

# WATERBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



FALL 2018

Volume 19, Number 4

## A Blush Hill Legacy

### The Early History of the Wallace Farm

By Kay Allan Wallace

The file at the Town Clerk's office indicates that the white "Greek Revival" farmhouse that stood at 1917 Blush Hill Road until April 1, 2018, was built in 1840. A deed of that year stipulates that the house then standing on the premises was to be removed before the sale was to be considered final. According to family legend, the original house was a log cabin that stood across the driveway, where there is still a small depression in the lawn. This may have been a root cellar, or similar feature, which Florence (Richardson) Wallace had her boys mostly fill in, probably in the 1920s.

This means that some of the barns were older than the house, though it is hard to say by how much. The main barn had been modernized in places, but its core was very old. The "young cattle barn" originally stood down the road on the Little River (before the dam was built), and was rolled up the road on logs by teams of oxen. The "tool shed" was built with lumber that was purchased and brought home from the saw mill on Little River the day before the 1927 flood, and the hen house was built by Keith and his brother Avelyn in the early or mid 1930s. Until approximately 1960 there was a very small building attached that held the cement and metal tub where the milk cans were kept cool in spring water. At that time, an enclosure was constructed inside the "watershed" and a new-fangled bulk tank was installed.

The farm changed hands several times between 1840 and 1866, some of the owners being George Stearns, Daniel Green, James and Mary Godfrey, and William Moody. On March 10, 1866, Nathaniel Moody, as administrator of the estate of William Moody, sold "...The farm on Blush Hill occupied by Silas Town and was deeded to said William Moody by James Godfrey and Mary Godfrey his wife..." to Sidney Wallace. At that time, the farm consisted of 134 acres "more or less".

Sidney and his wife Lavinia moved their growing family to Blush Hill from Gregg Hill where they had lived on a farm previously owned by Lavinia's parents, Moses and Eliza (Sleeper) Wallace. They had six children who lived to adulthood, although two daughters, Lelia and Mary, died of consumption in their early twenties. Their youngest son, James Moses Wallace, was born June 9, 1871. The two elder sons moved out of Waterbury, Charles to Barre where he went into the grocery business, and George to the Boston area where he was killed in an accident while working on a trolley car.

James remained on the farm and gradually assumed duties and responsibilities. The main products of the farm at that time were butter, maple syrup and fruit. There was a considerable orchard of apple, pear and plum trees at one time. A major renovation was undertaken in 1896 when the barn was disassembled and rotated 90 degrees. A large work crew

*Continued on page 3*



**Lavinia Wallace and her seven children.**  
**Photo courtesy of Kay Wallace.**

## In This Issue

- Honoring Bob Jones
- WDEV Celebrates Vermont Live Music
- Featured Figure: Florence Wallace
- Mystery Photo
- Memories of the China-Burma-India theater in WWII



**L: Sargent Calvin Dow carries water in Kunming, China, in 1943 while he served in the India-Burma-China theater of WWII. R: Portrait of Sargent Dow, 1943. Photos courtesy of Calvin Dow.**

## From India to China, 1943

By Calvin Dow

*Editor's note: Mr. Dow is a regular contributor to the WHS newsletter. All views expressed here are his own.*

The day finally arrived. The U.S. Army, China-Burma-India theater of war found space for Sgt. Dow. My orders stated: Proceed from Chabua, Assam Province, India to Kunming, Yunnan Province, China via C-46 cargo plane loaded with 55 gallon drums of gasoline for our P-40 Flying Tiger war planes. I was a commodity, a cog in the wheel of war. This was to be my first of four flights over the Himalayan roof of the world that would claim the lives of over a thousand Americans. Their bodies and planes lay buried in the deep ice and snow, perfectly preserved because nothing ever melted at this altitude. Huddled in layers of army, olive drab woolens, breathing through an oxygen mask, I had never been so cold. One winter in Waterbury Center, Vermont, the thermometer read 40 degrees below zero, but there you could step inside a warm building.

To take my mind off the threat of death, I thought about the possibilities of survival in a war-torn China. The invading Japanese army occupied 80% of China. In northwest China, Mao's communist army held 10%. In southwest China, my destination, Chiang's nationalist army and the American Army and Air Corps held 10%.

Suddenly, I heard the pilot's voice. "Take a look down at the city of Kunming's two million Asians where you will be stationed for two years, if you live that long."

I was leaving India, a country that was controlled by England for 200 years. The Indian activists tried every way to gain their freedom. Finally, they got it in 1948 and started a bloody civil war between Hindus and Muslims. Another stupid war of religiosity!

Now I was entering China, a country fighting to drive the Japanese out so that they could start a civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists. The U.S. was supplying them with weapons to fight the Japanese. The two Chinese armies would hide some of these weapons in big caves. They would use them when they started their civil war.

*Continued on page 3*

## Bob Jones Honored for 50 Years of Service

By Cheryl Casey

*Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Waterbury Record on August 23, 2018.*

Bob Jones thought he was showing up to a meeting about the scheduled rentals of the Waterbury Fire Department's tents. His wife, fire department colleagues, family, and friends had another idea in mind: a surprise party to celebrate Jones's 50 consecutive years of service to the department.

Waterbury Fire Chief Gary Dillon, his wife Sally, who is also a member of the department, and Betty, Jones's wife of 64 years, collaborated via email to throw together this luncheon event in the second floor meeting

*Continued on page 5*



**Bob Jones celebrates with his family and friends at the Waterbury Fire Station, in honor of his 50 years of service.**

## Wallace Farm History

*continued from page 1*

tackled the job and an acquaintance of a cousin, Florence Richardson, was brought in from a farm in Washington, Vermont, to do the cooking. As the story goes, James “liked her cooking” and they were married on February 16, 1897.

By 1900, Sidney and Lavinia had started staying for extended periods of time with their daughter Sarah (Wallace) Dodge in Waits River, Vermont. The 1900 census shows the farm on Blush Hill occupied by James and Florence, James' recently widowed sister-in-law Carrie (French) Wallace, and George Cullin, the hired man. The children started arriving in 1903 when Lelia was born, followed by Robert, William, George, Keith, Avelyn and Alice.

The farm grew on May 31, 1912, when James Wallace purchased from the Waterbury Savings Bank and Trust Company, as administrator of the estate of Fernando Cortez Marshall, “...60 acres on the low side of the road on Blush Hill and 5 acres on the upper side of said road..” There was a house on the “upper” side, where there is now a cellar hole, and a barn on the “lower” side, where parts of a stone foundation can still be seen. Those buildings were taken down by the 1930s, and some of the lumber was used to build a sugar house in the woods west of the farmhouse. A few small parcels were added later to bring the total acreage to 225 “more or less”.

The Wallace Farm was recognized as a Century Farm in 1966. Keith Wallace received the George D. Aiken Award as Vermont Agriculturalist of the Year in 1985. His daughter Rosina Wallace went into farming with him in 1980, and has kept the tradition alive, albeit with a smaller herd at the present time.



## Memories of India-Burma-China Theater

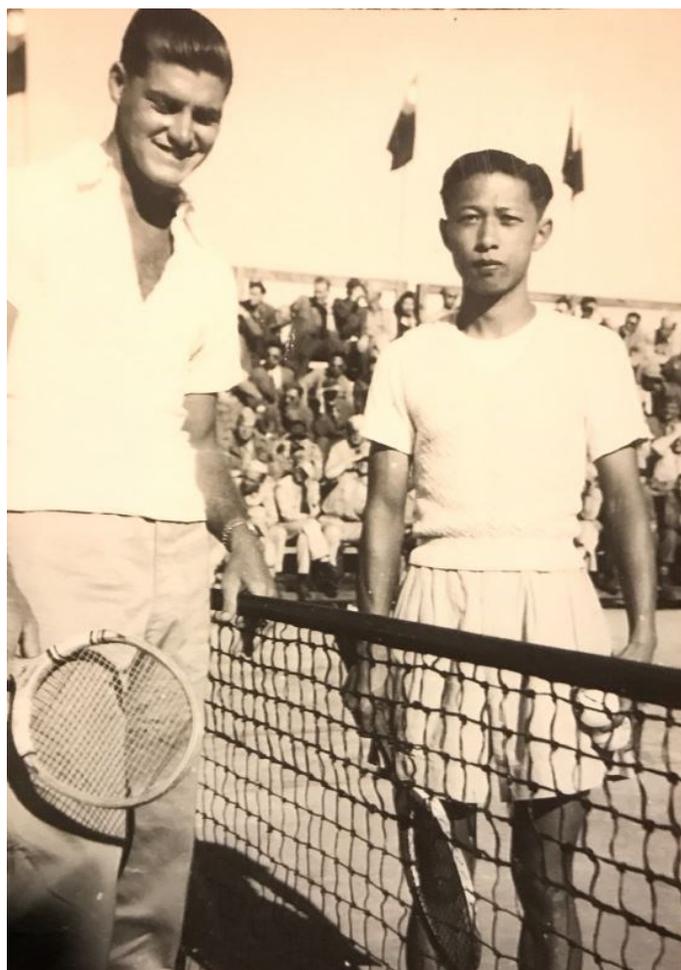
*Continued from page 2*

The U.S., as usual, was financing the world.

After WWII, President Truman sent General Marshall to China and for two years he tried to prevent the civil war. He failed. The Communist Army drove the Nationalists out of China to the island of Taiwan.

I was coming in to Kunming and for two years I would meet influential businessmen who had fled their homes in Shanghai, Canton, and Hong Kong. I first met them at the Kunming Tennis Community. They had their courts and players but no balls due to the Japanese blockade. We, the Americans, had tennis balls supplied by our Special Services.

That is how I met International Davis Cup star players in India and China, who were my passport into the society of 1940s Asia.



**Above: While serving in Kunming, China, in 1943, Sargent Dow played tennis with the Yunnan Province champion, among others. Photo courtesy of Calvin Dow. Left: The Wallace Farm. Photo courtesy of Kay Wallace**

## New Members

Lynne Alden  
Waterbury Center, VT

Robert & Kathy Grace  
Waterbury, VT

Luther & Cathy Jo Leake  
Waterbury Center, VT

Mark & Loren  
Montgomery  
Waterbury Center, VT

Chris Parsons  
Waterbury Center, VT

Katherine Powell  
Waterbury, VT

Dale Smeltzer  
Waterbury Center, VT

Frederick & Karen  
Weston  
Waterbury, VT

## Donations

Gordon Johnson  
\$25.00

June Marihugh  
\$20.00 to newsletter

Chris & Lee Anne Viens  
\$85.00

Gordon & Theresa Wood  
\$25.00 to newsletter



### Mystery Photo Photo donated by Kathy Valloch

This mystery photo was found at a yard sale in Burlington. It was taken on the steps of the old Seminary School in Waterbury Center. If anyone has any information about the time of the photo or the people in it, please contact us at [waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

## Celebrating the Live Music Tradition of WDEV Radio

By Cheryl Casey

*Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Waterbury Record on August 2, 2018.*

Live music has long thrived in Vermont, and radio station WDEV is quite possibly its greatest champion. The Waterbury Historical Society's summer picnic and program on July 25 featured the past and present of live music programming at the station, as told through select recordings and the stories of hall of fame broadcasters Joel Najman and Jack Donovan. Station General Manager and new owner Steve Cormier was also on hand to talk about the future of WDEV.

As the humid air and stormy skies threatened the Historical Society's annual potluck picnic, program committee members, headed by chairperson Betty Jones, decided to move the event from its scheduled location at the Hope Davey Pavillion to the Waterbury Center Community Church. There, some 45 members of the Society and the public filled up on dishes of pasta salads, deviled eggs, bean salads, and corn puddings, to name just a few of the savory dishes brought by participants. After dinner, the program

*Continued on page 6*

## Fire Department Celebrates Jones

*Continued from page 2*

room of Waterbury's Main Street Fire Station on Sunday, August 19. Jones, 84, joked that the only thing that wasn't a surprise was that the party was kept a surprise. "I don't use a computer!" he laughed.

After lunch, Chief Dillon gave a short presentation about the highlights of "almost a lifetime" of Jones's service, while another member of the department gave Mrs. Jones a bouquet of flowers in recognition of her support.

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.

Although retired from fighting fires, Jones still fulfills an important role for the department: scheduling and coordinating rentals of its five tents. Jones is now only the third member of the department's "Half Century Club," the elite few who have achieved at least 50 active years of service.

As if 50 years of service to the fire department wasn't already an impressive line on Jones's resume, Dillon acknowledged the breadth and depth of Jones's commitment to his community and country. Jones served 22 honorable years in the Army National Guard, receiving several achievement awards. He also spent 42 years on the National Ski Patrol, both in Michigan and at Bolton Valley, earning "Outstanding Patroller" from the National Ski Service in 1994.

In 1971, Jones spearheaded the organization of the Waterbury Ambulance Squad, serving as its first president and training the first cohort of volunteers. This initiative went hand-in-hand with his 18 years of experience as a Red Cross instructor.

Beyond roles in public safety, Jones also devoted 18 years as a mental health screener for Washington County Mental Health and 45 years to the Green Mountain Dog Club as a member and field director. He belongs to the Waterbury Center Community Church, where he has filled such roles as youth group advisor, trustee, and handyman. In 2000, the Town of Waterbury bestowed on Jones the Keith Wallace Community Service Award.

At the end of the presentation, Mrs. Jones related how her husband saved her father's life when the lawn mower he was riding tipped over, severing his arm. "My whole family is very grateful to Bob," she solemnly explained. Several others in attendance shared memories, congratulations, and expressions of thanks for how Jones has made an impact in the community and in their lives.



**Bob Jones served 22 honorable years in the Army National Guard, receiving several achievement awards.**

## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

More artistic culture comes to Waterbury and the ancient railroad bridge (circa?). In 1918 when my mother arrived in Waterbury Center she brought a huge Bosendorfer piano and a violin. Is Philip G. a Vermonter? Brian's mother hiked around Cotton Brook and Little River. My father and his father fished for pretty red-speckled trout in Cotton and Camel's Hump Brooks before and after the dam. Curtis Cotton's farm was adjacent to Cotton Brook in that beautiful Little River Valley. Pure Vermontish habitat.

*Your Connecticut Member  
Calvin Dow*

# WDEV Supports the VT Music Scene

Continued from page 4

committee surprised Jack Donovan with a birthday cake to celebrate his 75th.

Cormier opened WDEV's portion of the program with his vision for the future of the station, calling it "the most important station of the [Radio Vermont] Group by far. I drink the Kool-Aid." A 38-year veteran of the radio broadcasting industry, Cormier explained that his vision for WDEV's future aligns with that of both Lloyd and Ken Squier, "not that of a corporate owner. I'm not going to change this gem of a radio station."

Najman took up the presentation from there, moving the focus back in history to when WDEV signed on the air in 1931 from its Blush Hill studio. Live music was a regular programming feature from the start. Najman highlighted the daily 15-minute show by The Pony Boys with Don Fields as a prime example. Back in those days, live over-the-air broadcasting wasn't necessarily recorded, but someone *had recorded the program in 1941 while listening at home. This recording now lives in WDEV's archives, and Najman played portions of it for the audience, who murmured in delight at their own memories of The Pony Boys' broadcasts.*

Another significant fixture in the station's live music line-up was the Radio Rangers, who formed in 1986 and had a 50-minute show on the air for 26 years. Najman played selections from the show's introduction as well as repartee among the musicians.

Donovan rounded out the program with his memories of hosting the program, "VT Live," from 1976-1993. "I love the aspect of bringing local artists in and giving them a voice," he explained. Donovan's remarks featured recordings from Vermont-based Banjo Dan & the Mid-nite Plowboys and country music band leader Doc Williams.

"I wish we could go back and listen to it all over again as adults that might appreciate it more," said Camille Mason, Waterbury resident and member of the Historical Society's program committee. "It was fun to hear Rusty's [Parker] voice."



**Left: (L-R) WDEV General Manager Steve Cormier, broadcaster Jack Donovan, former station owner Ken Squier, and broadcaster Joel Najman. Right: Hall of Fame broadcaster Joel Najmen presents to program attendees.**

## SUBMIT CONTENT

To submit a letter to the editor, stories, or photos for an upcoming issue, email the editor at [dulcinea28@gmail.com](mailto:dulcinea28@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

# Featured Figure: Florence Wallace

## A Story of Persistence, Courage, and Family Love

By Kay Allen Wallace

Florence Ida Richardson was born March 2, 1875, in the town of Washington, Vermont. Her parents were Robert F. Richardson and Rosetta (Dexter) Richardson. She grew up on a farm on what is now route 110. When she was 21, she was asked to go to Waterbury to help with the cooking for a work crew that was renovating a barn. She accepted the challenge and ended up marrying the owner of the barn, James Moses Wallace, and moving to Blush Hill in Waterbury,

The transition from one hill farm to another may not have been too difficult, but the transition from youngest child, (her siblings were 16, 14, 11 and 10 years older), to a new wife living in a household with her husband's parents, his widowed sister-in-law, a hired man and at times a state ward who lived on the farm during her school years, must have been a bit of a challenge. Her first child, Lelia, was born July 24, 1903, then came Robert, William, George, Keith, Avelyn and Alice, who was born November 10, 1910. Seven children in eight years, all born in the farmhouse on Blush Hill, might seem to be a bit much, but life went on and the family seemed to thrive. James continued to market his diverse farm products, and devoted time to teaching Sunday School and being a leader in the temperance movement as well. Florence and her husband were strong believers in church, education and enjoying farm life.

They kept busy raising the children and doing the farm chores. James' parents, Sidney and Lavinia, started splitting their time between Blush Hill and long visits with their youngest daughter, Sarah, and her family in Waits River, Vermont, where she and her husband John Dodge owned and operated a general store. Lavinia died at age 75, while on one of those visits in October of 1907. Sidney continued to travel back and forth among his children and died at age 86, in 1913, also while visiting the Dodges in Waits River.

World War I brought some inconveniences and tensions, but life on the farm remained pretty constant. Then, as the war was winding down, James and all the children contracted the Spanish influenza that was raging across the country. Florence declared that she was too busy to be sick, and apparently never caught

it. The children all recovered eventually, but James succumbed and died on October 4th, 1918.

There was much concern that a woman couldn't raise 7 children, ages 7 to 15, and keep a 226 acre farm going. There was some pressure to put the children in foster homes, but Florence would have none of that. She used James' life insurance money to pay off the mortgage on the farm, and with help from neighbors and friends, they kept the farm going. The Revoir family, who had recently moved in next door, often appeared to help with the milking, especially with the cows that kicked. Various nearby farmers would show up at planting and harvesting time to make sure

there was fodder for the long winters. Florence had an extra field of sweet corn planted each Spring, and the corn was sold to the local cannery for money to pay the property taxes. Each year, two of the boys stayed at home and did the farm work while the rest went to school, and later college. Florence insisted that all the children would be college graduates, and that is just what happened.

When son Keith graduated from Syracuse University with a degree in Agriculture in 1932, he returned home and helped Florence operate the farm. In 1942, Keith married Gladys Pike, who had grown up on a local farm. After showing her new daughter-in-law how to prepare

several dishes the way her son liked them, especially donuts and pies, Florence left the Blush Hill farm behind and worked as a housekeeper on a farm in Norwalk, Connecticut, and then in Warren, Ohio. At the age of 68, she retired and embarked on a round of visits with her children who now lived in seven different states. She died in East Lansing, Michigan on July 10, 1945, at the age of 70, while visiting her son George and his family. At her request, she was buried next to her parents in West Topsham, Vermont.

Florence Ida (Richardson) Wallace is one of ten Vermont women included in the book *Mothers of Achievement in American History, 1776 – 1976*, with others such as Ann Story, Grace Coolidge and Dorothy Canfield Fisher. To her children and her grandchildren, even those of us who were born after her death, she was always “Mother Wallace”.



**Florence Ida (Richardson) Wallace**



**Donations Welcome** - We are a community organization that deeply appreciates the support and interest of our community. You can donate online at our website below.

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

\$10 per person

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

*(Check the mailing label on your newsletter to see when your membership expires.)*

### 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!



**[waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)**

**[www.waterburyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.waterburyhistoricalsociety.org)**

**FB: @waterburyhistoricalsocietyVT**

**Waterbury Historical Society, Inc.**

PO Box 708

Waterbury, VT 05676-0708

## About Us

**Board of Directors** - Stephen Van Esen, Jack Carter, Jan Gendreau

**President** - Barbara Farr

**Vice President** - Jim Walton

**Secretary** - Cheryl Casey

**Treasurer** - Paul Willard

**Archivist** - Tracy Haerther

**Assistant Archivist** - Jill Chase

**Curator** - Jack Carter

**Program Committee** - Betty Jones, Camille Mason, Anne Imhoff, Cheryl Casey, Betsy Ayers Shapiro

**Outreach Education Committee** - Jane Willard, Grace Sweet, Skip Flanders, Diane Gardener

**Newsletter Editor & Facebook Community Manager** - Cheryl Casey

**Webmaster** - Paul Willard

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE