



Public notice in front of the Starksboro Village Meeting House
March, 2025

April, 2025

50th Anniversary

This spring of 2025 marks the completion of the 50th year of operation of the Starksboro Cooperative Preschool, (originally named The Starksboro Meeting House Pre-School), and at the same time the beginning of the exciting renovation project now underway in its original home in the Starksboro Village Meeting House (see photo above).

After the success of a long campaign by the Starksboro Village Meeting House Society to secure funding for the renovation from a number of sources, including the Town of Starksboro, the Starksboro Cooperative Preschool, and the many grantors shown in the notice above, construction has now begun at the Meeting House!

To celebrate both these milestones, I offer here a summary of the founding and first year of the Starksboro Meeting House Pre-School in its original home.

This history testifies to the close relationship between the school and the Meeting House from its very beginning, and to the fruitful collaboration between community members from both institutions, one that began in 1974 and continues to this day, 50 years later.

Our First Year, 1974-1975

The Starksboro Meeting House Cooperative Pre-School officially opened its doors to the children of the community in the fall of 1974.

The first inklings of thoughts about starting the school had begun to percolate that spring among a small group of parents with young children from Starksboro and the nearby town of Bristol.

Some of us had taken our 3 and 4 year old children to a preschool playgroup in Hinesburg that year. In June, while recovering from a back injury, I spent time compiling the names of children and families who might be interested in participating in a school closer by, even right in our own town of Starksboro. It seemed there might be a sizable group of preschool and kindergarten aged children who could form the first class of a new school, and as I and my fellow parents began calling other parents, the idea took hold that we might be able to get started that fall.

Our founding group consisted of myself, Marcia Dominick, and Carolyn Glazebrook, friends and fellow parents who came to my house to discuss our ideas for the new school. Sherri Burgess, Jeannette Carey, Pat Sharp, and Evie Butterworth, who lived nearby in the town of Bristol, soon joined us.

Once the concept began to look like a real possibility, we decided to structure the school as a parent cooperative. Our idea was that parent members would help in the classroom, alongside a trained teacher. We were excited by the idea that we could share equally in the care and education of all our children. At the same time, by offering our own services to assist in the classroom, and in the maintenance and upkeep of the building, we could keep tuition affordable for as many parents as possible.

Before we could start, though, we needed to find a space, and hire a teacher.

Fortunately for us, when we were about to give up on finding a suitable location, I had the good fortune to meet and talk to Ruth Hanson. Ruth was a trustee of the Starksboro Village Meeting House, which I had known and admired only as a beautiful structure centrally located in the village of Starksboro.

After a number of conversations over tea with Ruth, sitting on her spacious porch right across the road from the building, and with other board members, including with town historian Bertha Hanson, I was delighted to inform our group of parents that we had been offered the use of the lower level of the Starksboro Village Meeting House as a space for our school. This was an exciting opportunity, and one we were eager to accept!

The understanding that we came to with the Meeting House board was that in exchange for their generosity in donating the space for our school, our parent group would contribute to fund raising efforts for the upkeep of the Starksboro Village Meeting House structure, and be responsible for taking care of maintenance of the lower level preschool area.

With our space secured, we were now in a position to hire a teacher, and after interviewing a number of candidates, we asked Helen Frost, if she would come on board with us as our first teacher.

To our good fortune, Helen accepted our offer, just in time for us to open our new school in the Starksboro Village Meeting House in the fall of 1974.

Helen was a licensed teacher whose calm manner and profound understanding of young children had deeply impressed us. Her previous teaching experience included completing a teaching internship in London, England. Helen was eager to join us in the creation of our new cooperative school. Though she understood that our financial situation was somewhat precarious, she wanted to be part of our venture, and joined in our project with enormous trust and confidence, of which we were the lucky beneficiaries.

Along with the large interior space, with well equipped kitchen and small bathroom, there was also a good-sized outdoor area around the back of the building suitable for outdoor play. Our parent group worked hard to sand and varnish the wide floorboards of the old floor. Several parents built a sturdy wooden swingset and carpenter Mike Burgess and others made a beautiful octagonal table and simple wooden stools for our indoor furniture.

Helen created and organized a variety of different activity areas inside the classroom; these included a fully equipped woodworking table, an area for building with unit blocks, and large hollow blocks, which was also where the whole group could gather for circle time, an indoor climbing structure, space for puzzles, small construction and sewing projects, a painting area with a standing easel, and plenty of art materials. We also had a separate writing table and quiet book corner.

Luckily for us, the town Library was also housed in an adjacent room in the lower level of the Meeting House at that time; shelves of books, a table, and a check out counter filled the “parlor” next to our classroom. (From here stairs led to the sanctuary space on the first floor of the building.) Librarians Sue Jagels and Judy Kessler graciously allowed our students to check out books when the library was open.

That fall, I submitted the articles of incorporation and application for our license. Soon after, the Starksboro Meeting House Pre-School was approved as a non-profit corporation by the State of Vermont.

Our newly assembled parent board began holding monthly meetings to discuss matters involving tuition, purchases, teacher salary, and coordination of fundraising and maintenance with the Meeting House. Also that year, we developed an income based sliding scale to establish a scholarship program so that every family with children who wished to attend could have the chance to

do so. We were also helped in our first two years by a small grant from the A. S. Richardson fund, after which we regularly applied for funding from the town of Starksboro for support for this program.

As a representative member of the preschool board, I joined the board of the Meeting House and attended their monthly meetings (acting as secretary for a brief time). I also played the pump organ that December for the Christmas candlelight service held in the sanctuary. (Never having played a pump organ before, it was a challenge, but one I very much enjoyed!)

Fundraising efforts to benefit the preschool included a "Night in Italy" spaghetti dinner held at the Starksboro Town Hall, a preschool crafts table at the annual Christmas bazaar, and a concert held in the Meeting House.

After a successful six months of operation in the Meeting House, in February of 1975, the following report was submitted in time to be included in the 1974 Annual Report:

In cooperation with the State Highway Department a program for picking up, crushing, and destroying junk cars and other bulk metallic waste was carried out in this area. Schools were co-sponsored for Boards of Adjustment and Administrative Officers. Publication of the "Newsletter" as an information vehicle was continued. Pre-hearing discussions were held on all Act 250 applications. A program was organized to assist member towns in drafting Capital Programs and Budgets. Active assistance was provided to towns making application for funds through the new Community Development Act. Subcommittees on transportation, education, land use planning, legislative and community affairs were active throughout the year.

At the present time the commission is revising the Regional Plan in order to update it in light of present trends.

The Commission and Staff take this opportunity to thank those who have participated in our endeavors. We sincerely trust our efforts warrant your continued support.

Condensed from a Report Submitted by
Tom Spencer, Chairman
Ray Willis, Executive Director

STARKSBORO MEETING HOUSE PRE-SCHOOL REPORT PRINTED BY REQUEST

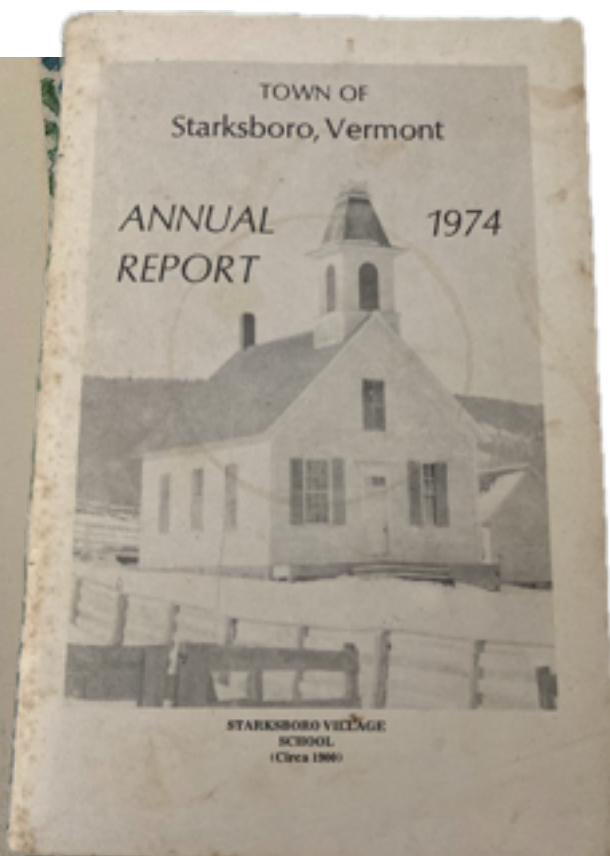
The Starksboro Meeting House Pre-School opened to serve all pre-school aged children in the area in September of 1974. Seventeen children are currently enrolled. Located in donated space in the basement of the Village Meeting House, we offer a combined nursery and kindergarten program to children three to six years old. Started and organized by parents Pebble Brooks, Marcia Brooks, and Carolyn Glazebrook in the spring of 1974, they and other parents were kept busy during the summer months patching up the masonry wall of the building, sanding and finishing the floor, clearing and seeding the backyard and collecting learning materials and equipment. Fathers Mike Burgess, Turner Brooks, Roger Glazebrook and friends Tom Carey and Tom Dryer made the furniture with the help of our teacher Helen Frost, mothers and friends. Other materials were bought with money raised through several fund raising events. As a cooperative group effort, parents continue to be a vital part of the school. Parent committees are responsible for providing classroom help, snack, and weekend cleanup and for fund-raising. Parents also fill the roles of president, secretary and treasurer.

We would also like to express here our deep appreciation to those members of the community who with their donations of time and materials to the Meeting House have made it possible for the pre-school to fulfill state requirements for a facility offering a nursery-kindergarten program. The required hot water heater was donated by Robert Thompson; Edward Hannan contributed the lumber and sheetrock out of which Turner Brooks, Robert Thompson and Richard Vincent built the enclosure around the furnace. Turner and Pebble Brooks donated the fire door and the panic hardware, which Turner and Mike Burgess installed.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the board of trustees of the Village Meeting House for their encouragement and help, and my special thanks to Ruth Hanson and Suelen Jagels for their support and understanding.

Many thanks too to all those who have donated their time and materials to this effort, and who may not have been mentioned here, and to Helen Frost, our teacher, whose dedication and interest in the school have been so important in making our first year a happy and successful one.

Pebble Brooks
President - Director
Starksboro Meeting House
Pre-School



(transcription below)

*Starksboro Meeting House Pre-School Report
Printed by Request*

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*Pebble Brooks
President-Director
Starksboro Meeting House Pre-School*

Looking back at this report now, in March of 2025, 50 years since it was printed, I am struck again by the evidence here of the longstanding ties between the Pre-School and the Starksboro Village Meeting House.

As I have learned from recent conversations with Susan Pare, lead teacher and director for the last 37 years, the culmination of the partnership between the Starksboro Cooperative Preschool and the Meeting House, in the form of this substantial building renovation project, is the result of

a great deal of hard work, commitment, and support from both the Pre-School and Meeting House communities.

The planned renovation and addition, as shown below, includes space for two classrooms, including one for toddlers, two bathrooms, an office space, and a new entrance area.

Rendering of Starksboro Cooperative Preschool Renovation



I look forward to its completion in the very near future! And I would like to acknowledge and celebrate all who have helped to make the new building project a reality.

I am grateful to have been a part of the beginnings of this creative and collaborative partnership, and to the vital work of providing continuous quality early education to the families of Starksboro and neighboring towns.

Pebble Baker Brooks
April, 2025
Cambridge, MA



Pebble at the Meeting House, February, 2025