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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 ByWay Books hosts pick-up party for ‘Charity & Sylvia,’
2 the Vermont Reads book for 2026

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4 TEXT BODY:

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5 ByWay Books & More, 399 Canal St., is supporting the
6 Vermont Reads Community Program by hosting a “pick-up party,”
7 an all-community event centered around the book *Charity &*
8 *Sylvia* by Tillie Walden (Drawn & Quarterly Press) on Wednesday,
9 July 22, from 4 to 6 p.m. A copy of the book may be “picked up”
10 for free by who participate.

11 “Weybridge, Vermont, in February 1807 is small, cold,
12 lonely, and beautiful. As an unwed woman with few prospects,
13 Sylvia Drake resides with and cares for her sister’s rambunctious
14 family. But today the house is abuzz awaiting a guest — Charity
15 Bryant.”

16 So opens *Charity & Sylvia*. Walden is an award-winning,
17 Vermont-based cartoonist and author of *Spinning and On a*
18 *Sunbeam*. She served as Vermont’s Cartoonist Laureate from April
19 2023 to April 2026.

20 *Charity & Sylvia* is a biography that is also the story of
21 19th-century America. For 44 years, Charity Bryant and Sylvia
22 Drake lived together as life partners in small town Vermont. And
23 in Walden’s graphic novel, America grows alongside these
24 women. We see the arrival of railroads, the terms of 14
25 Presidents, and the experiences of riots, rebellion, and plagues.

26 Walden created her work from archival materials at the
27 Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History with other primary
28 and secondary sources. Walden also drew on Rachel Hope
29 Cleves’s *Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early*
30 *America*, published in 2014 and first to unearth the story of
31 Charity and Sylvia.

32 In 2024, Vermont Humanities appointed Walden as the
33 first cartoonist-in-residence. She was commissioned to research a
34 graphic novel based on Charity and Sylvia’s story, so that the
35 story could reach a wider audience, and to be accessible to the
36 middle and high schools who take part in Vermont Reads.

37 “I am fascinated by life in Vermont in the late 1700s and
38 the 1800s,” said Walden. “I want the readers [...] to feel like they
39 understand a sense of how the days felt for these women. It is a
40 story about queer love, it is a story about commitment and
41 spirituality, but it is also a story of how we lived back then.”

42 “Tillie’s work on the story of Charity and Sylvia is a
43 deeply moving meditation on rural life, community, spirituality,
44 and love,” said Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup, executive director of
45 Vermont Humanities. “I have been working with the Sheldon

46 Museum to bring the story of these two women to a wider
47 audience for a dozen years, and I can't imagine a more moving
48 culmination to that partnership than Tillie Walden's masterwork."

49 Walden won the 2018 Eisner Award for Best Reality-
50 Based Work at the age of 22 for her graphic memoir *Spinning*.
51 Her work includes a graphic novel trilogy featuring *The Walking*
52 *Dead* character Clementine and two middle grade graphic novels
53 created with musicians Tegan and Sara. She is a graduate of The
54 Center for Cartoon Studies (CCS) in White River Junction and
55 became a professor at CCS in 2021.

56 ByWay invites teachers, clergy, teens, and the Brattleboro
57 community to participate in the pick-up party on Wednesday July
58 22, sign up for a discussion session, and enjoy light refreshments
59 while meeting fellow readers. For anyone who wants to join the
60 discussion but cannot attend, contact ByWay Books at 802-490-
61 8014 or contact@bywaybooks.co.

62 People are encouraged to pick up the book early to have
63 time to read before the first of three group discussions based on
64 the book. The first is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 26, at 6
65 p.m., with the ByWay Books Book Club. The last two discussions
66 will be scheduled after the new year in honor of Women's
67 History Month and LGBTQ+ Month.

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