A Message From Outgoing President Barb Farr

I hope you are all doing well as we enter the holiday season of a far-from-normal year. This will be my last correspondence as the outgoing President for the Waterbury Historical Society. I would like to express appreciation for being allowed to participate in a meaningful way in sharing Waterbury’s rich past through programs and PastPerfect, a web-based database of our collections that tell the story of our history. This online database includes photographs, letters, objects, Waterbury families and the compelling stories of our community, founders, and leaders.

The board and committee volunteers who dedicate their time and expertise to the WHS for programs, museum exhibits, walking tours and events are passionate to keep the history alive. Most recently, the Waterbury Women’s exhibit assembled by Jack Carter and Laura Parette was transformed into a six-part video series thanks to the creativity of the WHS incoming president, Cheryl Casey. Where there is a story to share, there is always a way, even during this time of coronavirus. This series recently won an award of excellence from the Vermont Historical Society.

The year of 2020 will go down in the books as one that most people might want to forget. In January, the WHS Program Committee had a list of fascinating programs for the membership and public that were scheduled throughout the year. One by one, they had to be cancelled or postponed to an undetermined future date. Due to the coronavirus, we couldn’t even conduct an annual meeting in person, so the membership elected to change the bylaws to adapt to electronic voting options.

Waterbury Women Exhibit Receives Award of Excellence

By Caroline Fox

In a socially distanced ceremony on October 7 at the Waterbury Municipal Office’s Steele Room, the Waterbury Women Video Project received the League of Local Historical Societies & Museums (LLHSM) Achievement Award for Excellence from the Vermont Historical Society. Recognition of outstanding work is always welcome, yet during these challenging times the award was a special boost to the spirits.

Steve Perkins and Eileen Corcoran from the Vermont Historical Society presented the award.

Feature at Winter 2020

In This Issue

- Featured Figure: Chris Palermo
- Voting Results
- 25 Club of Waterbury
- Maple Street Cattle Drive
- Birthday wishes
- History of Perkins-Parker Funeral Home
- Mystery Photo

At their last monthly meeting of the year, conducted on Zoom, Board members presented outgoing president Barb Farr (top right) with a gift certificate of appreciation to Evergreen Gardens.
By Bob Ayers

Here is a conundrum: What was the “25 Club” in Waterbury? How is it that my siblings and I grew up in our town from the late 1940s to the mid-’70s never having heard of it? Many of the prominent gentlemen in our home town, including our grandfather, Max G. Ayers, were members. To our knowledge, the “25 Club,” obviously a part of Waterbury’s history, was never mentioned to us.

Among the many Ayers family archives stashed at 18 Elm Street that have come to our attention is a large, hard-covered lined notebook of 300 pages labeled, “Property of 25 Club.” The second page lists the Club’s 37 members in 1915-1916, including names we recognize: C.B. Adams, M. G. Ayers (our grandfather, aged 25 at the time), R. W. Demeritt, C. C. Graves, B. C. Luce, V. L. Perkins, C. C. Warren, A. G. Wheeler (our great-uncle), E. W. Magnus (our next door neighbor), and many others, including a doctor and a pastor. Apparently, and not surprisingly, women were not members, though they were invited to a (usually) annual “Ladies Night.” In later years, the group met frequently at the Village Tavern, which, I think, was Clement’s Tavern on Main Street during our years there.

Throughout this journal, it is clear that the programs were planned ahead for the entire year. Early on, the gentlemen met once a month; later it seems they met twice a month. Each of the meeting topics was presented, or “read,” by a member. The source(s) of the monthly information is unclear. During the years 1924-1926, the topics included: Responsibilities of Citizenship, Cancer, The Cost of Government, Standardization of Schools, Educational Disciplines, Child Labor, Criminology, Vermont’s Major Problem, Good Roads, The Racial Problem, European Trip, Essentials of Progress, Caring for Returned Soldiers, and many more.

The final entry in the notebook is a membership list of 27 men, dated 1940, including our grandfather, who served as the secretary/treasurer. In the final entry, he reported a financial balance of $436.36. This follows with more than 20 empty pages, with the exception of two brief entries having to do with an earlier

Continued on page 7
Memories of the Maple Street Cow Drive

By Calvin Dow

That was the scenario back in the Roaring ’20s in Waterbury Center, Vermont. The Dow Farm had nine cows that had to be fed, milked, and pastured. Every day at dawn, Joe Senna, our handyman employee, would milk the cows by hand then open the wood stanchions and the cows would walk out of the barn, eager to spend their day in Mother Nature’s peaceful pasture of green grass and wildflowers.

The house and barn on Maple Street faced the entrance to Loomis Hill Road. Taking turns, one of the six Dow children would follow the cows up the dirt street (the cows knew the way) to the pasture, just north of the cemetery. Equipment for the walk was a small wheelbarrow and shovel for picking up manure and a stick for chasing dogs that liked to bark a hello at the sometimes nervous cows.

The bucolic pasture land was between Maple Street and Big Brook. Also on this land was my father’s abattoir and a fenced-in piggery. The pigs were destined to become delicious smoked ham and maple-flavored bacon. Joe built a slaughter building next to a natural spring, which he enclosed in a wooden well.

From Big Brook my father captured three pretty, speckled, red native trout to live in the well. We could watch them grow as he fed them small pieces of animal liver, which were easily on hand from his meat business. E.C. Dow’s Center Market was a big part of Waterbury Center history for 50 years.

In the back of the barn and silo, Joe built a hide house. At the abattoir, the cow skins were dried and then stored in this building. A tannery company man would collect and process them. During the summer you would avoid getting near this odiferous building.

Returning from the Maple Street chore, the young Dow student would change clothes, wash hands, and head for the dining room. At the old oak dining table sat father, mother, and six children. Every time a new child was born, another leaf was added to the table.

For breakfast, my mother served hot maple-flavored oatmeal and cold shredded wheat and corn flakes with raw, unpasteurized milk directly from our cows. Her hot buttermilk biscuits were so delicious we never put anything on them. We ate them straight, savoring the ingredients and baking powder.

Now the students prepare for their walk to the school at our big Seminary building. Classrooms were on the first floor, with auditorium and Town Library on the second floor. Dad drove his Dodge pickup truck to his Market to make pork sausage and beef burgers for sale. Mom started her endless tasks for the day while listening to classical music from Montreal AM radio. Every Saturday they broadcasted live the famous operas of the world from the Met in NYC.

That was my life back in the olden days in the paradise that was Waterbury Center, Vermont.
Mystery Photo: Can you fill in the names?

This photo is of either the high school or junior high orchestra in the 1920s, and it prompts so many questions!

If you stop and think about it, it is incredible that a small town like Waterbury/Duxbury would have an orchestra with so many stringed instruments. Was there someone in town that promoted it? Did the teacher [Lena Wallace] have a connection for inexpensive instruments? Were violins less expensive, compared to wind instruments?

Where was this picture taken? The High School didn’t have a stage until the 1930s and the community hall [now funeral home] shows no sign of ever having a stage. Does anyone have interior photos of the opera house? What was the painted background behind the curtain?

We have identified all but 4 of the people in the photo.

*Front row:* Frances Perry; Alba Cardazzo; Geraldine Garvey; Earl Graves; Melissa Lamb; Pauline Ayers; Mary Riggs; Anna Hamel; Esther Pike; Esther Sleeper

*Back row:* Raymond Flannery; _______; _______; Marjorie Willis; Lena Wallace; Beryl Thibault, Edward Lefebre; Frank Carpenter; _______; Esther Wheeler; Mary Perry; Margaret Stanley; George Ather; Donald Fields

Possible names from a May 1924 roster of the Jr Orchestra May ’24 are:

*Violins:* Albert Marchi, Dorothy Ennis, Geraldine Hill [m. Dean Cole], Irene Harvey,

*Mandolin:* Royal Atkins,

*Drummer:* Franklin Cooly

Let us know if you recognize any of the mystery four!

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**Donations**

Chris & LeeAnne Viens, $70.00

Gordon & Theresa Wood, $25.00 to newsletter

We are grateful to all those who donate throughout the year. Our Annual Appeal is currently underway. Your contributions help to keep membership dues accessible to everyone in our community. Donations also fund the wonderful programs and initiatives that keep Waterbury’s history alive!
WHS has a LOT of old slides in its collections, but no slide carousel and projector with which to better see and share them.

Do you have one of these contraptions collecting dust in your attic or basement that you would like to donate?

Do you know of someone who does?

There are hundreds of fantastic and interesting images just waiting to be shared in future WHS programs!

If you have a lead on a slide carousel and projector, please email us at waterburyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
LLHSM Award Given to Exhibit and Video Series

Continued from page 1

award to Jack Carter, Waterbury Historical Society Museum Curator, and Cheryl Casey, the producer of the Waterbury Women video series. The LLHSM Achievement Award distinguishes exceptional work by either individuals or community organizations to collect, preserve and share Vermont’s history. Usually given at the Society’s annual conference, the certificate was delivered directly to the Waterbury recipients since this year’s conference will be held virtually.

Steve Perkins, Vermont Historical Society Executive Director remarked, “The Video Series exhibited significant creativity and perseverance in response to the pandemic and could serve as a potential new model for other organizations’ exhibits in the future.”

Like so much during 2020, the video project evolved from a collaborative solution to the limitations necessitated by the pandemic. The award-winning video series is based on the Waterbury Women: Stories & Inspiration exhibit that was scheduled to open on March 26. Jack Carter had created the presentation in honor of the centennial year of the ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which granted women the right to vote. The exhibit draws on a 2007 scrapbook project sponsored by the Waterbury Public Library. This current, revised display highlights 20 women’s stories from this original project.

The stories accent the women’s distinct and singular contributions to the community and range from a tribute to Waterbury’s first woman Select Board member, to honoring a Battalion Chief of the local fire department and an account of one of Waterbury’s first women business owners. The themes are noteworthy: family heritage, personal achievement, business accomplishments, activism, and humor.

From stories of the everyday to the notable, the displays, and now the videos, highlight how every Waterbury woman’s story is a truly significant part of Waterbury’s community story.

With the onsite exhibit and its opening put on indefinite hold, Carter turned to Casey, who transformed the exhibit into a video project to share with the community online. An associate professor of communication at Champlain College, Casey captured the history of the 20 women profiled in the display with distinct video segments. The six video episodes are on the Historical Society’s YouTube channel, Facebook account, and website. Collectively, the YouTube viewings account for over 1000 engagements.

Carter is most pleased the exhibit is available to the local community and beyond, noting, “The video presentations make the exhibit accessible to a wider audience, engaging viewers with the celebration of Waterbury’s women and their achievements and accomplishments.”

As there is currently no set date for in-person viewing of the exhibit, these award-winning online videos are invaluable, providing community engagement and centering attention on these remarkable women of Waterbury.

Membership renewals are due January 1!

$10 Individual
$15 Household (2 adults)

**Special**

First-time Members Rate:
$5 for one-year membership and electronic delivery of the newsletter.

Give the gift of history to your loved ones with this special price!

Download the membership form from our website or Facebook and return to:

WHS
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Waterbury, VT 05676
Gentleman’s Club Journals Found in Family Home

Continued from page 2

membership list and a 1919 financial reference. Did the club dissolve in 1940? If so, why? Is there another notebook delineating meetings from 1940 on? The group seems to have survived the Depression years; did the impending WWII bring the organization to its end?

Because the last entry is in our grandfather’s unique and often hard to read handwriting and was passed down to our father, and thus to us, our thinking is that the 25 Club was dissolved. We think it is likely that our grandfather kept the journal and a few pieces of mail because he was the final secretary of the group and no one else knew what to do with them.

Our plan is to turn the notebook and a few pieces of mail over to the Historical Society. If you have heard of this group, apparently unique to Waterbury, please let us know by contacting me, Max Ayers’ grandson: bjayers766@comcast.net.

Bob’s siblings Dick, Betsy (Shapiro) and David assisted with this story.

Clockwise from top: A section of 25 Club meeting minutes recording the election of a new member and the resignation of another; scheduled presenters and their topics for the club’s 1923-1924 meetings; two covers from the 25 Club’s journals.

Photos courtesy of Bob Ayers.

SUBMIT CONTENT

To submit a letter to the editor, stories, or photos for an upcoming issue, email the editor at communitymgr.whs@gmail.com or send by post to:

Dr. Cheryl Casey, 1389 Kneeland Flats Rd., Waterbury Center, VT 05677.

Quarterly submission deadlines: February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15
Beloved Funeral Home Reaches the End of a Family Era, Transfers to New Ownership

By Chris Palermo

Editor’s note: This article is a selection from the forthcoming WHS book about Waterbury in the 21st century.

Founded in 1907 by Vernon L. Perkins of Warren, V. L. Perkins Company Home Furnishers and Funeral Service operated as a furniture and dry goods store on the main floor of 46 South Main Street in Waterbury with the funeral home on the second floor. Following his marriage to Vernon’s daughter Norma, Charles Parker became a licensed mortician and succeeded Vernon when he passed away.

In the mid 1940s, Charles purchased the property next door. Originally the Village fire house, the building later became the Town Hall, hosting everything from high school basketball games, boxing matches, and Town Meeting to plays and other community performances on the second floor. Locker rooms and two jail cells in the rear of the building occupied the first floor. The building went dormant following the construction of a new gymnasium at Waterbury High School on Stowe Street and was renovated to become the funeral home in 1957.

Charles passed away in 1969 and his children, Craig “Rusty” Parker and Priscilla (Parker) Palermo inherited the furniture store and funeral home. In 1979, great-grandson Chris Palermo was approached about becoming the next generation to work in the family business. A recent graduate of UVM, he agreed to come and work for a year to see if it was the right fit. On June 10, 1983, Chris purchased the furniture store and funeral home and in 1991, closed the furniture store to focus solely on funeral service and developing the newly acquired monument business. Perkins-Parker Funeral Home and Cremation Service continued to grow, providing service to an expanding number of families in the central Vermont area.

Life and business changed dramatically on the evening of August 28, 2011. Vermont, particularly along the spine of the Green Mountains, felt the torrential force of Tropical Storm Irene. Devastating flood waters engulfed communities along the Mad and Winooski Rivers, including Waterbury Village. The funeral home, in a little over an hour, received 3 feet of water on the main floor and 7 feet in the garages. Everything was lost—$100,000 worth of vehicles, and everything inside the building. The saving grace was no one was in the care of the funeral home during the flood.

Rebuilding the structure from the basement to the ceiling of the first floor took 4 months of working every day. Throughout the reconstruction, the funeral home never missed a beat, continuing to provide services, working cooperatively with other funeral homes to do preparation and utilizing churches, parish halls and the American Legion to hold services. It was remarkable how the community came together with the help of volunteers from surrounding towns.

On September 21, 2020, following 41 years in funeral service, 37 of those years as a business owner, Chris decided it was time to retire and closed on the sale of the funeral home and all assets with Jim Kennedy, owner of Lavigne Funeral Home in Winooski.
“The funeral home will continue to operate as Perkins-Parker Funeral Home and Cremation Service at its current location in Waterbury and John Woodruff, my longtime and invaluable employee, will continue his vocation with Perkins-Parker. I am truly thankful for my years of service to the families of central Vermont and the trust and faith they put in me and those who worked with me. It’s been a remarkable and fulfilling journey.

After 41 years and serving nearly 4000 families, I can unequivocally say that serving families in funeral service was the best decision I could have ever made. Four generations, 113 years of continued family ownership and management, it has been truly a remarkable journey and a vocation I have cherished every day. I am confident that moving forward Perkins-Parker Funeral Home and Cremation Service will continue its strong tradition of helping families get where they need to be and those who have passed, where they need to go.”

~ Chris Palermo
On September 21, 2020, Chris Palermo retired from his lifelong vocation as Funeral Director and Owner of Perkins Parker Funeral Home & Cremation Service and V. L. Perkins Co. Cemetery Memorials. After 41 years, serving nearly 4000 families in Waterbury and surrounding central Vermont communities, Chris looks forward to new opportunities, spending time with family and traveling. Bringing to a close 113 years and 4 generations of continuous family stewardship and service was bittersweet, but he takes comfort in knowing that a change in ownership will bring new vision and energy.

In addition to operating the funeral home, Chris served our community in a variety of different settings. He served on the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, and dedicated 16 years of service on the Select Board. When asked what he believed was his greatest accomplishment on the Select Board, Chris shared that it was a significant negotiation with the state in relation to the Park & Ride located off Lincoln Street. As part of the negotiation, the state was to gift the Park & Ride property to the municipality following its relocation to another area in Town. Unable to find a suitable place, the Select Board brokered a compensation package that brought the community a one-time payment of $250,000.00 and an annual stipend for payment in lieu of taxes. The Park & Ride today remains a great asset to our community!

Chris’s leadership in our Waterbury Historical Society marks another significant contribution of his volunteer services. In 2011, Chris was invited to join the Board of Directors. At that time, the Society was in a stuck place, not knowing if we could remain in the Janes’ building as part of the Library. Using his considerable skill sets, Chris moved us forward in the following ways:

- He reached out to the Vermont Historical Society requesting guidance in developing some much needed policies and procedures. A professional consultant was hired to assist with this process. It is one of the foundational pieces that re-energized us.
- It was Chris’ wisdom and experience with the Town that led us to ask Town taxpayers for financial assistance so that we could purchase and implement a digital archive. This funding made it possible for our Society to hire a summer intern who began the task of inputting our vast inventory into the software.
- Understanding the importance of keeping the community aware of our activities, Chris made certain that the Society entered a summary in our town’s Annual Report each year.
- Chris led the way to a new recognition of our role in collecting artifacts: The citizens of Waterbury are the owners of the collection and it is the Waterbury Historical Society that serves as the caretaker.
- Chris worked tirelessly to claim much of the Janes’ building for our History Center. Much of this task was accomplished via participation in a Capital Campaign fundraising committee. He was adamant that WHS pay our fair share, and we did!
- Chris gathered some helpers to accomplish the daunting and exhausting work of safely moving the collection to a climate-controlled storage unit.
- Working closely with the cabinet builders and a security system company, Chris oversaw the restoration of the new space in the Janes building.

There is a Palermo Room in our History Center in honor of a very generous donation from Terri and Chris Palermo. Chris’ commitment to the Waterbury Historical Society was pivotal to the success we now enjoy, and we are grateful!

Now it is time for Chris and his family to do some digging into a bucket list of hopes and dreams for their future. Chris reports that he wishes to use his experience in the funeral business to act as a legislative lobbyist for the Vermont Funeral Directors Association. He currently serves as their President. Chris and Terri purchased land owned by Terri’s family in Morrisville, where they have built their new retirement home. Chris has hopes of planting an apple orchard on some of this land. They have always dreamed of traveling to visit their family roots – Terri’s roots are in Ireland & Scotland, and Chris’s are in Italy. They could also “dig” some travel in our country, visiting national parks and also enjoy some time exploring Canada. Our very best wishes go to the Palermo family!
The History Center is open Monday—Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Located on the second floor of the Municipal Building in the newly renovated Dr. Janes house, the museum is free and open to the public. The Historical Society’s vast collections rotate through the exhibits, which are carefully assembled by our Curator. Stop by and learn something new about Waterbury’s place in Vermont and national history!

**UPDATE:** The History Center remains closed until further notice, for the safety of our members, staff, and the public.

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**History Center Acquisition Criteria**

Have something to donate to the museum? See if your item(s) meet these criteria:

- **Relevance:** Well-documented link to Waterbury.
- **Non-duplication:** Unique to the existing holdings of the collection.
- **Duration:** Intent is to officially add the item to the collection for the WHS to keep or sell (where proceeds will only go to benefit the Society).
- **Title and Provenance:** Deed of gift or bill of sale should accompany all items.
- **Restrictions:** Items will not be held by the donor to criteria about use, display, or future disposition.
- **Physical condition:** No extensive conservation required.
- **Rights:** Transfer of item(s) includes all pertinent rights (literary, property, copyright, etc.).
- **Costs:** Management and care funds should accompany the donation process.
- **Tax law compliance:** Gifts must be in compliance with applicable tax law.

For more information or to begin the donation process, contact: archivistwhs@gmail.com

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**TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED**

Due to pandemic restrictions on access to our offices, thank you for your patience!
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Donations Welcome - We are a community organization that deeply appreciates the support and interest of our community. You can donate by check to the PO Box below.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

$10 per person
$15 per family (couple and children under 18)

(Membership expirations can be found on your mailing label or in your winter email delivery.)

Please help the Historical Society GO GREEN!

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