

**William Dean Fausett (1913 – 1998)**  
**Collection, 1978-1991**  
**MSA 291**

**Introduction**

This collection focuses on William Dean Fausett's attempt to demonstrate the historic merit of the Cephas Kent dwelling in Dorset, Vermont, in the 1970s and 1980s. It contains letters, published materials, press clippings, supporting exhibits, a diary facsimile, genealogical material and court documents. The bulk of the collection was sent to the Vermont Historical Society by Mr. Fausett as part of his advocacy effort; additional materials were contributed by VHS President Winn Taplin. The collection is housed in 1 document storage box and occupies approximately .25 linear feet of shelf space.

**Biographical Note**

William Dean Fausett, known as "Dean", was born on July, 4, 1913 in Price, Utah. He was the youngest of seven siblings born to Adelbert Fausett and Minnie Bean Fausett.

Descended from a long line of Mormon pioneers, Dean was raised in Price, Utah, but at the age of 16 traveled back east to begin his lifelong career in art. He attended the Arts Students League in New York as well as the Beaux Art Institute of Design. His brother, Lynn Fausett, was already working as a muralist and Dean soon joined him as an apprentice. In 1935, Dean traveled to Europe where he studied and prepared sketches for muralist Hildre Meiere for her work at St. Michael's Passionate Monastery Church in Union City, New Jersey. After returning to the United States, he attended the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. In the 1930s, Dean Fausett spent time as the artist in residence at the Henry Street Settlement House Arts and Crafts School in New York City, where he taught art to under privileged children. In 1938, under a commission from the Works Progress Administration, he painted murals depicting maps of Grant's Civil War battles in the reliquary rooms of Grant's Tomb in New York City.

In the following years, Dean Fausett traveled and painted extensively throughout the United States, Mexico and Europe. During WWII, in addition to painting murals in the United States Capitol, he spent most of his time on a large commissioned mural for the United States Air Force at Randolph Field in San Antonio Texas. In 1945, after the completion of the over 3,000 square foot mural in Texas, Dean returned to Vermont where early in his career he had made a name for himself as a landscape and portrait painter. He purchased the Cephas Kent Dwelling in Dorset, Vermont, and began to indulge in his love of American history. After researching the history of his home, he came to believe that it was the dwelling house of Cephas Kent that had stood opposite to Kent's Inn in 1773. It was his belief that the house had been the mustering place for the Green Mountain Boys commanded by his relative John Fassett. Fassett had also helped to organize Seth Warner's Second Continental Regiment who, after mustering at Kent's

tavern, set off to capture Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga in the first major defeat of the British during the American Revolution. Dean Fausett also believed that four meetings held in the house in 1776 led to the founding of the Republic of Vermont. While the building had been moved and altered throughout the years, Dean believed the core of the house had played a major part in the creation of the State of Vermont as well as events leading up to the American Revolution. He researched the house and his own family's connection to it extensively over the following years while continuing to work as a painter, splitting his time between Vermont and New York.

In the 1970s, Dean Fausett began his battle with the town of Dorset over the widening of the road in front of his house and the removal of a wall from his property. He was concerned about the impact to his property and particularly to the 350 foot maple tree in his front yard. After a judgment was made against him, he appealed to the Vermont Supreme Court and in 1975 the court reversed the order citing that the measurement of the right of way had not been performed correctly. In 1978, the part of Dorset where the house is located was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Kent Neighborhood District. Dean Fausett believed that the Cephas Kent dwelling should have had a separate listing identifying his home's special historical role. In 1990, Dean moved to Dorset fulltime and established the Foundation for the Preservation and Protection of Green Mountain Boy History. For the rest of his life, he continued to research and write about his home and his family's connection to it and petitioned tirelessly for its recognition as an important piece of American history. Dean Fausett died December 13, 1998, in Rutland, Vermont, at the age of 85.

Dean Fausett painted over 15 murals that are installed in various places around the United States. Some of his murals do not survive but his Grant's tomb murals, which were destroyed by painting over them in the 1970s, were painstakingly restored in 1995 and Dean was an honored guest at their rededication. Among the many portraits he painted are likenesses of Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Grandma Moses, Vermont governor, Thomas P. Salmon, Utah governor, J. Bracken Lee, Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra Taft Benson, Sir Alexander Fleming, and composer /singer Hoagy Carmichael.

### **Scope and Content Note**

This collection contains materials related to William Dean Fausett's home, the Cephas Kent dwelling, in Dorset, Vermont, and his long fight to gain recognition for his home as an important historical site. The collection includes correspondence, exhibits, published material, genealogical papers, press clippings, and legal documents. Other materials in the collection include two small folders, one pertaining to his work as an artist and the other to his work with the organization American Forests.

Dean Fausett's correspondence spans the years 1978 to 1991 and includes a wide variety of recipients, among them the State of Vermont, the United States Department of the Interior, and the Vermont Historical Society. Notable letters include replies from the Secretary of the Interior Donald Paul Hodel in 1987 and from the Governor of Vermont,

Madeleine M. Kunin, in 1990. The subject matter of the letters is focused entirely on the dwelling and its historic significance.

The folder of “exhibits” contains materials assembled by Fausett to illustrate his historical arguments. The “exhibits” take the form of maps, sketches and booklets published by the Foundation for the Preservation and Protection of Green Mountain Boy History.

The genealogical materials are comprised of pedigree charts but also contain published genealogies and notably a facsimile of a diary written by one of Dean’s ancestors, Captain John Fassett, during a military campaign to Montreal during the American Revolution.

The press clippings range in date from 1973 to 1993 and focus on Dean’s battle with the town of Dorset as well as his mission to gain historic recognition for his home and an old maple tree on the property that he called “American Spirit.” The folder also includes a photocopy of an article published in 1904 about the discovery of long-missing official records of the early Vermont statehood conventions.

The final folder that focuses on his home is the 1975 Vermont Supreme Court docket pertaining to his legal battle with the town of Dorset over the removal of a wall on his property.

### **Related Collections:**

William Dean Fausett presented the Vermont Historical Society Library with a facsimile of John Fassett’s 1775 Revolutionary War diary and its 1886 transcription. They can be found at \*920 F264 1991.

The Vermont Historical Society has one painting and one print of William Dean Fausett’s work. The painting is titled “Guadalupe Cypress” (collection number VHS-A-789). The print is #61, “Autumn in Vermont” (collection call number VHS-A-711).

### **Inventory**

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|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| MSA 291: 1 | Correspondence, 1978-1991                                 |
| 2          | Exhibits and Publications                                 |
| 3          | Supporting Historic Documents                             |
| 4          | Genealogy Materials and Diary of Captain John Fassett Jr. |
| 5          | Press Clippings, 1973-1993                                |
| 6          | Supreme Court Docket, 1975                                |
| 7          | American Forests Project                                  |
| 8          | Art Career Materials                                      |

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December 2011  
FausettWilliamDean.doc