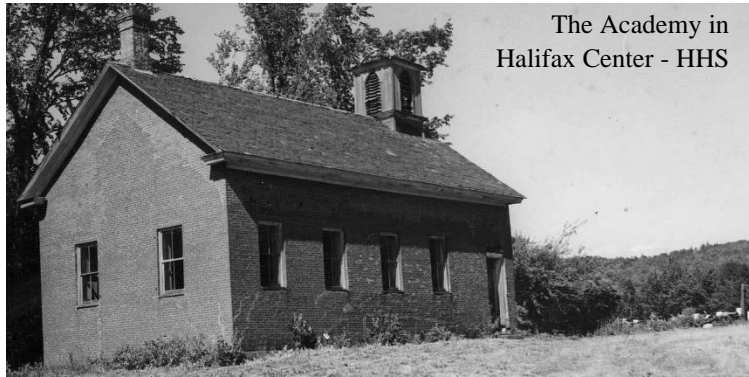


# HALIFAX NEWS

## THE SCHOOLS OF HALIFAX

*by Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont*

When the Town of Halifax was chartered in 1750, one lot of 360 acres was set aside for schools. The town contained 64 lots, each roughly square, arranged in a much larger square so that the town resembled a checkerboard. As the population increased, the need for schools near centers of commerce (hamlets or villages) also grew. West Halifax had its tannery; Halifax Center had the stagecoach stop and trading store. Schools were sited near houses, and children walked to school. Initially, residents of each district owned and managed their schools.

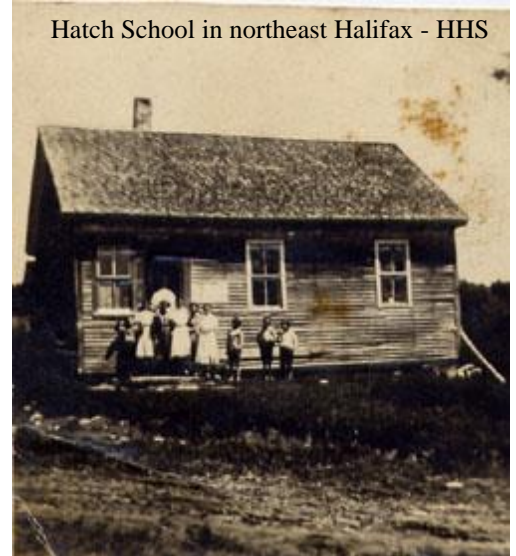


The Academy in Halifax Center - HHS

In 1784, eleven school districts were organized according to groups of families. The districts were numbered but tended to be known by family names: Fisher, Hall, Harrisville, Hatch, Niles, Pennel Hill,

Reid Hollow, Thomas Hill, Whitneyville. An exception was the Academy, a brick structure in Halifax Center (pictured above with the cemetery visible beyond it). When the population peaked at 1,758 in 1809, there were 15 schools accommodating 685 schoolchildren. In 1845, the state of Vermont centralized school management in towns.

Sometimes a private residence provided space for a school while its building was under construction. For example, a room over the dairy (now the kitchen) at 1581 Hanson Road, my mother's house, was the schoolroom until Hatch School was built on the corner of Hanson Road and Hatch School Road. That building, pictured at right, is now gone, although I recall that part of one wall was still standing in the early 1960s.



Hatch School in northeast Halifax - HHS

In 1856, McClellan drew a map showing the schools in existence at that time; his map includes the family names resident throughout the town. A slightly different representation of the town of Halifax drawn in 1869 by Beers showed the school district boundaries; there are 13 numbered districts on that map.



HARRISVILLE SCHOOL HHS



Harrisville School today

The wonderful Beers and McClellan maps, the period photographs in this article, and more of the history of Halifax schools are recorded in *Born in Controversy, History of Halifax, Vermont Volume 1* (Halifax Historical Society [HHS], 2007). All HHS photos are courtesy of Constance Lancaster, Halifax Historical Society.

As the population fell again, settlers seeking easier fields to till in more western parts, the number of school districts decreased. By early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were but four. The Annual report from 100 years ago, 1921, shows the four schoolhouses in town as: West Halifax School, Grove School, Valley School, and Harrisville School. West Halifax was in District 6; Grove School in District 4, the southeast corner of the town; Valley School was in District 2 on the western part of the North Branch River; and Harrisville was in District 10 in the central northern part of town. The remains of the Harrisville school still stand just up Moss Hollow Road from the corner at Green River Road.

School funding was a town matter from 1845 onward. Expenses were reported in the annual town report. Each school listed its annual costs—for example, the list from the Harrisville School included line items for teaching, transportation, janitor, wood, and cleaning the schoolhouse. Its budget in 1921 was just under \$1,000.

There were separate line items for all schools in the aggregate to cover the cost of supplies and repairs, truant officer, insurance, fumigation, and the school director.

Images from the 1921 town report are shown at right (photo from Halifax Historical Society).

The Plumb or West Halifax School was built in 1843 as a combination chapel and schoolhouse, as proposed by Sanford Plumb. Inside it today are the chalkboard last used in 1958—including names of former pupils and the cursive alphabet across the top—and many other relics from Halifax’s history. In October 1958, the new school building was completed, and the children walked up the hill on Branch Road to occupy it. The Plumb building housed the Halifax Fire Company for 20 years then was conveyed to the Halifax Historical Society.

Charlotte Miner wrote about the Valley and West Halifax schools (see September 2019 Halifax Newsletter). She recalled,

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

Harrisville School	
Grace Hill, teaching,	\$ 722 00
R. I. Burnett, transportation,	26 00
Mrs. Church, transportation,	18 00
A. H. Ryder, transportation,	177 80
Burton Hill, janitor,	4 00
A. H. Ryder, wood,	16 00
Mrs. Canedy, cleaning school house,	3 00
Miscellaneous	
Miss Eddy,	\$ 26 49
Insurance,	11 78
Fumigation by the school board, Valley and West Halifax,	13 35
Harry Learnard, truant officer,	3 00
J. C. Bowen, school director,	4 00
Freight,	23 10
L. A. Sumner, freight, labor, etc.,	15 50
<b>Total Cost,</b>	<b>\$97 22</b>
Summary of Expenses	
Teachers,	\$3,220 60
Transportation,	1,258 35
Janitors,	57 25
Fuel,	205 60
Tuitions,	249 00
Repairs,	501 05
Supplies,	346 23
Miscellaneous,	97 22
<b>Total,</b>	<b>\$5,935 30</b>



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.

Today few of the small 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century schools remain standing. In Halifax, we are lucky to have the District schools identified with their numbers. I am told we have Wayne Courser to thank for this feat. As you drive around, you may spot the white signs saying "District #[n]." If you choose to undertake this treasure hunt, you may want the Beers and McClellan maps to guide you. But be forewarned: many of the roads where the old schools stood are no longer drivable.

## TOWN NEWS

**APPRECIATION:** A big shout-out to **Joan Courser** who has been provisioning, cooking, packaging, and handing out Senior Meal all on her own for the ENTIRE PAST YEAR! Her solo year putting on Senior Meal is of course caused by the coronavirus pandemic, but she has never faltered nor failed to deliver an excellent dinner. She deserves a big round of applause as soon as we can get together again in person. Joan reported that 18 seniors came to pick up Senior Meal in March, and "24 meals went out; of course, they love New England boiled dinner. Hopefully, it will continue to do well. Our 21st. year! Us and Bellows Falls are the longest running ones in Vt. I will do it as long as I am able." Thank you, Joan!

## SENIOR MEAL

Friday, April 16 is Halifax's next Senior Meal. The menu is beef stew, coleslaw, rolls, and a dessert. Meals are still take-out only. They may be picked up from 11 AM until 1 PM at the Community Hall located at 20 Brook Road in West Halifax. A free-will donation of \$3.00 is suggested. All seniors are welcome.

Call Joan @ **802-368-7733** if you would like to pick up a meal.

– Joan Courser

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

On March 13, one truck and three men responded to Guilford to 'cover' their station They were there for five hours on the mutual aid call.

On March 14, three men responded to a call on Sprague Road. It turned out to be an accidental push on the lifeline button.

On March 14, one Halifax person and Whitingham Rescue responded to LaRock Lane. Deerfield Valley Rescue transported the patient to Brattleboro hospital with a severe headache.

## THANK YOU, AMANDA!

Amanda Ryan assembled COVID Care Baskets for more than three dozen Halifax seniors. Her care baskets included treats (e.g., sugar-free or gluten-free goodies), gift cards to the Jacksonville General Store, postage stamps, puzzles and other small items. The thoughtfully put together care baskets were packaged in reusable bags and carriers. She raised the funds, did all the shopping and assembling, and got a little cheery help with the deliveries. What a lovely thing to do!

## HEALTH – GETTING A COVID-19 VACCINE IN VERMONT

You can register for the vaccine to prevent COVID-19 at the Vermont Department of Health website:

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/myvaccine> or  
<https://vermont.force.com/events/s/selfregistration>.

For help making an account, please call **(802) 863-7240**.

When you are eligible to get an appointment, return to your registered account and book a time and location.

For help making an online appointment, call **(855) 722-7878**.

**NEW: All Veterans, their spouses and caregivers** can now get COVID-19 vaccinations from the VA under the **SAVE LIVES Act** signed into law March 24, 2021. Covered individuals can receive a vaccine from VA due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, **including Veterans who are not eligible to enroll in VA health care**. Sign up online: [COVID-19 vaccines: Stay informed and help us prepare | Veterans Affairs](#). Or call for help: MyVA411 main information line at [800-698-2411](#) (TTY: [711](#)).

## ENVIRONMENT

Woolly adelgids (uh-DELL-jids) have been found in Halifax. Woolly adelgids are a true bug accidentally introduced near Richmond, Virginia, in 1951. They are destructive to eastern hemlocks. The best treatment of woolly adelgids on a small tree is to spray the tree with horticultural oils. Spray in spring after the eggs hatch but while the insects are still crawling, and follow the label instructions. This method will not work on large trees. They should be treated with a systemic insecticide by injection or soil treatment.

## SORROW

It is with sadness that I report the passing of long-time Halifax resident **Roger Dann** age 86. Roger was raised in Manhasset, Long Island, NY. He was a long-time summer resident of Lake Raponda, Wilmington, VT. He was in the Navy serving in radio communications during the Korean War. He was an avid athlete in his youth and loved all sports and anything to do with the outdoors. Roger is survived by his wife Betty, whom he married in 1999. He also leaves a brother, daughters, stepsons, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Roger was an active member of West Halifax Bible Church and is greatly missed by many. A memorial service will be held later in the spring at the West Halifax Bible Church with a Christian burial to follow. If friends desire, gifts in his memory may be made to the Halifax Bible Church c/o Covey Allen & Shea Funeral Home, P.O. Box 215, Wilmington, VT 05363.

Some will remember **Wanda Dresser**, wife of Pastor Jim Dresser. They were at the Bible church in West Halifax for about five years. Wanda passed to heaven on March 11, 2021. They had retired to Montana. She is missed and mourned by many from many, many states as they were Pastor and wife at many churches with Village Missions. She was a dear, dear friend.

- Joan Courser

## JOAN'S SIGHTINGS.

A Bobcat was seen by Tim Wilson & Isabelle near Reed Hill Road. They were also thrilled to see a pair of Owls. Many Turkey are being seen in Halifax. Joan & Wayne have 12 to 13 come nearly every day. As the snow leaves more bare ground, we will most likely see less of them. Still see the fox now and then. It is okay with Joan if he finds a new area to hunt and leaves my chickens alone. We are thinking with this early spring weather the bear may be coming out of hibernation soon....another large threat to the chickens! And the bird feeders!!

I am enjoying more spring/summer birds at the feeders—Brown-headed Cowbirds, Red-Winged Blackbirds, a Robin, some new Sparrows. I hear a woodpecker pounding nearby and wonder if it is the Pileated that usually comes here; it sure sounds like it could be. I have not seen the Red breast.

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

- Joan Courser

Up on Hanson Road I saw two dozen ravens flying east at dawn one day, chortling and croaking among themselves. I heard the red-shouldered hawk in mid-March. It has a somewhat nasal, descending cry repeated twice. To me it sounds like a baby animal crying. I hope to hear the piercing drawn-out whistle of the broad-winged hawk soon. I hear pileated woodpeckers hammering and one of the smaller woodpeckers drilling away; someone is laughing—I think it is the pileated woodpecker. Listen to bird calls on Cornell Lab's *AllAboutBirds* website, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide>. I also watched otters ice-fishing down on Jacksonville Pond.

- Laurel Copeland

## HISTORY (taken from a 1985 Halifax Newsletter)

Estimated population for 1985 for the Town of Halifax: 511. Estimated total housing units for year-round occupancy: 219; vacation-recreational: 199.



Signs of the Times...and the times are mud and sugaring seasons!



From top left:  
Swanson's horse;  
sometimes it takes a backhoe to get through the mud; Old Lane on a passable day; little puppy Allie in the sugarhouse; waiting for the sap; art knows no season for David Brewster





Newsletter  
P O Box 27  
West Halifax VT 05358



Valley School, Flag Day 1898 *Photo courtesy of HHS*

# Halifax News

APRIL 2021



The Bows of the West Halifax School, c. 1911  
*Photograph from the Halifax Historical Society Courtesy of  
Constance Lancaster*

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