

MAY 2019

HALIFAX NEWS

MAGGIE AND THE RACCOON

This is a family story I wrote up in 2016 to celebrate the 90th birthdays of my parents, Art & Lynda Copeland.



Lynda's mother, Maggie Peltz, came to visit us in Halifax many summers in the 1960s. Back in Illinois, she ran one of the last independent dailies, the Clinton Daily Journal & Public, until she retired and sold it around 1980. She was elegant and cosmopolitan.

One summer when she came to visit, we were having a problem with the bread. We kept the extra bread down in the cellar, a lovely moist place with a small seasonal pond, made of "dry wall", which is to say, rocks piled on top of each other. A large boulder graced the middle of this small space.

Maggie liked to wake up early, and looking out on a pleasant sunrise one morning, she noticed a raccoon trotting up the road with a package of hotdog buns in its mouth. She reported this at breakfast, and Art did something about it: he put the bread in a cage.

The next morning Maggie again reported seeing the raccoon trotting up the road, this time with a bag of hamburger buns in its mouth. Art again took action – he suspended the cage from the ceiling.

Breakfast attendees next day looked expectantly at Maggie, but she said nothing of raccoons.

The day after, it was much the same story, and Art expressed satisfaction with his solution.

But the third day after the cage was hung in the cellar, Maggie saw that raccoon, trotting up the road with a loaf of bread in its mouth.

So, that evening, Art took his .22 long rifle down the basement and waited. After some time, he saw a bright eye gleaming up on the wall. He took very careful aim, fired – and shot a hole right through the drain pipe.

Who really cares to keep bread in the cellar anyway.

- *Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont*



TOWN NEWS

BREAKFAST on Saturday May 4th (7am-10am)

Hope to see everyone at the Halifax Community Club benefit breakfast Saturday, May 4 from 7 AM to 10 AM at the Community Hall (corner of Brook Road and Branch Road in the village of West Halifax). Pancakes - plain, blueberry, and chocolate chip, sausage, ham, eggs Benedict, scrambled eggs, hash brown casserole, fruit, coffee and juice. Adults \$ 8.00, Seniors \$ 7.00, Child under \$ 3.00

May 4 Green-Up Day After breakfast please segue into Halifax Green-Up day, the Town spring cleaning bee!
<https://halifaxvermont.com/>

AN IRISH PARTY IN MAY!

Mud season spoil your Saint Patrick's Day party plans? Despair not! Violinist Bekka Eowind and her husband, Kurt Schellenberg, will perform Irish and other tunes during a casual dinner gathering at the Halifax Community Hall on **Saturday, May 18, 5-7 PM**. The Halifax Community Club will provide several casseroles plus iced tea and hot coffee. Optional side dishes, desserts, etc., are welcome but not required! Get to know your new neighbors and each other. **Join Us!**



For more information about the musicians, see <https://suzukiassociation.org/people/bekka-eowind>.



HALIFAX CELEBRATION DAY

Saturday, September 28, 2019 is the date of the Halifax Celebration Day. Did you know that the folks that plan and make happen this fun day in Halifax have already had their first meeting? We are finding that our group is shrinking instead of growing. We need more folks to be a part of our planning and working to make this event happen. Some new and fun/interesting things were discussed. Please...if you can help in any way towards helping us make this a special day, volunteer! The next meeting is May 23 at 7 PM at the Town Office meeting room. Come and join us!

Call Patty Dow to volunteer or offer your ideas. 802.368.7390

HISTORICAL HELP NEEDED

Help!

The **Halifax Historical Society** needs more active members. We have lost several members this past year, including our wonderful president Art Copeland (June 11, 1926-Dec 23, 2018) and longtime historian Bernice Barnett (Aug 4, 1937-Jan 18, 2018). The society maintains a museum in West Halifax in an attempt to preserve artifacts from Halifax's past as well as photos and written material about the town, and it holds at least one meeting every year. The society is currently functioning with no president or vice president.

Interest in the town's history seems to be waning, and the workload falls on the shoulders of just a few active members. We really need more working members.

If you have any interest in joining the society, or if you're already a member and you'd like to play a more active role, please let me (Gretchen Becker, gretchenb@myfairpoint.net) or any other member of the society know.

We're always interested in hearing ideas for meetings or other activities.

HALIFAX COMMUNITY HALL ACTIVITIES

To rent our beautiful, newly painted, rewired, & insulated Halifax Community Hall, contact Joan Courser at (802) 368-7733 or JWCinVT@gmail.com. - *Joan Courser*

HALIFAX COMMUNITY CLUB will meet Monday, May 13, 2019 at Lynda Copeland's house at 1581 Hanson Road, 6:45-7:45 pm. The Halifax Community Club is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Gifts are tax-deductible. Contact: LaurelACopeland@gmail.com or 368-7097. HCC documents are posted online: <https://czresearch.com/halifax/>

HOW'S THE WEATHER? April gave us a wide variety of weather effects. Crows on a very foggy April 9th are pictured.



SENIOR MEAL (CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN HALIFAX)

MAY 17 ~ serving at noon: Roast pork, baked potato, carrot salad, vegetable, roll, and rhubarb dump cake with ice cream for dessert. Held at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax VT. All seniors are welcome. A call to Joan is greatly appreciated 802.368.7733

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

On 4/1 twelve men, one truck and the ambulance from Wilmington responded to a motor vehicle accident on Brook Road, a pickup in the river. The jaws of life were used to remove the driver's door to remove the driver. He was transported to Greenfield hospital then to Baystate in Springfield, MA.

On 4/2 seven men responded to an accident on Rte. 112 -- a car on the guard rail. The ambulance transported to Bennington.

On 4/4 two trucks and three men responded to a brush fire on Perry Road. A live electrical wire was down and burning in the leaves. The ground was quite wet and that helped to contain the fire. Two men waited for several hours until Green Mountain Power arrived to cut the power to the wire. It was a very windy day, and the power company was extremely busy.

On 4/6 a call came in of an alarm sounding at a home on Thomas Hill, Halifax. Fireman Andy Rice of Thomas Hill responded to this call and took care of a faulty detector.

On 4/9 seven men and one truck responded to an accident on Collins Road. A car was off the road in a deep ditch, due to very, very foggy conditions. No injuries were reported.

On 4/11 two trucks and nine men responded to a porch fire on Metcalf Road. Quick work of the residents had the fire out, but the firemen always want to check for any 'hot spots'.

On 4/18 five men responded to a medical call on Hubbard Hill to assist the ambulance personnel. The ambulance transported to Greenfield.

On 4/19 one fireman assisted Rescue Inc. with a call on Thomas Hill.

On 4/20 Halifax Fire Co. was called to Guilford for wire down. They were turned back en route.

On 4/24 a call came in on Thomas Hill; the fireman that lives on Thomas Hill took care of this call.

On 4/25 a call came to assist the Rescue Inc. on Thomas Hill; again Andy Rice who lives on Thomas Hill took care of this call.

On 4/25 three men responded to Haynes Road in Wilmington on a mutual aid call for a first-alarm brush fire.

A THANK YOU

With much gratitude to the Halifax community and the great people in it: Please let me deeply thank every one of you who were extremely helpful and very kind to me on that day of April 9th when my good truck flipped over into the ravine by the Sumner's farm -- I want to deeply thank everyone who was there: you were splendid, and I salute every single one of you. Among these heroic people were Mr. Chum & Debbie Sumner, Marion Canedy, Rick Hurley, Larry the fireman, the EMT's, Andy Rice, Mr. Wayne Courser, and every kind passerby, and Jill who drives the mail truck....And the wonderful outpourings of thoughtful concern and offers of so much help were very moving--I will never forget you--Bless every single one of you and Halifax.

-- Ainslie Robertson

• **Our Fire Department Needs Our Support!** The Halifax Fire Department has monthly 50-50 raffle tickets available. Ten dollars a month. Call Wayne at 802-368-7733 if you are interested. A great way to support your fire department. Every little bit helps. They are an all-volunteer department that raises their own money for trucks and all other equipment. And it's not too early to put their two big annual events on your

calendar: **Auction at the Fire Department** on the 1st Saturday in July (July 6 at 10AM) and **Clam Bake at the Old Cody Farm** on Old County Road on the 1st Saturday in August (August 3, serving 1-3PM).

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS



Lots of sighting this month! Laurel saw a Ruffed Grouse, a fairly large mystery grey bird in her mom's feeder, lots of dark-eyed juncos, sparrows with rusty caps, white-breasted nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, a hawk, a large frog and several smaller wood frogs, and brown-headed cowbirds, and her mom, Lynda, saw a goldfinch and a purple finch. Lavern saw a bobcat and a fox and has lots of birds at her feeder. Parkhursts had three young moose cross their yard, also deer in the yard, and they saw deer and fox on their road. Bill Dame had an Owl and a Hawk at his place also birds at the feeder.



Joan has seen some new birds at her feeders...A Rufus Sided Towhee, which has been here in the past, but I saw for the first time a Brown Towhee...that was exciting for me. One morning I looked out and under the bird feeder was a Coon stuffing his face with sunflower seed. Only saw it that one time which is probably good news for my chickens! I am enjoying the spring birds...still have my Mr. & Mrs. Cardinal, lots and lots of Blackbirds and Red-Winged Blackbirds, Cowbirds,

several different Sparrows. The Snowbirds / Juncos are not as numerous as they were but there are still many here; the Blue Jays have returned, my Red-Breasted and White-Breasted Nuthatches are still around, some Chickadees (which I love) too, and one lonely Yellow male goldfinch. I have really missed them this past winter but glad to have at least one now. Saw a couple of Purple Finch, and for two days I had a couple of Red Poll. And I was thrilled to see a Yellow-Shafted Flicker. I am still enjoying the Downy Woodpecker, haven't seen the Hairy Woodpecker, but I can hear a lot of loud hammering from a Pileated Woodpecker. It is very loud so must be that big fellow; wish I could locate it.



I am anxiously awaiting the Hummingbirds and Orioles. It should not be too long before they arrive, usually around May 5th. Liz Hull and I always call each other to see who gets them first!!! She did last year! I am all ready for them with clean feeders and hummer food all made.

Laurel writes... While the ice was slowly melting on the ponds in Halifax and neighboring towns, I was delighted to see an otter fishing on the ice on Jacksonville pond next door in Whitingham. I saw it on two different days, sitting on the ice, peering down into the inky water, then slipping in to catch the fish. I photographed it eating its catch – quite a sight (and sound) in the video version. – *Laurel Copeland*

Otter Eating a Fish on Jacksonville Pond



THIS MADE ME SMILE....What is the difference between a cat and a frog?? A cat has nine lives, but a frog croaks every night.

HEARD THE PEEPERS ON FRIDAY APRIL 19 for the first time here in the village of West Halifax. That is ALWAYS a noise that makes me happy!!!!

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

- Joan Courser

“HIAWATHA’S MITTENS”

By **BERNICE BARNETT**

WEST HALIFAX — Have you ever smelled an odor that made you reminisce a bit about your childhood?

Well, Archie Burnett of West Halifax did, and because he “followed his nose” he discovered a tree that is uncommon in the state of Vermont.

One day while he was cleaning ditches along a stretch of road in the hamlet of Grove, in Halifax, he began to smell a sweet, spicy odor. Soon he realized he had experienced this in the past. But where? When? After prolonged meditation, his childhood flooded back to him and he recalled with delight, “Hiawatha’s Mittens.”

Yes sir, there they were dangling over the roadside, the long-forgotten leaves of the Sassafras tree.

He became familiar with this tree when he lived in Pennsylvania as a boy. How well he remembered those fascinating, mitten-shaped leaves and their enticing flavor, and the legend of Hiawatha. He remembered the story of the Indians who used these leaves to make a tea, which they believed would cure many of their ailments. Later the colonists adopted their recipe and even today the Sassafras root and leaves are used in the making of some medicines and soap.

When Archie moved to Ver-

“Hiawatha’s Mittens” was originally published in the Brattleboro Reformer, Nov. 16, 1970 along with the sketch by Eileen Marguet.



“HIAWATHA’S MITTENS”

mont with its maples and evergreen, the sassafras tree and “Hiawatha Mittens” reluctantly slipped from his mind.

The Sassafras tree is a member of the Laurel family and makes its appearance quite often in parts of Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania. It is also found in parts of Asia.

In warmer climates, the tree often reaches a height of 50 feet. However, here in Vermont it seldom reaches 30 feet. In Canada, it grows only as a shrub.

In the autumn, Nature provides its own coloring for “Hiawatha’s Mittens” as the leaves turn to pretty colors of red and gold.

Bernice Burnett Barnett often spoke about wanting to revisit and update her “Mittens” story for a future Halifax newsletter. She was happy to know the original newspaper clipping is on file at the historical society as well as her friend, Eileen’s original sketch, and several carefully pressed and preserved sassafras leaves. With the coming of spring, it is possible the “sweet spicy” fragrance of sassafras is in the air somewhere in Halifax. Having consulted a local forester, I was advised that sassafras trees in Windham County tend to be found growing along the Connecticut River. However, he knows of small grove growing along the Back Westminster Road near Saxtons River, and several other old, large specimens in this area. He said that sassafras trees are long-lived, and the wood is extremely durable. — Connie Lancaster

News from Bygone Days

A Rare Tree Grows In Halifax

“A Rare Tree Grows in Halifax” was written by Bernice c. 1979

Every year this writer makes a pilgrimage to her favorite spot near the Gene Gates Farm. This spot attracts me because it has a sassafras tree which is rare in Vermont.

I first learned of this tree from my father, Archie Burnett, who discovered the tree years ago when he was digging a ditch in line with his work as road commissioner for the town of Halifax. He was familiar with the sassafras tree because it grows abundantly in Pennsylvania, a place where he lived as a child.

The tree’s leaves are fascinating because they are shaped like a mitten, and so they are called Hiawatha’s Mitten.

~ C. Lancaster, Halifax Historical Society

Newsletter

P O Box 27

West Halifax VT 05358



**Always wanted a firetruck?
Halifax has a firetruck for sale!
802-368-7733**



Hail, sleet, rain, mud, snow, fog...April
in Halifax! Looking forward to May.

Halifax News

MAY 2019

**NEWSLETTER - Got a great
Halifax story? Write it up and
send it over! Send your story to
Joan at JWCinVt@gmail.com
(802.368.7733) and / or Laurel at
LaurelACopeland@gmail.com.**

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