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My Most Unforgettable Character

by Rev. William T. Wallace

Florence Richardson Wallace was culling potatoes in the cellar of her Vermont farmhouse. The dog's incessant barking sent her hurrying up the stairs to open the door to two distinguished callers. Bishop William F. Anderson and Dr. Charles McConnell of Boston University much wanted to meet the then elected "Mother of the Year" for Vermont.

Springtime in Vermont means plenty of mud when one gets away from their few paved main roads, so these gentlemen had hired a team from the local livery and had driven four miles way up the Blush Hill road. Mrs. Wallace was a humble woman, but she was quite at ease as she served them tea and modestly accepted this tribute.

Florence was born in the town of Washington, Orange County, Vermont. It was on a farm far from the small village. Her mother was, at the time, too old for normal child bearing. The women of the neighborhood prophesied she'd never live to grow to maturity. She worked with her father out of-doors much of the time as she grew older.



They raised sheep and she kept a portion of the wool, and from it she made mittens for her own children much later in life. Her brothers and sisters were much older and away

Florence Ida Wallace, from home during born 1875. her girlhood. On one occasion a returning brother Photos on this page courtesy of the Wallace Family Collection, Kay Allan Wallace



overtook her coming home from school and offered her a ride. But she refused. She had been warned never to ride with strangers! When she reached home her mother introduced her to this brother whom she had never seen!

When her schooling was finished she went to keep house as a "hired girl" in the Wallace home at Waterbury, Vermont and on a hillside farm which had been in the Wallace family for half a century. The son liked her so much that he proposed marriage and after a few weeks, she accepted.

She had seven children in seven years and all seven were delivered without medical assistance. She merely kept her head and delivered them herself. One child was born on Sunday morning under unusual conditions. A neighbor had come to call. She quietly conversed with him in her kitchen 'til she heard her husband's team drive in the yard. He was, of course, returning from church four miles away and most of the way was up hill. She then

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excused herself and went into their bed-room.

Her husband came in and greeted their guest. A few minutes later he went into the bedroom. He returned shortly and announced the arrival of a new son! In spite of the labor pains, she had waited for the proper moment to have her baby.

Her husband, Jamie Wallace, died with Spanish Influenza in October, 1918 in that epidemic which swept the western world. Well-meaning friends advised her to "farm out" the seven children in nearby homes, or at least, some of the younger ones. But she said, "If I can only someway keep our farm I can keep <u>all</u> of my family together." And she paid the last of the mortgage with a meager \$1,000 insurance policy which came due on her husband's death. Their farm was now free from indebtedness.

Well, she raised those seven children and she saw to it that each one had the

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The Waterbury Historical Society collects, researches, documents, preserves, and exhibits artifacts related to the history of Waterbury, Vermont to help others gain a deeper appreciation, education and inspiration through connections with our past.

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Postings From the President The Importance of Community Collaboration

As with many other organizations across the country the last few years, pandemic restrictions gave the Waterbury Historical Society (WHS) an opportunity to step back and think outside of the box when it comes to achieving our mission. With a strong membership base and

well-attended programs, we might well have carried on doing what we were doing, had it not been for the ways quarantine and social distancing pushed our creative thinking into high gear.

My first term as president of WHS coincided with pandemic challenges as well as the bulk of the work undertaken by our book committee on our latest publication, *A New Century in Waterbury, Vermont* (see rear cover). While thinking through my own vision for leading the society, I realized with astounding clarity that both the community response to the pandemic and the community contributions to the book project were, in combination, perfectly emblematic of how Waterbury's story has been defined by a deep commitment to collaboration.

Now a couple of months into my second term as president, I am energized by thinking about how WHS's own collaborative opportunities with other organizations and businesses in town can strengthen our mission.

For example, our outreach education committee has collaborated with teachers to conduct oral history projects and arranged with senior center board members for historic driving tours. The American Legion has partnered with WHS for nearly two decades on the annual Memorial Day celebration. The society collaborated with Revitalizing Waterbury to include historic walking tours in the events commemorating Tropical Storm Irene. We have co-sponsored historic walking tours with the library, entered a team for the recent Waterbury Winterfest bocce tournament, and manned tables at town events like NQID. Through Facebook and Instagram, the Waterbury Historical Society is able to lift up businesses and organizations around town by engaging with their content; in turn, they are doing the same for us. This spring, WHS is planning to co-sponsor a speaker/workshop event series with Bridgeside Books and the Waterbury Public Library.

Waterbury's history is a collaborative storytelling project in action, with past contributions still to be uncovered and new chapters begun every day. I envision the Waterbury Historical Society as witness to and participant in the present stories, even as we document and preserve the past.

2023 Monthly Waterbury Historical Society Meetings

Waterbury Historical Society (WHS) board meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Meetings are open to the public. While the WHS welcomes public participation and input, it is a forum to conduct business. Times and locations subject to change.

April 19, 5:00 - 6:30pm on Zoom

May 17, 4:30 - 6:30pm in Steele Community Room

June 21, 4:30 - 6:30pm in Steele Community Room

July 19, 4:30 - 6:30pm in Steele Community Room

August 16, 4:30 - 6:30pm in Steele Community Room

CHER



The first train pulled safely into Waterbury on September 29, 1849, but it hasn't always been so. In recent years, with the help of Linda Kaiser, Skip Flanders, and countless hours in state archives, I have accumulated a chronology of nearly 220 train



Photo by Mark Bushnel

wrecks in the Waterbury area. These range from a dog

being hit all the way up to entire passenger cars spilling into the Winooski River. This new Wrecks of Waterbury series will highlight historic accidents and will concentrate on those where photographs have been located.

Without Warning

by Brian Lindner

Our first story is of a spectacular wreck that took place on the Park Row crossing at the train station. It was Sunday, May 3, 1931, when 18-year-old E. Hayes Merchant was driving a 1927 Ford coupe southbound on Railroad Street around 8:50 in the evening. He made a right turn in the direction of Main Street but his view of the train tracks to the south was blocked by a freight car on a siding. Merchant pulled onto the main track at the station and was instantly slammed into by northbound freight #705 traveling at 50 (or more) MPH. Train Engineer Rosebury had not been sounding his steam whistle or warning bell.



According to the Waterbury Record, "Pieces of the Ford car were strewn for over three hundred feet north of the crossing, the machine being literally torn to pieces." Merchant was reported to have "dropped out of the tangled mass of wreckage" at 292 feet. Transported to the Heaton Hospital in Montpelier via the V.L. Perkins hearse/ambulance, he was found to have suffered multiple broken bones, but no significant internal injuries. A full recovery was anticipated.

It is interesting to note the Vermont Railroad Commission had recently agreed to a

petition by Waterbury citizens that allowed passing trains to discontinue the use of their steam whistles and alarm bells during evenings and nighttime as they approached any of the five crossings inside Waterbury village limits. That well-intentioned petition and its approval nearly cost Merchant his life.

In Sympathy – Jim Walton

by Cheryl Casey

he Waterbury Historical Society (WHS) is saddened to learn of the passing of Asa James (Jim) Walton, Jr. on February 26, 2023. Jim was a longtime member of the society, dear friend, and great supporter of our programs and initiatives. Active in society leadership and as a volunteer, Jim served as vice-president of the board from 2017-2020. All of us at WHS send our sincere condolences to Jim's wife, Barbara, and all of his beloved family and friends. We will miss Jim's warm smile, boisterous laugh, savvy advice, and commitment to the community.

Jim's obituary can be found on VTDigger: https://vtdigger.org/2023/03/01/asa-james-walton-jr/



Jim Walton presented a portion of the Memorial Day Ghost Walk program in 2018, speaking about the effects of the 1918 flu pandemic on public health in Waterbury.

Passing the Newsletter Torch

by Paul Willard

he Waterbury Historical Society publishes a quarterly newsletter. Cheryl Casey has been the creator and editor for the past five years beginning in the summer of 2017. She has produced exceptional newsletters and improved the design and readability. The Fall/Winter 2022 issue was her last. Cheryl is also president of the WHS. Thank you Cheryl for all you do for history and Waterbury.

Cheryl passes the editor torch to Laura Parette. Laura lives in Waterbury Center and is a graphic designer. "Newsletters are one of my favorite types of design projects. I like organizing lots of information so a newsletter is an enjoyable read. I look forward to filling Cheryl's shoes."

Laura welcomes suggestions and encourages all to submit articles or photos. Reach her at laura@lauraparette.com.



The History Center and Museum is open **Monday to Friday** from 8am to 4pm. Located in the restored Dr. Janes house at the municipal complex. The museum is free and open to the public.

The Waterbury Historical Society's vast collections rotate through exhibits. Stop by and learn something new about Waterbury's place in Vermont and national history!

Catching Up With the Accession/Deaccession Committee

by Michael Maloney, Collections Manager

The Accession/Deaccession Committee (A/D) has been meeting weekly since 2018 to determine what items are most important to be added and/or kept in the Waterbury Historical Society (WHS) collection. Since returning from a hiatus during the pandemic, the committee has been hard at work. In September, Dave Luce and Rotarian Kevin Gorham, built shelving in the two storage units at Sir Richard's that houses the collection overflow. With the help of several volunteers, the committee scavenged for wooden pallets around town; stored the contents of the units in the Recreation Department van, thanks to Wyatt O'Brien, during construction; and then returned them, sorting and organizing as they went. Now the WHS can easily see and access what is stored there.

Over the past two months, the A/D Committee and the Collections Manager have been working together to inventory hundreds of items donated during the pandemic that are still waiting to be processed and added into our collection. Despite being on hiatus during the early stages of the pandemic, the Historical Society received a significant number of donations. Through the work of Board members Jan Gendreau, Anne Imhoff, and Jill Chase, roughly four hundred unique items have been inventoried. This includes a collection of advertising calendars and other Waterbury ephemera donated by

Steve Van Esen, detailed financial records from the owner of Derby & Ball, Co., well over fifty unique photos of Waterbury citizens and locations from the last two centuries, the #1 Vermont license plate owned by C.C. Warren, and many more items of value from community members. Due to the volume of unprocessed materials, the A/D Committee has put a temporary moratorium on accepting new donations.

	/ˌdēakˈseSHən/
verb	
	officially remove (an item) from the listed holdings of a library, museum, or art gallery, typically in order to sell it to raise funds. "the decision was made to deaccession the picture"
noun	
	the official removal of an item from a library, museum, or art gallery in order to sell it. "in England deaccession has been adopted by local authorities to offset spending cuts"
	ac·ces·sion
	ac·ces·sion /əkˈsəSH(ə)n/
noun	
noun	
noun	/ek/seSH(e)n/ the <u>attainment</u> or acquisition of a position of rank or power, typically that of <u>monarch</u> or president.
noun 1.	/ek'seSH(e)n/ the <u>attainment</u> or acquisition of a position of rank or power, typically that of <u>monarch</u> or president. "the Queen's accession to the throne"
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noun 1.	/ek'seSH(e)n/ the <u>attainment</u> or acquisition of a position of rank or power, typically that of <u>monarch</u> or president. "the Queen's accession to the throne" Similar: succession elevation assumption of attainment of inheritance of a new item added to an existing collection of books, paintings, or <u>artifacts</u> . "the day-to-day work of cataloguing new accessions"

The greatest challenge to a growing, active collection is amassing duplicates of materials. The committee works tirelessly to determine if an item should be a part of our collection and routinely must check to see if we already have a copy of that item and which has the best quality. In doing this work, they ensure our collection is always full of well-preserved and unique materials for museum goers and researchers alike to enjoy. Once the inventory is complete, the A/D Committee will be going through these items and determining what will be kept and how they will be stored. In the coming months, the committee will be working on accepting new donations and hopefully overseeing teams of volunteers as an inventory of the WHS cataloged collection gets underway.

If you are looking for direction on what to keep for a future donation and what may be more worthwhile in donating to other organizations please consider this. The WHS is primarily looking for materials that have origins in Waterbury or tell the story of the people or history of Waterbury. Questions? Contact Mike at WaterburyCollectionsManager@gmail.com

Items WHS may be interested in collecting:

- Photographs
- Handwritten notes, letters, or diaries
- Objects made in Waterbury by members of the community

Items WHS are likely not looking to add:

- Mass produced materials
- Antiques, furniture, tools, or dishware not made by an industry in Waterbury
- Book collections that could be found in libraries

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

17th annual Memorial Day Ghost Walk Monday, May 29, 11am Holy Cross Cemetery, Duxbury

(Rte. 100 South, located approximately across from Crossett Brook Middle School)

PROGRAM

Memorial Day Service American Legion Post 59

Student Speaker Jeswin Antony, American Legion oratorical winner for the 3rd year

Ghost Walk Lead by members of the Waterbury Historical Society

This year's Walk will feature stories of immigrants, buried at the cemetery, who decided to call America their home. Discover what made them uproot their families to come to a new country, and learn a new language and culture.

Learning about Waterbury's history one person at a time.

Family friendly. Rain or shine. Questions? Contact Jan Gendreau 244-5029.

Presented by the Waterbury Historical Society and the -American Legion Post 59



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formal education that had been denied her. Florence Richardson Wallace's self-education continued 'til the end of her life. To it there was no end.

Each of her seven graduated with college degrees, some with high honors and some with several degrees. There were two girls and five boys. The oldest child was a girl and she was only 15 years old when her father died. By much careful planning she went directly from high school to college. The five boys did not, but each in turn helped carry on their farm for a year or two before starting college.

Florence could not send much tuition money during these college years but her faith and encouragement never faltered. And because of her prayer, faith, and encouragement, each was able to achieve many scholarships. And she gave direct assistance in many other ways. She did the laundry for one of her sons when he was a thousand miles from home.

At the time of her husband's death, all of the children were sick with "flu." When the last one had recovered and was able to return to his bed upstairs, she later related that she had one moment of panic. She had always had a fear of entering a darkened and empty room with a kerosene

lamp in her hands. As she started down the stairs this night the fear gripped her. She said she wanted to turn back to be with the children. (She had, of course, tucked each one in and given him or her a good night kiss.)

She breathed a prayer as holding this lamp she made her way down these farmhouse stairs. And, as she put her foot on her kitchen floor, she was later to relate, that fear left her and it never returned. She had asked for help from God and in that moment He had given it. Many, many nights she was alone in that farmhouse, but she was never afraid again.

The lawyer who made her the executrix was amazed at the carefully kept figures she showed him. But he knew they were true. They lived on a bare minimum for many months. With farm products, they eked out their living. She remembers one month, in particular, when their total grocery bill was less than \$8.00. She was a wonderful cook and housekeeper as well as a "homemaker." For years she baked five loaves of bread four times a week. And after all seven were in bed on Saturday



night she would mop the kitchen floor. And on other nights, too, when the occasion demanded as it did in "mud time."

Because she had known from experience how difficult it was to have parents living in the home with the family, she often remarked that she would not permanently live with any of her children.

When the last son married and came home with his wife, Florence packed her suitcases and went to Concord, New Hampshire. She said she had always wanted to live there. She took a domestic job with a family and stayed with them in that vicinity for the few years that were left to her.

And because of her love of travel and her more than love for each of the seven and his or her family, she visited each in turn. These visits she greatly enjoyed.

They were now living in seven different states. While she was at the home of her Michigan son, she had a coronary occlusion and was found on the cellar floor with a paring knife and a potato in her hands. She was working in the cellar because that was the coolest spot in the house on this hot summer's day in southern Michigan. And, as usual, she was busy preparing for the next meal. I am sure that her death was as she would have wished.

Another son, an ordained minister of many years, preached her funeral sermon to an overflowing gathering of townspeople who loved and admired her and in the same church where all seven of her children had been baptized and were at one time members. She had always asked to be buried in the Richardson family lot at West Topsham,

With farm products, they eked out their living. She remembers one month, in particular, when their total grocery bill was less than \$8.00. Vermont. There she lies, united in death with parents and other loved ones. It is a spot of beauty and is referred to as such by all of her many descendants who try to make at least an annual pilgrimage there.

Hers was a remarkable faith. She believed in prayer and turned to it in time of need. She believed in tithing and relatively, hers was one of the largest contributions in the Waterbury Methodist Church. By taking her problems to God's throne, she never failed to receive help. And of Divine help she often had need.

For years she made all of the children's clothes from clothing that had been sent her. One son had his first pair of socks from a store

when he was senior in high school. She was an excellent seamstress and this skill she put to good advantage.

When her children were small, a wealthy woman out for a drive from the local hotel saw this family of eight walking along their Blush Hill road and was greatly impressed. On her return home she wrote and secured the names and ages of the seven children. After that, and as long as she lived, this generous lady sent each \$10.00 as a Christmas gift each year. She also cut out pictures and clippings from the papers and periodicals and mailed them to different members of the family according to their interests. Thus, nature study and knowledge of wildlife was inculcated. Of particular influence were the stories of Thornton (Waldo) Burgess.

One son is now a Professor of Ornithology at the University of Michigan. Another has long been a recognized authority and lecturer on nature themes. All seven have always loved birds and animals and have befriended them.

Previous to her husband's death, sometimes Florence might think the punishment meted out a bit severe. And, on certain occasions it is well remembered that if a child had been sent to bed without his supper, she would take a few bits upstairs while the father was busy doing chores at the barn. This never bothered her conscience in the least. She did know the value and the necessity of discipline, but she always administered it in a loving way.

She leaves a void and a loving tender memory in all seven of our lives. She was my mother as you may have guessed.



by Michael Maloney, Collections Manager

n my first few months as the Collections Manager for the Waterbury Historical Society, I have come across several fascinating items in our collection. One in particular that has repeatedly been a topic of discussion with Board members and friends has been our model ship of the Santa Maria. Some readers may be familiar with this item, but to describe it for you: It stands over three feet tall and is roughly three feet long. Billowing canvas sails, detailed woodwork, and an impressive painting of Mary and her child on the stern all bring this item to life. The story of how it came into our hands is equally as interesting. The claim is that it was carved over 200 years ago by an Italian sailor and taken by Nazis during World War II, after the war it was purchased at auction by Waterbury's own Lyle Woodward and brought back here in 1966. My questions are: How true is this story? Is there a community in Italy that is missing this important piece of art? How would one go about finding the validity of the story, or prove the age of the ship?

That is what I have set out to do over the past month. While I have yet to be fruitful, I have learned a lot about



how archives and museums research and identify information about items in their collection. I have spoken with archivists and conservators who have provided me with contacts at museums out of state and looted art auction houses, and gleaned information on how even large national museums struggle to identify potentially stolen art like our Santa Maria. While this ship is only indirectly a part of Waterbury's history, it tells a larger story of both our town's military history and the history of looted art throughout the world. Stop by our Museum any time and take a look at what may be one of our most unique items!



Upcoming Program: Crime of the Century The 1880 Murder of Alice Meaker

by Skip Flanders

his program explains the story of how 9-vear old Alice Meaker of Duxbury was murdered in Waterbury. Poisoned by her step mother, learn how the crime was solved and the criminals punished. In a joint effort it will be presented by Skip Flanders of the Waterbury Historical Society and Don Welch. The program will be held April 26, 7pm in the Steele Community Room, 28 North Main Street. Free and open to the public.

Watch for details on future programs.



Hysterical Historians

The Waterbury Historical Society (WHS) entered a team in this year's Waterbury Winterfest Bocce Tournament, held on Sunday afternoon, February 5, in Rusty Parker Memorial Park. The Hysterical Historians was comprised of WHS treasurer Joe Camaratta, Lorraine Camaratta, president Cheryl Casey, and Margaret Moreland. They maneuvered the uneven, pitted, icy court to survive the initial single-elimination round, but were ultimately defeated in the semifinals. There's always next year!



Photos: (Left) Joe Camaratta bowls as Winterfest referee Roger Clapp (far right) watches closely. (Top) Team ringer Margaret Moreland takes another shot at the opposing team's balls in the tournament's semifinal round, supported by teammate Cheryl Casey.

Donations

Annual Appeal donations and membership renewals through February 11, 2023.

The Waterbury Historical Society sends our appreciation to those who gave during our annual campaign and renewed their membership. If you have yet to renew your membership please use the form below. Thank you.

Jeanne Alix-Piotrowski Jeffrey & Susan Amestoy William & Susan April **Richard Ayers** Jeremy & Georgia Ayers Elaine Beal Milton & Joan Beard Elizabeth Bordeaux Lindy Boudreau Willis Breen Geraldine Callan Joe & Lorraine Camaratta Joanna & Stephen Caswell Jim & Lorrie Casey Sus<mark>an Chalmer</mark>s Jerry Chase Katya d'Angelo Clement & Donna Despault Gail Deuso Ron & Carolyn Fox Roger & Martha Fraser Jan Gendreau Shirley Gilman Joanne Goyette Robert & Kathryn Grace Harold Grout Alan Grout Nicholas & Susan Gruschow Ron & Marge Gulyas Judy Harriman Paul & Patty Haverstick

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Membership and Gift Form

Over 170 members support the Society's work to collect, research, document, preserve, and exhibit Waterbury's history. We invite you to become a member today!

Name(s)							
Address							
Town		State	_ Zip				
Phone	Email						
Membership Type:	New	Renewal					
Membership Levels:	Individual (\$10/year)	Household	(\$15/year)				
I would like to make a gift to the WHS in the amount of \$							
I would like to receive the WHS newsletter by:							

Please send this form and check payable to: Waterbury Historical Society PO Box 708, Waterbury, VT 05676

waterburyhistoricalsociety.org waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com



@waterburyhistoricalsocietyVT

Thank you for your support of the Waterbury Historical Society.

WHS is a volunteer-run 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

WaterburyHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

Help Wanted: Calling Model Train Enthusiasts

by Laura Parette

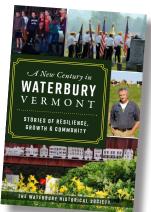
The Lionel model train in the Community Room of Waterbury's historic train station is running again, post pandemic. Revitalizing Waterbury is looking for a volunteer to maintain the train that brings smiles to the faces of kids of all ages.

Requirements: track cleaning every 3-4 weeks, simple repairs as needed and comfortable on a 6-foot ladder. Flexible hours and you'll be trained on how to properly clean the tracks and train. If interested or have further questions, contact Laura Parette: laura@lauraparette.com, 802-233-0576.



Waterbury Historical Society's latest book A New Century in Waterbury, Vermont: Stories of Resilience, Growth and Community

Told by members of the community in their own words, this collection of stories 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.





Available from the Waterbury Historical Society at the Waterbury Municipal Center. You can also purchase a copy of the book every Wednesday from 2-4pm at the History Center offices on the 2nd floor. Cash and check accepted only. Proceeds support the Waterbury Historical Society.

Our newsletter has many terrific things going for it: knowledgeable contributors, professional layout, and a dedicated readership. One thing it doesn't have? A NAME!



Help us name our flagship publication by voting for your choice or suggesting a name you think would be a good fit. Voting runs March 15 - April 1. Scan the QR code, click the link (email newsletters), or visit this website to vote: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MBGTGRM



PO Box 708, Waterbury, VT 05676