

Starksboro Historical Society (SHS)

Date: 10/11/24

Location: Jerusalem (South Starksboro) School House

Event: The McCullough Turnpike with Q&A

Time: 7:00PM - 8:20PM

OFFICERS PRESENT: Dan Baker, Kevin Hanson, Peg Casey, Herb Olson

MEMBERS/VISITORS PRESENT: Mike Blakeslee, Cecilia Elwert, Elsa Gilbertson, and many visitors (total of 75+ folks!)

Cecilia Elwert opened up the meeting representing the Schoolhouse welcoming a larger than expected crowd. Many chairs were hastily set up to accommodate the large group. She then reviewed logistics for emergency exit and facilities.

Cecilia talked briefly about area activities including a Green Mountain Club walk on 11/2 at 9:30 AM as well as ongoing activities at the Schoolhouse. She also brought attention to a vintage postcard of the old intersection before the road was changed she has and available as “free swag” for anyone that might want one.

Susan Klaiber then talked briefly about Schoolhouse activity including building a new Fire Station #2 separate from the Schoolhouse, which would allow removing the current lean to type structure built to the Schoolhouse. She concluded mentioning that the Jerusalem Schoolhouse was built in 1872 and last used as a public school in 1968. Several attendees were among those who had attended school in it.

Mike Blakeslee, as part of the speaker introduction, talked about SHS and Starksboro Meeting House books and booklets that were available for sale. He then introduced the presentation speaker, John Croft, Chief of the Mapping Section, Vermont Department of Transportation who he knows through re-enactment.

Some highlights from his talk were:

- The first road over the gap was the Fayston Turnpike in 1860.
 - John explained the difference between a road, highway, and turnpike. A road is a public way which may be privately or publicly owned. A highway is a publicly owned road. A turnpike is a privately owned road with a toll to use.

- A cross-mountain road from Chimney Point/Lake Champlain Bridge to Middlesex was first discussed at the State level in 1929. As a result of the '29 flood, the state developed a system of highways, some existing and some proposed, and a reimbursement system to towns for care of town roads.
- In 1933 Ai. A. McCoullough of Fayston proposed and developed the McCoullough Turnpike from Fayston to Starksboro.
 - The tollhouse for the Starksboro side was at John Wrights house, now Bob Hall's home. McCoullough's house was the tollhouse on the Fayston side.
- In 1935 the State purchased the right of way for \$7,500.
- Starting in 1936, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was involved to build out the road starting on the East (Fayston) side. Improvement continued until 1957.

After the presentation there was a lively discussion for about 40 minutes. Some topics were:

- Why was it called Drake Woods? Drake Woods is actually the section of Route 17 from Route 116 to the Bristol/Starksboro line.
- There was a discussion about people from South Starksboro (including Linda Orvis Barnard's mother) walking over the gap to Fayston for kitchen tunks.
- There was a discussion as to when the road was paved. There was no definitive conclusion, but it appears that maybe it was not paved with bituminous pavement common today until 1957. Macadam oil treatments were probably done much earlier.

The presentation and conversation ended at 8:22 PM with a round of applause for the presenter.

Refreshments were served afterward.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Hanson