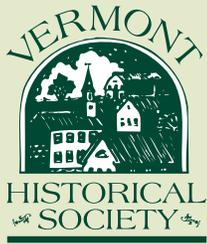


# History Connections

Vermont Historical Society

News &  
Notes

Spring 2008 / Volume #2 / Number 3



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## We've Got E-News!

There is so much going on that we can't wait to tell you, and our plans include regular **E-Newsletters**. We will update you, our members, every other month with our news, events and activities, photos and links to our website pages. If you are not on the list and would like to be, please contact us at [diane.campbell@state.vt.us](mailto:diane.campbell@state.vt.us).



The Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent federal agency that grows and sustains a "Nation of Learners," because lifelong learning is critical to success.

## IMLS Grant To Help Assess the Needs of Vermont Collecting Institutions

Who is taking care of Vermont's cultural heritage collections? What is the condition of those collections? What is needed to properly care for the collections, and how do we let people know about those needs?

Next year the Vermont Historical Society hopes to answer some of these questions. VHS, in partnership with the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance (VMGA), the Vermont Department of Libraries, The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, and the Vermont State Archives, has received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Service's **Connecting to Collections** program. The \$40,000 grant will be used to develop a survey to assess the current needs of collecting institutions in Vermont. The survey will be sent to all collecting institutions in Vermont, including historical societies, libraries, museums, town and city clerks, and county courts. Using information gathered in the survey, the project team will write a report describing collecting institutions' most pressing needs, with recommendations about meeting those needs.

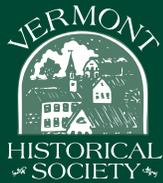
Jacqueline Calder, VHS Curator, will direct the survey project, which lasts from April 2008 through March 2009. Calder will work with Eileen Corcoran, Director of VMGA, and VHS's Local Historical Societies Outreach Manager, Lisa Evans. "The majority of collections in Vermont are held by small institutions with limited means and no professional staff," says Calder. "Our plans for the summer involve having six regional informational meetings around the state. We will hire two interns who will help collecting institutions complete their surveys as needed."

The interns will help with the distribution and completion of the survey, and enter the data into a database. The project team will take this information to write a report on state-wide collections needs. The report will be used to raise awareness about these needs, to plan for developing new working partnerships among collecting institutions, and to seek private and public funding opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels.

For more information or to make sure that a collections institution you are associated with receives a survey, contact Jackie Calder at the Vermont History Center in Barre, [jackie.calder@state.vt.us](mailto:jackie.calder@state.vt.us), 802-479-8514.



*Using IMLS funding, VHS has taken care of one of its collection's needs by installing painting storage racks at the Vermont History Center.*



Volume #2, Number 3  
Spring 2008

*History Connections* is published four times a year by the Vermont Historical Society.

The Vermont Historical Society engages both Vermonters and "Vermonters at heart" in the exploration of our state's rich heritage. Our purpose is to reach a broad audience through our outstanding collections, statewide outreach and dynamic programming. We believe that an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities.

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#### **Business Hours:**

**Vermont History Center, Barre**  
*Library:* Tues-Fri / 9am -4:30pm  
2nd Saturday of each month /  
9am-4pm

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**Pavilion Building, Montpelier**  
*Museum & Store:*  
Tues-Sat / 10am -4pm  
Sundays May to October:  
Noon-4pm

**Museum Admission:**  
Families: \$12; Adults: \$5; Students, children, seniors: \$3; Members & children under 6: Free;  
Student school groups: Free  
Call 802-828-2180

**Library Admission:**  
Non-members: \$5;  
Members and students: Free

## From the Director



### The Vermont Way

The request seemed simple: Give a talk to 125 academic CEOs at the annual meeting of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), scheduled for July 2007 at a resort in Stowe, Vermont. "We want a one-hour overview of Vermont past and present," the AASCU contact told me, "with an emphasis on lessons we can take back to our campuses to help us administer them more effectively." Knowing that most of my listeners were unfamiliar with Vermont, I ran through the main currents of the state's history—Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, agriculture, the antislavery movement, rural life, tourism, politics, rapid growth in the last half-century—and did some bragging on aspects of contemporary Vermont that I thought might prove relevant to their work. The chancellors and presidents seemed happy with the results, so I put a check mark beside the assignment and moved on to other things.

But in thinking about it afterwards, I realized the topic had much more potential. Vermonters know that their state has a complex popular image in today's America, one in which myth and reality come together freely. For many outsiders, influenced both by tireless Green Mountain public relations efforts and the genuine attractions of the state, determined independence, green grass, blue sky, happy cows, great skiing, peaceful villages, and maple syrup have become enduring symbols of Vermont. This idealized picture includes "real Vermonters," usually some humorous variation on quaint and idiosyncratic folk like Larry, Darryl and Darryl from the old Bob Newhart sitcom. Several generations of Americans have warmed to that vision, and it often seems during foliage season as if everyone east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio dreams of moving to Vermont to run a B & B or a country store.

At the same time, Vermont has attracted much attention lately for major changes in the state's political and social landscape. Once the rock of the Republican Party, Vermont has become a favorite of liberals and the despair of conservatives for legalizing civil unions, sending Bernie Sanders to the U.S. Senate, and waging vigorous discussions at town meetings on the impeachment of President Bush. Long one of the most homogeneous states in the Union, today Vermont is welcoming increasing numbers of African refugees, immigrants from the Mideast, Hispanics, and other newcomers who add rich veins of diversity to the population. A simultaneous influx of well-to-do urbanites has sent property prices soaring, dotted the Vermont hillsides with second-home McMansions, and created new tensions over land use, funding of local schools and services, and how much growth Vermont can absorb without turning into suburban New Jersey.

Trying to separate the substance from the style, I pondered whether distinctive aspects of Vermont could be instructive or useful models for others. I thought about the things Vermont does well—small-town democracy, respect for the environment, women as leaders, a tradition of higher-education service to the people of the state, ethics in state government, respect for state and local history, effective management of growth, civil discourse on contentious issues, social tolerance and acceptance—and came away concluding that the answer is "yes." Vermont is no northern New England utopia, but it does work, and that merits consideration by Americans elsewhere.

The result of all this reflection is a collaborative project to compile a congenial book on the lessons Vermont has to impart, under the title *The Vermont Way: Perspectives from the Green Mountain State*. Identifying areas in which Vermont excels and finding authors who can shed light on those qualities will be an interesting process. Although not every Vermont example will resonate elsewhere, folks from "away" might well find that there's something to learn from "that pinched up little state north of Boston." To paraphrase Daniel Webster's famous description of Dartmouth College before the U.S. Supreme Court, Vermont is a small state but there are those who love it, and consideration of *The Vermont Way* may add respect to that affection and suggest productive strategies elsewhere.

J. Kevin Graffagnino, *VHS Executive Director*

## VHS Library Acquires Early Vital Records

The VHS library has acquired 287 reels of microfilm containing the state's vital records from the beginning of record keeping through 1870. "This is a very positive development for genealogical researchers using our library," said VHS librarian Paul Carnahan. "Now they will have access to more resources under one roof."

The library has been the state's leading genealogical library since the librarianship of Dorman B. E. Kent in the 1920s, but it has never had vital records among its holdings. When the state's Public Records office and the VHS library were both located in Montpelier, researchers enjoyed making the short walk from the VHS across the State House lawn to the "root cellar," as it was affectionately known. But in 1992 the Public Records Division moved their facility west to Middlesex and microfilmed their vital records cards in the process. In 2002 the VHS library moved east to Barre, further separating the two facilities and making research less convenient.

"Vital records" in this context are birth, death and marriage records which were recorded by the government. The vital records microfilm at the VHS library is actually an index to vital



*Volunteer Ruth Finn sorts through the microfilm containing vital records.*

records at the local level. The original records are, in most cases, still kept in the various town clerks' offices across the state. Many of the original town records up to 1850 are also on microfilm at the state's research facility in Middlesex.

Although the new index goes back as early as 1760, the recording of vital records in Vermont was haphazard in the early years. Recording was not required until 1857, but even after that some events were indexed with errors or not recorded. Genealogical researchers are

advised to not rely on one source of information.

The VHS's recent acquisition only includes the oldest records. The state has 578 additional microfilm reels that contain indexes to the state's vital records from 1871 to 1954. These additional microfilms are available in Middlesex and at a select group of libraries in the region.

The Society's purchase of the vital records microfilms from the State of Vermont was made possible by the library's Richard J. Fowle Fund and individual donors. 

### Web extra:

Public Records Reference & Research:

<http://www.bgs.state.vt.us/gsc/pubrec/referen/index.html>

## Library Catalogs Vermont History Articles

The VHS library has begun providing enhanced access to articles published in the Society's journal, *Vermont History (VH)*. Since 2000, the VHS has made the content of *VH* available to the public through its web site one year after publication. While these electronic files have always been searchable with "keyword" searches on the web site and through Internet search engines such as Google, articles in *VH* have never been listed in the library's catalog. Now that the library's catalog is available through the Internet, the opportunity exists to link these two resources.

"This is a wonderful marriage of two Internet resources," said VHS Librarian Paul Carnahan. "The VHS library's catalog strives to be a centralized research tool for Vermont history. What better resource to add to the catalog than articles from our own journal, *VH*, which is the foremost publisher of new research in the field?"

Inclusion of *VH* articles in the online catalog means that researchers who are conducting research on Vermont topics will retrieve bibliographic citations to *VH* articles alongside books and other materials on the same subject. *VH* articles

will receive the same subject headings as books, which means that retrieving topical information will be more efficient than the often clumsy process of keyword searching through Internet search engines. Because the articles already exist in electronic form on the Society's web site, researchers will be able to click on a link in the VHS catalog and bring up the full text of articles on their home computer screens.

The VHS library has long included cataloging for articles on Vermont historical topics that were published in regional and national scholarly journals, but it has never included articles from its own journal, *VH*. The new project uses new technology to expand the library's traditional mission of providing bibliographic access to primary and secondary sources in Vermont history.

The library's cataloging project includes only *VH* articles published since 2000. Articles that were published prior to 2000 are too numerous to catalog, although the library staff is considering creating electronic files of particularly popular articles and cataloging them. The Society has published five

*Continued on Page 5*

## Slate Gravestone of Revolutionary War Veteran Donated to VHS

**T**hirty-six-year-old Nathaniel Brown Dodge enlisted in Captain Alexander's Company of Colonel Porter's Regiment at Northfield, Massachusetts in February of 1776. The regiment served in the expedition to Quebec and its retreat to Ticonderoga. On July 4 of that year Nathaniel Brown Dodge wrote to his wife from camp at Crown Point about the hardships he and his fellow soldiers were suffering, briefly describing the retreat across Canada and down Lake Champlain.

"I would inform you that Small Pox has been very hard amongst our men," he wrote. He reported that several of his comrades were killed by Indians but disease had taken a greater toll. As he wrote this letter, Dodge was unaware of the great events happening in Philadelphia with the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Dodge survived small pox and the war, and went on to marry three times, fathering nine children. In 1795 he moved to Beckley Hill in Barre, Vermont, where he lived to be eighty-three years old. He was buried in Maplewood Cemetery in Barre in 1823.

A beautifully carved slate stone marked his grave until family members saw that it was splitting and flaking away. A new stone was made and set, and the family stored the old one. Dodge's descendants, Whitney and Terry Maxfield, recently donated the old stone to the Vermont Historical Society, and a copy of Dodge's letter to his wife had been donated by an earlier generation of the family. This gravestone is a solid reminder of the courageous citizen soldiers who became some of Vermont's earliest settlers. 



Curator of the Vermont Historical Society Museum, Jackie Calder, with the recently donated Dodge headstone.

## Radicals, Vermonters, a Photographer: New VHS Book Pictures Jamaica, Vermont, in 1950



In the summer of 1950, Rebecca Lepkoff and her husband Gene bought land in Jamaica, Vermont, a small, south-central Green Mountain town on the West River. A 34-year-old photographer, Rebecca had already made a name for herself as

a member of the Photo League, a New York-based group that viewed photography as a tool for social change. Her photographs of her native Lower East Side in the 1930s and '40s were already becoming renowned. The Lepkoffs were drawn to the communitarian homesteaders who populated the Pikes Falls area of Jamaica, clustered near Scott and Helen Nearing. Rebecca, who is now 92 years old, and Gene still own a house in Brattleboro where they spend part of each summer.

About two years ago a treasure trove of Rebecca Lepkoff's photographs of Jamaica were presented to the VHS Publications and Research Committee by independent Nearing scholar Greg Joly, who lives in Jamaica. In *Almost Utopia: The Residents and Radicals of Pikes Falls, Vermont, 1950*, VHS is pleased to publish for the first time some 60 photos that Rebecca took of Vermont natives and transplants at work and play during that summer of 1950, as the Korean War engulfed the nation's headlines. These intimate images are the work of an artist at the peak of her craft, and they portray a rural Vermont town at a moment in time just before paved roads and postwar development would alter its character forever. Greg Joly's accompanying text provides the background on the Pikes Falls neighborhood and the presence of the Nearings and their associates in the community. He sets the photographs in historical context and relates the fate of the Pikes Falls communitarian experiment that in many ways presaged the larger back-to-the-land movement in Vermont during the 1960s and 1970s.

*Almost Utopia* will be available in late May, at the VHS store and through your local bookseller. The Society is planning several events to launch the publication of the book. Look for details on the VHS website [www.vermonthistory.org](http://www.vermonthistory.org). 

## Work Can Be Fun! (But Don't Tell Anybody)

From churning butter and sawing wood to exploring an old-time print shop, youngsters attending our 2007-2008 series Family Fun workshops at the museum learned how children in Vermont spent their days in other times. "It's all about work!" said Geraldine Brown, Museum Educator and coordinator of these six workshops which were offered one Saturday each month from October through March.

Geraldine decided on the theme of "Children at Work," inspired by the collective statewide reading of Elizabeth Winthrop's novel, *Counting on Grace*. This is the story of 9-year-old Grace Forcier in 1910, Pownal, Vermont who has to leave school to work in the local mill to help support her family. Ms. Winthrop drew her fictional story from the photographs of Lewis Hine, photos that helped lead to the reformation of child labor laws.

Starting off with the first program, "Children in Vermont's Work Force," Geraldine used Lewis Hine photographs of Vermont children working on farms and streets, in mills and factories to teach children to "read" photos. From these photos our group of 9-12 year-olds gleaned lots of information from the subject's pose and expression or clothing, the background, and other people who might be in the photo. They discussed what it meant to work, why it was important, and how it is different today.

From factories and mills, the workshop moved on to "Churning Butter, Sawing Wood" in November. Here, younger kids ages 6-10 took on these common 19<sup>th</sup> century farm chores. They worked hard at making the butter and learned to use a

two-man cross-cut saw. The butter tasted especially good on fresh-baked bread after the "chores" were done!

Preparing for a long Vermont winter 300 years ago was everybody's job if you were Abenaki. Hunting for and harvesting berries, herbs, seeds, mushrooms, corn and other good

wild foods to dry for storage was imperative to survival. Abenaki instructor Judy Dow spun wonderful stories in our wigwam: stories about making bowls and other storage containers, tanning hides and making warm clothing. At the end Judy fed everyone good winter foods and shared a traditional Abenaki blessing.

In our next session, children received the message that today's hobbies were often yesterday's required work. Imagining a young girl getting her inventory of quilts made as she dreams of her future

wedding, our present-day sewers produced a respectable log cabin quilt sample that will be used in our Freedom & Unity exhibit to teach visitors about quilting!

Most kids today get a February vacation from school, but not in 1880! In this workshop, our multi-aged students studied together, practiced writing, had a geography lesson and a spelling bee and did their sums. This hard work was rewarded with nutritious snacks at recess.

Finally, young apprentices learned tricks of the trade from a master printer, setting type and making prints. It was a long day, and lots of hard work produced wonderful pieces on an old-time printing press.

The Family Fun Workshops will be offered again in the fall of '08. We will have a new slate of sessions to offer our young historians. More work that's fun! 



*Emma and Jen Fischer from Bennington churning butter.*

## Library Catalogs *Vermont History* Articles

*Continued from page 3*

indexes covering the period 1930 to 2002 that provide "manual" access to *VH* articles published prior to 2000. Furthermore, the Society continues to provide biannual indexes to *VH* articles in the last issue of odd-numbered volumes. These indexes provide a larger number of access points than library cataloging can provide.

In a related development, the Society has signed a contract with EBSCO publishing to include the contents of *VH* in a forthcoming electronic database called "Historical Abstracts

with Full Text." This national database will be available through subscribing libraries and the VHS library. Articles from *VH* will now be available electronically through EBSCO and the VHS website six months after publication to satisfy scholars' needs to access to research in a timely fashion. 

### Web extra:

VHS library catalog: [catalog.vermonthistory.org](http://catalog.vermonthistory.org)

Vermont History articles: [vermonthistory.org/journal](http://vermonthistory.org/journal)



## Upcoming Events

**May 19**

### Community History Partnership Projects on the State House Lawn

Beginning at 10:00 a.m., teams of schoolchildren and local historical society volunteers will present projects from their collaborative research on 11 communities from throughout Vermont. Come and help us celebrate this unique multi-generational partnership program that integrates hands-on learning about Vermont history into the classroom.

**June 1**

### Weston A. Cate, Jr. Research Fellowship Application Deadline for 2008

The Vermont Historical Society awards a fellowship each year to encourage research in Vermont history. The fellowship supports research for one calendar year in any aspect of Vermont history and is open to all individuals. For more information, see [vermonthistory.org/awards](http://vermonthistory.org/awards) or call 802.479.8500.

**June 5**

### Rocking Chair Event

The Vermont Historical Society's Celebration of Historic Governors will be hosted by Governor James H. Douglas and Mrs. Lola P. Aiken at the Pavilion Building, 109 State Street, Montpelier. Please join us at 4:30 p.m. as we unveil 12 beautiful new rocking chairs, each named for a historic Vermont governor. Refreshments will be served. *Mark your calendars!*

**June 14 and 15**

### Vermont Days!

Vermont Historical Society celebrates by opening its museum doors for free!



*Parade-goers enjoy the fun at History Expo in Tunbridge, Vermont.*

**June 21 and 22**

### 9th Annual Vermont History Expo at Tunbridge World Fairgrounds

Vermont History Expo is a two-day summer festival where Vermonters and "Vermonters at heart" experience our state's living history. The Expo features distinctive exhibits from the collections of 150 local historical societies, museums and heritage attractions. Become immersed in a hands-on Vermont history lesson—in the spirit of fun and discovery. Call 802.479.8500; [www.vermonthistory.org/expo](http://www.vermonthistory.org/expo).

**July 1**

### Richard O. Hathaway Award for Outstanding Vermont History, Deadline for Submissions

The Vermont History Society requests nominations to recognize an individual project or publication completed during calendar year 2007, which made an outstanding contribution to the field of Vermont history using various media. For more information, see [www.vermonthistory.org/awards](http://www.vermonthistory.org/awards) or call 802.479.8500.

## In the News



**Tess Taylor** has been promoted to Director of Education and Public Programs from the position she held as Vermont History Expo Manager. Tess continues to manage the Expo and, as department head, has taken on all public programming aspects of the Education Department. Tess

lives in Barre and is very active in local education and community boards and organizations.



**Victoria Hughes** joins the Vermont Historical Society staff as K-12 Education Programs Manager. Victoria will be working with educators to develop a Vermont history curriculum for Vermont schools. She coordinates Vermont History Day activities

and will take students to Washington, DC for National History Day. Victoria returns to Vermont after being Curator of Education at the Huguenot Historical Society in New Paltz, NY.

## Your Membership at Work for Vermont

**Y**ou are receiving this newsletter because you have generously given to VHS, preserving Vermont's legacy. Your donation is much more than money! You are preserving historic Vermont treasures such as the old Spaulding Building; Civil War battle flags; ski industry memorabilia; original Vermont paintings, quilts and tapestries; Vermont family papers, manuscripts, and diaries; political paraphernalia; and much more!

Your donations also offer a variety of school programs, Expo and other opportunities to audiences of all age groups. In the Montpelier museum, thousands of people walk through 350 years of Vermont history each year. Thousands more delve into the library online or in Barre for genealogical and other historical research. Thanks to you, they can access over 50,000 catalogued books and serial titles, 1,500 linear feet of manuscripts, 30,000 photographs, 8,700 broadsides, 1,000 maps, and of video, film, microfilm, & oral recordings.

You love Vermont! We all do. Saving and learning about Vermont's history helps us all make important decisions about Vermont's future. Your support makes it possible—  
**thank you!** 🍷

## Lola Aiken Honored at Annual Legislative Reception

**A**bout 70 people attended the January legislative reception honoring Montpelier native Lola P. Aiken in the VHS museum.

Lola and her husband, the late George D. Aiken, worked with Vermont and American leaders from the 1930s through the 1970s, representing Vermont's tradition of public service. In appreciation of her lifelong work on Vermont's behalf, the Society presented Mrs. Aiken with a "memory book" written by many state and community leaders who worked with her.

Author and event speaker Frank Bryan, referring to the custom of state birds, flowers, etc., noted that "Lola is our state honey." VHS Executive Director Kevin Graffagnino said "I'm told that in Japan they have a practice of honoring special individuals as "living treasures of the nation." If the United States had such a tradition, there's no doubt that Lola Aiken would be the first recipient of a 'Living Treasure of Vermont' designation." 🍷

**Web extra:** [vermonthistory.org/aiken](http://vermonthistory.org/aiken)



## Supplying an Army *by Paul G. Zeller*

**D**id you ever move, feed and clothe an army? No? Well Perley P. Pitkin of Montpelier did during the Civil War. Within the collections at the Vermont History Center are over a hundred of Pitkin's military papers, and they tell quite a tale. Pitkin was commissioned as the quartermaster of the 2nd Vermont Infantry in June 1861.

By February 1862, he was promoted to captain and made assistant quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac. In the spring of 1863, after the Chancellorsville Campaign, Pitkin was in charge of the port at Aquia Creek. In his papers are several log pages of the arrival and departure of vessels. The log page for June 3 paints a vivid picture of what the little port must have looked like. The stream was crowded with all types of vessels carrying a wide variety of cargo such as commissary supplies, mail and passengers, hay, soft bread, contrabands and refugees, and troops.

In the winter of 1863-1864, the Army of the Potomac lay in and around Brandy Station, Virginia. Pitkin, now a colonel, was in charge of the rail yard and feeding and clothing the 100,000-man army. Again from his papers is a daily log of the rail cars at the station and their contents. The following are a few examples of the contents of the rail cars: car No. 1101, 25 barrels whiskey, 40 barrels flour, and so on.

Pitkin's folder of military papers is only one of many of the Civil War papers, letters, diaries and memoirs in the Vermont Historical Society's collections. All are interesting, some are humorous and others will just break your heart. 🍷

**Web extra:** For full story please go to [vermonthistory.org/vignettes](http://vermonthistory.org/vignettes)

*Paul G. Zeller is a VHS volunteer. He is also a retired Army Reserve colonel and lives in Williamstown, Vermont.*



9th Annual

# Vermont History Expo

June 21 and 22, 2008, 10am – 5pm

Tunbridge, Vermont, at the World Fairgrounds

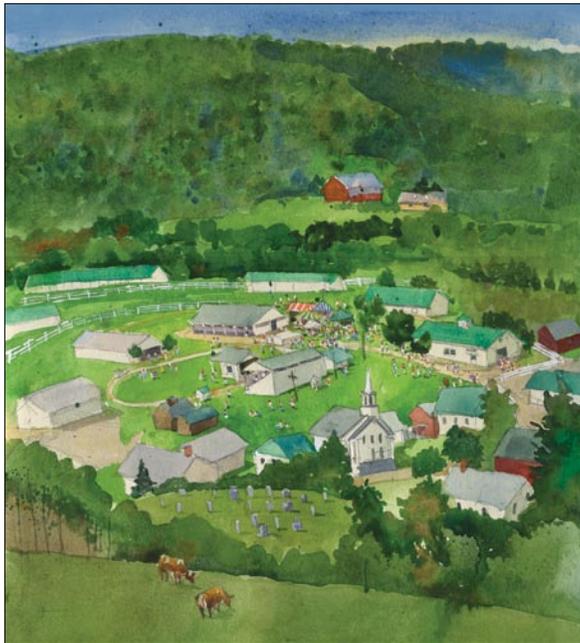
**Public Admission** (good for 2 days):

Adults \$10, Students \$5, Children 5 and under free, Families \$20 for weekend! ½ price admission for visitors in period dress.

**Members Only Discount!**

Adults: \$6, Students: \$4, Family discount: \$15

Order your tickets by June 16. Member discount available in advance only (not available at gate). Call Rilla, 802-479-8502, or email: [rilla.brown@state.vt.us](mailto:rilla.brown@state.vt.us)



Sponsored by



Poster art created by Bert Dodson

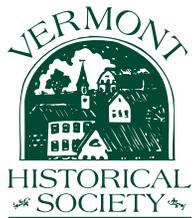
## Mystery Photo

Last issue's mystery photograph was quickly identified by members Paula



Sagerman of Wilmington and Stephen Baker of Brattleboro. The view was of the falls of the Whetstone Brook in Brattleboro looking toward the second Brattleboro House, which was located at the site of today's Plaza Park near the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center. Additional information can be found in *Before Our Time: A Pictorial Memoir of Brattleboro, Vermont, 1830-1930* on page 108.

This issue's mystery photo is of a group of women, perhaps in Barre, Vermont. We know the names of two of the women but not the organization with which they were associated. Does anyone recognize these outfits or hats as common with a larger organization? It might be a French-Canadian heritage group, but there are no insignia to confirm this. If you can identify this group, please contact the Society's librarian, Paul Carnahan, at [paul.carnahan@state.vt.us](mailto:paul.carnahan@state.vt.us) or 802-479-8508.



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