

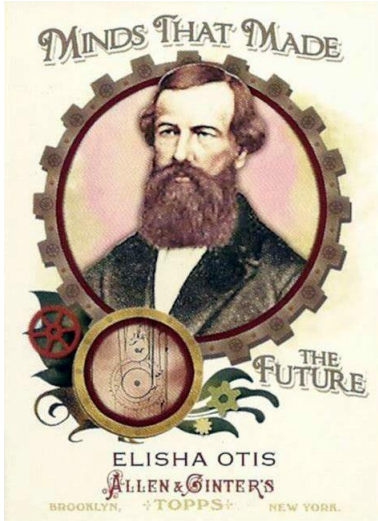
September 2022

HALIFAX NEWS

THANK YOU, ANDREW—HOW WE FOUND THE OTIS HOMESTEAD

Constance Lancaster, Halifax Historical Society

While there has never been any doubt that Elisha Graves Otis was born in Halifax, Vermont, there have been questions about exactly where in Halifax he was born. So, in 2009, when Andrew Carroll contacted Laura Sumner about visiting the Elisha Otis birthplace for his *Here is Where* project, she circled #63 on the Town's historic houses map, mailed him a copy, and asked members of the Halifax Historical Society (HHS) for more information. Soon, plans were afoot: Mr. Carroll would fly to Boston, stay overnight in Brattleboro, and visit Halifax the next day before catching an evening flight out of Boston. The pressure was on.



Volume I of the town history had been published by the HHS the previous year. It included a few details about Elisha's father, Stephen Otis, Jr., who was a joiner (master carpenter) living in Marlboro in 1801 when he oversaw construction of the Whitneyville Baptist Church. By 1806 his name appears in minutes of Halifax town meetings; often he served as lister, and for four years represented Halifax in the Vermont State Assembly. He was a leader in the local Whig party and in the temperance movement.

In order to figure out where he lived on August 03, 1811, when his sixth child, Elisha, was born, we (Laura and Connie) needed to review land records. Laura photocopied every Stephen Otis, Jr., deed, and I began locating the properties, from descriptions, using the original Halifax plat plan and cross-referencing lot numbers with owner names shown on the 1856 McClellan and 1869 Beers maps.

maps.

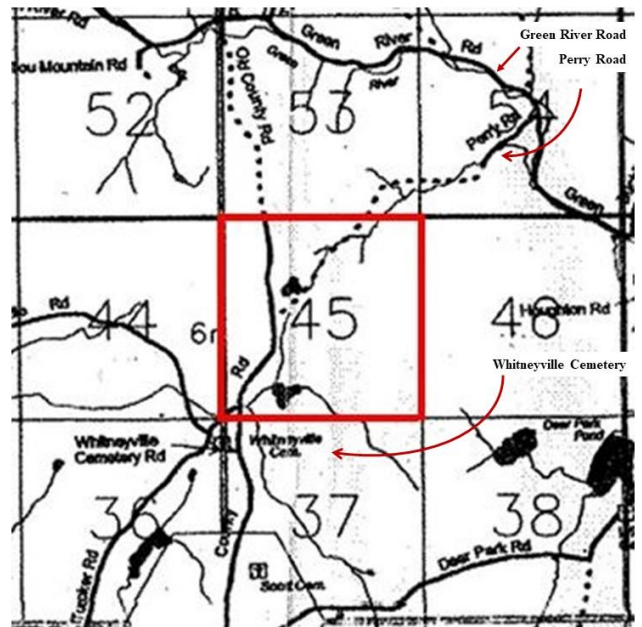
Link to McClellan map: <https://czresearch.com/newsletter/1856McClellanmapHalifaxVTsm.jpg>

Link to Beers map: <https://czresearch.com/newsletter/1869BeersmapHalifaxVTsm.jpg>

Site #63 on the historic houses poster is in Lot #31, on an abandoned road, not far from the Worden Cemetery. We learned that Stephen Otis never owned property in or anywhere close to Lot #31. His properties were consistently near Whitneyville and Harrisville, and often included Green River access. The first purchase by Stephen Otis "of Marlboro" in 1805 from Alpheus Clark was 100 acres in Lot 54; he sold this parcel in 1810 before Elisha was born. His second purchase, in 1808 from William and James Alverson, included 110 acres in Lot 45, east of the County Road (see map). By February of 1809, he had moved his wife, Phebe, and four children to Halifax.

The house on the maps may have been built by members of the Alverson family.

Once we'd identified the spot, we attempted various hikes from Old County Road to locate the house site. However, massive beaver dams proved too challenging, and soon there was no more time to explore before Andrew's visit. On that September day, Laura Sumner, Connie Lancaster, Doug Parkhurst, and Steve Sanders hiked the abandoned Perry Road with Mr. Carroll from the Green River entrance, not knowing what, if anything, we would discover. The adventure as written in *Here is Where, Discovering America's Forgotten History* is great storytelling and fun to read. Finding the Elisha Otis birthplace began



with Andrew Carroll’s question, “Where was he born?” and was answered during his visit on September 24, 2009. We are grateful.

Our planned September 3, 2022 hike to the Elisha Otis birthplace, organized by HHS President Andrea Rand, will begin at the west end of Perry Road thanks to advance clearing efforts of Gary Rand and Mike Fournier. You are invited! It should be an easier expedition this time. Also, we will be joined by an Otis family member: Carol Otis. Carol’s ancestor, Seth Otis, was Stephen’s brother. I look forward to meeting and hiking with her.

Pictured left to right: Carol Otis, Andrea Rand, Doug Parkhurst



TOWN NEWS

HALIFAX HISTORICAL SOCIETY OTIS HOMESTEAD HIKE – SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 AT 9:30 AM

The Halifax Historical Society is sponsoring a hike to the Otis homestead on Perry Road.

Meet Saturday, Sep. 3, at the Historical Society Museum next to the firehouse in West Halifax at 9:30 A.M. Because of the lack of parking at Perry Road, it will be necessary to carpool from West Halifax to the abandoned site.

Dress appropriately! Bug spray, sun protection, waterproof shoes if you don't want wet feet. If you have difficulty walking, we ask that you refrain from hiking.

There will be a brief on-site discussion of the Otis family, Perry Road, and old abandoned homes and the cellar holes that are left behind. We will find out about the intriguing opening in the stone structure pictured at right. You will meet Carol Otis, perhaps the last living descendent of the Otis family line. Her ancestors are Stephen, Sr. and Lucy Chandler Otis, who came from Connecticut to live with their son, Stephen, Jr. in the house on Perry Road where their grandson, Elisha Otis, inventor of the elevator safety brake, was born on August 3, 1811, to Stephen, Jr. and Phebe Glynn.



Elisha Graves Otis introduced the braking system for elevators in 1853. Later that year, at the 1853 New York World's Fair, Elisha demonstrated the safety system by conveying himself up into the air on an elevator-assisted platform and having the rope cut. The platform dropped a few inches then came to a halt, thus demonstrating the efficacy of his invention. Sales picked up! Otis' safety system was critical to the development of skyscrapers.

Here in Halifax in 2009, as we recount above, Constance Lancaster (Halifax Historical Society) and Laura Sumner met with Andrew Carroll, who was crisscrossing America searching out unmarked historic locations. His travels and finds are written up in his book, *Here Is Where: Discovering America's Great Forgotten History* (New York: Crown Archetype, 2013). Connie researched land records to locate the Otis homestead. The three visited the site, leading to restoration efforts we enjoy today.

BINGO NIGHT – SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 AT 6:00 PM.

Bingo in the Community Hall starts at 6:00, doors open at 5:30 pm. Great prizes! Hot dogs and snacks for sale. Sponsored by the Celebration Committee.

SENIOR MEAL IN HALIFAX – FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 AT 12:00 NOON

The next Senior Meal in Halifax will be Friday, September 16, serving at noon at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax, VT. The menu is: Sauerbraten, potato, vegetable, roll and dessert. A call to Joan is appreciated 802-368-7733. All seniors are welcome. A fee of \$3.00 is appreciated but not mandatory. Hope to see you there!



HALIFAX CELEBRATION DAY – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1 ALL DAY LONG!

Halifax Celebration will be on Saturday, October 1, 2022. Activities include Ritchie Mitnik and Ethel Lee performing 50's & 60's music at 12 noon, and a Chili Contest with great prizes—enter early! Hayrides, softball, children's games during the day. Boom Box Band playing at the fire Station at 8:00 pm!

Scarecrow Contest on Celebration Day: This contest will be judged by the Halifax Elementary Students. All scarecrow entrants must have their scarecrows created and placed at the Halifax School parking lot by Saturday, September 24. Winners will be displayed during the Celebration. You will also be able to make your own scarecrow during the Celebration Day.

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS.

August 4, 10 men and one truck responded to a medical call on Hatch School Road.
August 4 two men responded to a second medical call on Hatch School Road.
August 11, 13 men responded to a vehicle fire on Collins Road.
August 11, five men responded to a medical call on Hubbard Hill Road.
August 17, two men responded to a medical call on Jacksonville Stage Road.
August 18, two men responded to a medical call on Hatch School Road.

August 20, 6 men responded to a bicycle accident on Deer Park Road.

**Call the Fire Department BEFORE you burn brush!
Wayne (802) 368-7733 or Malcolm (802) 368-2484**

Emergency services — call 911

New Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call 988

Veterans Crisis line — call 988 then press 1, or you can text 838255

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS.

There are still lots of birds at the feeders! I am so fortunate to have four male Baltimore Orioles and some females eating the sweet Hummingbird food. Actually, the hummers have to pick their times to feed, but they are all getting plenty, and I am buying lots of sugar!!! The hummers go to lots of my flowers to feed also. They are all so beautiful. I know they will be leaving fairly soon. They fly so very far to their winter grounds that I worry about them, but that is what they do each year and what they are created to do. I always wonder if some of the same ones come back each year. From what I read in bird books, I believe it is more than likely some are the same birds! Amazing!!! I look forward to the winter birds arriving sometime soon. I love seeing them all!

I saw an Evening Grosbeak just the other day at my feeder. I still see Blue Jays; the babies raised here (second brood) are learning to feed themselves but still pester Mom or Dad to feed them if they will. Have a few that have not grown their 'top knot' on their heads yet. My Woodpecker family has grown up, and the youngsters are feeding themselves when they have to. I sure do enjoy all of 'my' birds. We had a different animal here—a groundhog (hedgehog) —it also enjoys birdseed! A couple early evenings we saw two foxes cross the land between us and the fire station. Looked like a momma and this year's young one. They were not close together. I think Momma is trying to teach her youngster to make it on his own. Like seeing them but am concerned for my chickens! Wayne reports seeing many turkeys.

- Joan Courser



Elsewhere Around Town. It is August and the season of the dragonflies. They fill the air up here on Hanson Road, mating, dropping to the ground, buzzing my hat. Also numerous are red squirrels, tiny but noisy—tsk! tsk! tsk! There are lots of goldfinches, phoebes, chickadees, crows, and turkeys along with barred owls, Eastern pewees, blue-headed and red-eyed vireos, robins, and broad-winged hawks—two of them calling and following each other through the trees. I also heard house wrens and, per Merlin Sound ID, a Carolina wren. Let the migrations begin! We had a black bear mosey up the driveway and around the turn-around, eating the ripe blackberries on his quick pass through. And down in the meadows, a doe with her twin fawns appears from time to time. I've seen lots of fritillary butterflies—"fritillary" being derived from the Latin for chessboard—and several Monarchs with their loopy flight patterns. Over Gates Pond, I saw a mature bald eagle (pictured).

- Laurel Copeland



Fire Co. Clam Bake, 2022



Bill Oglesby down the road sent a series of beautiful photographs of hummingbirds in the bee balm or just sitting.



SENIOR SOLUTIONS: NOW IS THE TIME TO APPLY FOR SEASONAL FUEL ASSISTANCE! September is here – which means it is time to sign up for Vermont’s **Seasonal Heating Fuel Assistance Program**. Seasonal Fuel Assistance can offset winter heating costs by anywhere from a few hundred to even a few thousand dollars. Let Senior Solutions help you apply through Vermont’s LIHEAP program. The program could help lower your bills if you heat with oil, kerosene, propane, electric, coal, wood pellets, or wood.

Apply now! Don’t wait. This program is income and household-size based. If your income is at or below these levels, regardless of other things you own, you qualify:

- Household of 1 – 2,096/month
- Household of 2 – 2,823/month
- Household of 3 – 3,550/month
- Household of 4 – 4,279/month

Call the Senior Solutions HelpLine at 802-885-2669, or drop by the old firehouse at 18 Beaver Street in Wilmington any 2nd or 4th Thursday from 11 am to 1 pm, or email Thom Simmons at TSimmons@seniorsolutionsvt.org, to obtain an application or receive assistance making an application over the phone, while you are still entitled to full seasonal benefits.

Newsletter
P O Box 27
West Halifax VT 05358



Day lily and rainbow



Spider web at Hatch Cemetery

Halifax News

SEPTEMBER 2022

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LaurelACopeland@gmail.com or

Joan JWCinVt@gmail.com

(PO Box 27, 05358).