



Preservation NEWS

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Standing Up for Freedom Waterbury and the Anti-slavery Movement

by Margaret Moreland

Although Vermont is often celebrated for being the first state to outlaw slavery, its constitutional provision only covered those individuals considered adults. Vermont had almost no commercial intercourse with the South or shipping interests that profited from the slave trade. Waterbury does not stand out as one of the landmarks of the anti-slavery movement in Vermont in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In the 1730s–1760s, Partridge Thatcher, who was tasked by the crown to survey Waterbury in the early 1780's, was an enslaver of at least 6 individuals on his homestead in New Milford, Connecticut.

However, Waterbury was part of a broad network of resistance in Vermont that defied the Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850. Letters between Joseph Poland, a prominent abolitionist who owned and edited the *Vermont Watchman* newspaper in Montpelier, and Wilbur Siebert, historian and author of the *Vermont Anti-Slavery and Underground Railroad Record*, reveal that Poland knew and corresponded often with well-documented agents of the Underground Railroad including Rowland T. Robinson. Through that correspondence, Poland learned that in Waterbury, Dr. C. C. Arms, Deacon Butler, and Deacon Parker provided a place to stay and transportation to the next stop in Richmond.

Waterbury became an abolitionist stronghold, gaining support from many prominent men of the town. In 1820, Waterbury's town representative, Judge Dan Carpenter, argued for a resolution

of remonstrance against the admission of Missouri into the Union with a constitution "legalizing slavery and the cruel and unnatural traffic in human blood." He called on Vermont's senators and representatives in Congress to exert their influence and use all legal means to prevent Missouri's admission.

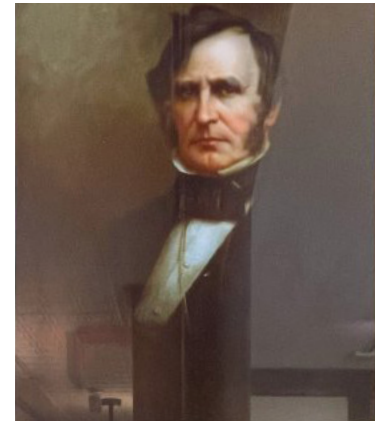
The Anti-Slavery Society of Vermont was established as early as 1834 and was the first state auxiliary to the national organization. Historian Theodore Graham Lewis noted that when the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society needed financial support in 1839, local leaders Amasa Pride and Erastus Parker each pledged \$100. Waterbury's total contribution grew to \$500. Erastus Parker would afterwards become the chairman of the 1841 Anti-Slavery Convention.

In 1841, after the succession of President Tyler, anti-slavery activity grew and Waterbury was chosen as a suitable place for an anti-slavery convention. In anticipation, Erastus Parker, chair of the Executive Committee of the Waterbury and Duxbury Anti-Slavery Society, placed a notice in local newspapers that read:

The friends of Abolition, in Waterbury and vicinity, apprise their friends through the State, that entertainment will be provided for those who come from abroad to attend the Anti-Slavery Convention, notified to be holden at said Waterbury the 1st and 2nd days of July, 1841. Should any come into town on Wednesday evening to attend said convention, those coming from the North will call on Rev. Mr. Hall at Waterbury Center, who will direct them to places of entertainment; and those coming from other directions will find some friend at the public house in Waterbury Street, who will give them like directions.

continued on page 4

A quote from the 1865 Inaugural Address of Governor Paul Dillingham.



Freedom and Unity

"We are all equal; at the ballot box, in our courts of justice, and in all our institutions of learning, our rights are the same, no matter what is our color, or what is our race. On the basis of equality we have lived and prospered . . . we cannot but hope that the equality, which has so blessed us, may yet, and speedily, become the primary law of every state in our Union."

Governor Paul Dillingham,
Inaugural Address – 1865

COURTESY OF WHS ARCHIVES

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The Waterbury Historical Society makes history visible in our community. By collecting, preserving, and sharing local artifacts and stories, the society seeks to educate and instill appreciation for our past and its relevance to our present and our future.

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Preservation News is published by the Waterbury Historical Society, a nonprofit organization. Contributions of manuscripts, photos, illustrations, and news are welcome from members and nonmembers. Quarterly submission deadlines are February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15. The editor can be reached at laura@lauraparette.com

Postings From the President A New Chapter at the History Center

Although the History Center has been closed to the public and collections donations have been paused for the past few months, our volunteers have been hard at work behind the scenes researching, designing, and implementing a re-freshed History Center experience. Some familiar exhibits will return with updated information and newly featured artifacts. Others have been carefully packed away to make room for stories waiting their turn to be told. We are taking great care to present these stories accurately and compellingly, while situating Waterbury's rich history within the broader themes of the 250th anniversaries of the United States and the Republic of Vermont.

The board is now planning for the History Center's reopening, and I'm pleased to share that our official Grand Re-Opening Celebration will take place on Saturday, May 23, from 11am–1pm, launching our summer and fall holiday weekend hours. The History Center will be open Saturday and Sunday, May 23–24, from 11am–3pm. Our annual Memorial Day Commemoration and Ghost Walk will follow on Monday, May 25. Please visit our website, read the monthly Heritage Tracks, and follow us on social media for event details.

After Memorial Day, the History Center will resume regular operations, open to the public during municipal hours (Monday–Friday, 8:30am–4:30pm) and on holiday weekends — Independence Day (July 4–5), Labor Day (September 5–6), and Indigenous Peoples' Day (October 10–11) — from 11am–1pm.

These expanded weekend opportunities are made possible by the dedication and enthusiasm of our volunteers, who are inspired by both extraordinary and everyday objects that connect past and present. I hope you will visit not only to explore local history, but to engage with one another about what that history means in your own lives. I am confident the new exhibits will help you discover those connections. History matters.

Cheryl



CHERYL CASEY

Ribbon Cutting • Raffles • Refreshments • Speakers • More

Waterbury
HISTORY CENTER
GRAND
RE-OPENING

Saturday, May 23, 11am-1pm
28 North Main Street, Waterbury, VT

Join us in celebrating the Waterbury Historical Society's refreshed History Center. Enjoy newly featured artifacts and the return of familiar exhibits with updated information. Watch for more details.

WaterburyHistoricalSociety.org

WRECKS OF *Waterbury*

This series highlights historic accidents and concentrates on those where photographs have been located.

“...No Weight Which Could Be Placed Upon it Could Break it.”

by Brian Lindner

One mile north of Waterbury is a long railroad bridge over the Winooski River. This bridge doesn't have a great history. On July 10, 1883, an 8-year-old boy was killed when he couldn't get off before being struck by an oncoming train. On November 13, 1902, an unidentified male was hit and flung into the river, never to be seen again. And the courts had been dealing with this pesky bridge for years before either of these incidents.

On September 29, 1849 the first passenger train arrived in Waterbury. During that same year, the line was being constructed north to Burlington and this river crossing was the first major bridge in that effort. The bridge at this location was of timber frame construction resting on huge stone pillars in the river. With apparently good maintenance, it lasted twenty-five years.

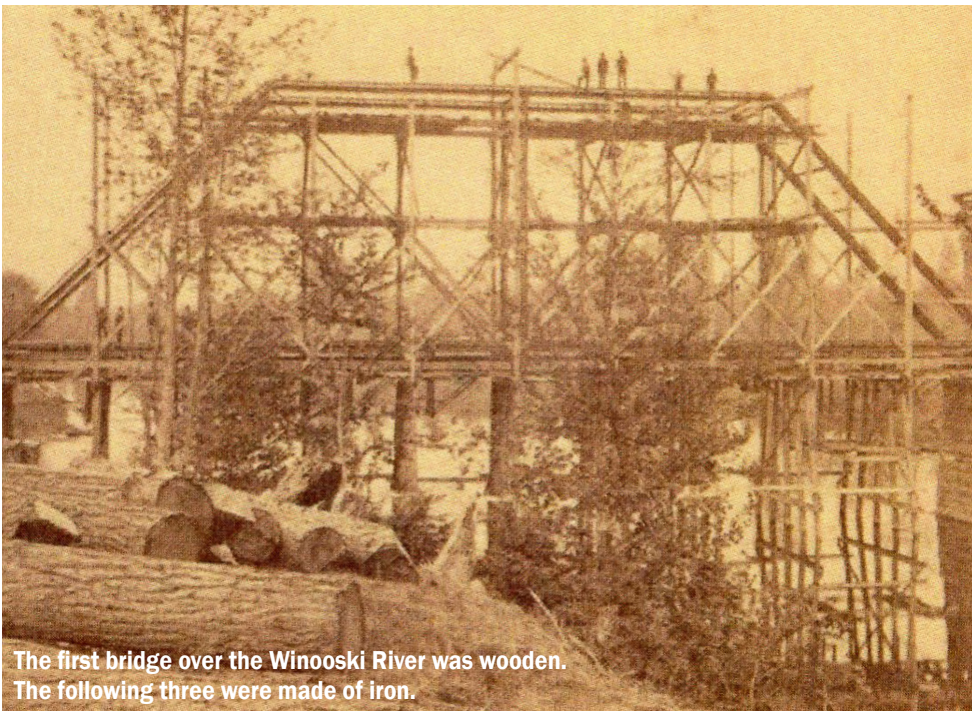
By 1874 new technology had come to railroading in the form of iron bridges. The Central Vermont Railroad (CVRR) contracted with the New England Iron Company of Boston to construct a three-section iron replacement of the old wooden bridge. Construction was completed in January and the bridge was ready to be tested. A crowd gathered. The first two tests went well. Test #3 called for a locomotive to push four cars, each loaded with fifty-two tons of iron, out onto the span from the north end. The bridge quickly collapsed, and two workers survived their plummet into the river. Later in the year, the contractor rebuilt the bridge, this being the third at this location, but refused to cover any other costs. CVRR sued them in a Massachusetts court, and it took five years to finally win.

The original iron tension bars had been found faulty and new ones manufactured by the Phoenix Iron Company were used to build bridge #3 which was tested and accepted by the CVRR on October 21, 1879. It served well until the Flood of 1927 when the iron structure was washed away leaving only the stone pillars. They were used to support bridge #4 which is the one still in use today. Some remains of bridge #3 often become visible during low water situations in the Winooski River.



Photo by Mark Bushnell

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN LINDNER



The first bridge over the Winooski River was wooden.
The following three were made of iron.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

LOST GRAVES: BURIALS ON THE VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL GROUNDS, 1891-1913

Saturday, April 18, 1:30pm
St. Leo's Hall, 109 S. Main St.

Rep. Anne Donahue, from Northfield, presents how she made it her goal to identify the final resting place of individuals who died at the Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury around the turn of the 20th century.

MEMORIAL DAY GHOST WALK

Monday, May 25, 11am
Location TBD

This year's theme will honor the Revolutionary War soldiers buried in Waterbury's cemeteries. The walk will be lead by members of the Waterbury Historical Society. Questions?

Contact Jan Gendreau
802-244-5029.

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

WORN HISTORY: CLOTHING & IDENTITY ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

July 1 till mid-September
Steele Community Room

The WHS summer exhibit will display textile artifacts (clothing) from our collection as far back as the early 1800s.

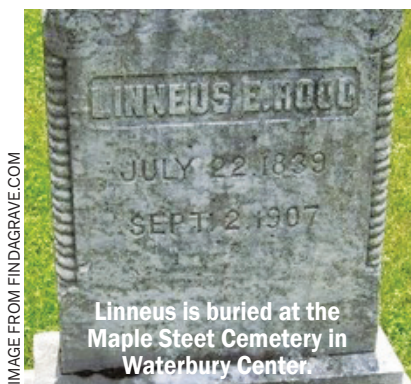
Do you enjoy sharing local history? Join the Outreach Education Committee.

Each month we bring items from our collection to the Waterbury Area Senior Center and to Brookside Primary School to better connect community members of all ages with Waterbury's past.

Interested? Email Margo Sayah,
margosayah@gmail.com.

Linneus E. Rood, 1839 - 1907: Farmer, Soldier, Cornetist

by R. W. Holibaugh



According to a September 11, 1907 *Montpelier Argus and Patriot* obituary, “Lyaneus” Emanuel Rood died that year at age 68. He had been a Waterbury resident much of his life and “played E flat coronet [sic] in the Waterbury Center band for many years.” It was common to see leaders of 19th century village bands mentioned in old newspapers, but unusual to find the name of an individual band member. As I pursued a variety of questions, a fuller picture of Rood’s life emerged.

Born in Randolph, Vermont on July 22, 1839, L. E.’s father was Julius Harrison Rood, a physician

who attended Dartmouth College in 1843, and his mother was Marcia Chloe Goodrich Rood. The naming practices of parents in the 19th century often borrowed Biblical names or the names of heroes for their children. As a “man of science,” Julius and his wife chose “Linnaeus,” the name of a famous 18th century Swedish physician, botanist, and zoologist. As an infant Linneus moved with his parents from Randolph to live with his grandparents Solomon and Abigail “Nabby” Clough Rood on Solomon’s 2,800-acre farm in Brookfield, considerably larger than the earlier 50–100-acre plots in Vermont. The opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823 altered farm economics by connecting Vermont to New York City markets and triggered shifts toward larger acreage with commercial sheep farming and dairy production. As he grew, it’s likely that “Lynn” worked on his grandfather’s farm in this idyllic setting.

The *Lamoille Newsdealer* reported that “Linneas” E. Rood of Woodbury married Marion W. Silloway of Elmore on December 23, 1862. Linneus and Marion married before his anticipated draft into the service. Marion was 18 years old when she died slightly more than a year later on January 26, 1864. About one in 100 women died due to complications related to childbirth during this period.

Following the Civil War, Rood returned to farming as confirmed by the 1870 U.S. Census. Documents show that Linneus, age 24, married Effie Lydia Sager, age 18, who was born in Johnson on August 15, 1848. In 1866 the Roods lived in Woodbury in Washington County and later in that year had their first child, Julius Leffingwell Rood. Additional children, Myron, Lillian, Guy, and Fred followed. This scenario was not unusual with young men returning from the chaos and bloodshed of the war. Agrarian Vermont, then as now, provided an ideal backdrop for raising children. However, a record shows that Linneus and

Effie divorced May 23, 1891. They would have been married for 25 years.

In 1893, Rood married Ruth A. Lampher Eldred Nichols, age 40, who was his third wife. She also had two previous marriages and perhaps six children.

The circumstances surrounding Linneus’s cornet playing are absent. His obituary indicates that he played in Waterbury for years and that he played the E-flat instrument, higher-pitched than is common today. The 19th century saw many changes in the construction of musical instruments, especially cornets. Cornet or “coronet” was



a name applied broadly to both rotary and piston instruments, as well as keyed bugles. We know nothing of the bands, teachers, or music he may have played. While only a brief mention is made of the “Waterbury Center band,” there is, in fact, a rich trove of information about 19th century Waterbury music that deserves some attention.

R. W. Holibaugh: Studied musicology, as well as library science, and taught music bibliography and the history of musical instruments. He has extensive experience performing on brass and early music wind instruments.

continued from page 1

The position of Waterbury native Paul Dillingham, a U.S. Representative from Vermont from 1843 to 1847, presented petitions from his Vermont constituents against the admission of pro-slavery Texas as a state. Nevertheless, he claimed he could see no way to admit Texas as an anti-slavery state that would be consistent with the Constitution and voted for its admission. This stance was not popular in Vermont. Although he worked for harmonious relations with the southern states, when Fort Sumter was fired on Dillingham uncompromisingly espoused the Union cause. In 1861, as a state senator, he played an important role in planning and implementing ways to support the government.

Vermont’s vehement opposition to slavery led many to join the new Free Soil Party, established in Montpelier in 1848. The state’s former governor, William Slade, a strong supporter of the new party, stated its basic tenet: “But in the name of God, let us be united now — standing firmly and immovably, upon the platform of ‘no more slave states — no more slave territory — Free Soil for Free Men.’” Many

newspapers signaled their support as anti-slavery activity continued to grow and *The Free Mountaineer*, a pro-Free Soil newspaper, began publishing in Waterbury in 1849.

In April 1861, Waterbury was among the first towns to respond to the call for soldiers and Captain Charles Dillingham, later a lieutenant-colonel of the Eighth Vermont, began raising troops in the town. Numerous Waterbury men served in the Civil War, many in the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th Vermont Infantry regiments. Sadly, Waterbury lost over eight percent of those it sent to the field of war.

Today, Waterbury citizens’ resistance to oppressive and dehumanizing practices continues through the community group, the Waterbury Area Anti-Racism Coalition (WAARC). This multi-racial, multi-generational group of community members con-

ducts education, outreach, and advocacy initiatives aimed at challenging explicit and implicit racism at all levels, from the interpersonal to the systemic. Their efforts resulted in the Town of Waterbury adopting a declaration of inclusion in 2020 (see brown box).

Waterbury condemns racism and welcomes all people, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability, and will protect these classes to the fullest extent of the law. As a town, we formally condemn discrimination in all of its forms and commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community. Waterbury has and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinion.



WATERBURY

From Independence to Interdependence: Waterbury and the 250th

by Cheryl Casey, WHS president

Vermont occupies a unique place in the story of American independence. Not only did it play a significant role as an ally in the thirteen colonies' struggle for freedom from Britain, but just six and a half months after the Continental Congress adopted Thomas Jefferson's Declaration, Vermont declared its own independence and established itself as a Republic. The making of America and the making of Vermont are deeply intertwined stories—ones that continue to shape how we understand our shared history today.

The Historical Society has been collaborating with the Waterbury VT250 Planning Committee to support the town's efforts to educate and engage community members, local businesses, and organizations as we approach the milestone anniversaries of both the United States and the Republic of Vermont. We are grateful to be working alongside Revitalizing Waterbury, Waterbury Rotary, and dedicated volunteers in advancing this community-wide initiative.

The committee's work centers on three areas: communication, education, and engagement. One project currently underway is supporting Waterbury Rotary's annual Not Quite Independence Day parade by participating in theme development and coordinating marketing and promotional efforts. By the time this newsletter reaches you, the committee expects to launch its new website, waterburyvt250.org, featuring a calendar of commemorative events, highlights from local history, and opportunities for community participation. You can also follow the effort on Facebook and Instagram at @waterburyvt250.

WHS looks forward to continuing our partnership with the town committee through 2027, sharing resources and working together to mark these historic anniversaries with thoughtfulness and care. These milestones are more than commemorations of the past; they are opportunities to reflect on the values that shaped our beginnings and to consider how we carry them forward today.

WaterburyHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

FOUND!

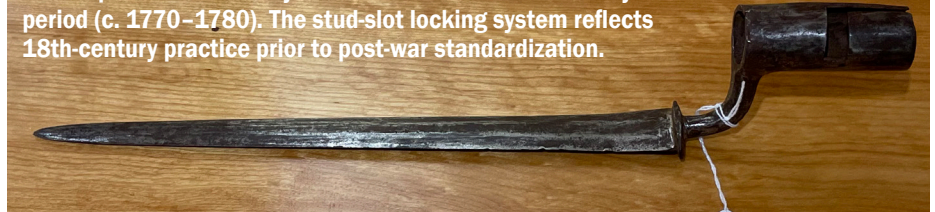
IN THE COLLECTION

by Ryan Geary, WHS Vice President and Exhibits Manager

This bayonet, from the WHS collection, is a British-Pattern socket bayonet from the Revolutionary War period (c. 1770-1780). It was most likely privately manufactured and is compatible with the smoothbore arms carried by Vermont and other regional militias. It reflects the realities of Revolutionary War service in northern New England. Removed from the uniformity associated with later American armies, the men who defended this region in the 1770s served in loosely organized militias, armed largely through necessity. There was no central supply system on the northern frontier. Instead, soldiers relied on what they could get, such as privately owned firearms, locally crafted or imported equipment, weapons taken from the British, or relics of the French and Indian War.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RYAN GEARY

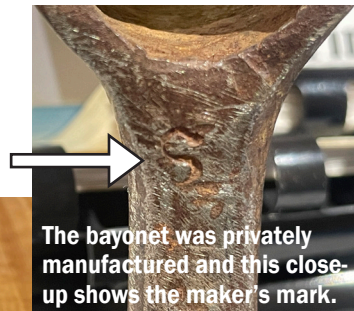
British-pattern socket bayonet from the late Revolutionary War period (c. 1770-1780). The stud-slot locking system reflects 18th-century practice prior to post-war standardization.



Bayonets like this one, British in overall pattern but privately crafted, were fitted to a wide range of smoothbore muskets. Many of those muskets were originally intended for hunting or household defense and were altered locally for military use. Socket diameters, blade lengths, and mounting methods varied widely. The lack of uniformity is physical evidence of how frontier communities armed themselves during a period of political uncertainty, contested authority, and constant shortages of military supplies. Some of the men buried in Waterbury's historic cemeteries lived with these conditions firsthand. Deacon Asaph Allen represents the rank-and-file militiamen who balanced military duty with farming, family life, and civic obligations. Allen and those like him answered alarms, guarded supply routes, and stood ready to defend their homes against threats that could come with little warning. Their equipment was whatever they could get, often mis-matched, worn, and locally adapted.

Men like Moses Nelson, George Kennan, and Aaron Wilder served in the Continental forces and later joined other veterans settling in Waterbury after the war. These men brought with them not only memories of war, but the tools they had carried with them through the conflict. Bayonets remained useful after the fighting ended, kept for practical defense in a still uncertain frontier but perhaps mainly for their emotional value as symbols of their service.

As Vermont moved toward independence and eventual statehood, militia equipment like this bayonet tell a distinctly local story of the American Revolution. It reflects a war fought not only by famous generals and uniformed regiments, but by ordinary people responding to immediate demands. Though we do not know who specifically carried this bayonet, it points to a Revolution that was uneven, improvised, complicated, and personal.



The bayonet was privately manufactured and this close-up shows the maker's mark.



Meet The HISTORY KEEPERS

History is both about the past and what is happening right now – and right now there is a group of dedicated people who work to collect, preserve, and share Waterbury's vibrant history for future generations. Waterbury Historical Society would like our readers and members to meet these wonderful folks and learn more about what draws them to the Waterbury story. Each issue of Preservation News will highlight a board member, a volunteer, or a staff member.

Name: Ryan Geary

Career: Varied! My first job in Vermont was with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, where, in partnership with the Vermont Old Cemetery Association, we worked to straighten, repair, and catalog headstones in old or abandoned cemeteries. I have also worked as a mental health crisis responder, a carpenter, owned an art gallery and gift shop, and currently am a manager at a recreational and medical cannabis dispensary.

Role with WHS: Vice President and Exhibits Manager.

Years lived in Waterbury: About 20 years in the area (West Bolton/Bolton), a dozen in Waterbury.

Waterbury Historical Society (WHS): Did you choose Waterbury or did it choose you?

Ryan Geary (RG): I chose Waterbury. The Winooski River valley chose me.

WHS: What about Waterbury keeps you here?

RG: I feel incredibly fortunate to live here near the river and to be able to fish and explore the surrounding mountains and brooks whenever I want solitude. It has been a wonderful place to raise my family; it is home.

WHS: What about history interests you most?

RG: If we are talking about specific historical topics, I am interested in pre-colonized North America, Abraham Lincoln, and the histories of BIPOC Americans. If we are speaking of history as a subject and critical component of human progress, I see the preservation and sharing of history as a duty. I believe it is important for people to be stewards of history, to pass along the

Ryan Geary with his sons enjoying the Winooski River.



stories of our past, especially the harder-to-tell ones, so that future generations have a fuller, truer understanding of how we got to where we are and how we can continue to grow.

WHS: If you could go back in time, what historical event would you want to see?

RG: My Waterbury-specific answer would be to witness a conversation between Ezra Butler and Elder Charles Bowles, a Black preacher who founded the Free Will Baptist Church in Huntington and traveled throughout the state helping to form congregations in many Vermont towns. On occasions when he stayed overnight in Waterbury, it is said he would dine with Ezra Butler. The two men had much in common: both were preachers, both fought in the Revolutionary War (Bowles joined at the age of 16 and served for the entire war!), and both came to Vermont seeking peace and land to farm. Yet, they experienced very different worlds, and I imagine those conversations were fascinating.

WHS: What's the one word people who know you best would use to describe you?

RG: Passionate.

WHS: If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

RG: Infinite memory.

WHS: As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

RG: I mostly wanted to be myself and pursue whatever made me feel passionate and inspired.

WHS: Are you a hunter or gatherer?

RG: When it comes to the study of history I feel like I'm more of a scavenger. Looking through what the hunters discarded as unimportant and searching for the things the gatherers overlooked.

WHS: What would you like to see for the future of the Waterbury Historical Society?

RG: I would like to see growth, new engagement, and an increased focus on presenting and exhibiting stories that have not received much attention. Those stories are the ones most at risk of being lost to time and memory.

2026 Waterbury Historical Society Meetings The Public is Welcome to Attend

Board meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month
4:30pm in the Steele Community Room.

March 18, April 15, May 20, June 17, July 15, August 19,
September 16, October 14, November 18, December - no meeting.

Donations

Annual Appeal donations and membership renewals through February 18, 2026 are listed below. WHS sends our appreciation to those who donated.

YOUR GIFT OF \$100 OR MORE COMES WITH A TOKEN OF OUR APPRECIATION: A TOTE BAG WITH THE WHS LOGO.

Membership in the society and the quarterly newsletter are automatically included with your annual donation.

****NEW**** Your gift of \$100 or more comes with a token of our appreciation: a 12" x 13" tote bag emblazoned with the Waterbury Historical Society logo. Carry it with pride and help share your love of local history wherever you go!

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Donation Level: ☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$200 ☐ Other \$ _____

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*Thank you for your support of the
Waterbury Historical Society.*

Two-Hundred-Year-Old Butler House on the Move

by Skip Flanders

In January after a month of preparation, the home of Ezra Butler, Waterbury's second settler, began its move to a new location 250 feet from where it was built more than 200 years ago.

Ezra Butler settled in Waterbury in 1785 and first built a log cabin on his 200-acre farm. This was followed by the present cape-style house in the late 1790s or early 1800s and was possibly the first frame house in Waterbury. Butler was one of Waterbury's first selectman, a county Judge, Congressional representative and was elected Vermont's 9th Governor in 1826. Butler and his wife Tryphena Diggins had eleven children and raised eight to adulthood on the property. His daughter Fannie married Dr. Henry Janes of Waterbury. Governor Butler died on July 12, 1838, at age seventy-five and is buried in Hope Cemetery.

The property is currently owned by W. Chris Noyes who grew up in Waterbury. Chris said he remembers taking a walking tour of Waterbury in elementary school with the Butler house a stop along the way. Chris plans to bring the structure up to today's standards and preserve the exterior appearance, saving some Waterbury history in the process.

The house, supported by steel beams, was carefully turned and carried through a park-



COURTESY OF WHS ARCHIVES

ing lot between two buildings on two large hydraulic dollies to the new foundation. In the earlier years, it was fairly common to move a structure a short distance. The most notable recorded structure moved in Waterbury was the move of the large schoolhouse located beside the Congregational Church. In 1899, this building was moved in two sections using rollers and oxen down Bank Hill and onto a new stone foundation on Elm Street where it is now the Prohibition Pig Brewery. It was moved by James Hattie during Christmas week, and one section sat on Bank Hill on Christmas Eve.

Thank you to Chris Noyes for sharing the stories, plans and photos of the Butler house move.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHRIS NOYES



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