

MHS Newsletter

Marlow Historical Society's Mission is to preserve and illuminate Marlow's History

Fall 2017



The Methodist movement in Marlow had its beginnings on Marlow Hill in a meetinghouse which over time was shared by Baptists, Congregationalists, Universalists and Methodists. As none had a preponderance of the population, individually they could not afford to support a minister or a meetinghouse. Each church selected one representative to meet and together find one man to minister to the different denominations.

As a result, an article in the 1807 town warrant read: "To see if the town will settle Paul Dustin as minister." It was so voted and remuneration was to be \$150 a year. At that time the town taxed its residents to pay the minister's salary. Mr. Dustin was a Methodist. Consequently, a minority of 17 voters felt strongly enough to sign a protest against the vote, "as Mr. Dustin exhibits views on Methodism which we profess not to believe, and as we think the Constitution of New Hampshire being liberal will not compel any to pay to a different denomination." Regardless of this, Mr. Dustin accepted and was duly installed.

The exact date upon which a Methodist Society was formed is unknown. However, the young Mr. Dustin did his work well, and by 1811 there was a growing congregation of Methodists. Services were held in the Marlow Hill meetinghouse, which was eventually purchased by the Christian Society around 1827. Perhaps unwilling to share the meetinghouse it was reported at an 1829 meeting that "13 were absent in assisting to raise the frame of the Wesleyan Chapel," the first Methodist building. Begun in May of 1829, it was in use until 1845. At that time growth in "South Marlow" or "The Plains", as it was then called, prompted its move down from Marlow Hill. (Continued on Page Two)

Back To School Memories of Vilas High 1935-1966

Back to School! The Back-to-School ads are in the papers, on TV and radio, online and flyers. The bus schedules have been posted. Soon the kids will hop on the bus to Keene Middle and High School. September has arrived!

This wasn't always the scenario. From 1935 until 1966 Marlow students headed in the other direction to Vilas High School in Alstead. A new school was opening due to the generosity of philanthropist and Alstead native Charles N. Vilas. And what a beauty of a high school it was, with the gym itself being state of the art for the time. A two story brick building, a stage and balcony in the auditorium and a new chemistry lab! STEM before it was the thing.

Two of the first students from Marlow were Leroy Mosher and Ethel Nichols. Leroy, better known as "Dutch" graduated in the first class ever-1935. Miss Nichols graduated the next year ('36). They later married and years later their son, Leroy Mosher Jr. (better known as "Chuck"), also graduated from Vilas High School, Class of 1964. He met and married his high school sweetheart, Sally Westcott of Alstead (VHS, '66). They still spend time at their summer camp in Marlow.

A few years later Charlie Strickland headed out to Vilas where he met Frances Perham of Acworth. History repeated itself when their son, Jim, went to Vilas and met the love of his life, a Langdon girl (me). Charlie and Fran graduated in 1943, Jim in 1964, and Pat (the Langdon girl) in 1966, the last year of Vilas High School.

Although most in the Andrews family went to Keene High School the youngest daughter went to the new high school. Emily Andrews graduated in 1939. By the 1960s three nieces were also Vilas graduates, Carol (1960) & Kathy (1964) Andrews and Emmy Compton (1962). (Continued on insert)

Not everyone was in favor of the relocation and the Methodist congregation split. Those that stayed on the hill built a new meetinghouse. As the draw of the "Plains" became stronger, the hill folk were unable to support their building and it was turned over to the Universalists in 1873. It was later also moved from the hill and it is now Murray Hall. Many of the Methodists from the hill joined the village church.

At the time of the move a piece of land was purchased across the street from the Christian Church (now Jones Hall). Through the efforts of Amos F. Fiske, planning began to re-erect the Wesleyan Chapel where it sits today. Our present building, however, is not the relatively small chapel moved down from Marlow Hill. In 1857 a vestibule eight feet by twenty-five feet was added in front and new windows were placed. In 1866 a deed for the land was given by Gardner Towne. At that time about twelve feet was added at the west end, and pews were rearranged to create a center aisle. It was at this time that a heavier bell was purchased to replace the old one.

Over the ensuing years a great deal of time and money has been spent on keeping the steeple in repair. During one of the repairs, we were able to read the inscription on the bell. It was cast by Henry N. Hooper & Co. of Boston in 1867. Hooper was an apprentice of Paul Revere in his Boston foundry. He later purchased the foundry and established Henry N. Hooper & Co. to produce lamps and lighting fixtures, bells, and, by 1862, artillery for the Union Army. Many of his bells are found throughout New England.

The Methodist Church has contributed to Methodism in two very interesting ways. Osman Cleander Baker was born in Marlow in 1812 and educated at Wilbraham Academy and Wesleyan University. He was made bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1852, serving until 1866 when partial paralysis prevented him from continuing service. He was a professor in the General Biblical Institute in Concord, NH, which later became the Boston University School of Theology. He died in Concord in 1871.

Secondly, in 1924 the Methodist Episcopal Church granted women the right to be ordained as local deacons and elders. One of the first women ordained was Lucia Coffin who preached in Marlow from 1923 to 1926. In the church records is a copy of a Christmas program with her name as pastor. Since Paul Dustin, the first Marlow Methodist pastor in 1807, eighty three ministers have filled the pulpit. Only three have been women.

Our church building today has relatively the same look that it did after the 1866 renovations. We no longer heat with wood, and the two chimneys at the front of the building have been covered over. Work has been done to the foundation and the basement partially cemented. We have recently taken out two pews at the back of the church and built cabinets along the back wall. This gives us storage space and a place to organize our Food Pantry donations. Work is always ongoing on these beautiful old buildings which are the signature of our village. Churches have often had to remove their steeples when repairs became too expensive. We continue the work on our steeple, knowing that from many of the hills around you can look down and see the spire with its bell marking the village of Marlow. On Sunday mornings if you listen you can hear that bell calling all to worship as it has for one hundred fifty years.

As we look back to those early meetings where men and women of differing doctrines shared a meetinghouse, we think of our church today. Our Methodist Church is the only one of the original Marlow Hill buildings still used for worship, and as in old we continue to be a congregation of many different denominations coming together in worship and praise. We cherish with grateful hearts that ribbon of faith that has prevailed here in Marlow for over two hundred years.

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written by Sharon Davis, Lay Leader, Marlow UMC
Henry Northey Hooper; en.wikipedia.org
Ordination of women in Methodism; en.wikipedia.org

TIDBITS FROM MARLOW HISTORY:

Can you imagine traveling to Keene and back by trolley? You could have done just that if the plans of the Ashuelot Valley Improvement Co., Inc. had been realized. The company, of which Elgin Jones was Treasurer, planned to build an **electric railroad which would run from the Square, up Court Street, through Surry, and on to Gilsum and Marlow**. In 1901 the route was surveyed and plans drawn in meticulous detail; the originals are stored at the Historical Society of Cheshire County. The construction of the Dartmouth College Highway (Rt. 10) eliminated the need for it, and the trolley line was never built.

In the early 1930s Marlow had its own **dance pavilion**. It was located near Morrell's Cabins, roughly where the now closed Marlow Grocery stands. Different groups played there.

Just a few steps away there was a **pool hall** on the third floor of the Nichols/Newton Store. There was a barber shop on the same floor, and space for members of the Bald Mountain Sportsmen's Club to meet. To add a touch of class you could get oysters downstairs at the meat market.

The pool table (which was manufactured in Worcester, MA in 1903) later found its way to the Odd Fellows' Lodge, and many years later it was bought by a member, who had it restored.

During the Depression a **basket** was passed around, carried from one house to another. The women put unneeded items into it and took out what they could use, before passing it along. Someone might find yarn, extra jar seals, or toys for the children. Everyone always asked, "Where is the basket???" and were eager to see it come around again.

The "**burning boat**" tradition is said to have started in the early 20th century. Young folks would find an old rotted boat, set it on fire in the evening and push it out into the Ashuelot, where the blaze made a spectacular sight. Some individuals whose names we won't reveal resurrected the tradition in 2011, on the last night of Marlow's 250th Anniversary celebration.

The **chandelier in Jones Hall** was restored in 1998 in honor of Nelda C. Gorges (1914-1997) and Frances Strickland (1926-1998) who, a commemorative plaque reads, "were tireless workers for the benefit of Marlow."

And then there was "Galloping Gayla"! In the mid 1960s, the members of the Marlow Fire Department worked during a whole winter to create a unique vehicle called Galloping Gayla in honor of Gayla Landon who ran a boarding house in the village. It had the engine of a '49 Chevy, the hood cover flapped, and it featured wheels that wobbled, a bowling pin for gear shift, a cow bell, a toilet for the driver to sit on, and many other "bells and whistles". Galloping Gayla was featured in many parades in Marlow and all the neighboring towns. The driver on the photo is George Sanders Jr. Wearing the white helmet is Fire Dept. Captain Charlie Strickland.



Another beautiful Marlow girl, Lorraine Whippie (1959), met and fell in love with Dale Dustin of Alstead. Their wedding was in the Marlow Methodist Church. Lorraine gladly loaned her wedding dress for us to model in Marlow's 250th Marlow Brides Show. They made their home in Alstead for many years. Although we lost Lorraine several years ago, Dale still visits Marlow for breakfasts and Tuesday meals.

Romances, friendships and memories were made over those four decades. Attending such a small school gave everyone the opportunity to participate in school activities and extracurricular events. Sports, Music, Plays, Science Club and Science Fairs, Gym Shows, Student Council, Band and Chorus Concerts, Athletic Club, Oratorical Contests, Girls' and Boys' State, FFA, FHA, and the Annual Vilas High School Fair. Looking through the yearbooks I remembered these and many others. They were all part of the VHS experience. Several all-school extravaganzas were traditional. During the 40s the whole school performed "H.M.S Pinafore". Every student had to participate even if it was just pulling the curtain between acts. While WWII saw most of the "boys" head off to war, the Vilas "kids" held War bond drives, collected scrap metal and harvested potatoes. In the 50s and 60s a play competition was held between Vilas, Charlestown and Walpole High Schools. Later these three schools would join together in one school, Fall Mountain Regional High School, but in those days they were rivals.

Another long-standing tradition was the Vilas Fair. Sponsored by the FFA, townspeople and students displayed animals, crafts, foods, vegetables, flowers. There was a popcorn stand and a cotton candy machine set up in the same spot year after year. At the senior booth you could buy a burger, hot dogs, fries or a soda, or all of them if you had enough money. The juniors' booth sold cider and doughnuts. We went to area apple orchards to pick the apples and press the cider. A parade with our own band had floats entered from each class and other civic organizations in the area. In the afternoon the traditional Fair Soccer game was played and the day ended with plays in the gym. Three one act plays were presented by classes in 7&8, 9&10, and 11 & 12th grades.

In the 60s the event of the year was the Gymnastics Show directed by our coach, Les Greene. As the agile ones performed on the rings, tumbled and balanced on the beam, parents and townspeople would cheer them on. The Tabloids were amazing and the hit of the evening. In 1965 and 1966 the musically inclined and/or interested organized Hootenannies, a 60s Variety Show. Basketball was our entertainment all winter. Vilas was a powerhouse in class S (stands for small). We were the Class S State Champions in 1944, 1945 and 1951. Later we made the playoffs many times but the championships were not to be. After Friday home games we spun records "at the hop" and even back then the proms were the chance to dress up for those magical moments.

Speaking of basketball, I must mention Dan Metcalf. He started as a teacher and coach at Vilas High School in 1936. He went on to become our Principal until the very end in 1966. In the early years he taught history, coached and was the Principal. A man with a firm hand but warm heart, he guided many students through Vilas High School. If you drive through Alstead today you will see the stately brick school with the Daniel M Metcalf Gymnasium renamed for him. He was called the Squire of Vilas, thus we were the Vilas High School Squires.

Vilas High School was a small school yet a fine one. In 1966 the towns of Acworth, Alstead, Charlestown, Langdon and Walpole formed a Regional School District. Named Fall Mountain Regional High School, it was centrally located in Langdon. Marlow chose not to join. Our students attended FMRHS for one more year and then signed an agreement with the Keene District. Because our time at Vilas High School is in the past, but we participated all those years, I truly believe this period from 1935 - 1966 was of historical significance to Marlow. When a chance came to purchase surplus yearbooks I jumped at the chance to save them for the Marlow Historical Society. The Vilas High School yearbooks (not a complete collection) will be on display at the Marlow Historical Society building at Murray Hall. Come for a visit and take a look at your Mama or Papa's or Auntie's or Uncle's yearbook entry. A few years ago some Vilas Alumni were discussing Marlow kids who went to school there. While reminiscing it was agreed upon that the Marlowites were the "fun" classmates. That is our legacy and a nice thought. Let it be so, wherever we may go! Good times at Vilas High

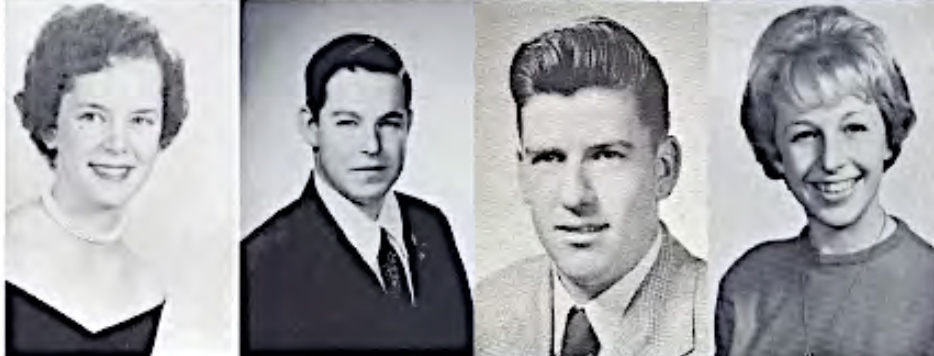
Written by Pat Huntley Strickland, Vilas High School graduate 1966 and a Marlow resident by marriage with assistance from Sally Westcott Mosher '66, Chuck Mosher '64, Jim Strickland '64, Emily Compton Bomely '62, Marcia Huntley Maloney '62 and Charles B. Strickland '43. If you would like to know more about Vilas High School, search vilasalumni.com. Enclosed please enjoy the yearbook pictures of some of your friends and relatives who graduated from Vilas High School. These are taken from the yearbooks we have available and not a complete set.



Left to Right:



Row One:
*Maria Aho '59; Robert Davis '56;
Douglas Gendron '60;
Joanne Marcotte '66*



Row Two:
*Marie Sawyer '56; Robert Nichols '63;
Elgin Russell '55; Kathleen Andrews
'64*



Row Three:
*Marlene Dunn '58; Thomas Foote;
Emily Compton '62;
Kristen Aho '63*



Row Four:
*Michael Gendron '58; Carol Andrews
'60, Gary Roberge '64; Leroy Mosher
'64; Joyce Champney, '32*



Row Five:
*Morton Whippie '58; Donald Winham
'55; James Strickland '64;
Lorainne Whippie '59; Louise Aho '58*



**Marlow Historical Society
1976-2017**

Officers:

President: Maria Baril
Vice President: Joanne Thomas
Treasurer: Pat Strickland
Secretary: Patti Little

Directors:
Joe Baril
Barry Corriveau
Linda McCracken

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www.marlownewhampshire.org

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Upcoming Events:

**MHS Election
New Officers & Directors
Tuesday, Sept. 19, 6:30 pm
Murray Hall**

**New Hampshire Humanities
Program: "Wit and Wisdom:
Humor
in 19th Century New England"
with Storyteller
Jo Radner
Sunday, Sept. 24, 2:00 p.m.
Murray Hall**

Refreshments Served

SAND PONDERS TO THE RESCUE

One early morning in August 1989, two elderly Bellows Falls fishermen nearly drowned when their boat capsized on Sand Pond, throwing them and all their gear into the water.

Without life jackets, they clung to their overturned boat about 200 feet from shore. Luckily Dan Penney and his son, who were fishing near by, were able to tow the boat to land. At the time the Penneys were renting a lakeside cabin; they now own a camp and are summer "Sand Ponders".

Next day Doug Heffernan and his teenage sons Scott and Patrick donned their scuba gear and dove 35 feet to recover all the lost equipment, including a fisherman's cap. The Heffernan family has owned a cabin on the lake since the early 1980s.

The two fishermen were thrilled to get back the "lifetime's worth of fishing tackle" that they thought was gone forever. The story made the paper; the Keene Sentinel published it on August 4, 1989.

