



## Washington Historical Society Newsletter

### FALL 2019 EDITION

#### Washington Historical Society Officers

President: Bert Bodnar

Vice President:

Treasurer: Elaine Crandall

Secretary: Marian Baker

Archivist: Gwen Gaskell

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Bill Mulcahy

Webmaster: Phil Budne

Barn Phil Barker  
Committee: Volunteers needed

Museum Gwen Gaskell  
Committee: Volunteers needed

Newsletter Barbara Gaskell  
Committee: Gwen Gaskell  
Contributors welcome

Program Bert Bodnar  
Committee: Marian Baker

#### *President's Message*

First, a big thank you to Tom Talpey and Pete Martin for their years of service on the board of directors. They were responsible for obtaining so many excellent programs in the past years. They diligently sought and engaged interesting speakers for our after meeting programs. We will miss their dedicated service.

Next, a warm welcome to Susan Fairchild and Bill Mulcahy, who joined the board. We look forward to their assistance and ideas for enriching the Washington Historical Society. We still have, however, one opening for the BOD and are also seeking a vice president.

This spring, the board took a close look at the repair and maintenance of the three buildings in our care. Many were beyond the volunteer status, and some required special equipment so we solicited bids and most of the maintenance has been completed including extensive repairs to the school

house and power washing the museum. We are currently awaiting a bid to paint the trim on the barn museum.

Working with the owners of the old town pound and the selectmen, work is progressing on cleaning up the pound and digging out the sand from inside it and from its front wall. Some of this has already been done, and hopefully by the time you read this, it will be completed.

At the annual meeting in August, members voted to ratify the amendments to our by-laws, which we included with our spring letter.

We have had some excellent programs this past year and are planning more for next year, including a presentation on antique stage curtains that will take place in the newly renovated second floor of the town hall. We are also working with the presenter to obtain a Moose Plate Grant to clean and restore the curtain.

I am representing the society on the planning committee for next year's Old Home Days, which will be held the first weekend in August. If anyone is interested in planning and leading a program for the society, please advise one of the board members of your ideas.

Exciting times are ahead for the society, and I hope you actively join in to enjoy them.

Hope everyone has a safe and fun winter, enjoys the holidays, and returns to join us in the spring at our first meeting on April 13.

*Bert Bodner*

### A Year of Accomplishment and Change by Gwen Gaskell

This has been a year of accomplishment and change that needs to be made note of. The major accomplishments were the completion of the upper hall at the Town Hall. The space is beautiful and is being used as we all hoped it would be. Thank you to everyone who made donations to make it possible. Stage lighting and sound systems are being completed.

The new fire station is completed with the renovation to the old section being made into training rooms, showers, kitchen, rest room and storage space for the firemen and rescue squad. There was an open house and a few Sunday morning breakfasts were served to raise the funds to help with the completion and for folks to see the completed results.

The old Center School/Police Station was raised up and a full concrete foundation was poured to allow space for the utility systems and give it a sturdy base on which it is now sitting and will last a long time-Forever? Next year more work will be done.

The big change was to our landscape-- The large colonial home beside the Library is gone. It was the former home of John Safford/ Twiss and later the Cilley's , all descendants of the original Saffords. We had heard that it was going to be rebuilt in Maine, perhaps some of the larger timbers did go there, but advertisements were seen for some of the timbers from "the Historic Safford Tavern" so we are not sure how that is turning out.

Next summer there WILL be an Old Home days, July 31, Friday evening Ice Cream Social and a program in the upstairs of the Town Hall, with events on Saturday and Sunday. We will post a program in the Spring issue of our newsletter. Make plans to be around! Have a great winter.



### Summer on the Town Common

The Old School House (Police Dept) was raised up and a new basement poured under it. This is step one in rehabbing the building so it will survive into the future.

The annual Pie Sale on the Common during the July Flea Market was a success. Thank you to the cooks and the purchasers!!



## Little Boy Lost - The Search for the Identity of the "Boy Shot on Mill Hill"

By Bill Mulcahy

An unmarked grave fills me with sadness. It has always been that way. Perhaps someone is buried in a plot but isn't recorded on the monument or maybe there is no monument at all. In either case someone lies forgotten, with only a faint indentation in the mossy grass to mark the spot. Anonymous among the remembered souls at rest.

It's a natural thing – wanting to be remembered. A human thing. People seek to ensure a more permanent remembrance by leaving a marker behind when their time on Earth is through – a marker of stone, or bronze, or slate – something that says "I was here," and tells a little of their story.

There are many who search for these markers, seeking to rediscover ancestors – to learn more about them - who they were, where they came from, and what they did. Often in the hope that along the way, they will learn more about themselves.

I am one of those searchers. I search for myself, for my family, and I enjoy helping others with their searches. One of the ways I help others is by being a "photo volunteer" for FindAGrave.com. That's a free website containing information on the final resting places of millions of people around the world. This past summer I claimed a number of unfulfilled requests for various cemeteries in the Washington, NH, area, where my wife and I have a seasonal cottage. Many of these requests had been outstanding for years because previous volunteers had been unable to locate the graves in question – mostly they were unmarked. Without grave stones to help me, I would need maps of the cemeteries. I reached out to Gwen Gaskell of the Washington Historical Society. Gwen pointed me to Kitty West of the Washington Cemetery Trustees committee. I called Kitty, and she was instantly amazing! She worked closely with me and provided information which helped me complete 14 requests!

While working with Kitty, I noticed a plot in the East Washington Cemetery recorded only as "Boy shot on Mill Hill." It was an intriguing entry – something to find out more about later, once I had completed my "Find A Grave" commitments.

Later, when I was at that beautiful old cemetery taking photographs, I remembered the mysterious entry, and located the unmarked grave. It was just an empty plot of grass surrounded by lichen covered stones. A lonely spot with a mysterious record reference – "Boy shot on Mill Hill." I wondered once more about those words, and the story they were trying to tell.

The next day I called Kitty and thanked her again for all of her help. Just before hanging up, I asked if she had any special mysteries that I could help with. She answered immediately - "Boy shot on Mill Hill!" Kitty had long been curious about the boy – who was he, and the story behind his being there. She said how nice it would be if we could give the boy back his name, and find out if anyone had cared about him. I immediately sensed in Kitty a kindred spirit and told her that I would see what I could find out.

A few days later, I started to work. A simple rule in historical research is to start with what you know.

I had a location – East Washington (the boy was buried there, and, though I had not been able to find it on a map, people familiar with the area believe that Mill Hill is there too - close to the mill pond and the Purling Beck Grange building).

A date would be extremely helpful too. The boy was resting in the second row of the part of the cemetery known as the 1908 section. Could I make any assumptions as to the date that the boy died based on this location? No. After walking the area, it was clear that the plots had not been sold in any specific sequence. People had been able to choose the plot location that they liked best.

I started my active search using the New Hampshire Death and Interment records available on Ancestry.com. These records are organized by county, with Washington and East Washington being part of Sullivan County. I decided to search these death records in five-year ranges, starting with 1905 – 1910, looking for boys who died between the ages of 5 and 18, and whose cause of death was a gunshot wound. I searched through 1930 without luck.

What other assumptions might I be able to make? I returned again to the cryptic entry - "Boy shot on Mill Hill." He was young (a "boy") and his cause of death was from a gunshot wound. The lack of a name or any additional information in the cemetery record seemed to indicate that he may have been someone not locally known – a runaway maybe, passing through the area, run afoul of a local farmer while trying to pilfer food or find shelter for the night? Such an event must have been "news," at least locally. Possibly something was reported in an area newspaper?

My wife Andrea researched which local newspapers provided coverage of the area during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two newspapers in particular sounded promising. The *Hillsborough Messenger*, published in Hillsborough, NH, and the *New Hampshire Argus & Spectator*, published in Newport, NH. Both of these

papers were available online - through the Fuller Library in Hillsborough, NH, and the Richards Library in Newport, NH.

Though published in other towns, it was typical of such newspapers to broaden their appeal by including news from outlying communities under headings such as “**Washington**” or “**East Washington**”. This news was often submitted by people living in the immediate vicinity. A quick check found that both papers followed this practice.

Being the closer of the two papers geographically to Washington/East Washington, I started with the *Hillsborough Messenger* using the Fuller Library site.

The words that would make up my search – “East,” “Washington” (as in George, or D.C.), “boy,” “shot,” “Mill,” and “Hill” are all commonly occurring. To keep the number of records returned manageable, I again used a limited range of years – this time two-year spans (i.e. 1905-1907, 1908-1909, etc.), but again came up empty.

I switched over to the *New Hampshire Argus & Spectator* on the Richards Library site. 1905-1907, 1908-1909 – again nothing.

Blurry-eyed, I began working through the years 1910-1911. I was reading through the **East Washington** column on page 1 of the Friday, August 5, 1910 edition. The everyday happenings of the East Washington of 1910 were coming to life for me. Sam Reynolds was working for Ed Hoyt haying for a few days. Dilbert Darris had finished work for Fred Brockway and was now working for Herbert Smith. Poor Mrs. Ella Gage had been injured in an awful accident when her horse fell down and threw her from the wagon. It’s hard not to read these intimate snippets about daily life in this small, close-knit, community and not begin to feel a connection to the place, the time – and of course the people. But it was as I read the next item in the column that a shock of recognition went through me...

*“A very sad and fatal accident occurred Saturday afternoon while two boys were playing with firearms. One of them was shot and instantly killed.”*

With those two economically written sentences I knew that I had my first concrete clue. I immediately texted Kitty and included a picture of the article. She was equally excited and encouraged me to keep going. I did. The article gave no names, but I now had a date. The paper had been published Friday, August 5, 1910, and the tragedy had happened “Saturday afternoon...” The date: July 30, 1910!

Nothing makes “research fatigue” vanish more quickly than a positive result – I was on to something now! I returned to the *Hillsborough Messenger* and refocused on editions published immediately subsequent to July 30, 1910. The *Messenger* at that time was published weekly on Thursdays, so I searched the August 4, 1910 edition. The result was another intriguing snippet on page 8...

**“Sherriff Ramsey of Manchester was in town Tuesday and accompanied by Deputy Gay went to investigate the shooting accident in the north part of town. He pronounced it purely accidental.”**

The snippet didn’t mention East Washington, but rather “...the north part of town.” And it was printed under the **Hillsborough** local heading, not **East Washington**, indicating that the accident had happened in the northern part of Hillsborough (which is adjacent to East Washington). Though adjacent, these two locations are in different counties. East Washington, as mentioned earlier, is in Sullivan County, and Hillsborough is in Hillsborough County. I returned to Ancestry and searched the New Hampshire Death and Interment records again – but this time for Hillsborough County. I entered my search criteria – no name, but a death date of July 30, 1910, and a location of Hillsborough, NH.

The first record returned was for a boy of about 7 years old who had died on July 30, 1910, in Hillsborough, NH. I opened the record – “Cause of Death, Gunshot Wound.” “Duration, Instantaneous.” “Place of Interment, East Washington NH.”

I had found him! The “Boy shot on Mill Hill” was Clifford Charles Butler.

I texted the news to Kitty immediately, sharing Clifford’s name and a copy of the record and telling her how moved I was - admitting that I had some tears in my eyes. Kitty replied that she had the biggest grin on her face, knowing that we now had the boy’s identity!

According to NH Death & Interment record, Clifford was born on October 11, 1902 in Danby, VT. His father was Ralph E. Butler, a laborer, born in Wells, VT. His mother was Alice (née Lillie) Butler, born in Iowa. Clifford was 7 years, 9 months, and 19 days old when he died. He was buried in the East Washington Cemetery on August 1, 1910. The family’s residence was given as Putney, VT, with a notation that they had been living there for three years.

Clifford Butler had his identity back, but there were still unanswered questions. How had he come to be shot? What were he and his family doing in East Washington? Why had his grave been left unmarked?



I went back to the newspaper printed closest to Clifford's death, the August 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Hillsborough Messenger* and read it page by page to see if there was anything else there. I found what I was looking for under the "East Washington" column on page three...

**"The community was shocked on Saturday afternoon to learn that Clifford, the 7-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Butler, had been shot. He with a young cousin had got an old musket and loaded it and it went off while the little fellow's face was directly over it. He lived only a few minutes. The mother was entirely prostrated by the sad occurrence. The funeral was held Monday afternoon, Rev. W. G. Hubbard officiating."**

I paused a long while after reading the heartrending details. The elation of having found his name a few minutes earlier immediately gave way to the sadness and sorrow surfaced by knowing the manner of Clifford's tragic death. These feelings were compounded by my thoughts of the impact on his parents. The reporter's description of Clifford's mother's reaction, so evocatively captured in 9 words, touched my heart deeply across the distance of 109 years. "The mother was entirely prostrated by the sad occurrence." Oh my goodness – how could you not want to put your arms around Alice Butler at that moment and attempt to console her, even in that moment of a mother's inconsolable grief?

The manner of Clifford's death was now known – the result of a tragic accident, as Sheriff Ramsey had declared after his investigation. But why was the Butler family in East Washington and who was the young cousin involved in the fatal accident?

With nothing more coming from the NH papers I moved my search to Newspapers.com, a paid subscription site containing newspaper archives from across the country, and searched papers in the Butler's home state of VT. That search resulted in the discovery of the following article under **The Putney Column** from the August 5, 1910 edition of the *Vermont Phoenix*, published in Brattleboro, VT.

***Clifford C. Butler Instantly Killed***

**Clifford C. Butler, 7, son of Ralph E. Butler, who moved his family from the Mae Brown house here, to Hillsboro, N.H., a few weeks ago, was shot and instantly killed Saturday night near the lumber camps at East Washington by a companion named Reed. The boys got into a farmhouse and loaded an old gun. They tried to set it off with matches and when it failed to go the Reed boy told his companion to blow into the muzzle to make the powder go down into the opening. The gun was discharged, the bullet going into the Butler boy's mouth and coming out through his shoulder. Both the Butler and Reed families are employed at the lumber camps at the portable saw mill there.**

The additional details in this article helped answer some of the remaining questions, but the more graphic description only served to further heighten my own level of horror over young Clifford's final moments. Using information from these and other sources, I was able to piece together a fuller picture of the Butler family story.

Ralph E. Butler and Alice (Lillie) Butler were married in Mount Tabor, VT, just after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Clifford was their first child and only child. Sadly, there is evidence that two other pregnancies ended in stillbirth. The last another boy, in the year prior to Clifford's death. Ralph was a lumberman, temporarily moving his family to take a new job, then returning again to their base in Putney. During the previous winter of 1909 – 1910, the family had gone to a job in Green River, VT. In March the family was back in Putney, but by the middle of July, they were off again for a new job near East Washington, NH. They had only been in the new area at most for a couple of weeks when Clifford was killed.

I have not been able to determine the full identity of the Reed boy, the young cousin who was playing with Clifford according to the *Messenger* article. Extensive research of both the Butler and Lillie (Alice Butler's maiden name) genealogies show some fascinating interconnections with the last name of Reed, but these have so far not led to the identification of a boy of the appropriate age. That search continues.

It is perhaps no surprise that Clifford's death seems to have taken a fatal toll on Ralph and Alice's marriage. I don't know when they separated, but by 1917 Alice is remarried, and by 1921 so is Ralph. Neither of them had any other children. Alice died in Mexico, NY in 1953, aged 67. Ralph died in Greenfield, MA in 1966, aged 86.

As to why no marker was placed on young Clifford Butler's grave – that too remains a mystery. The dissolution of Ralph and Alice's marriage alone doesn't explain it. But they were also poor people, and that certainly could have been a factor. The Butlers left East Washington very soon after Clifford's funeral, and it is very likely that the Reeds did as well. Absent any other information – one can only speculate.

The written records didn't lend themselves to clarity either. While the base of Mill Hill is in East Washing-

ton, the summit is across the town line in Hillsborough. With the exception of one snippet, the papers reported Clifford's death as an East Washington event, but the investigation into it was handled by the Hillsborough County sheriff, and his death certificate was completed by the Hillsborough town clerk and filed for Hillsborough County, and not by the Washington town clerk recording for Sullivan county.

Local memory of the tragedy, involving relative strangers who were only around for a very short time, simply faded away over time until all that remained was "Boy shot on Mill Hill," and Clifford Charles Butler, age 7, became little boy lost.

Having rediscovered Clifford's name and the tragic circumstances of his death, I wanted to make sure that his identity would never be lost again. I spoke to Kitty West, and we decided to share the cost of placing a marker on his grave. Clifford's grave would no longer be marked by just a faint indentation in the mossy grass, he would have an appropriate monument.

Kitty put me in touch with Phil Barker, chair of the Cemetery Trustees for the Town of Washington, and himself a lover of local history. I gave Phil the information that I wanted carved on the stone, and he took it to Peterborough Marble & Stone, run for generations by the Kaufhold family. When he brought it back for Kitty and me to see, we were very pleased with the results.

It was important to us to add the words "He Was Loved" at the bottom of his modest little stone to reflect that regardless of why his grave went unmarked for so long, there is no question for us that Clifford was both loved and deeply mourned by his parents. Kitty and I both hope that Ralph and Alice will rest more easily now that their son's grave is finally marked.

The new monument was set in place by Phil Barker on October 1, 2019. Kitty West was in attendance and took pictures of the event. I was not able to be there because my wife and I were away completing the construction of our new home, but I am very much looking forward to seeing Clifford's new monument next summer.

[Bill Mulcahy and his wife Andrea Morris are seasonal residents of Washington, NH, where Andrea has owned a cottage since 1985. Bill received a BA in History from Stonehill College in 1982, having won that college's Frederick Jackson Turner award for writing in American History in 1981. He recently joined the board of the Washington Historical Society.]



Kitty West and Bill Mulcahy with the stone for Clifford Butler's unmarked burial site.



Phil Barker placing the Clifford Butler stone in the East Washington Cemetery.

**ITEM FOR SALE**  
**FEATURING FAVORITE LANDMARKS OF WASHINGTON, NH**

To order contact: Elaine Crandall (603) 495-3416 or [ecrandall@verizon.net](mailto:ecrandall@verizon.net)  
Gwen Gaskell (603) 495-3231 or [jimgwen@gsinet.net](mailto:jimgwen@gsinet.net)

**Afghan. \$45.00** Featuring scenes of Washington woven into a beautiful memento of our town. It is available in green or blue on an off white background.

**Puzzle. \$5.00** Our 494 piece, 14" x 19" puzzle is an aerial photograph of the Washington town center by Bill St. Pierre. A limited edition collectible.

**Mug. \$5.00** White ceramic 11 oz. mug with a black & white sketch of the three steepled buildings in the center of town. Microwave and dishwasher safe.

**Trivet. \$15.00** A 6" x 6" ceramic trivet or tile, suitable for hot or cold, with a leather backing, featuring a color photograph of the three steepled buildings in the center of town. Gift boxed.

**Postcards and Notecards of Gustine Hurd Images. \$0.50 each / \$5.00 per set.** Two photographs taken in the early 1880's by Gustine Hurd have been turned into postcards and notecards. The single fold notecards are packaged in sets of 4 with envelopes. Two notecards of each picture or four of one picture.

**Glass Medallion. \$5.00** This 3" medallion depicts the Town Hall. The picture is adapted from an early 1880's wet plate photograph taken by Gustine Hurd. Available in blue or green.

**Booklet *History of Camp Morgan.* \$25.00** A compilation of information from multiple sources brought together in one place outlining the history of Camp Morgan from it's earliest days to the present.

**DVD. \$20.00** *Meetinghouse: The Heart of Washington, NH.* Few structures say "New England" as eloquently as does a classic eighteenth century meetinghouse. The small hill town of Washington, NH claims such a meetinghouse. Erected on the 4th of July, 1787, it is still the heart of the town. In this film the town opens its heart to the world. It displays 225 years of affectionate, sometimes contentious, interplay between generations of Washington citizens and the Meetinghouse on the Town Common.

*All items can be shipped for an additional charge. Call or email Elaine Crandall or Gwen Gaskell at the contact info above to ascertain the amount required. It will be in the range of \$4 to \$10 per package, depending on what is being shipped and your zip code.*

Washington Historical Society  
PO Box 90  
Washington, NH 03280

ANNUAL MEMEBERSHIP DUES are \$10 for an individual and \$15 for a family (including children under 16). For those who would like to contribute more to help us cover our expenses, we have a sustaining membership for \$25. The membership year is August 1 through July 31. We appreciate your continued interest and support of our projects. New members are always welcome. If you would like to join us as a member, please complete the form below and send to THE WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PO BOX 90, WASHINGTON, NH 03280. If you know of someone who might be interested in our newsletter, please let us know or pass this one on to them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participating family names: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone # Winter \_\_\_\_\_ Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership level: \$10 Individual \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 Family \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Sustaining \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE NOTE: As a non-profit historical society, we qualify with many companies for matching grants provided the company you work for, or are retired from, supports such benefits.

**Email: [washingtonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com](mailto:washingtonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com)**