

MARCH 2020

HALIFAX NEWS

Halifax Had a Ski Area



Like many of the neighborhood ski areas that “popped up like wildflowers” in Vermont after Wallace “Bunny” Bertram created the Model T-powered rope tow, the North River Ski Trails, Inc. on Route 112 near Fowler Road did not succeed.

In recent years, largely through the efforts of Jeremy Davis, interest in so-called “Lost Ski Areas” has grown. Davis has published books on the subject and offers information online at www.NELSAP.org, a site that welcomes memories and photos of New England ski area history. He posted, “North River Trails was a small, rope-tow area in the Town of Halifax” adding, “He found the area on a ski map published in 1948 by Vermont Life. Anybody else remember this one?”

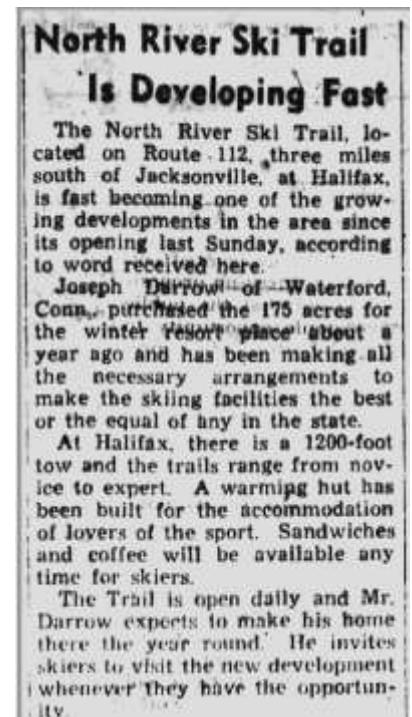
Frank M. Stone remembered it in his 1980 interview with Bernice Barnett and Elaine Fairbanks for the Halifax town history. He told them that he and his family “took timber and removed stubs” from the mountain behind the Niles Cemetery on the former Loren Dean Farm. The ski tow was set up by Joseph Darrow, who operated the business starting in 1948.

Bernice remembered the lines of parked cars along Rte. #112 when the area was open; she was friends with the Darrow children at Valley School. During our last writing project for the newsletter, Bernice and I were searching for anyone who had skied or worked there. She helped me connect with a volunteer at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital who said she had lived in Halifax and, it turned out, had worked making beds in the bunkroom at the ski area.

Doug Parkhurst put me in touch with Bud Bemis of Jacksonville, who skied at North River Trails as a teenager. Bud remembered details of the tow, propelled by a model T engine, the gears and pulleys attached to trees, and how the rope would burn through his gloves. He would park at Wesley Stone’s, and ski/walk along the road up to the tow. Bud still bears a scar from an accident involving the sharp end of his ski pole. Conditions could be rough, but he recalls some pretty good downhill skiing.

First-hand stories are scarce. Detailed information and chronology, however, can be gleaned from town records and online newspapers.

- January 11, 1947: Sidney W. Bliss of Halifax to Joseph Darrow, Jr. and Thelma E. Darrow of Waterford, New London, Connecticut, 168 acres, bounded north by lands now or formerly of Frank B. Stone, east and south by lands of Frank H. Stone and Frank W. Fowler, and west on the road leading from the North River Rd. (#112) to Christian Hill (Fowler Road) excepting and reserving the Niles Cemetery. [V.24: p43].



- January 4, 1948: Opening day of the “North River Ski Trails.” It closed by March 19th.
- November 23, 1948: Joseph and Thelma Darrow leased their property to a newly formed Corporation named “North River Ski Area, Inc.” that operated the area during the winters of 1949, 1950 and possibly 1951.
- June 6, 1951: Joseph and Thelma Darrow convey 168 acres to Arthur M. and Geneva C. Purington. [V24:p291]
- June 21, 1951: North River Ski Area, Inc. surrenders its lease of November 23, 1948 since the Puringtons now own the property, with a period of six months right to remove their equipment. [V24:p292]

The earliest newspaper reference appeared in *The Reformer* in November 1947. “South Halifax: Ernest Pierce is helping Joseph Darrow in building a ski tow and bunks in a shed attached to the house. Mr. Darrow has closed the antique shop for this season.”



Ad from Brattleboro Reformer of Jan 3, 1948

Next came the announcement for opening day, January 3, 1948. On January 5, 1948, *The Reformer* wrote, “Southern Vermont’s newest ski development, North River Ski Trails on Route 112 in Halifax, three miles south of Jacksonville, began operations Sunday with excellent skiing enjoyed by a good-sized crowd. A 1,200-foot rope tow takes skiers to the top of an intermediate slope. Members of the Brattleboro Ski Patrol were in attendance Sunday and earlier helped to break out trails through the deep snow cover. The North River proprietor, Joseph Darrow, plans to operate the tow every good skiing day throughout the season. A warming hut will be open for skiers.”

Weekly updates on conditions and attendance reported in multiple newspapers indicate a highly successful opening season. The area closed only one weekend due to poor conditions and another because “the owner, Joseph Darrow, Jr. was called to New London, CT by the serious illness of his father.” Rain in mid-March spoiled hopes for continued skiing, and the area closed for the season.

During the 1949 season, snow famine delayed the opening to February 1st. Reports indicate the area received its “best of the winter snow fall” in mid-March. North River reporting excellent conditions on March 21st with 100 skiers on Saturday, the crowd swelled by members of the Edelweiss Ski Club of Greenfield, Massachusetts.



Ad from North Adams Transcript of Feb 6, 1948

During the 1950 season, there are few reports until an optimistic one in March, which refers to most ski areas having been on the verge of disaster in February.

Clearly, the best skiing in Halifax happened during the winter of 1948. The next two seasons were marred by weather and poor attendance. North River Trails, despite its dollar-a-day rate, faced increased competition from nearby Hogback and Dutch Hill. Both areas were rapidly expanding, offered user friendly, faster T-Bar lifts, parking lots and ski lodges, and advertised in the Boston papers.

After his downhill enterprise in Halifax, Joseph Gilbert Darrow, Jr. returned to Waterford, Connecticut for a few years. He moved to California and died in Los Angeles in 1971.

~Constance Lancaster, Halifax Historical Society



A white-out snowfall in February offered a quiet pause between ice storms

TOWN NEWS

2/24-3/17: BROADBAND FOR HALIFAX? YOU TELL US.

The Broadband Committee Urges Everyone to Complete the WRC Survey by March 17, 2020. To understand fully the need for high-speed internet in Halifax and other Windham County towns, the Windham Regional

Commission (WRC) is conducting a survey. **The Broadband Committee is urging every Halifax resident to take the survey online, or, if online isn't possible, on paper.**

The survey can be found online at <http://www.windhamregional.org/broadbandsurvey>. The link can also be found at <https://halifaxvermont.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/halifaxvermont>. Paper copies are available at the Town Office.

It takes 15 minutes or less to answer all questions. All information collected will be kept confidential by the WRC study team. All survey responses must be completed by March 17.

We need all full and part-time residents, both renters and property owners, to complete the survey. High participation will make the survey results accurate. In addition, high participation will indicate to the WRC study team that Halifax has a critical need that should be given the highest priority.

The Broadband Committee is also recommending a YES vote at Town Meeting on Article 3, whether Halifax should form the Deerfield Valley Communications Union District. **You must be present at Town Meeting to vote.** The Committee will present at both Town Meeting and the Information Session the reasons why it recommends the YES vote and will answer your questions. We hope to see you there.



2/28: SPAGHETTI SUPPER TO BENEFIT OUR SCHOOL, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 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! Postponed from the original date of Feb. 7th by wild storm. \$ 8 adults; \$ 5 students; \$ 25 family of 4 or more. Tickets at the door or call 368-2888 for more information.

3/3: TOWN MEETING FIRST TUESDAY IN MARCH

See you at the Halifax School down in the Multipurpose Room at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 3, 2020. And be sure to vote that same day in that same location. Polls are open from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m.

3/20: SENIOR MEAL (CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN HALIFAX)

Friday, March 20, 2020 is the next meal at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax, serving at noon with Heidi's homemade rolls and dessert bars. 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).

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. 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!!!

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

On Jan. 24, five men responded to a call for a woman that fell on the ice and broke her leg and ankle. Colrain ambulance transported to Brattleboro Hospital.

On Feb. 1, five men and one truck responded to an electric pole fire on Collins Road. A squirrel shorted it out. There was no actual fire. But the poor squirrel lost its life because he went where he should have not gone.

On Feb. 18, three men met Marlboro rescue on Lucier Road in Thomas Hill, Halifax for a possible stroke. Rescue Inc. transported.

SORROW

It is with deep grief that I tell of the passing of my beloved brother. Many of you in Halifax have met my family when they came up to visit. My brother, Douglas Stanley Waldron, passed on to heaven on February 14th at the age of 75. We have always been very close, and my heart is broken, but he is now Doug again. He fought a long, hard ten-year fight with Alzheimer's.



Yearning for spring...

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS

Wayne sees turkeys many days on his way to Jacksonville. We have had some come to the feeders here at home. He also said he saw six Red Winged Blackbirds here. That is a good sign of Spring!! I saw some of them while in New Jersey and -- a first for me -- a baby Woodpecker! Boy, was it cute, but I am not sure if it was a Downy or the larger Hairy. Also saw a Red-Bellied Woodpecker in NJ. And so very many Canadian geese, huge flocks of them in the field across the road; it was amazing when they all took off at once. It is definitely spring down in NJ. I sure do miss the sunshine and bare ground.

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

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

- Joan Courser



Bonnie and Stephan sent a startling picture of a late-night visitor to their Halifax Center home (see pic above).



On Hanson Road, we are watching the birds on the feeder: chickadees, blue jays, and white-breasted nuthatches. This month we had a new visitor: a goldfinch in winter plumage. I spotted the black squirrels on Collins Hill; I've seen two together.





HERE IS A SHORT TALE. I was walking down my long driveway in mid-February when I noticed a tunnel under the new-fallen snow, running right across the driveway. Alarmingly, tire tracks sliced right through! I began casting about, looking for the little corpse. I spied a bit of charcoal grey fur poking through the snow and leaned in to view the tiny victim...when it leaped up, tunneled madly down the drive, then scabbled up the embankment of snow and burst through the snowy top (see action shot) to make a getaway into the woods. It was a short-tailed shrew. The short-tailed shrew is an uncommon sort of mammal: it is venomous. Its bite can kill small rodents it wants to eat; the bite causes pain in humans. *-Laurel*

Have you seen the super-bright planet Venus lately? It's hard to miss at the moment. It's visible right after sunset, hanging in the western sky for a few hours. It will shine brightly until May 2020.

WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

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 the road. 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, 368-2439). The 5 animals are Moose (tracks #9), Black Bear (tracks #35), Bobcat (tracks #7), River Otter (tracks #23), and Fisher.



Newsletter

P O Box 27

West Halifax VT 05358



Fairy forest between Hanson Road and Brook Road

Halifax News

MARCH 2020

SPAGHETTI SUPPER *RESCHEDULED* --

HALIFAX SCHOOL

246 BRANCH ROAD, WEST HALIFAX VT

FRIDAY, FEB. 28, 2020, 5:00 PM TO 6:30 PM

\$ 8 ADULT. \$ 5 STUDENT. \$ 25 FAMILY OF 4+

NEWSLETTER - Send your Halifax story to Laurel LaurelACopeland@gmail.com

or Joan JWCinVt@gmail.com

(802.368.7733; PO Box 27 05358).



The morning sun on Feb. 7, 2020 after the ice storm

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