

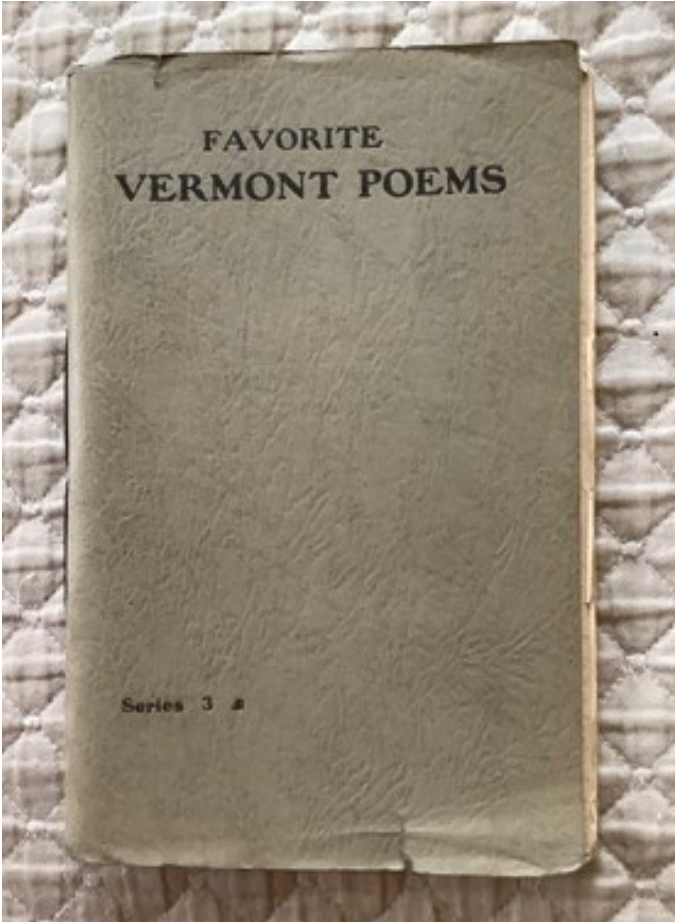


## A VERMONT WRITER

by Margaret Edwards

*This column is an offering of The Danforth Library in Barnard and a chance to introduce Vermont writers who deserves wider renown.*

### Three “Anonymous” Women Poets



There is a feminist saying that makes the rounds each generation: “Anonymous was a woman.” Q: Who was it who wrote something widely admired, but whose name most likely was lost? A: A woman. This disappearance quite naturally grew out of society’s admiration for female self-effacement. Many decades ago, and well into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was still being written in etiquette books that “a lady’s name” should appear only three times in a newspaper: first as an acknowledgment of her birth, next as an announcement of her wedding, and last as a notice of her death.

A tradition of honoring a lady by downplaying her very existence may account for how difficult it can be to pin down the biographical facts of women writers who were born before 1900. A Google search yields fewer “hits” than would be the case were the writer a man.

The three women poets cited below wrote poems that were published in a 1929 pamphlet called *Favorite Vermont Poets*. “Favorite” they might have been at the

time, but it is now hard to discover exactly who they were.

### Sarah Mabel (Hall) Walter (1863–1935)

Luckily Sarah Walter’s name appears on an informative gravestone in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. She was “wife of” Charles True Walter, whose name and dates above hers appear on a huge stone with “WALTER” emblazoned on it. From the chiseled information, it’s possible to determine that, at the age of twenty-two, Sarah bore a son named Dudley Augustus who died at birth. She went on to have two healthy daughters: Dorothy Charlotte, who never married and lived to be 78; and Elizabeth, who married someone with the surname Nelson and died at 90. A bit more research yields the two facts that Sarah was born in Burke, Vermont, and married Mr. Walter in 1886.

A poem must speak for itself, and Sarah Walter’s “Adagio,” the one chosen for publication in *Favorite Vermont Poets, Series 3*, by editor Walter John Coates, seems quite unusual in its final stanza. There the poet deftly creates a rhyme with the Latin name of a flower. All of the poem’s imagery is drawn from Vermont’s hesitant springtime.

### ADAGIO

I love to roam the wakening hills  
Where lie late drifts of snow,  
And watch the little trickling rills  
Steal to the flood below;  
To pause beside foaming brooks  
That rush exulting by,  
While from the gravelly banks there looks  
The colts-foot wonderingly.  
In the frozen woods as yet no hints  
Of Spring’s soft beauties are,  
Save there by yonder stump the glints  
Of shy hepatica;  
The Christmas fern’s dark shining sheaf,  
Enticing, bids me come  
And find nearby the glossy leaf  
And checkerberry plum.  
But all in vain in woodsy bower  
Or slopes precipitous  
I seek that lowly laughed-at flower,  
The *carpus foetidus*.

### Jessie Damon Penniman White (b.1872 – ?)

Jessie Penniman White had become associated with Windsor, Vermont, by the 1900’s. But where was she born? There is much more yet to be learned of her life, but one hard fact managed to surface in the chaos of online sleuthing. In 1931, Jessie Penniman White published a book for junior readers called *Top O’ The Morning*, a book still available as a rare book and charmingly illustrated by an artist named Eleanor B. Campbell.

*Cont. next page - Poets*

Poets - Cont. from front page

At least we have a sample of White's poetry. Editor Coates selected "Ascutney Granite," which is prefaced with a note to the reader: "The rare and beautiful green granite, from Ascutney Mountain, which was used for the lower walls of the Boston Journal building erected in 1902, occasioned this poem."

#### ASCUTNEY GRANITE

Rough-hewn and shapeless, from the mountainside,  
Vermont has sent her hard green stone to be  
Fretted and tortured, that the world may see  
How fine a heart her rugged pastures hide.

Even when polished will not yet the stone  
Be alien to the crowded city street?—  
Shrink from the tread of careless hastening feet?—  
Still claim another life as all its own?

The lightning's kiss, the north wind's close embrace,  
The hot sun's breath, the crash of falling snows,  
No human voice from dawn to daylight's close,  
The white clouds reaching down to touch his face.

Ascutney sent the stone to us—and yet  
Shall not the very lump of granite thrill  
With homesick longing for that far green hill—  
Even when polished, can the stone forget?

#### Eva Skinner Blake (b.1861 – ?)

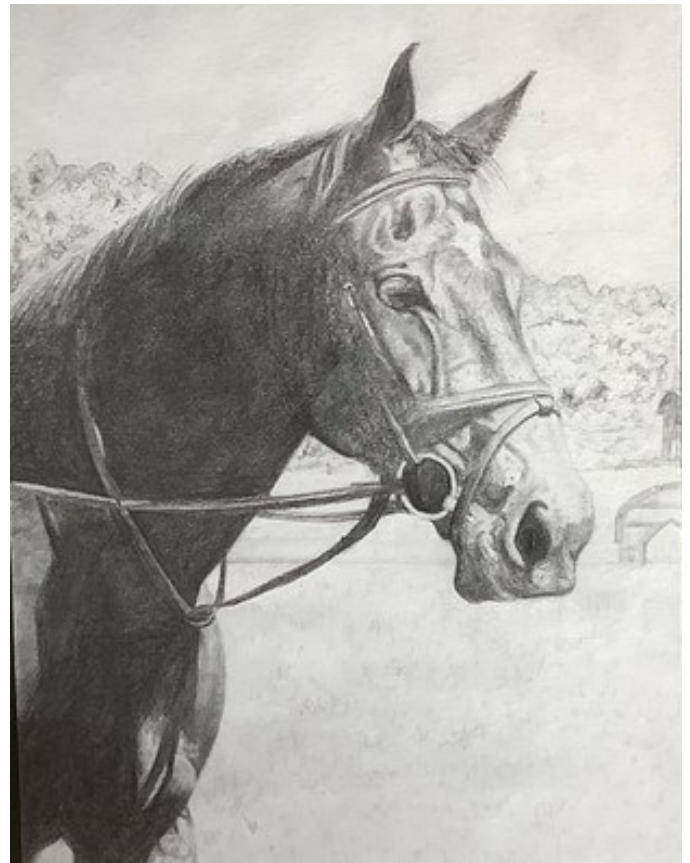
Even less is known about Eva Skinner Blake. We can surmise she is a Vermonter by the fact her single poem appears in *Favorite Vermont Poets*. We also can learn from a footnote that she published a book of verses entitled *Rhymes from the Kitchen* in 1923. From her *Rhymes* came this one, which will delight anyone who has any acquaintance with horses.

#### SMILES

I like to see a horse that smiles:  
He points his ears ahead.  
He does no smiling with his mouth.  
But with his ears instead.  
He reaches out his velvet nose  
In friendly way the while,  
As if he knew you were his friend—  
That is a horse's smile.

I like to see a dog that smiles:  
He does it with his tail.  
He wags it gaily to and fro  
Or raps a welcome hail.  
The friendship of a dog is true,  
Without deceit or guile.  
Just watch the wagging of his tail—  
That indicates a smile.

And so a horse smiles with his head.  
A dog smiles with his tail.  
The signs you easily can read  
Because they never fail.  
And you can tell their owners' ways  
As you go round the town.  
Dumb animals yet plainly speak,  
With smiles or with a frown.



A horse "smiling"—in this 2021 graphite drawing by Genevieve Morel of Barnard, Vermont.

A poem by an author whose name is obstinately obscure is close to being a work that was penned by our old friend Anonymous. But at least we readers can deduce from "Smiles" something particular about Eva Skinner Blake—whoever she was. We know that she loved animals and observed them closely.

The Danforth Library does not have a copy of the pamphlet called *Favorite Vermont Poets, Series 3*, from which the poems quoted above were taken. The rare and somewhat tattered source is owned by Danforth Library trustee Margaret Edwards, who hopes that someone will email her at [RgeEdwards@aol.com](mailto:RgeEdwards@aol.com) and tell her more about any of these three Vermont writers: Sarah Mabel (Hall) Walter, Jessie Damon Penniman White, and Eva Skinner Blake

## EDITOR'S REMINISCENCES

### THE ART OF FELLING TREES

Once again a large maple tree that has lived past its prime needs to be taken down before it is brought down in an uncontrolled manner by an act of nature. When such trees are close to human habitation this often requires considerable skill and sometimes heavy equipment. It also brings back memories of past exploits.

Some forty-five or so years ago my father was asked to take down a dead tree at the Green Mountain Horse Association. The tree was between "B" and "C" barns, be-

*Cont. next page - Trees*

**CHARLES DANFORTH LIBRARY NEWS**

**Library Hours**

Wednesdays 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
Saturdays 10:00 a.m. – Noon

**New Books – August 2021**

**Fiction**

*The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich (Pulitzer)

*A Distant Grave* by Sarah Stewart Taylor

*Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah

*Whereabouts: A Novel* by Jhumpa Lahiri

**Dorothy Canfield Fisher 1879-1958**

*The Bedquilt and Other Stories*

*Her Son's Wife*

*Understood Betsy*

**Non-Fiction**

*How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by Clint Smith

*The Plague Year: America in the Time of Covid* by Lawrence Wright

*All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake*, by Tiya Miles

**Memoir**

*Crying in HMart* by Michelle Zauner

**Essay**

*Best Person Rural* by Noel Perrin

**Library Passes Available**

**The Echo Leahy Center in Burlington**

This pass provides a discounted general admission price of \$7.00 per person. The Echo Center is open daily year-round 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day). 1 College Street, . Phone: 802-864-1848, Website: [echovt.org](http://echovt.org)

**Vermont State Parks**

Vermont State Parks [vtstateparks.com](http://vtstateparks.com)

Permits up to 8 people in one vehicle entry into any VT State Park's Day Use Area

*Note: Vermont residents who are 62 years or older, or a veteran who has been honorably discharged from active duty in US armed services, are eligible for a lifetime day entry pass into the parks. These Green Mountain Passports are available through the Town Clerk's office for \$2.00*

**Vermont Historic Sites** – Free Admission for up to 8 people in the same vehicle.

[Home Page | State Historic Sites \(vermont.gov\)](http://Home Page | State Historic Sites (vermont.gov))

Submitted by:

Judy Maynes

Barnard, Vt 05031

Email: [judy.maynes@gmail.com](mailto:judy.maynes@gmail.com)

*Trees - Cont. from previous page*

side a small 6' x 4' shed, with various utility wires running in several directions, and two wooden fences nearby. There was only one line on which the tree could be felled safely.

My father considered the situation carefully. Looking at the 40' tree from every angle, at the wires and at the tops of the barns. Then he walked out about 10' from the base of the tree into the parking area and using the edge of the sole of his boot he trenched a line in the dirt about 10' long. This was where the tree had to land.

He picked up his saw, started it, and approached the base of the tree. After taking a final look around he started his fall-cut, periodically stopping to check the cut and the fall-line. After clearing the wedge of wood from the fall-cut, he once again stepped back to check everything.

A small group of spectators had gathered and my father looked at me as if to say, "Here goes nothing". He restarted his saw and made his back-cut, steadily cutting while looking up at the tree. Right on cue the tree started to fall and I yelled "Timber!". Dad stepped away and the tree landed on the line in the dirt. I hope I can do the same when I take down the maple.

**LOCAL CRYPTOGRAM**

A cryptogram is a code in which one letter is substituted for another. For example, the word "Church" could be written BWMSBW. The letter B would be the letter C and would be so throughout the entire message. In this message U = W. The solution is found by trial and error. The CRYPTOGRAM answer is on the last page.

"DERN JFDA-UEDDEHQ

EH F LMMPUFZ.

DERN JFDA-NEHQEHQ

FS F UEHLMU.

OZON JFDA-LPOFKEHQ EH SJO UFDDN.

AOOS JFDA-LFHBEHQ EH F IESBJOH.

OXOH SJO BDMBIN

JFDA-ZFUH SJO JMTPN

FHL SJO AFPKOPN KFIO

JFDA-FHNUOPN."

-BFPD NFHLCTPQ,

XEDDFQO EH DFSO NORSOKCOP

THE PLANNING COMMISSION meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:00pm at the Town offices.

BARNARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION meets the second Monday of the month, 7:00pm, Town Hall.

BEES MEETINGS are held at 6:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the library at the school.

DANFORTH LIBRARY HOURS: Wednesdays 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to Noon. ECFiber Wi-Fi access available .

SELECTBOARD meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at the Town offices at 7:00pm.

SELECTBOARD ASSISTANT, Rob Ramrath, [select-board@barnardvt.us](mailto:select-board@barnardvt.us), 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR, Rob Ramrath, [zoning@barnardvt.us](mailto:zoning@barnardvt.us), 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

TOWN CLERK office hours are Monday & Tuesday, 8:00am-3:30pm. Public access is restricted. Call 234-9211 for an appointment.

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:00pm at the Barnard Town Hall as necessary.

THE BARNARD ENERGY COMMITTEE meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm at the Town Hall

YOGA CLASSES offered at Danforth Library, Mondays 9:00am - 10:30am with Amanda Anderson. Classes are by donation; for more information contact [Amanda@innerliftyoga.com](mailto:Amanda@innerliftyoga.com). Yoga Classes are also offered on Thursdays from 9-10:30 with Beth Umba. Contact Beth at: [bethumba@gmail.com](mailto:bethumba@gmail.com).

BARNARD GENERAL STORE, Monday-Saturday: 7am-7pm, Sundays: 8am-6pm. <https://www.facebook.com/barnardgeneralstore>

BARNARD LISTSERV: to subscribe please send an email to: [barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org](mailto:barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org)

RECYCLING Click [here](#) for Hours and Regulations

THE BARNARD INN is running a "Feeding Neighbors & Sustaining Community" campaign. Purchase an e-Gift Card and in turn the chefs will feed neighbors. Whole chicken dinners (serves 4-6) and individual sized meals to help feed Vermonters in need. Thank you and please stay safe. E-Gift Cards are available at [www.barnardinn.com](http://www.barnardinn.com).

ECFIBER Governing Board meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm in 012 Oakes Hall, Vermont Law School. More information at <https://www.ecfiber.net/>

HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs to be announced. Questions? Email: [historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com](mailto:historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com)

## BARNARTS EVENTS SCHEDULE

### Music On The Farm

Aug. 26: Myra Flynn & DonnCherie  
 September 2: Bow Thayer  
 September 9: Ida Mae Specker  
 September 16: Alisa Amador  
 September 23: Fiddle Witch  
 September 30: DJ Sean Mixkings

### Lakou Mizik Residency

Sept 22 - Oct 2, Haitian Roots Cultural Engagement. Two local performances and community and school workshops!

### Public Performances:

Sat, Sept 25th - Barnard Town Hall  
 Fri, Oct 1st - Woodstock Town Hall Theater  
 Workshop schedule will include 6 area schools, plus senior & community centers

Haunted Village Theater, Oct 23-24, Barnard Village

### Coming in Late Summer

Wasteland Public Radio: Well, That Happened  
 An original dystopian podcast written and performed by:  
 Aaron M. Hodge                      Maureen Hennigan  
 Daniel Patterson                      Heather Howell  
 Peter Mendes                      Chris Peirce  
 Erin Bennett      Linda Treash      Will Moore

**CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER**

"Lips half-willing in a doorway.  
 Lips half-singing at a window.  
 Eyes half-dreaming in the walls.  
 Feet half-dancing in a kitchen.  
 Even the clocks half-yawn the hours  
 And the farmers make half-answers."  
 - Carl Sandburg, Village in Late September

## WCSU SCHOOL CALENDAR

Sept. 1 - First day of classes.  
 Sept. 6 - Labor Day, school closed.  
 Oct. 6 - Two hour delayed start.

School buses will be on the road starting September 1st. Vermont Statute 23 V.S.A. § 1075 states: The operator of a motor vehicle, including authorized emergency vehicles under section 1015 of this title, upon meeting or overtaking a vehicle marked and equipped as provided in section 1283 of this title that has stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging public or private schoolchildren, shall stop his or her vehicle immediately and shall keep it stationary while the flashing red signal lights are in operation.