

Private Academies
In
Underhill

Elizabeth Weichel Moore
2013

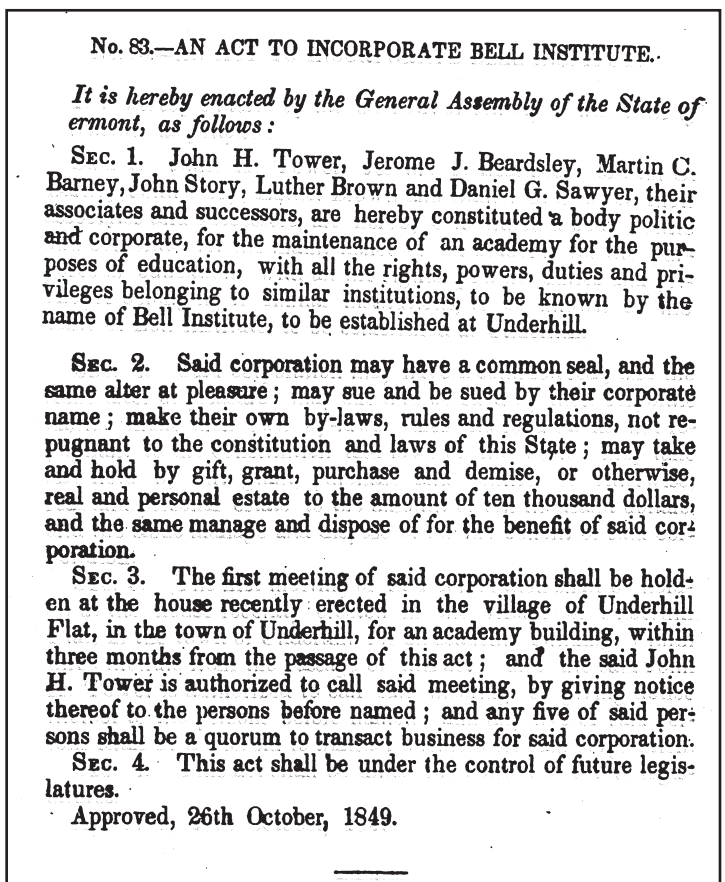
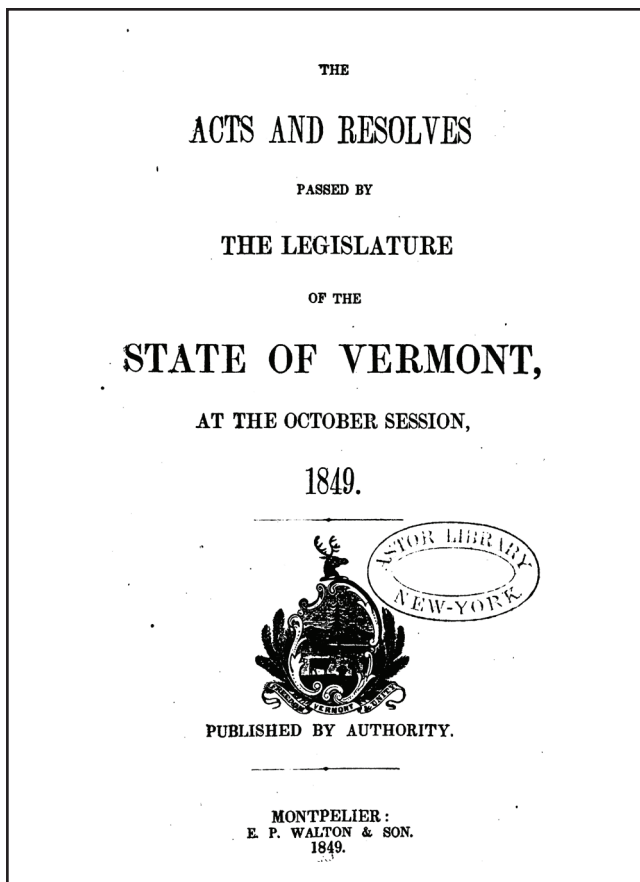
~ Private Academies


Although all the towns in Vermont were laid out with many neighborhood school districts, each individually supported by the families in the district, early on in the State private academies were established in order to provide teaching in more diverse and advanced subjects than it was possible to accomplish in the local one room schools. Throughout the 1800s, private academies were established all over the state, some for advanced high school training, others including elementary grades, as well. Many had scholars as faculty and attracted students from out of town who boarded nearby. Sometimes, the academy teachers were used as interim pastors in local Protestant churches.

In the mid 1800s, Underhill supported three such private academies, very well respected. According to the 1916 'History of Jericho', a school was started in Underhill Flats by Joseph Swan Cilley and his wife in the house formerly occupied by Joseph Kingsbury. "Here was laid the foundation of what was afterwards called, The Underhill Academy".

~ The Bell Institute

On October 26, 1849 the Vermont Legislature passed an 'Act to Incorporate Bell Institute'. "John H. Tower, Jerome J. Beardsley, Martin C. Barney, John Story, Luther Brown and Daniel O. Sawyer, their associates and successors, are hereby constituted a body politic and corporate, for the maintenance of an academy for the purposes of education.....to be known by the name of Bell Institute, to be established in Underhill.....The first meeting of said corporation shall be holden at the house recently erected in the village of Underhill Flat, in the Town of Underhill, for an academy building, within three months from the passage of this act; and the said John H. Tower is authorized to call said meeting....."





BELL INSTITUTE,

UNDERHILL, VT.

PRINCIPAL, CHAUNCEY H. HAYDEN, A. B.

FIRST ASSISTANT, MISS ADDIE D. HALE.
(Of Smith College)

INSTRUCTOR IN MUSIC, A. W. TERRILL.

> School Year 35 Weeks. <

Fall Term commences Sept. 4th, 1883; closes Nov. 23d, 1883. Winter Term commences Dec. 11th, 1883; closes March 21st, 1884. Spring Term begins April 8th, 1884; ends May 30th, 1884.

— TUITION: —

<i>Primary Department, (Fall Term)</i>	- - -	\$ 3.00.
<i>Common English, per year,</i>	- - - - -	12.00.
<i>Higher English,</i>	- - - - -	15.00.
<i>Languages,</i>	- - - - -	18.00.

Tuitions Due the Middle of Each Term.

THE Trustees, in reopening a School in Bell Institute, wish to announce to the public that they are this year offering special advantages to all students desiring to pursue a thorough English course, or to fit themselves for College. As regards the situation of this Academy, few have as delightful scenery, as healthful and central location, and as strong public sentiment to sustain educational interests. French will be made a specialty. The buildings are to be refitted soon, and the patronage of the people of Underhill, Jericho and towns of the vicinity is respectfully solicited.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

D. G. FRENCH, President.

B. H. DAY, Secretary.

Further information can be obtained by addressing the Principal or Board of Trustees.

Half-fare Certificates will be given to students travelling over the B. & L. Railroad.



~The Underhill Academy

Three years later, on November 23, 1952, the Vermont Legislature passed ‘An Act to Incorporate the Underhill Academy’ “Section 1. There is established and constituted, at the village of Underhill Flat, a high school, to be known by the name of The Underhill Academy.....Section 5. The first meeting of said corporation shall be held at the Academy building in the town of Underhill, within three months from the passage of this act, and the said John H. Tower is authorized to call said meeting.....”

The notebook containing the minutes of the meetings of the trustees of the Underhill Academy does exist. On November 5, 1852, the proprietors of Underhill Academy agreed to “*Associate ourselves togetherfor the promotion of Scientific and Library improvements under the corporate name and seal of Underhill Academy.....The object of this Association Shall be the support of an Academy in Underhill Flat and to furnish the same with suitable rooms and an apparatus for Illustrations and Experiments on the Natural Sciences and also to provide teachers for Said Academy and we hereby agree to adopt and to be governed by the following Constitution.....*”

The reading of the Constitution - Article by Article- was called for and after amending arts. and reading arts. - together with filling the Blank with the name of Underhill Academy in the preamble - the same was unanimously adopted & the Secretary was requested to offer the same for signatures and the following subscribed to Said Constitution, to wit ----

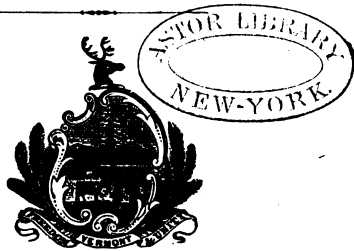
J.H. Tower, Thaddeus Murdock, E.H. Byington, G.B. Bliss, Hiram Dow,

J.H. Tower Jr, E.S. Whitcomb, William Thorpe, Joseph Wells, Joseph Kingsbury, A. Butts, J.H. Bostwick, A. B. Perry

In addition to the Articles of Constitution, the notebook contains the warnings and minutes of meetings for the election of trustees. It has no information about the teachers, students, or subjects taught, or its relationship to the Bell Institute, which is never mentioned. Only one advertisement has been found for the Underhill Academy, dated 1865, with B.C. Ward as Principal. It does not mention teaching in the natural sciences.

A similar flier for the Bell Institute, dated 1883, lists as Principal, Chauncey H. Hayden, A.B. (He also served as an editor of the 1916 ‘History of Jericho’.) In fine print the flier announces that the trustees are that year reopening a school in the Bell Institute offering Higher English, Languages and college preparation.

THE
ACTS AND RESOLVES
 PASSED BY
The General Assembly
 OF THE
STATE OF VERMONT,
 AT THE
OCTOBER SESSION,
 1852.



PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

MONTPELIER:
E. P. Walton & Son, Printers.
 1852.

No. 101.—AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE UNDERHILL ACADEMY.

SECTION 1. Location and name of Corporation.	SECTION 2. Members and purposes of corporation.
SECTION 3. Powers of corporation.	SECTION 5. First meeting. Quorum regulated.
SECTION 4. Trustees may increase their number, fill vacancies, and appoint teachers and officers.	SECTION 6. This act subject to control of future Legislatures.

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont, as follows :

SEC. 1. There is hereby established and constituted, at the village of Underhill Flat, a high school, to be known by the name of the Underhill Academy.

SEC. 2. John H. Tower, Joseph Wells, Joseph Kingsbury, S. W. Tower, Hiram Dow, James L. Whitcomb, John Story, Levi French, William Thorp, Henry Mead, C. F. Halsey, J. D. Sands, George B. Oaks, James Whitcomb, H. B. Day, S. S. Brown, L. H. Bostwick, E. S. Whitcomb, S. M. Mead, S. B. Bliss, Amos Eastman, J. H. Woodward, Josiah Bass, Asa L. Lane, Ziba Church, S. M. Merrill, and their associates and successors, are constituted a body politic and corporate, with all the powers and privileges belonging to similar institutions, by the name of Underhill Academy.

SEC. 3. The said corporation may have a common seal, and the same alter at pleasure ; may sue and be sued, make their own by-laws, rules and regulations for the government of said corporation and of said Academy, not repugnant to the constitution and laws of this State ; may purchase, take and hold real and personal estate, to the amount of ten thousand dollars in real and five thousand dollars in personal estate.

SEC. 4. Said corporation may increase the number of trustees to a number not exceeding thirty, and may supply any vacancy that may happen by death or otherwise, at any meeting regularly warned for that purpose, and held agreeably to the rules and regulations which may be adopted by said corporation ; and they shall have power to appoint, select, support, all such teachers and officers as they may find necessary for the government and welfare of said institution.

SEC. 5. The first meeting of said corporation shall be holden at the Academy building in the village of Underhill Flat in the town of Underhill, within three months from the passage of this act, and the said John H. Tower is authorized to call said meeting by giving notice thereof to the persons before named, at which meeting seven members of said corporation when met, and at any subsequent meeting, shall be a quorum to transact any business whatever.

SEC. 6. This act shall be subject to the control of any future Legislature.

Approved, November 23, 1852.

At its peak the Underhill Academy was said to have had 175 pupils. The school often had soirees with recitations, debates and musical programs, but unfortunately no programs seem to have been saved.



Underhill Academy
Bell Institute

B. C. WARD, Principal.

<i>PRIMARY DEPARTMENT,</i>	- - - - -	\$3 00
<i>COMMON ENGLISH,</i>	- - - - -	4 00
<i>HIGHER ENGLISH,</i>	- - - - -	4 50
<i>GREEK and LATIN,</i>	- - - - -	5 00
<i>FRENCH, \$3,50--with other studies,</i>	- - - - -	2 00

TUITION PAYABLE AT THE MIDDLE OF THE TERM.

No charges made for less than one half a Term, and no deduction made except in cases of protracted illness.

BOARD can be obtained at a reasonable price.

Rooms will be furnished those wishing to board themselves.

Pupils are requested to be present at the opening of the term, as no classes will be formed after the first week.

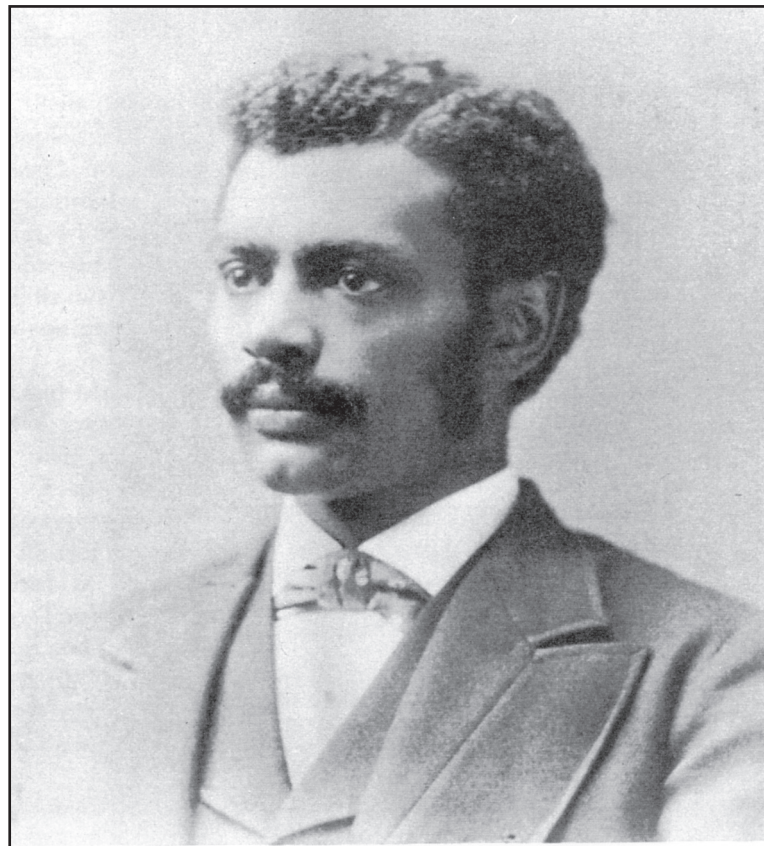
UNDERHILL, Vt., July 31st, 1865.

Fall Term commences Aug 31st 1865

~George Washington Henderson

After the end of the Civil War, the Underhill Academy had among its students a most outstanding young man. George Washington Henderson was born a slave in Virginia in 1850. During the war he escaped to the Grand Army of the Republic and was taken on as a servant by Henry Carpenter, adjutant in the Eighth Vermont Regiment. In 1865 then only fifteen years old, he accompanied Carpenter when he returned to his home in Belvidere, Vermont. While working for the family, the young man was helped to “learn his letters”. He must have been an apt student, for the Carpenters made an arrangement for him to study at the Underhill Academy, then under the tutelage of Oscar Atwood. His boarding arrangements are not known, but he must have lived in the area, for on April 5, 1872, George Washington Henderson became a formal member of the Underhill Congregational Church. W. Scott Nay, later to become a beloved doctor and leading citizen in Underhill, was his school companion at the Academy and later remembered him in a letter to the UVM Alumni Weekly in 1936:

“It was a most satisfactory privilege for me to protect him from the jibes of some discourteous students who, because of his color, thought themselves to be his superiors. It is needless to say that he outranked them all in scholarship as he excelled them in demeanor. His record has shown him to be a second Booker Washington.”



George Washington Henderson

After several years in Underhill, the young man went to Barre, graduating from the Spaulding Academy. He still remained a member of the Underhill church. He went on to study at the University of Vermont, where his career from then on has been quite well documented. At the University he was an outstanding student, graduating at the head of his class in 1877, the first member of his race to be elected to the scholastic fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa. He was leader of his class and a member of the Delta Psi fraternity (along with contemporary, John Dewey.) The 1877 commencement at which he received his A.B. degree was held in the College Street Congregational Church. He gave an honorary address at the ceremony, "The Economy of Moral Forces in History". The Burlington Free Press covered the event and commented, "Mr Henderson's effort, in point of interest and ability, as well as of earnestness and excellence of delivery, asked no odds of any other on the programme. When it is considered that its author was born a slave and twelve years ago had not learned to read, its maturity of thought and good taste in presentation must be considered truly marvelous."

In 1875-76, while he was a student at the University, he served as a teacher in the Jericho Academy. In the summers he worked on a farm in Waitsfield. After receiving his degree, he became a teacher and then the Principal of the Craftsbury Academy, along the way earning an M.A. degree from UVM, reading a paper on "Conservation". He went on to Yale Divinity School where in 1883 he received a B.D. degree and a Hooker Fellowship for graduate study in Berlin. He was accompanied to Berlin with his new wife, the young Preceptress (teacher of drawing, music, elocution and bookkeeping) at the Craftsbury Academy. When they returned to Vermont, they settled in Newport, where Mr Henderson held the position of principal of the elementary school. It was in 1886 that he formally transferred his membership from the Underhill Congregational Church. His time in Newport was short, for tragedy befell, with the untimely death of both his wife and infant. Both are buried in a family grave in Belvedere. At this time, his former mentor at the Underhill Academy, Oscar Atwood (UVM 1864) was president of Straight University (now Dillard) in New Orleans. He may have encouraged the young widower to come South, where he became an ordained Congregational minister in 1888, serving for two years as pastor of the Central Congregational Church. In 1890 he accepted the chair of theology at Straight University and pastorate of the University Church. In 1904, he became Dean of Theology at Fiske University, and in 1909 went on to Wilberforce University in Ohio, where he taught theology and classical languages until his retirement in 1932. Throughout his career he was in demand as a lecturer and editor. He died in 1936 and is buried in Wilberforce, Ohio. He often visited in Vermont with his second wife and kept his relationships with friends in the state. In 1999, he was honored with an historic site marker in Belvidere, as a "Minister, Educator, Champion of his Race".



Oscar Atwood

~~Establishment of the Green Mountain Academy

A flier for the Green Mountain Academy, with J.S. Cilley, Principal, is dated 1853, with Martin Wires, Chairman Trustees. It states that the Institution was established 'in the past year' (1852, the same year as the Underhill Academy) in Underhill Center. It lists a Primary Dept and 'liberal arts' curriculum, similar to the Bell Institute. However, it was not until November 14, 1855, that the Vermont Legislature actually passed an 'Act to Incorporate the Green Mountain Academy'. "Section 1. There is hereby constituted a high school to be located at Underhill Centre....." The incorporators included Martin Wires, along with L.S. Stevens, Riley Haniford, two Terrills, two Woodworths and other prominent citizens of Underhill Center.

In 1886 J.J. Monahan, a lawyer, Underhill Postmaster and important civic contributor, wrote the early history of Underhill for the Rann Gazeteer. In his history he stated that Underhill had only two private academies, Bell Institute in the Flats and Green Mountain Academy in Underhill Center. He never mentions The Underhill Academy, and he lived almost directly across the road from the school building. Subsequent historical writers repeated his statement and the record became very confused. It would seem that both schools occupied the same building and had their own faculty and curriculum. The record is clear that the Underhill Academy owned the building, took care of its maintenance and decided what would be done with it.

In 1853 J.S. Cilley left his position as Principal of the Academy in the Flats to become the first Principal of the Green Mountain Academy in Underhill Center, even before the new school was officially chartered. He served there for five years as an outstanding educator. At one time the school had as many as 120 students, some out of town boarders. (Cilley went on to take a similar position at the Williston Academy)



THE
 ACTS AND RESOLVES
 PASSED BY
 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
 OF THE
 STATE OF VERMONT,
 AT THE
 OCTOBER SESSION,
 1855.



PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

MONTPELIER:
 E. P. WALTON, JR., PRINTER.
 1855.

No. 105.—AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE GREEN MOUNTAIN ACADEMY.

SECTION

1. Location and name of academy.
2. Corporators and their powers.
3. Further powers of corporation.
4. Number of trustees may be increased to thirty. Power of trustees.

SECTION

5. First meeting. Organization. By-laws. Number necessary for a quorum at meeting.
6. This act to be under the control of future legislatures.

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont, as follows:

SEC. 1. There is hereby constituted and established a high school to be located at Underhill Centre, in the county of Chittenden, to be known and called by the name of the Green Mountain Academy.

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CORPORATIONS.

[A. D.

SEC. 2. Martin Wires, C. M. Bates, B. M. Burbank, Riley Haniford, Alfred Bicknell, L. M. Stevens, Calvin Howe, A. L. Terrill, Edward Haniford, Franklin Woodworth, John Terrill, Rapha Woodworth, Timothy Terrill, John Choate, Silas Sears, Myron Bronson, William Powell, A. F. Burdick, I. D. Beeman, and Harvey Dickerson, of said Underhill, and their associates and successors, are hereby constituted a body politic and corporate, with all the powers, rights, privileges and duties belonging to similar institutions, by and under the name specified in section one of this act.

Sec. 3 and 4.....

SEC. 5. The first meeting of said corporation shall be holdn at the Academy in said Underhill, on the first Tuesday in June A. D. 1856, at six o'clock in the afternoon, at which meeting a majority of the corporators named shall be necessary for a quorum to do business; they shall organize by the election of a president of the corporation from their own number, and a secretary; when organized they may make by-laws, rules and regulations, appoint officers, and set times for annual and other meetings for the transaction of such other business as pertains to the objects of the corporation: *Provided*, that at any regular meeting, subsequent to the meeting above named, twelve members shall constitute a quorum.

SEC. 6. This act shall be under the control of any future legislature to alter, amend or repeal, as the public good may require.

SEC. 7. This act shall take effect from its passage.

Approved, November 14, 1855.

GREEN MOUNTAIN ACADEMY.

This Institution, established during the past year, is located at UNDERHILL CENTER. The First Term of the School commenced on the 29th of November last, and the Trustees have great pleasure in saying that, thus far, it has been attended with eminent success.

The SPRING TERM will commence on Monday, the 28th of February inst., under the charge of

J. S. CILLEY, Principal,

Who will promptly secure such assistance as the interest of the School may require. He has already engaged the services of

Miss MARY WOODWORTH,
Teacher of Music.

Miss CHARLOTTE SAFFORD,
Teacher of Painting and Drawing.

Mr. C. B. CURTIS, Teacher of Penmanship.

The Principal, designing to promise no more than he intends to perform, would merely give assurance that every exertion will be made to promote the interest of all who may be placed under his charge; and would apprise all who may favor with their attendance, that they will find the School Room a place for *labor and toil*. Believing the School worthy of public confidence, we respectfully solicit for the Institution continued and extended patronage and support.

TUITION PER QUARTER:

Primary Department,	- - - - -	\$2,00.
Common English Branches,	- - - - -	3,00.
Higher Branches, including Languages,	- - - - -	3,50.
Music, with use of Piano,	- - - - -	8,00.
Crayoning and Monochromatic, each	- - - - -	4,00.
Penciling and Painting, each	- - - - -	2,00.
Penmanship,	- - - - -	1,00.

Those who may wish to obtain Board, will find ample accommodations upon reasonable terms.

MARTIN WIRES, *Chairman Trustees.*

Underhill Center, February 10, 1853.

~~Closing of the Academies in Underhill

In 1856 The first Vermont State Board of Education was created. The State required that high school education be made available for all children. In 1857 High Schools opened in St Johnsbury, Rutland, Burlington, St Albans, Williston and Montpelier. The private academies soon were not able to compete and most became part of the public school system or closed altogether. (A few outstanding ones have managed to survive until the present day as a public/private hybrid, but mostly independent of the State Education System.) Green Mountain Academy closed in 1881. Underhill Academy held on until 1892. The date of closure of the Bell Institute is unknown.

Dec. 19, 1893 . The Trustees of Underhill Academy met at their building according to Adjournment. On motion of ??? A.F. Burdick the Central Committee of the Trustees of Underhill Academy were instructed to arrange with the Committee of the Underhill Graded School District to allow them the use of the building for School purposes.

Adjournment without date.

F.S. Jackson , E.S. Whitcomb Jr, Secretary Protem

~~The Underhill Jericho Incorporated District

In 1893 the State chartered an Incorporated School District (I.D.) for the population center which was rapidly growing in Underhill Flats and spilling over into the neighboring area of Jericho, called Riverside. The expansion was in response to the service of the newly arrived B. and L. Railroad. That same year, (1893) the trustees of the Underhill Academy appointed a committee to arrange for the use of the building for the Underhill Graded School District. (For a while, the upstairs of the building had been rented to the local Grange.) The I.D. included Jericho District 2 and Underhill District 3, approximately 50 families in each district.

From 1893-1972, the Academy building served as the I.D. Graded School. (A new I.D. School was built on the Jericho side of the border, remodeled in 1972). From 1920-1947 the Academy building served as the local High School. (1947 was the last graduating class.) The Mount Mansfield Union High School opened in 1947 as the new High School for five local communities: Underhill, Jericho, Richmond, Bolton and Huntington.



~Academy Buildings

The Underhill Academy building was built on a plan similar to many local academies: a two story central pavilion capped by a bell tower and two side wings. The building was sold for use as a business location in 1972.

The Green Mountain Academy had a prime location in Underhill Center on a small sandy knoll with a fine mountain view. There was no basement and the sills were set on large stone slabs set on edge. The inside of the building was barn construction with two stories each with one open room. The exterior was a pleasing neoclassical design, with a bell tower. The Academy was occasionally used for Sunday Mass for the local Catholic Community until they were able to build their own church next door. The original Catholic church burned in 1890 and the academy building, which no longer housed the school, was sometimes used for worship until the new church was built. The Town bought the building and it was used as a Town Hall from 1900 - 1949, when the Town Hall moved to the former Union Church in the Center and renovated it. It has been used as the Town Hall ever since. In 1951 when the District #5 school burned, the building was again used as a school until the new Underhill Central School opened. The building was sold to artist, Roy Kennedy, who remodeled it for his home and studio. It is still in the Kennedy family, 8 Green St.



Kika McArthur 2013

~References

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W.S. Rann, editor. "History of Chittenden County, Vermont." Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co. 1886.

Meeting Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Underhill Academy. 1852-1893

Acts and Resolves of the State of Vermont General Assembly, 1852, 1853, 1855

Margaret Hazen Muller '26. "The Strange Tale of George Washington Henderson, '77"