

SEPTEMBER 2019

HALIFAX NEWS

BITS & PIECES: MEMORIES OF GROWING UP IN SOUTH HALIFAX, VERMONT

Charlotte Miner was one of several speakers at last year's Halifax Historical Society meeting held July 13, 2018. She had written notes that she allowed me to copy. Here is a transcription of her memoirs.

Timelines for Gretchen Becker's purchase of property from Henry O. Miner on May 6, 1985 -- (1) Daniel Alonzo and Lila Sturtevant Miner moved from Greenfield or Coventry, Massachusetts, in 1917. Probably to the Smith Place north of Carl Stone's [place] between Jacksonville and So. Halifax. (2) December 26, 1923 Daniel and Lila bought "our" house from Lester Fairbanks. It was originally a logging camp, and I could see cracks through the roof. (3) April 27, 1931 this property sold for \$1 to Henry O. and his sister Mary E. Boyle (Bessie). She developed [an illness] and, I believe, died at Brattleboro Retreat. (4) Henry Otis and Sarah Bercia Upright married February 24, 1935, in Conway, Mass. Lived several places in Massachusetts and Vermont, one being the "dance hall" owned by Fred Bender where I learned to walk. We then moved to our one-room home across from the present home of Gretchen Becker [on Route 112 at Branch Road]. Two small camp rooms from CCC camps were joined to this. (5) Henry and Sarah Miner bought the Miner Homestead about 1945 for \$50 – 26 acres.

I'll start back at the 1938 flood when Branch Brook rose to the yard of Schneider's and my dad, mother, & I walked "over the hill" to the Carl Woodard home (Sabia's). The road at the intersection of Rte. 112 and West Halifax Road was washed out. In the days after, my mother would go to Branch Brook to get pails of water. On one of these days, I climbed a 12 ft. ladder onto the bridge – 2 years old!

Living in the one-room CCC camp was cozy, to say the least. Of course, there was no plumbing.



My dad spent years working on the town roads under the supervision of Raymond Ouellette. Many of these years, we had no car, so he commuted round-trip by walking and doing a full day of physical labor – using a scythe to mow the roadside or picking stones behind the road grader.

My mother was a good cook, but as a child my suppers were always crackers and milk. One time my mother sent me with change in an envelope to buy bread from the "breadman" who had a weekly route. Something scared me, and I put my hands over my ears, and all the change fell out. Bread was about 9¢ a loaf. Some metal detector might still find coins there.

A highlight of family gatherings was root beer made in a big galvanized tub.

In 1945, we moved to Gretchen's place. The only plumbing was cold water running constantly into the kitchen sink through old lead pipes. There was a spring up the hill, so it was gravity-fed. One of the first projects was to put in electricity. I was designated to crawl between the roof and upstairs ceiling to pull the wires through. Up to this time, kerosene lamps were our source of light, and we mostly went to bed early. My mother used to check the meter to be sure we didn't use more than the 30 kW [allotted] for the \$3 base charge per month.

For years we had one Guernsey cow named Plinky. I could ride her in the pasture. Often, I would take a cup to the barn and drink warm milk.

My dad, as I've mentioned, worked with Raymond Ouellette. On July 4, 1945 or '46, I went to my first movie, Charlie Chaplin – Look Who's Laughing, plus Northwest Passage. Ray and his son, Bob, drove us to Greenfield. We did this for several years and would come back to my house for fresh peas. Bob & I graduated from 8th grade in Halifax and from Whitingham High School together. He went on to UVM and became a state engineer. Unfortunately, in his early 40's (?), he became disabled and was cared for until he died about 3 years ago.



April 30th is my birthday. A highlight of this date was to get new socks (red, white, yellow) and to get out of long underwear and long cotton stockings.

I think trout season started in May, and I loved to go fishing at the brook. One time, I caught a trout and put it in the spring-fed barrel in the yard. I would hold a worm above the water, and the trout would jump for it. One day, I found it in the driveway. Apparently, it jumped too high.

Saturday night was bath night using a big galvanized tub by the wood stove. At this time, we often listened to Jack Benny and Amos & Andy.

My elementary school was mostly the one-room Valley School where Virginia Stone now lives. There were never more than 15 students in the 8 grades. Older students helped the younger ones. In first grade, one worksheet was geometric shapes with color words in them. I could never remember “purple”. In 2nd grade, there was 1 boy, and in 3rd grade, 1 boy, so the teacher made me do the work with both, and I was promoted to 4th grade. She often brought her black lab, Captain Jenks, to school.

Valley School closed when I was in the 4th grade. Students attended the two-room West Halifax School where the [Historical Society Museum*] is now. Jump roping was a favorite recess activity. I could do 100 jumps. A special treat was to have a few pennies and go to Fred Melius’ store next door.

We were back at Valley School in 5th grade. Our teacher was Barbara Dary. She read us a book about birds. We each made a booklet of drawings and descriptions. This became a lifelong hobby of birdwatching, mostly at bird feeders, but I’ve been on several [Road] Scholar birding programs. I remember the first starling I saw on the porch one winter. Once I had a chickadee land on my mitten while skiing behind Schneider’s.

Other memories of Valley School include going to Wesley Stone’s each morning to bring water back to put in the porcelain jug with spigot for drinking. Parents provided a hot meal. My favorite was beans and hotdogs, I think made by Kathryn Stone, Lucille Rice’s mother. I was often frustrated at having to practice “Charlotte Henrietta Miner” in cursive before I could go out to play. We’d find baby mice in the field and bring them to the school yard. Sometimes we’d sneak into Frank Fowler’s corn field. We’d squirt corn kernels at each other. Prisoners’ Base & throwing the ball over the school were popular games.

School attendance was very important to me. One below-zero morning in an early grade, transportation did not show up. I insisted my parents walk me to school. I had perfect attendance each year but 4th grade when I had pneumonia, and as a high school junior I had measles.

My clothes were mostly homemade from other clothes. Once a teacher commented on a “new dress” I was wearing, and I told her my mother made it from “an old rag in the attic”! I was 10 yrs. or 11 yrs. when I got my first store-bought snowsuit. It was dark green with colorful embroidery on the jacket and fleece-lined! How special that was! I always looked forward to “hand-me-downs”. The Hebards had daughters, and their clothes were always welcome.

For about six years, in the ‘40’s, we did not have a car. Maybe once every six weeks, my dad & I would ride to Shelburne Falls with the milk truck delivering cans to the creamery. We had about an hour to shop. A special treat was a 5¢ ice cream cone. One time I saw a drawing book in the window at Sawyer’s News Room. It was labelled \$1.00. I saved pennies, nickels, & dimes to buy it. The day I took my change in, they said it was only 10¢! I think they knew better.

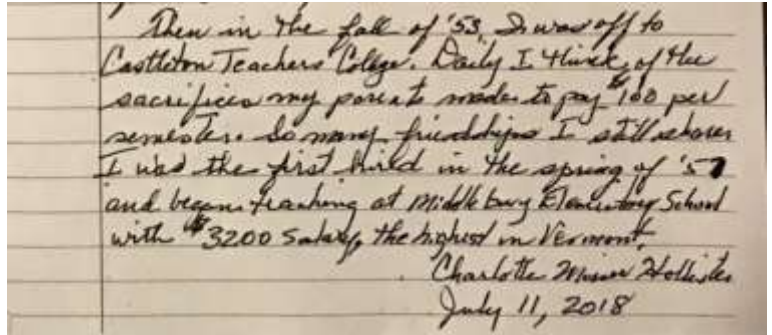
Travelling distances was very limited. Maybe twice a year we would make a trip to Greenfield – just before school started and before Christmas. It was a real treat to go to the Greenfield Fair in Leon LaRock’s truck with other town folk. During high school, our annual trip to the Tri-County Music Festival was fun.

In the fall of ‘49, I was off to Whitingham High School. Transportation, at least part of those years, was in the back of Jane Grant’s pickup with a canvas over the top & benches. Sometimes we shared the space with a calf. My parents paid \$3 weekly.

High school was my social life as my parents kept me pretty much supervised. One time, Mrs. Nelson nabbed me for leaving study hall to go to Mr. White's typing room. I told her it was "activity period". I got straight A's in Algebra and Geometry because Ms. Arnold gave us Friday quizzes with the exact problems we had done during the week. I memorized! Loved typing class with Mr. White. He took Nancy Allen Lang, Mary Butterfield, and I to Columbia University to a yearbook conference. Seeing New York City was a thrill. On the way home, I read all the road signs, and they wanted me to shut up! From this composition, you can see why I was voted most loquacious in the class.

I was chosen for Girls' State. For days before I went, I cried and cried from homesickness, but I was determined and, after the week, I cried to have to come home.

Then in the fall of '53, I was off to Castleton Teachers College. Daily I think of the sacrifices my parents made to pay \$100 per semester. So many friendships I still share. I was the first hired in the spring of '57 and began teaching at Middlebury Elementary School with \$3200 salary, the highest in Vermont.



~ Charlotte Miner Hollister, July 11, 2018

* The West Halifax or Plumb Hollow School House operated until the middle of the 20th century. The West Halifax area used to be called Plumb Hollow. The building was later occupied by the Halifax Fire Company until conveyed to the Town of Halifax when the new firehouse was completed. The Historical Society purchased the schoolhouse from the town.

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.

Halifax Town Celebration will be on **Saturday, September 28, 2019**. This is a celebration of small-town life, kicked off with a delicious early morning **pancake breakfast** and ending after dark with **dancing in the street at the Firehouse to Groove Prophet**. **Contact Patty Dow: 802.368.7390**

TOWN NEWS

DID YOU GO TO THE CLAM BAKE? Guess what? It was wonderful!! 513 tickets were sold – meaning the volunteer firemen were up at the crack of dawn grilling 513 half chickens and boiling I don't know how many lobsters and steaming maybe a gazillion clams. In the ice cream wagon, the first hour or so was pretty quiet, then things really picked up. Edie Fenton was taking orders and money, Kathy Mirucki was repeating orders, handing cones to customers, and scooping on one side of the freezer, and Gretchen Becker, Rosie Bellow and Laurel Copeland



took turns scooping ice cream and adding the extras on the other side. At one point well after 3 o'clock, Laurel stepped out to see what was out there and was shocked to see a long line of customers. Meanwhile it seemed as if the most common question from customers was, where is the pop cow? Well, she finally showed up and did her business then sat down with the kids to enjoy corn on the cob (see pictures).

HALIFAX COMMUNITY CLUB meets Monday, September 9, 2019 at Lynda Copeland's, 1581 Hanson Road, 6:45-7:45 pm. Contact: 368-7097 or LaurelACopeland@gmail.com.

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

On August 6 six men reported to LaRock Lane to assist Deerfield Valley Rescue.

On August 20 nine men responded to an accident on Rte. 112 motorcycle versus car.

CRISIS HELPLINE: 1-800-273-8255 (Veterans ext 1 or text 838255). <https://www.speakingofsuicide.com>

SENIOR MEAL (CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN HALIFAX)

Senior Meal will be Friday, September 20, 2019. Menu: Baked chicken drumsticks, potato, vegetables, rolls and dessert. Serving at noon at the Halifax Community Hall at 20 Brook Road in West Halifax. All seniors are welcome! 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).

WEST HALIFAX BIBLE CHURCH

On the weekend of **October 18, 19 & 20**, the WHBC will celebrate 25 years with Village Missions. Village Missions helps small rural churches pay their Pastor. The church provides a parsonage & health insurance; Village Missions covers the salary until the church can pay it on their own. We will have in attendance past Pastors and their wives, Village Missions district representatives present and past, and the head director of Village Missions from Oregon. It will be a fun weekend, and we are very happy to honor these people for their support to our small rural church.

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS – Check your label! If you receive your newsletter by mail, your subscription is due! Please send a check made out to “Newsletter” for \$7 to Joan Courser, P O Box 27, W. Halifax VT 05358.

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS

No reports to me this month except turkey, and our bear is still visiting. Lots of beautiful birds but many are in transit this time of year.

I am waiting on the winter ones to arrive, but the cold winter weather can hold off as far as I am concerned.

Where did summer go?????

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



Laurel reports seeing twin fawns up above Hanson Road, a little skunk, herons, hawks, a barred owl, goldfinches, red efts, tiny frogs, caterpillars including a yellow one and the brown-and-black wooly (Isabella Tiger Moth), and quite a few butterflies as well as a huge



falling star one pre-dawn during the Perseids meteorite shower. Not a sighting but I was hearing some bird calling day and night from late July through mid-August, coo-CHUK-CHUK! coo-CHUK-CHUK! What was that bird?! I listened to every recording of bird calls I could find online before I read Patti Smith's column about the little mink in rehab, in which she casually mentioned listening to the black-billed cuckoo. Ah ha! That's the bird. And more recently, my mom, Lynda Copeland, was sitting in her kitchen sipping coffee when someone started banging on the window! She turned around, and

there was a bear jumping up, hitting the glass, trying to get the birdfeeder down. Enough with feeding the birds.
~Laurel Copeland

TRAVEL Let me share with you a short story on a trip to the state of Missouri to see my great niece become a private first class in the Army. It is with great pride that I was privileged to see Maria Ferello, age 19 years, become a private in the Army. She spent 15 weeks at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. She left for basic training right from college in May, experienced many new things, and worked very hard. One day after becoming a Private, she headed back to college in Virginia with her twin. She has spent many days here in Halifax with Wayne and I am proud she wants to serve her country!!!
- Joan Courser

EMERALD ASH BORER

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a small invasive beetle that kills ash trees. It has not been found in Halifax yet but is in 44 towns in Vermont since its discovery in Orange County in 2018. Ash trees make up ~5% of Vermont's trees. When the EAB infests an area, it is usually undetected for 3 years. The beetle's larvae feed on the inner bark and outer wood, blocking the flow of water and nutrients in the tree. Then mass die-off of ash trees occurs after 3-6 years. Typically, 99% of ash trees in an infested area will die within 6 years. The dying trees have very poor-quality wood, making them dangerous to climb and subject to falling (loggers will not climb ash trees in affected areas). When a lot of ash trees die all at once, roadways and power lines are blocked or damaged, and the number of fallen trees can overwhelm local capacity to remove them.

What to do? Learn to identify ash trees: they have compound leaves and attach leaves and branches opposite each other (pics). Ash trees in the yard can be protected by biennial inoculation with one of two chemicals that protect the tree. Use an established and licensed arborist, as scam artists may sell a homeowner services for ash tree look-alikes that don't need treatment.

For more information, visit <https://vtinvasives.org/land/emerald-ash-borer-vermont>.



3. Branches and buds are in pairs directly across from each other (opposite branching).



ROADBLOCK! On my way to work Thursday the 22nd about 6 a.m. I encountered a roadblock on Hanson Road (photo). While I went around via the Brook Road to Rte 112, Steve Sciortino cut up the tree and opened the road. Thank you, good neighbor!

Newsletter

P O Box 27

West Halifax VT 05358



Heron fishing on Shearer Hill



Daylilies rule the roadsides in August.
But maples tell us autumn is coming.



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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.