first time I had a Zoom it was for math. I was screaming at the Chromebook to let me in the Zoom ten times until it let me into the Zoom ten minutes later. And I wanted to throw my Chromebook out the window because it was not connecting to my internet.

Hadley Gilson, age 10

Dear Future Self,

I am writing you a letter, so I can remember this time of crisis. Masks. Social distancing. Remote learning. This pandemic was a big, bumpy ride. The masks felt suffocating, at first. Now, I can wear one for seven hours straight (almost). Social distancing was hard, I wanted to see my friends. We compromised and had FaceTime and Minecraft time set aside. Remote learning was infuriating. No guidance, and not enough instruction. I felt SO happy on the last day of school. Now, I look forward to remote learning (Mostly the sleeping in ;). Stay safe. Stay positive. Be happy. Be true to yourself. Be kind. Stay strong. Believe in yourself and everyone around you. When things are tough, you've been through tougher. And most importantly, HAVE FUN!!! You can do this! Life is good. Go enjoy it.

Griffin Paine, age 9

The pandemic hit really hard, so hard we had to switch to remote learning and a lot of businesses closed. One of the good parts about the pandemic was that I got to go outside all of the time and I got a lot of fresh air. Another good thing was that more people found ways to stay active outside, like going on a hike or fishing. One of the worst parts of the pandemic for me was not being able to see my family and friends, so when school switched to remote learning I didn't see my friends in person. I also didn't like being on the computer all day and I don't think I learned as much as in a normal year. I also missed out on sports like basketball. Never in a million years did I think I would live through a global pandemic!

Colin Smith, age 11

A Strange Year

The COVID-19 pandemic was a strange and somewhat spiraling thing that occurred in 2020 but both good and bad came out of this strange time. First off, to get the bad out of the way, 55,000 died and we got stuck in our homes. People felt worried they were going to get covid. And people lost loved ones and their homes and food. But we got some good out of it. We now appreciate the time we get with other people and we found other ways to talk and hang out like Google Meet and Zoom.

Continued on page 9

Waterbury Kids Reflect on Pandemic Life

Continued from page 8

Nathan Rundle, age 11

The Powerful Pandemic

Here I sit.
Thinking about all going on in the world.
All of us separated by the invisible.
I would reach out to you
but a simple elbow touch wouldn't do.
Lysol spray has become perfume.
hand sanitizer has become hand lotion.
The newspaper has become the Bible.
People scrambling for TP.
The rush for a vaccine.
The stress of protests.
The stress of election.
Getting to sleep in
is oh so nice.
Staying healthy
is oh so nice.
Spending time with family
Is oh so nice.
Staying social distance
Is oh so hard.
Keeping masks on
Is oh so hard.
Remote work
Is oh so hard.
Dealing with stress
Is oh so hard.

Remember when
the first case was recorded.
Remember when
the tenth case was recorded.
Remember when
the 100th case was recorded.
Remember when
the 1,000th case was recorded.
Remember when the 10,000th case was recorded.
Remember when
the 100,000th case was recorded.
Remember when
the 1,000,000th case was recorded.
Remember when
the 10,000,000th case was recorded.
Remember when
the 100,000,000th case was recorded.
Remember when
the 130,000,000 case was recorded.
Remember when
the vaccine came out.
Remember when
8 percent of the world got vaccinated.
Here I sit
Thinking about all still going on in the world
All of us slowly defeating the invisible.



Note of Interest:

Vermont's First License Plates

By WHS Outreach & Education Committee

Beginning in 1905, Vermont required drivers to have a driver's license. The State also called for automobile registrations and license plates on vehicles.

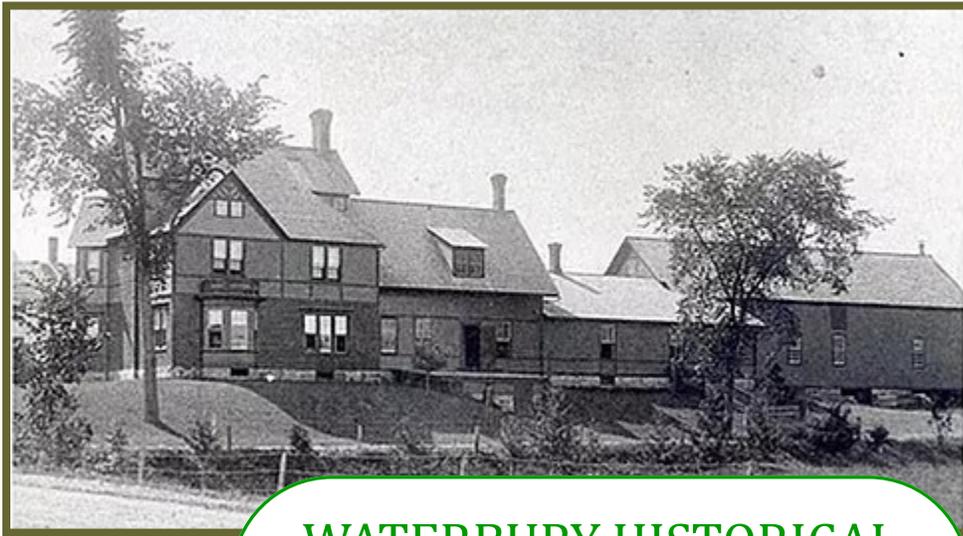
The first license plate was a single plate with white numbers on a blue background. License plates numbered one and two were issued to Charles C. Warren, a tanner from Waterbury. He and his wife lived at 89 South Main Street. The license plates were attached to their two four-cylinder Packard automobiles.



The C.C. Warren home on South Main Street in Waterbury. The Warren's automobiles bore the first license plates issued in Vermont. Photo from WHS Archives.

We're now on Instagram!
Follow us
@waterburyhistoryvt





WATERBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORY CENTER

The History Center is open **Monday—Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Located in the renovated Dr. Janes house at the municipal complex, the museum is free and open to the public.

The Historical Society's vast collections rotate through the exhibits, which are carefully assembled by our Curator. Stop by and learn something new about Waterbury's place in Vermont and national history!

History Center donations are

**TEMPORARILY
SUSPENDED**

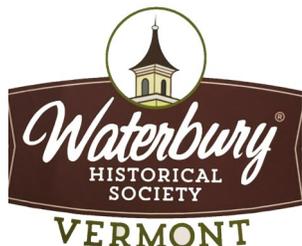
We regret the inconvenience
and hope to start accepting
items again soon.

We are unable to accept donations at this time. The pandemic shutdown significantly slowed our work in sorting, cataloguing and digitizing the many artifacts, photographs, and papers that Waterbury residents and businesses have graciously asked us to preserve.

WHS faces an additional challenge with the sudden loss of our beloved and talented Curator, Jack Carter.

The Historical Society respectfully asks for your patience, and that you hold on to your items until we are better positioned to give them the care and attention that they deserve.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support of WHS!



Donations Welcome - We are a community organization that deeply appreciates the support and interest of our community. You can donate by check to the PO Box below.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

\$10 per person

\$15 per family (couple and children under 18)

\$5 new first time members **special price!**

(Memberships run by calendar year.)

Please help the Historical Society GO GREEN!

Contact us to opt for email-only delivery. Benefits include cost-saving, paper-saving, and a newsletter in color!



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About Us

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Webmaster— Paul Willard

PLACE
STAMP
HERE