



TOWNSHEND HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

N E W S L E T T E R

Spring/Summer 2015

PO BOX 202, TOWNSHEND, VT 05353

www.townshendvt.org

History Tour: Cellar Holes and House Sites

Sunday, May 17 at 1:30 pm

The plan is to check out cellar holes and house sites in West Townshend that are fairly accessible to the road. If there is time after the "accessible tour," we may do a second tour for real hikers to a less accessible location.

We will meet at the West Townshend Country Store to car pool. Bring sturdy, waterproof shoes, insect repellent, hats, etc. (If in doubt about the weather, call Charlie Marchant before 11:30 am on Sunday at 365-7937.)



The Free Man's Oath of Loyalty in 1855*

Memories from Charles Gray Atwood Part VII

Next summer I went back home and the following September I was twenty-one. I had been in Brattleboro nearly five years. Now, according to the Vermont law, I was a "free man." I no longer had to turn my wages in to my father. I got (from Father) my "freedom suit of clothes;" fifty dollars; and a new trunk. In November I cast my first vote. It was for my father to go to the State Legislature; and he was elected. I had to take the free man's oath of loyalty to my State and my Country. I could go where I pleased; and do what I liked.



Manchester Depot Courtesy of Landscape Changes

My sister Nellie was now married. Her husband, Alfred Porter, got me a position in a grocery store, in what was then "way out West" - Madison, Wisconsin. So, Father drove me over the mountain

to Manchester with new clothes, new trunk, and heavy heart. Here I took a train for Troy N.Y. And soon out West, taking fifteen days and about as many changes of train. We had no sleepers. I sat up. My freedom boots were so tight that I did not dare to take them off, lest I couldn't get them on again. When I did take them off in Madison, my feet were nearly done for. I feel that they've never been right since.

I found a good hotel, The Washington. The Western people were very cordial. The first morning I came down to breakfast, the hotel clerk invited me to go fishing. But it was Sunday, and I knew what my Mother would think of fishing on that day. So, I said, a little smugly perhaps, that I was going to church. The clerk decided to come along with me. After church a dear old lady spoke to me, and guessing I was a stranger, invited me home to dinner with her. As long as I was in Madison, she and her family were my best friends.

I worked for a man named Foote. He was very kind to me, and so was his wife, but she was queer. She had two little girls. She used to bring them into the store, setting them up at the counter, and giving them each a glass of wine.

I boarded with a woman who kept a girls' boarding school. One day I took several of the girls skating. Trying to show off, I ventured out too far. The ice there was thin, and in I went. The girls fished me out – quite a little of my aplomb gone.

The above selection was excerpted from "A Bit of Family History: Memories by Charles Gray Atwood." From Joyce Coil.

* Voter's qualifications and oaths: Every man of the full age of twenty-one years who is a citizen of Vermont, having resided in this State for the period established by the General Assembly and who is of a quiet and peaceable behavior, and will take the following oath or affirmation, shall be entitled to all the privileges of a voter of this state:

You solemnly swear (or affirm) that whenever you give your vote or suffrage, touching any matter that concerns the state of Vermont, you will do it so as in your conscience you shall judge will most conduce to the best good of the same, as established by the Constitution, without fear or favor of any man.



Memories of West Townshend from Calvin Dean (1921-2015)

The following memories, written by Cal Dean as a tribute to Walter and Bill VanNess, also serve as a fitting tribute to Cal Dean himself. The letter tells us about the writer's early history in West Townshend, and reveals what a fine individual he was.

Here is Cal's letter of April 25, 2004:

Enclosed are some pictures of the historic old VanNess garage in West Townshend that I discovered in my collection. Few people that drive by today realize that this building was very important, but the garage and its proprietors, W. W. VanNess and his son Walter had a tremendous effect on the life of everyone in town and around a wide area.

I was riding my bicycle in front of the garage when Carl Joy, took the picture. When I look at the pictures [of me on my bike] it becomes easy to remember that George Sanderson once had a business building bicycles and sold me the one I am riding for \$7.00.

My sister Eula and I lived directly across the road in the old hotel building [in West Townshend] with our grandparents, Charles and Anna Dean, who moved up every Spring to their farm on Windham Hill, taking their cows and horses with them –where we raised Green Mt. Potatoes and Gilfeather turnips, returning in the Fall because of the severe winters.

The potatoes and turnips were put into bins at what was then the Grout and Dean [General Store] run by our father, Ray W. Dean.

I used to deliver the Grit [newspaper] to W. W. VanNess and his wife, Emma at their nice brick house and I could hardly wait for the next one to arrive, as Mrs. VanNess always had a custard pie sitting there, that I can still see and taste [it] to this day.

All the kids in town of course went to the two-room school, that luckily is still standing, and we always hoped that W. W. VanNess would be shoeing a horse or repairing a wagon wheel at the old Tannery Building just across the old stone bridge, as he had to do this work sometimes for farmers as well as running the garage with his son Walter.

W. W. Van Ness, or “Bill,” as everyone called him, was a giant of a man to us kids; we felt that he could lift the whole world. Though he might look intimidating to someone else, we knew he would stop what he was doing when he could --give us a grin, and visit --making us feel really important.

One time I broke my sled and took it to the garage where Walt [VanNess] took the time to repair it. When he was done I handed him 25 cents that I had saved. I can still see the look on his face and hear his voice as he informed me that he had no change and I would have to pay him later. Today I know it was his way of saying, “happy sledding.”

Nathan Lawrence used to cut hair in the office of the old Glove Factory [in West Townshend] that was recently made into a restaurant and now closed. One time when we were waiting for hair cuts and Walt was in there too, and he took us through the building where all the machinery was just sitting idle, with gloves all cut out ready to sew and no one --only ghosts --to do so. What a sad and eerie feeling to remember.

I used to spend some time at the garage with my grandfather when he was having work done. The garage was a social gathering place as many came from miles around for some type of repair, or to report someone ill or injured, or to use the telephone, as few had one or even electric lights. The VanNesses had a Model T at their garage for emergency, with runners in front and tracks on back that they used to transport the mail and sometimes

even the Doctor up Windham way, or way up beyond the Herrick place.

Yes, the old Tannery building is gone where Bill sometimes worked, and the old building where they once made wagon wheels by water power on Tannery Brook --the main bridge too --all victims of the 38 Flood. The Dunbar and Carr place by fire, and the Dam sadly took many more. The old hotel is gone and the house where the post office was at that time --thanks to man and his ability to destroy everything.

I can only hope that the VanNess Garage will be allowed to stand forever, as a reminder of a better time when people were more thoughtful and friendly with each other, and [will] serve as a memorial to Bill and Walt VanNess who gladly gave of themselves to help so many others.



Barn Tour

A Barn Tour is planned for October, 2015. We hope to have 10-15 barns on the tour that can be viewed from the roadside. A map and brochure will tell a little about each barn. In addition, some of the barns may be open to the public; buffalo, emus, horses may be on view; and produce may also be available on our special day. After the tour, a “virtual barn tour” will appear on our new web site.

New Web Site Coming

We look forward to welcoming you to our new web site that should be available by the Fall. Stay tuned: www.townshendvt.org. Although the old site has served us well, the time had come for a face lift. Our new site will make us more accessible to many who browse the web from phones and tablets. This will encourage visitors to the area to take tours to see our houses, barns, and bridges. Our photo collection – over 1400 in all --will be available, as well as newsletter archives, exhibits, and virtual tours.



P.O. Box 202 Townshend Vt 05353

Maple Sugar Tour Report

The tour this year was a great success. We had four sugars makers on the tour including Charles Marchant, Robert DuGrenier, Leigh Merinoff, and Mitchell Putnam. The “Tasting” at the West Townshend Country Store was a great hit! All of the sugar houses reported that it was one of the best years on record.

SAVE THE DATE

WINDHAM COUNTY HISTORY FAIR

Saturday, August 22, 2015

10 am – 4 pm; Newfane Common

Come see the Townshend booth.

The fair is free and will include exhibits by Windham County Historical Societies, demonstrations, crafter, and history talks. Tours of the Courthouse (by Hon. Judge Wesley), the Railroad Station, and the Jailhouse. Raffles, food, and much more will be happening. Bring your antiques for professional appraisal at the antique booth.

