

FEBRUARY 2020  
HALIFAX NEWS

FIRST LIGHT

Dull pewter days,  
The last of the decade  
Snow, then ice—  
A full-girdled shellac—  
Moonless toasts and resolutions  
Under caliginous skies  
Then, finally,  
Gloriously,  
Sun

Blinding ice bright  
Upside down chandeliers  
of maple and ash  
Frosted azalea antlers  
Snow globes of hydrangea  
Spent, hanging on—  
Crab apples captured, lurid  
And red, magnified,  
Enshrined  
Like the magnolia bud  
nostalgia *and* portent—  
A kaleidoscope on the credenza

The tangle of an unpruned apple  
Iced and aflame in the first light of the year  
Shattered glass whirls and falls  
Like autumn leaves—  
Or a splintering quarrel

Along the roadside  
Ancient maples score  
A lost language of jagged dashes  
Checks and crosses  
A hieroglyph in inverted brail—

Slapdash swords pierce snowy fields  
The icy throw of a hundred conductors' batons  
In furious finale —  
Stigmatic pathways of deer

Puckering crackling snapping spitting

A dog shaking off the wet  
The crinkle of silver foil  
A hoopla of hibernal peepers  
Unceasing

The sun couples  
With the weeping beech—  
frozen skirts a-swish  
in a hot winter waltz—  
Freeze and thaw  
Freeze and thaw

Freeze and thaw

—Gregg Orifici

January 1, 2020  
Halifax Center



Halifax from Hogback Mountain, New Year's Day, 2020  
Photo: Laurel Copeland

## TOWN NEWS

**SPAGHETTI SUPPER TO BENEFIT OUR SCHOOL, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2020, 5:00 PM TO 6:30 PM** in the Halifax School at 246 Brook Road, West Halifax, VT. This spaghetti dinner will feature a great meal and the best dining companions around: you all!

\$ 8 adults; \$ 5 students; \$ 25 family of 4 or more. Tickets at the door or call 368-2888 for more information.

**OLD HOME DAYS** are July 15 through July 19, 2020. We are celebrating Halifax's 270th year!!! We have lots of fun activities and demonstrations in the line-up along with musical entertainment. If you have any questions or suggestions or would like to help with the festivities, please contact us at the Town Clerks Office 802-368-7390 or email [halifax@myfairpoint.net](mailto:halifax@myfairpoint.net). Some things you can look forward to are: bird demonstration, Jaws of Life demonstration, movie night, Ice Cream Social and Old Home bus tours. So, keep a watch for more information in the coming months. We are excited and hope to see you all there!!!

### SENIOR MEAL (CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN HALIFAX)

Friday, February 21, 2020 is the next meal at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax, serving at noon. Menu: corn chowder, johnny cake, turkey or ham sandwich, coleslaw and homemade rolls and desserts from Heidi. All seniors are welcome! A call to Joan is appreciated: 802.368.7733.

A free-will donation of \$ 3.00 is asked (\$4 if you're <60 years of age).

### FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

Jan. 6 six men and one truck called to a residence on Green River Rd for lift assist; truck turned back en route.

Jan. 11, six men responded to a CO meter sounding; it was a faulty detector.

Jan. 12, two men and Deerfield Valley ambulance responded to Jacksonville Stage Road to assist the ambulance personnel. All responding had to 'stage away' until the arrival of the State Police.

### HISTORICAL TIDBITS

**Bucklin Hill Connections** We are owners of property on Bucklin Hill Road. Recently we became interested in the previous owners of our land. We went through the town archives and did a lot of research and, I'll tell you, I almost fell out of my chair: the earliest owner was a John Thomas! Which also just happens to be my name. The chances of that are just astounding. The only difference is I was a corporal and he was a captain in service to our country. The odds are overwhelming. I hope someone else finds this as unusual as we did. Hard work and searching reveals some amazing facts. *– John Thomas, RET CPL*

### JOAN'S SIGHTINGS

Lots and lots of birds at the feeders now that we have plenty of snow. The wild turkey are coming quite often, plenty of Blue Jays I counted twenty one time, four Cardinals, twenty or more Mourning Doves, lots of Juncos, a few Sparrows, a few Purple Finch, one White Breasted Nuthatch, a Downy Woodpecker, a Hairy Woodpecker, a few Goldfinch, about five Chickadees, and a few Titmice. I saw what I believe was a Snowy Owl flying across a road here in Halifax; it was very big and beautiful!! I also saw a Ruffed Grouse crossing the road on Reed Hill. And lots of Fox tracks but no sightings.

*My chickens* have started to lay eggs again, I am surprised because it is so cold but am grateful for the eggs. Hopefully they will keep it up and I will have some to sell at some point. Nothing earth shattering as of yet maybe one or two eggs every other day. Jason A. gave me a cute little red hen with feathers on her feet. She is laying a small egg. She is soooooo cute!!

LOVE MY BIRDS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Send your animal sightings to Joan at: [jwcinvt@gmail.com](mailto:jwcinvt@gmail.com)

- Joan Courser

Jesse, the bird man up in Halifax Center, has seen at least 30 goldfinches, some even sporting yellow plumage. A pair of cardinals now come daily, with a few titmice, chickadees and today 18 turkeys! Let the sun shine on.

For my part, I am happy watching the otters play and fish on the ice down below Shearer Hill Farm and spotting the barred owl and the red fox from time to time. -Laurel



## CONNECTIVITY

Last month we featured the advent of broadband internet connectivity in Windham County and potentially in Halifax, specifically. Our friend and neighbor, Gregg Orifici, has previously waxed poetic on this very subject.

### Last Dial-Up Town in America

I.  
Saul Bellow hid out here for decades.  
Elisha Otis, and thus the elevator, were native sons.  
Boom town in the early '80s. Tanneries,  
Mills and brothels—the 17-80s.  
Runner-up first capital of Vermont,  
1,800 souls secure on a hilltop,  
Before  
The lure of rivers and stoneless soils—  
Its manifest decline...

By 2015, Halifax was in eclipse—  
The last Dial-Up Town in America.

Satellite dishes now foul the roofs  
And front yards of antique capes and saltboxes,  
Modular homes and trailers. 700 souls—  
half newcomers—  
Homesteading for an internet  
Fickle as rain.

Enter a URL into your browser,  
do the dishes,  
And they'd be dry enough to put away  
By the time the webpage appeared—  
No last-minute recipes  
For that oversize zucchini.  
No fritters, eight balls or boats.

Flatlanders from Boston and NY who moved here  
For the peace and quiet instead found  
Endless aggravation—washboarding and potholing  
Dirt roads to Brattleboro or Shelburne Falls  
To update a Facebook status, friend someone,  
Or download their mail.

During the icy slide of winter  
There would be no escape into the bottomless web  
Of other people's catastrophes—toilets overflowing  
Cruiseships, sharks invading the Outer Banks—  
No avoiding the creep of mud season, when you  
sink in  
Six inches past your axle.

For years, couples argued  
Whose turn it was to circulate  
the next broadband petition—  
People sold out,  
Gave up the farm, got what they could  
For their clapboards or vinyl. People  
Divorced.

II.  
Then a cell tower went up  
Right at the crossroads.

Those who weathered the Dial-Up Years,  
The hardy few who remained, camped out  
To watch spring's leafy unraveling  
Obscure the growth of the tower. By July,  
We signed up for introductory rates.

Gossip by the mailboxes suddenly ceased, prayer  
Circle at the Bible Church moved online.  
When occasionally we recognized someone's car  
and  
Rolled down our windows, we thanked God  
And V-Tel and the tight-lipped old-timer—  
Now practically a saint—who broke ranks  
With the historic district and leased  
his land for the tower.

Yes, we had rejoined America—

Inside, with our digits and thumbs on devices,  
Gardens went unpicked and unweeded.  
Wood piles waited to be split and stacked,  
Fields to be bush hogged. Sugar to be tapped.  
When  
As always the foliage turned red and orange and  
gold,  
It fell unnoticed.

We were connected, content—  
Binge streaming Netflix and cracking  
the previously unimaginable cache of internet porn.

-- Gregg Orifici (2015)

## THE OUTHOUSE

When my parents, Art & Lynda Copeland, first bought the Hall Farm on the Tony Hansen Highway, aka Hanson Road, from Marie and Gerald Howatt, it had cold running water from a shallow, 13-foot well, and there was a 7-year drought on.

Here is a history of the farm my dad, a mathematician, put together:

<https://czresearch.com/halifax/HHSTalk2017ArtCopelandonHalifaxHouseHx.pdf>

An artist friend of the family, Schubert Emerson Jonas, drove up from Florida to spend the summer painting, making sculptures, and singing nutty songs.

Here is Schubert's painting of our lower field and Blue (Ballou) Mountain.



And there is his painting of the Farm living room.

Schubert, who used to say he came from the coldest town in the lower 48, Houghton, Michigan, and who hated the cold the way cats hate a closed door, sang,

I wish and then I wish again!  
That I was back in Michigan!  
With a 5 a.m. alarm!  
And a milk pail on my arm!



And he sang,

My cutie's due at 2 to 2  
Coming through on a big choo-choo  
Been away for months and months  
And I never cheated once  
Stayed home nights, didn't dance  
Didn't want to take a chance  
Stayed home days, didn't flirt  
Couldn't do my cutie dirt  
My days are blue, my nights are black  
But I don't cry cuz she'll be back  
And hey-y-y-y -- you say there is no Santa  
Clause  
I know darn well there is because  
My cutie's due at 2 to 2 today!

I'm not claiming this is a logical tale. I'm just including the pertinent details to give you an idea of the main players. So, there was a shallow well and a drought and a problem-solving mathematician and a nutty artist.

Art and Schubert dug a hole and built an outhouse. Schubert looked at that outhouse and said it needed painting. Art & Lynda acquiesced. Schubert painted that outhouse inside and out. On the inside, there were dozens of eyes of all sizes staring at you as you sat, painted in vivid greens and yellows. On the outside, there were three lovely dancing nudes.

We had the finest Chick Sales ever.

## FIRST CHRISTMAS

The Farm was not winterized or insulated. It did not have central heat. Still, we came up to spend Christmas there in December 1962. Never ones to keep a treasured experience to themselves, Art & Lynda invited a houseful of guests, some with children. Did they mention the part about no heat and no water?

When we arrived, I was surprised to find a snowdrift in the corner of the living room, near the kitchen. Being only 6, I did not immediately put it together with wind blowing gustily through crevices and frozen pipes. Soon guests arrived. For some reason, perhaps because all lodging in the area was chock full of holiday skiers, no one left the minute they grasped the situation.

They all stayed. But the house was cold. We heated it with two wood stoves – a parlor maid in the living room and a classic cook stove in the kitchen. A glass of water sitting on the stove leaf froze. My mom wore mittens when she cooked and flummoxed the city folk by thawing the toilet paper over the stove. The gin froze in the bottle. To draw water from the well, my dad used a long pole and a bucket and rope, the pole to break through the ice, and the bucket on the rope to draw up the water. We kept snow melting on the stove round the clock.

All persons were co-opted to carry the mattresses and bedding downstairs and blanket the living room floor with makeshift beds. Everyone slept in the living room, as the only other heated room was the kitchen. All night long, we heard: “Oof!” “Sorry!” Thud. “Ow!” Stumble, bumble. “Aie!” “Sorry!”, then, creeaakk, ka-chunk! Creeaaak, slam! ...as some frigid sleeper (?) went to add yet another log to the fire in the dark, tripping over all the other sleepers (?) along the way. One kid was spoiled and insisted on having a glass of water by his bed. A glass of water was duly set on a log by his head. In the morning, it was frozen solid.

One night, I went out to the lovely outhouse (with the nudes and the green eyes) to pee before bed. The north wind was howling. The outhouse faced north. When ready to leave, I couldn't push the door open again. I was stuck in the outhouse! No one could hear me yelling. I couldn't outpush the north wind. I guess someone else came out to pee, because I lived to tell the tale.

- *Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont*

## DARK SKIES NO MORE?

SpaceX president Elon Musk has permission to put 12,000 satellites in orbit around the earth as part of his global 5G network, Starlink. Selling the 5G service would ultimately finance Starlink. So far 122 of the satellites have been deployed. Musk then requested permission to put 30,000 more satellites in orbit around the earth. Based on interference from the initial 122, astronomers realized this would be the end of earth-based astronomy. It would be impossible to observe the stars with 42,000 satellites circling the planet. Discussions between astronomers and SpaceX engineers are now ongoing.

## HAVE YOU SEEN ANY OF THESE 5 ANIMALS CROSSING A ROAD?

As part of a wildlife connectivity project, I am interested in where some wide-ranging mammals cross roads. If you see one on or crossing a road, or if you see tracks that suggest one crossed the road, let me know ([LaurelACopeland@gmail.com](mailto:LaurelACopeland@gmail.com), 368-2439). The 5 animals are Moose, Black Bear, Bobcat, River Otter, and Fisher Cat (which is a weasel; pictured).



## Newsletter

P O Box 27

West Halifax VT 05358



I see the river otters sitting on the ice, fishing out the beaver ponds. But I have not seen one cross a road. Have you? See story inside.



We are delighted to see a new business in the old Grange building in the village of West Halifax! Best wishes, Ross Barnett!

# Halifax News

FEBRUARY 2020

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**SPAGHETTI SUPPER -- HALIFAX SCHOOL**  
**246 BRANCH ROAD, WEST HALIFAX VT**  
**FRIDAY, FEB. 7, 2020, 5:00 PM TO 6:30 PM**  
**\$ 8 ADULT. \$ 5 STUDENT. \$ 25 FAMILY OF 4+**

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