

NOVEMBER 2020

HALIFAX NEWS

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HALIFAX UNION SOCIETY

By David Jones, Halifax, Vermont

On June 18, 1891, ten citizens of Halifax, Vermont formed the Halifax Center Union Society and agreed to take ownership of the Baptists' building in Halifax Center in exchange for a promise to maintain it for religious use.

The idea of a "Union Society" was not uncommon at the time. In small towns like ours, neighbors formed Union Societies when a church was desired but no single denomination had enough members to maintain a building or hire a minister. It was also common for local pastors to organize cooperative Union services and picnics. In cities, Union Societies were formed to serve common purposes such as publishing inter-denominational Sunday school booklets.

Our Union Society began with one valuable asset and was quickly favored by a second:

- First, in 1891, we gained ownership from the Baptists of a church building with excellent acoustics and a lovely setting.
- Second, in 1893, the Society received a gift of \$1,000 from Nabbe Allen and, after her death later that year, received an additional \$5,000 she had designated in her will. These gifts paid for current expenses and provided an endowment of about \$5,600, which would be the equivalent of \$150,000 today.



Nine days after the Union Society was formed, 15 additional members were elected. Membership then declined slowly; in the forty years that followed, only 16 additional members joined to replace those who had moved away or passed on. There were never more than 30 members until the early 1930s.

Over the years, income from Nabbe Allen's bequest financed most of the costs of pastoral leadership, building maintenance, contributions to the West Halifax church, and support for summer Sunday school programs operated in cooperation with the West Halifax church. Nabbe Allen's gift provided the means for the Society to function, and the terms of her bequest set the ground rules for *how* the Society would function.

The first use of the building that generated local newspaper coverage was for services led by Rev. Willard Streeter, a nephew of one of the 15 original incorporators. In 1897, shortly before his Divinity School graduation and ordination into the Congregational ministry, Rev. Streeter organized the Christian Endeavor Society, which held services here. Membership in the Christian Endeavor Society grew to 54 by the time he moved to Exeter, NH, in 1901. The 54 included five of the original Union Society incorporators, Rev. Streeter, and five young adults who later became members of the Union Society in the 1930s. The other 43 members, most of whom we believe were children and young adults, did not join the Union Society.

Minutes of the Christian Endeavor Society business meeting on Oct. 26, 1899, include this entry: "The President should purchase a bell for the church." We know the bell was soon ordered; Connie Lancaster found this item in the Vermont Phoenix newspaper of a few weeks later, November 17, 1899: "The new bell for the Union Church has not come. We are waiting anxiously to hear it ring." Ultimately, the lasting legacy of the Christian Endeavor Society was to obtain and install the Blymyer Bell we have now.

By 1916, the Union Society was holding services only in summer, serving mainly summer residents. Pastoral leaders included Rev. Tinker, the pastor of the West Halifax Baptist church, and a few who served other towns in the surrounding area.

In 1926, Alvin R. Allen joined the Union Society. From 1933 through 1935, he campaigned through town by horse and buggy to attract new members. The records show 151 adults and 49 children joined. This was the greatest surge of membership in our history. The majority were not full-time Halifax residents, but many established Halifax families were represented, particularly the Crosiers, Vissers, Careys, and Clements. The non-residents included an Evans family from Somerville, NJ.

Nabbe Allen's bequest was still financing most of the Union Society's activities. Her bequest had included several conditions which, in the early 1930s, were updated and codified into a set of by-laws that still guide us today. These conditions include:

- That the Society will be non-denominational and without creed;
- That trustees elected by the members will be responsible to arrange for services and to maintain the building;
- That services may consist of missionary work, preaching and singing, lectures or readings, Sunday School, suppers, social and radio entertainments, charitable work, and such other activities as are commonly conducted by a modern liberal church, schoolhouse, or home.
- That no collection will be taken during any services although contributions will be gratefully received.

In 1936, in the depth of the Great Recession, the Society loaned \$6,000 to the town of Halifax. This sum represented about 80% of the Society's assets at the time. The town paid interest quarterly for a term of 30 years and fully repaid the principal in the late 1960s. The loan may have been seen as mutually beneficial when it was made, but the 30-year term limited the Society's ability to invest for capital gains during the post-war boom. As a result, the inflation-adjusted value of Nabbe Allen's bequest was substantially reduced over these years.

In the 1940s, the summer population decreased drastically due to effects of the war. The number of services was reduced to one annually, on Old Home Day. After the war, the frequency of services increased gradually to 3

per summer 1949, 5 per summer in 1954, and 10 per summer in 1957. For the first time, services were held in the evening. Numerous ministers were called to provide leadership. In 1958, the Reverends Sanford, Call, Barber, Butler, Freeman, and Club were all contacted to lead services. In the annual meeting in 1959, however, members determined that it might prove satisfactory to have just one minister for the full summer.

After Rev. Yager of Readsboro had led the congregation for two years, Rev. David Evans was chosen to lead services in 1961. Rev. Evans had joined the Society as a child of the Evans family in 1935. Rev. Evans served until his death in 1966. Malcolm Evans, the son of David Evans, served as minister from 1971 to 1974 but, in 1975, was replaced by a trio of ministers – Butler, Roy, and Eliot. We have no record of why this occurred. By 1976, attendance had dwindled, and only one service was scheduled. By 1979, services were suspended entirely.

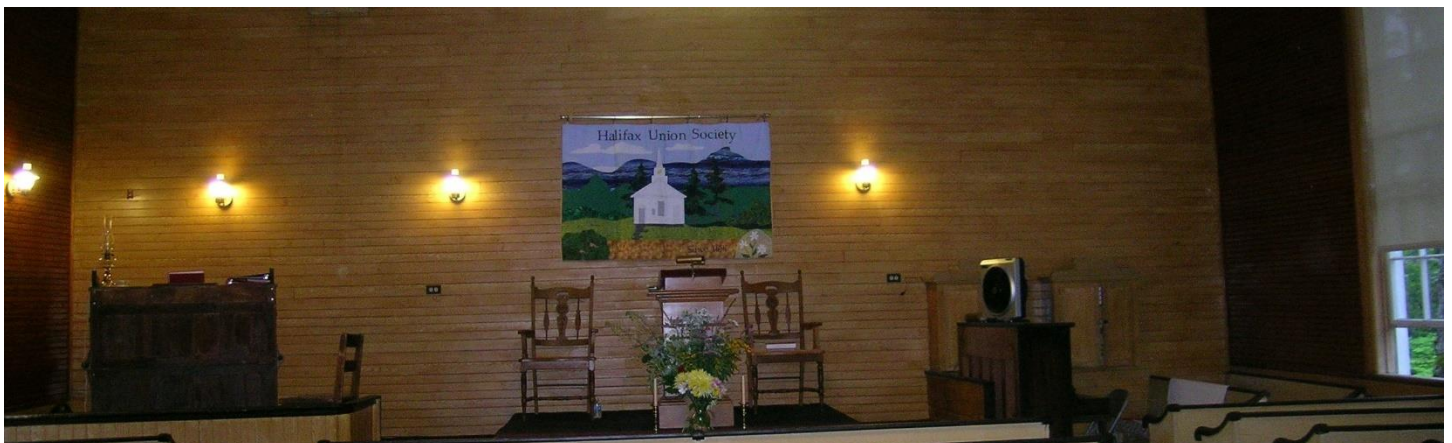
For most of the 1980s, the Society's focus was on holding concerts, hymn-sings, and lectures. The concerts organized by harpsichordist Lynda Copeland drew audiences exceeding 100. The other programs drew dozens.

In 1989, Rev. Malcolm Evans resumed as minister. He built a thriving congregation with average weekly attendance of 26. In the 1990s, trustees William and Anita Amberg were instrumental in repairing the building, organizing the program, and restoring financial health. But after Rev. Evans' death in 1996, membership again declined.

In the early 2000s, a core membership group that included elders Edith Bickle, Roger Kirk, Lillian Brigham and organist Alan Dann organized services, developed new leadership, and built membership. Their efforts led to the selection of the Rev. Dr. Marcia Dorey as pastor in 2007. Marcia has led our services for 12 years, one of the longest if not the longest tenure of any of our pastors.

And so, here we are today. Over the 129 years of our history, our members, pastors, and lay leaders have worked hard to transform this church building into a church community that we love. The full list of people that have contributed their talent, time, and resources over the years is much longer than what is recorded here. Some are still living; others have passed on. Some have produced tangible results, like the seat cushions and shades donated by Lillian Brigham and the red hymnals donated by Martha Macallister. Others have created intangible memories, such as the concerts organized and performed by Lynda Copeland, the sing-alongs produced by James and Alice Martin, and the fellowship we feel during our weekly summer services.

In 2018, we asked the Halifax community to help us maintain the building by contributing to the exterior restoration fund. The response was much better than we had hoped for. We achieved our fundraising goals due to generous contributions from our members, neighbors and friends, including a Community Grant from Coop Insurance Companies and their agent, Burns Insurance. We were able to hire Momaney Painters to do the terrific job you see today. We are deeply grateful for everyone's support. This summer of 2020, we held our community together and kept everyone safe by holding services though conference calls. We are looking forward to the time when we return to our summer church home.



TOWN NEWS

HISTORY OF HALIFAX...Gleanings from 1985 Newsletter

A. J. Tucker's tannery, located at West Halifax, was established by Nathan W. Halliday about 1836, though it has been rebuilt five times. The present owner came into possession of this property in 1860. He employs fourteen men and tans 400 sides of leather per week, manufacturing upper leather extensively. The establishment is operated by both steam and water-power, using 500 to 600 cords of bark per annum. [This tannery was located across from Guyette's. That would make it the first place on the right on Collins Road going from the village before what is now the Dann place. The tannery is now long gone.] – *History from the Gazetteer & Business Directory of Windham County, VT 1724-1884, printed July 1884.*
<https://sites.rootsweb.com/~vermont/WindhamHalifax.html>

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

Sep. 30: nine men, Whitingham Rescue (WR) and Deerfield Valley Ambulance (DVA) went to a call on Old County Road.

Oct. 5: three men and WR and DVA went to Deer Park Road; a man was transported to the hospital for chest pains.

Oct. 8: one man responded to a call on Fowler Road; a man was transported to Bennington hospital.

Oct. 11: three men responded to a residence on Hanson Road for a lift assist.

Oct. 18: five men responded to Larrabee Road for a woman having trouble breathing. There was no transport.

Oct. 18: five men and DVA responded to a residence on Green River Road for a woman having trouble breathing. She was transported to Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.

Oct. 19: six men and one truck responded to Halifax Falls for a smoke alarm sounding. The resident had closed the fireplace heatilator before he left, and that caused smoke to activate the smoke alarm. A small amount of smoke was found in the building.



The firemen still have their monthly 50/50 raffle. Tickets are available by calling Wayne at 368-7733 or any fireman. Tickets are \$ 10.00 a month.

SORROW

It is with a broken heart that I tell of the death of my Sister-in-Law, Barbara Waldron, age 74, of Ringoes, NJ (3 days from her 75th birthday). Barb was much, much, much more than a sister-in-law. We have known each other for many, many years—we met when we were 8 years old. She was married to my brother for 57 years. Losing both of them within 8 1/2 months weighs heavy on my heart. Many folks from Halifax have met Barb & Doug which is why I am letting folks know of this loss. She left two sons, Edward and Dougie, two daughters in law, five grandchildren, and more friends than I can count. I was in NJ with her when she passed suddenly. Sometimes....life is just hard.

– Joan Courser

SENIOR MEAL

Friday, November 20 is the next meal in West Halifax at the Community Hall located at 20 Brook Road. We serve at noon. The menu is: Sauerbraten (marinated beef), potato, veggie, roll and dessert. The hall will be set up for a sit-down meal. Take-out will also be available. Please call Joan at 802.368.7733 so she has some idea of how many meals to prepare and how many persons want to eat in.

– Joan Courser



JOAN'S SIGHTINGS.

I am amazed at the number and different kinds of birds at my feeders! Too many Blue Jays, plenty of Grosbeaks, Chickadees—their number has picked up a lot, a few Purple finch, Goldfinch, Titmice, Two White-breasted Nuthatch, Two Red-Breasted Nuthatch, three different kinds of Woodpeckers and my Cardinals. I had a bird I can't identify at the feeder for a short time one day (passing by to warmer climates). I have searched my bird books but don't see one that matches it. The closest I can come is it MAY be a Warbler. It was light orange-tinged at the breast and on the belly near the tail, with fairly dark brown wings with white on its wings. Maybe....a Swainson's Warbler. It was one I had never seen....quite pretty. Wayne and Lewis saw an Owl on Reed Hill at the town line. Gretchen said she has Chickadees again.



A friend writes: “Hi, Joanie! Vicki Hardgrove here. Just wanted to share a photo with you of a fledgling vulture that sat in the road for about 15 minutes before I had to get out of my car to chase it into the brush. Mama and Dada were watching from afar, so I was hesitant to interfere (getting pecked to death by a set of 3-foot vultures isn't on my bucket list). You can't see it very well, but his beak is bright yellow. Don't know if you can get it into the newsletter but wanted to share it with you. Thanks much, Vicki”

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

- Joan Courser

On Hanson Road we are seeing a few grasshoppers, flies, crows, black-eyed juncos, nuthatches, blue jays, tree swallows, chickadees, robins, turkeys, ravens, a big owl, deer, shrews, mice, squirrels, and grouse. We hear the coyotes singing some nights.

- Laurel Copeland

HUNTING SEASON SAFETY IN VERMONT.

Fall is hunting season for many. As with many activities, safety first! Vermont offers a hunting safety website and an official training program. The first phase is a free, online program; see details online:

<https://www.hunter-ed.com/vermont>.

Fall is also a great time to go hiking. Hunters and non-hunters alike should be mindful of the need to be safe.

- Obey the law. Halifax Town Clerk has seasons info and licenses.
<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/hunt/hunting-regulations>
- For the most part, hours are limited to one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset (there are a couple of exceptions).
- Always wear hunter orange clothing (cap, outer vest, or jacket) to make yourself highly visible.



- Remember to outfit horses and dogs in bright orange if they're on the trails during hunting season.
- People can post their land against hunting if they choose, but there are requirements:
<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/landowner-resources/private-land-and-public-access/what-posting-means>
- Protect yourself from tick-borne disease by using insect repellent (DEET or 20% Picaridin work best) and/or by wearing permethrin-treated clothing. Do not put permethrin on your skin or underwear. You can buy clothing that has been treated or send clothing to a firm that treats it for you or do it yourself ahead of time. You cannot just spray a little permethrin on your clothes and go outside; that won't help.
<https://www.consumerreports.org/insect-repellent/how-to-use-permethrin-on-clothing-safely/>

WILDLIFE ROAD CROSSINGS. I am building a database of when and where these 5 mammals cross a road: **Bobcat, Moose, River Otter, Black Bear, and Fisher.** If you see one crossing the road or see tracks/scat that suggest one crossed the road, please let me know the date, the precise location (GPS coordinates or photo with EXIF info is best) and the type of animal (LaurelACopeland@gmail.com, 368-2439). Thank you!

Newsletter
P O Box 27
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What a lovely place to dine al fresco



The fall foliage was glorious!

Halifax News

NOVEMBER 2020

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US Mail:** \$7 per year to cover postage
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Thank you!!!

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