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**Motor Car Spells End of an Era
for Liverymen and Blacksmiths**

From the Brattleboro Reformer in 1935
A New Machine

Judge John Ware remembers the arrival of the motor car in Townshend in the 1890's. In those days the noisy, unfamiliar vehicles caused horses to panic and so were a real threat to drivers of buggies and wagons, and to riders of horses.

Judge Ware tells us, "The first automobile that came to Townshend . . . was driven by Mr. Cushman of New York and stopped at Mr. Taft's [livery] in Townshend village. He was on the way to Jamaica. Mr. Taft sent a man ahead to Jamaica to tell everybody to get out of the road with their horses as an automobile was coming" (Brattleboro Reformer, April 18, 1935).

As an enterprising liveryman, Mr. Julian Taft kept ten horses, including a span of browns and a fine span of blacks, that was used on the hearse. When Mr. Cushman's car arrived in the 1890's, the Taft livery stable was the main hub of transportation for hire. Although this would eventually prove to be the end of the era for liverymen, horses and cars continued to coexist for quite some time.

By 1920 a father-and-son garage was opened in West Townshend by former blacksmith William VanNess, and his son, Walter, where cars could be purchased and repaired.

Another father-and-son garage was set up in 1932 by Robert Kearley, where gas pumps were installed in the front of a house on Route 30 across the street from the former livery stables. An auto repair shop was also set up in the barn.



Robert Kearley, Sr. in front of his garage

Message from our President:

We are meeting regularly to plan the work and raise the money to repair the Follett Stone Arch Bridges. A contract will soon be signed with Michael Weitzner to restore the bridge on State Forest Road that crosses Negro Brook. The work is expected to be finished this year.

Special THS work sessions have included processing, cataloging, and scanning materials donated over the years. Volunteers are needed in this and several other areas. If you are interested, please call us at 365-7937 or email info@townshendvt.org.

Many thanks,
Charles Marchant



Arthur Wright as a young boy

The Wright Brothers of Townshend

Raymond Wright (1895-1918) and his younger brother, Arthur Wright (1898-1962) grew up in Townshend and went to Leland & Gray High School with Frank Lewis who wrote the following letter that describes life on the farm just before Raymond was deployed overseas during WWI. It appears that the Lewis family lives on a farm near the Wright family, and that while Arthur is working on another farm away from home, Frank is catching him up on the local news:



Wright family farm

March 9, 1917

Dear Friend Arthur:

....I got up at 4:45 this morning intending to take a load of logs to Townshend. Well the snow is 34 inches deep in the woods ...well it was a quarter of one when the load was bound. When I was making a sharp turn up on the mowing the off ox stumbled and could not get his feet. I shoveled him out and he got up and after some more digging got back into the road and came home for a two o'clock dinner.

... That play that I was in went good. Phoebe is a game sport. If you had been there you would have laughed. Court came home the 23 of Feb. He and I went to a dance the next night. You should have seen Miss Blood keep hold of his elbow.

... On the twenty seventh there was a grange sleigh ride from Grafton to Townshend. It was a mild night but soft roads. I got aboard at Grandpa's sugar house. Will Dompier and Mr. Tuttle each had a [sleigh] load. All attended the dance and supper. We shuck (sic) the light fantastic until two o'clock. I got into bed at 4:30 and out at 6:45. Then went to Townshend with logs.

I am banking on three litters of pigs. I think it is a sure thing this time. I had 13 sows to my boars. Hogs sold as high as 15 cents alive in Chicago last week.

Ever your friend, *Frank Lewis*



Early photo of Frank Lewis' house on Acton Hill Rd. c 1880's when the Boutelles lived there.



Raymond Wright, three years older than Arthur, graduated Leland and Gray High School in 1916, and enlisted in 1917 during WWI.

The following letter, dated five months after the Frank Lewis letter on the previous page, is from Raymond Wright to his parents, Edmund & Sarah Wright after he was deployed overseas.

**On Active Service
with the American Expeditionary Force
August 22, 1917**

1st Co. Military Police
1st Expeditionary Division
American Expeditionary Forces

Dear Father and Mother:- I have got [erasure] here at last. I had a fine trip across the ocean. I was glad to get away from the city. This is a fine country over here. It is the best climate that I ever saw. I suppose that you are nearly done haying by this time. How is everybody around home. You can tell my friends

that I am feeling fine, and am very glad to be over here. You don't need to worry about about (sic) me. I am glad to hear that they are drafting all of the slackers around home. I will write as often as I can. This is all the address there is. Write when you can.

Yours truly, Raymond W.

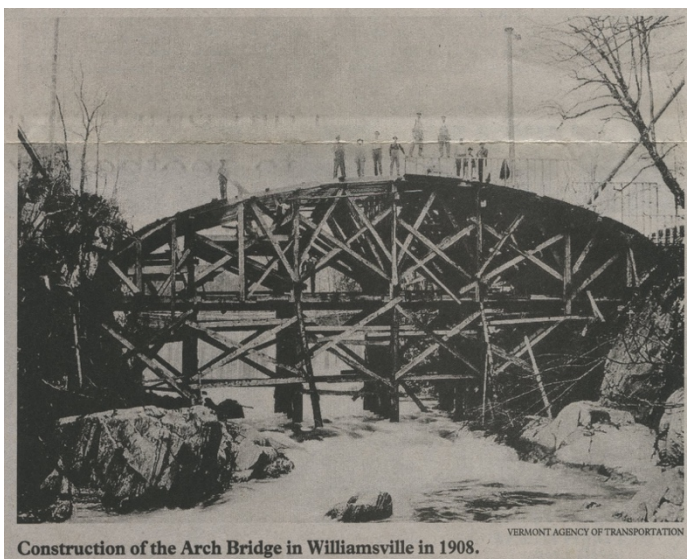
"OK P. R. Kelly, 1st Lt., Inf." [Censor's mark]

Raymond Wright served in France with Co. "D," 22nd Infantry, 1st MP Co., 1st Division. He was wounded in Aisne-Marne (75 miles from Paris) in the last summer of the war. Subsequently captured by the Germans, he died of wounds while a prisoner of war, 8/3/1918. Although casualties for the division numbered 7,000, the battle was a victory for the Allies and a major turning point of the war. Armistice was to come 100 days later.

For more info try this: http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_aisne_marne.html



Sarah Wright, mother of Raymond and Arthur



Construction of the Arch Bridge in Williamsville in 1908.

The framework necessary for building a cement or a stone arch bridge (Williamsville bridge in 1908)

Follett's Dry Stone Arch Bridge May Outlive Cement Bridge

Although cement was becoming the material of choice for bridge building by 1910, James Follett had built as many as 40 bridges in Southern Vermont during this era using a dry stone method –completely without cement, and using local materials. Many of Follett's bridges have withstood the test of time, having lasted 110 years and still counting. Currently the Williamsville cement arch bridge (under construction above) needs to be replaced at an estimated cost of \$2.25 M. In contrast, Follett's much smaller West Townshend bridge, built in 1910, is expected to continue in service after a restoration cost of approximately \$283,000. Today we can admire both Follett's engineering skills and his frugality in creating this historically important passage over Tannery Brook.



P.O. Box 202, Townshend, VT 05353



Treasurer Lee Petty & President Charles Marchant
at Townshend's Pumpkin Festival in October



Townshend Historical Society Board

President: Charles Marchant

Vice President: Robert DuGrenier

Secretary: Marge Holt

Treasurer: Lee Petty

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Please Join us for 2020 !

Membership year runs January to December.

Dues are \$10 single; \$15 family
(Additional donations gratefully accepted.)

Please mail your dues to
THS, PO Box 202, Townshend, VT 05353
or on-line at www.townshendvt.org