

DECEMBER 2019

HALIFAX NEWS

THE BLUE GIRAFFE

More than just a spa and a 1939 science fiction tale, The Blue Giraffe once flourished in Halifax Center as a restaurant. It was the creation of my sister, Heidi Copeland (now Schmitt). In 1973, at the age of 18, Heidi convinced her parents, sisters, and paternal grandmother Dorothy Copeland to buy the house at the corner of Jacksonville Stage Road and Stowe Mountain Road (that is, the Anderson house opposite the mailboxes). Heidi envisioned a cozy café serving the delicious baked goods she is known for and a lunch special that would change daily. She wanted a place close to the Marlboro Music festival; Halifax was close enough.

Next came renovations. The house in Halifax Center had a long history of serving as a stagecoach stop, tavern, and general store, perhaps operating as early as 1770. My dad, Art Copeland, who had helped build his parents' home in Ann Arbor (MI) among other projects, took the lead. We girls (including my oldest sister, Julie) helped with framing in part of the attached carport as a storeroom, adding a restroom per state regulations, taking out one of the old glass-front cases from the front room – possibly left from the house's years as a post office (1816-1954), insulating the attic, and adding walls and wallpaper upstairs.

(right: 1974 Reformer article announced the café's opening)



PROPRIETOR Heidi Copeland, seated, and her sister Laura are shown here in the new Blue Giraffe Tearoom in Halifax Center. On the table is one of the specialties of the house, Raspberry Ring Torte.

We also helped with the kitchen floor. This was a project and a half. The floor was completely covered in worn-out linoleum dating from before World War II. The squares were glued down with some fantastically sticky concoction from that era. (Linoleum was invented in 1860 for ship's flooring! It is made from solidified linseed oil [linoxyn], pine rosin, ground cork dust, wood flour, and mineral fillers.) Art thought the original wood flooring underneath the linoleum would look better. Since it would be hard to look worse than that old linoleum, we started removing the stuff, getting to work with paint scrapers and crowbars and Zip-Strip, whose can said, "Poison!". For some reason there were a lot of nailheads in the linoleum; those had to come out – hence the crowbars. One evening, we or a visiting racoon or skunk was careless in the kitchen and knocked over an open bottle of Joy dishwashing liquid. In the morning, we were all very impressed to find the Joy had dissolved the sticky adhesive. That was the end of working with Zip-Strip.

When the work was done and the wood floors were gleaming, Heidi made a sign board picturing a blue giraffe and hand-painted lettering, took out some ads, and opened up in the summer of 1973, with a collection of old teacups ranged along the shelves. The Blue Giraffe sold Nehi soda pop; Floyd Canedy would drop by from time to time and say, "give me a soda, any kind of soda, don't matter at all". The Blue Giraffe also sold Camels by the pack for 40 cents; this was popular with our young friend David DuMont. But what was most beloved among the things the Blue Giraffe sold were Heidi's homemade lunches and baked goods including bagels, all sold with teas and coffee. She made ham salad sandwiches on homemade bread, salads with homemade dressings, chicken stir fry, and hearty stews in the fall. She made cookies and pies. Everything was top-notch. For staff, she had me, her sister, in my summer between eleventh grade and twelfth grade, as well as Tammy Barnett during the school year. The next summer she was joined by the Hughes twins, Charis and Margaret. In fall and winter, she rented out a room to a friend or two to help with the costs and workload. Sarah Mustin came in the second year to add her expertise and help bake bread. That year Heidi added dinner to the menu. Each day's dinner was the specialty of the day, prix fixe.

Shopping for the “BG” supplies took place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, then the café was open 15 hours a day on Thursday through Sunday. Heidi or I went shopping in North Adams. Our mom, Lynda Copeland, remembers going with Art to Chicopee to pick up the huge bags of flour Heidi needed for her baking. Heidi found giant wedges of Gruyere at a great cheese store in the building on Putney Road in Brattleboro just above The Marina. The boxes of Camels I bought in Wilmington for \$3.90 a 10-pack box. I cannot recall where we got the orange and grape Nehis. I do recall, though, that for years after the Blue Giraffe closed, our parents were working their way through institutional-sized containers of molasses (Heidi’s famous ginger cookies) and Karo syrup (Heidi’s famous pecan pies) and—wait for it—Joy dishwashing liquid. And my daughter still has the teacup collection.

Greg Marguet remembers the Blue Giraffe. He tells of a time an Amish couple drove their carriage up there and stopped in for lunch. I would have liked to have a picture of that! At that time, the Blue Giraffe Tea Room was in the front room by the carport. The window next to the door still bore the scratched line and date “1938”, noting the level to which the flood waters rose way up on that hill. The historical pane has since been broken and removed, but it was there when we were.

Lynda also recalls two neighbors who came by horseback, tied the horses to the porch posts, and stopped in for a bite to eat. She also describes playing a few concerts in the Union Society next door then adjourning for post-concert refreshments. What a lovely venue to have next door!

My sister Julie tells of being at a conference in Bennington a few years ago and talking to people from Boston who, hearing she was from Halifax, said—“Wait! Halifax? I used to drive there on weekends to go to this amazing restaurant. Did you know it? It had a weird name...the Blue Giraffe.”

- Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont

Historical clippings from the Reformer (1974) thanks to Constance Lancaster, Halifax Historical Society

New Halifax Center Restaurant Opens in Former General Store

By BEHNICE BARNETT
HALIFAX — What could be more natural a place for a public enterprise than the old General Store and Post Office at Halifax Center! The large frame structure, built in the late 1700s, has been a favorite gathering

place for many years. It first opened its doors as a stagecoach inn, then it became a general store with post office. Now, once again it will serve the public as the Blue Giraffe Tearoom.

Under the watchful eye of its proprietor, Heidi Copeland, the

tearoom began business July 7 with an open house.

In the attractive decor of blue and white, the public can relax and enjoy delicious snacks or a luncheon plate, all prepared by 19-year-old Heidi, a most capable cook. She has been interested in cooking since she was eight years old.

The Blue Giraffe is open four days a week: Wednesdays from noon to 10 p.m., Friday and Sunday from noon to midnight, and Saturday from noon to 1 a.m. On these days you will find Heidi in the kitchen preparing pastries and bread.

A sample menu might include a luncheon plate of roast beef salad on hot homemade bread with lettuce and tomato. Desserts listed were jam filled shortbread, fudge cake, Blue Giraffe butterscotch drops, Blue Giraffe Fantasies and the specialty for

the day, Raspberry Ring Torte.

Heidi's sister, Laurie, is the waitress and bookkeeper; and Charis and Margaret Hughes, twin sisters who live in Halifax, are dishwashers on weekends.

Heidi Copeland was educated in the Dover, N. H., school system and attended Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, N. Y. Her favorite sport is horseback riding, and she spent six months in Karlsruhe, Germany, where she studied dressage at Reitschule Egon von Neindorf. The Copeland family have been summer residents of Halifax for 15 years.

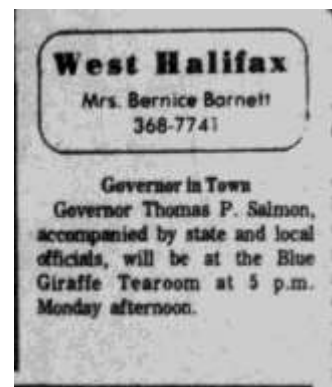
And how does it happen that an enterprise in Halifax should have the unlikely name of Blue Giraffe? Because Heidi always liked to draw giraffes, and because the first house she looked at for a tearoom happened to be blue.

Visit to Halifax

Before heading for the Deerfield Valley, Salmon made a visit to Halifax Center. Almost 50 people from the town, which has a population of about 300, showed up to greet the governor at the Blue Giraffe Tea Room, the only business in tiny Halifax Center.

The governor arrived in the midst of a spectacular sunset, and was greeted by the Rev. Malcolm Evans, who noted that the building in which the group was gathered — the old General Store and Post Office — was built in 1770, before Vermont was even a state.

Salmon compared this visit with his trip to the Grange Hall in West Halifax before he was elected in 1972. That time he had to drive over glare ice, and was greeted by about 25 townspeople, considered a good turnout for a Democrat.



Salmon told the group that he didn't want to make a campaign speech, but that Vermont consists of many small towns, "and there is a real special quality to the small Vermont town."

He said it was important for a governor to get back to the people.

After his short greeting he was presented with a box of "Blue Giraffe goodies" by the owner, Miss Heidi Copeland, and circulated among the guests.

Then his caravan had to leave. "Now let's eat," said someone as many of the residents of Halifax stayed to visit with their friends.



(left) Lucie Sumner painted Halifax Center in 1976, capturing the Blue Giraffe at the end of its run. The painting pictured now hangs in the Halifax Historical Society, a gift from Edie Fenton of Halifax.

John Cupak, Jr. of Deltona, Florida, sent a poem written by Lawrence Hill of Halifax (1913-2013). The original handwritten manuscript is pictured alongside a transcription of the timely poem.

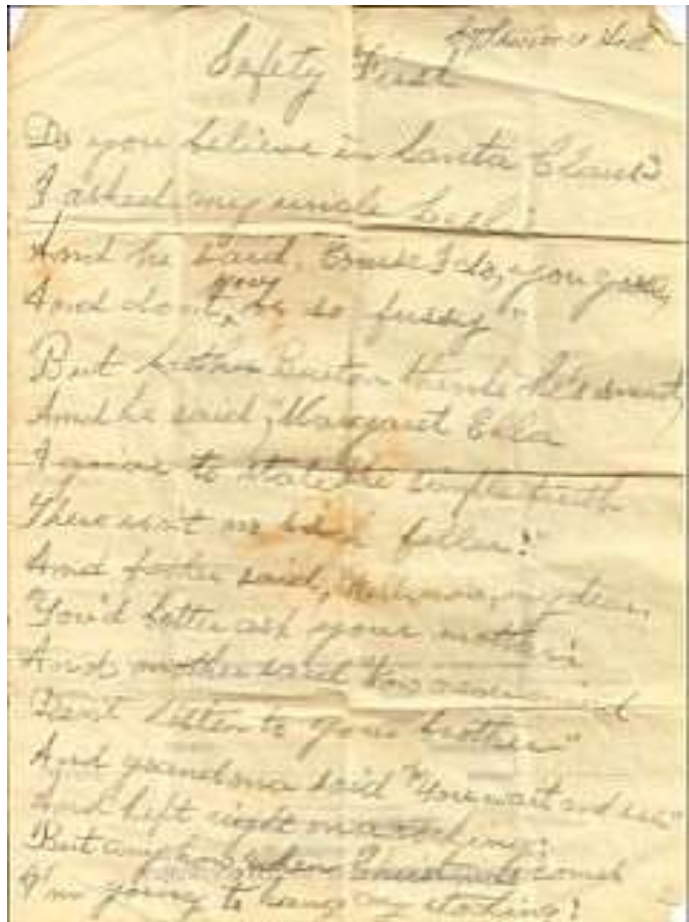
Safety First
by Lawrence Hill

Do you believe in Santa Claus?
I asked my uncle Leslie.
And he said, "Course I do, you goose
And don't you be so fussy."

But brother Burton thinks he's smart,
And said, "Margaret Ella,
I grieve to state the simple truth
There isn't no such feller!"

And father said, "Well, now, my dears
You'd better ask your mother."
And mother said, "Now, never mind,
Don't listen to your brother."

And grandma said, "You wait and see"
And kept right on a-rocking;
But any how when Christmas comes
I'm going to hang my stocking!





Help Wanted: Who Is Who in Kyra Markham’s Jamboree Painting?

Last month we published a story about local mid-20th century artist Kyra Markham and asked whether other figures in her paintings could be identified. Could the man in the foreground with a hat be Henry Miner rather than the man in the hunting cap and red shirt being Henry Miner? Either way, we’ve still got an unknown man in the picture.



TOWN NEWS

WEST HALIFAX BIBLE CHURCH

The annual Christmas candlelight service is Dec. 22, at 7 PM at the church at 137 Branch Road, West Halifax, VT. This is always a very special evening celebrating the birth of Jesus and the Christmas season with attendees circling the sanctuary, each person with a candle, and the singing of Silent Night. Light refreshments will be available after the service in our beautiful, newly restored fellowship room. All are welcome.

SENIOR MEAL (CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN HALIFAX) will be Friday, December 20, 2019. Menu: baked ham, potatoes, vegetables, rolls and dessert. Serving at noon at the Halifax Community Hall at 20 Brook Road in West Halifax. All seniors are welcome!

The Grades 1 and 2 children visited Senior Meal again last month (pictured reciting a poem).

If you are coming, a call to Joan is appreciated 802.368.7733.

Set up a ride to the Meal with Moovers (1-888-869-6287 Monday-Friday 8:00 am-4:30 pm).



HALIFAX COMMUNITY CLUB will meet on Wednesday, December 18 at the New England House, 254 Marlboro Road, West Brattleboro, at 5:30 pm for our annual holiday dinner (Dutch treat). All are welcome! Just let me know if you are coming so our reservation accommodates us all: 368-2439 or LaurelACopeland@gmail.com.

HALIFAX HISTORICAL SOCIETY is now on FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/Halifax-Vermont-Historical-Society-113563599997907/> For information on joining the HHS, contact GretchenB@myfairpoint.net.

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

Oct. 29 -- three men and one truck responded to an alarm sounding on Collins road. It was caused by someone taking a shower.

Nov. 1 -- two men responded to a call on Branch Road; they assisted the ambulance with loading a patient. He was transported to Greenfield hospital.

Nov. 3 -- 10 men and two trucks responded to a mutual aid call to a building fire in Readsboro; Jerry, Wayne and Malcolm remained on alert in Halifax in case Halifax had a call.

Nov. 14 -- two men responded to a call of an ill man on Thomas Hill. Rescue Inc. transported to Brattleboro hospital.

The fire dept. has monthly 50/50 raffle tickets available, \$ 10.00 a month. Contact Wayne 802-368-7733 if interested.

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS

Wayne and Lewis saw about 6 or 8 turkeys together a day or two after the turkey-hunting season ended. They usually saw some each day but not during the season to hunt them; they seem to know when it ends and come out of hiding. I am happy to say that the number of birds at my feeders has picked up and I believe it will pick up more when there is snow on the ground. I am thrilled to say I have had a Carolina Wren here off and on. Wayne said he saw a Red-winged Blackbird. I remember that one hung around here most of last winter. I hope to see it, too. I am also thrilled to have 4 or more Cardinals, male and female, here most of the time. Several different kinds of Sparrows, many Mourning Doves, a couple of White-breasted Nuthatch, a couple of Titmouse, Goldfinch, Blue Jays -- many at times, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Grosbeak, & a couple of Brown headed Cowbirds. I am now again reporting birds every two weeks to Project Feeder Watch at Cornell.

LOVE MY BIRDS!!!!!!!!!!!! I hope many of you are enjoying them to

Send your animal sightings to Joan at: jwcinvt@gmail.com - Joan Courser

Gretchen Becker saw 3 little bears near Warriners' one day. Any sign of them lately? Not likely with the beech nuts and acorns frozen in the ground already!

On Hanson Road we've had tufted titmice, junkos, chickadees and blue jays this week, and I spotted a woodpecker in the apple orchard. The hooded mergansers are on the ponds and Canada geese are overhead. I've seen a couple of turkeys and the sharp-eyed crows monitoring our trash out on the curb. A few squirrels are active up here on Hanson Road in spite of the snow cover and icy cold weather.

EMERALD ASH BORERS: WHAT HAPPENS IN WINTER?



In the wintertime, we order firewood and haul it from woodlands to homes. It's up to all of us to keep ash tree firewood from towns infested with emerald ash borer (EAB) within those towns. **Burn local wood!** The tiny Emerald Ash Borer beetle (one-half inch long) is pictured at left next to an EAB larva. The larvae chew tunnels or galleries through the transportation tissues of the ash tree – just under the bark (picture at right). This disrupts the flow of nutrients, starving the tree.



Winter is here! Pile up that local cordwood. Wood fires will be burning.

NEED TO PAY FOR YOUR MAILED (PAPER) NEWSLETTER?
SEND \$7 CHECK MADE OUT TO "HALIFAX NEWSLETTER" TO
JOAN COURSER, P O BOX 27, WEST HALIFAX VT 05358.

Newsletter

P O Box 27

West Halifax VT 05358



Our Thanksgiving table was graced with real, baked breadbaskets made by Heidi of Blue Giraffe fame (see lead story)



Snowy road in Halifax (Nov. 19, 2019)

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NEWSLETTER - Send your Halifax story to Joan JWCinVt@gmail.com (802.368.7733; PO Box 27 05358) or Laurel LaurelACopeland@gmail.com.

Editor LaurelACopeland@gmail.com. Color e-mail version available.