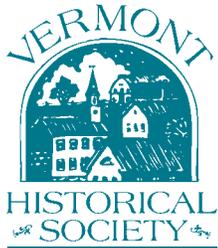


History Connections

Vermont Historical Society

News & Notes

Winter 2012 / Volume #6 / Number 2



Since 1838

Vermont Historical Society
60 Washington Street
Barre, Vermont 05641-4209

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Please note: Renovations mentioned here are supported in part by a grant from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation and a grant from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The Vermont Historical Society would like to also acknowledge exhibit support from the Vermont Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or the Vermont Humanities Council. The Vermont Historical Society does not discriminate against any person in regard to their race, color, sexual orientation, national origin, disabilities, religion, age, or sex.

The year of the event, 2012

We are looking forward to a big year for the Vermont Historical Society. It's a Vermont History Expo year and this event is down-home fun whether you are 8 or 88!

Be sure it's on your calendar for June 16 and 17. Invite the grandkids! Invite the relatives! Bring them all to the Tunbridge Fairground both days this spring. Don't forget, you'll get a half-price discount if you are in period dress.

Construction and new exhibits

Before summertime begins, exciting things are happening at the Vermont Historical Society.

Construction has begun at the History Center in Barre to create new exhibit galleries. Most people see the enormous exterior project restoring the bell tower—even in the cold of winter—but inside, the work has stepped up to prepare for the first exhibit opening, *The Emergence of the Granite City: Barre 1880–1940*, slated to open in conjunction with the Barre Heritage Festival on July 26. Watch for updates on this opening, as well as the *Service and Sacrifice: Vermont's Civil War Generation* and *Icons, Oddities, and Wonders* exhibits.

Presidents' Day

Hail to the Chief! On Presidents' Day, VHS Executive Director Mark Hudson will share stories of Vermont's encounters with the nation's chief executives. Whether through birth, campaign stops or "just passing through," Vermont has had unusual relationships with America's presidents. Spice up your

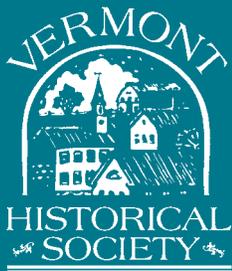
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Picture yourself . . .

walking down a path, chatting with President Calvin Coolidge and his wife, Grace. As you walk on, you pass by a Civil War encampment along with a group of girls in 19th-century garb sewing and laughing as they prepare items for soldiers, a play area with children on stilts, and in the air you smell waves of apple crisp and maple creemees. In the field, you see a team of oxen plowing. The only place this could all happen in one weekend is at VHS's Vermont History Expo!





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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.

Executive Director: Mark S. Hudson
Editor: Julie Nelson
Printing: Stillwater Graphics

Vermont History Center
60 Washington Street, Barre, VT
(802) 479-8500

Administrative Offices & Store:
Monday–Friday 9am to 4pm

Library
Tuesday–Friday 9am to 4pm
Wednesday 9am to 8pm
Second Saturday each month
9am to 4pm
(802) 479-8509

Library admission:
Non-members: \$5
Members and students: Free

Museum & Store
Pavilion Building
109 State Street, Montpelier, VT
Tuesday–Saturday 10am to 4pm
(802) 828-2291

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

www.vermonthistory.org
vhs-info@state.vt.us

From the Director

We're everywhere!

On a snowy afternoon in early January, armed with colored markers and lists of the towns served by VHS programs, I colored some maps of Vermont illustrating the breadth of our impact across the Green Mountain State. While I knew that our expanded outreach efforts were significant, the results of this activity were amazing. Although our facilities are located in Montpelier and Barre, our programs and services reached all corners of the state.

Over 5,000 kids and their parents experienced three centuries of history through tours and programs featuring the *Freedom and Unity* exhibition at the Vermont History Museum. They traveled from 68 different towns in Vermont, some from as far away as Alburgh, Newport, Bennington and Dummerston. For our very popular History for Homeschoolers programs, the Museum hosted groups from 40 Vermont towns—including Dorset and Franklin.

Our ongoing efforts to bring Vermont history to classrooms throughout the state have yielded impressive results as well. The Vermont History Explorer website delivered resources for teachers and students in 99 Vermont towns since it was launched last spring. Teachers from 53 Vermont towns benefitted from the various workshops delivered throughout the state by our education staff. Classrooms in 42 towns were enriched with History Lending Kits, such as "Abenaki in Vermont," "Archaeology Alive!" and "Vermont in the Civil War." In addition, students

from 26 towns participated in the Vermont History Day competition in April.

VHS programs and services for local community heritage organizations also had a broad impact. Over 50 towns were represented at the League of Local Historical Societies and Museums Annual Meeting in November, including delegations from Dorset and Montgomery. Over 150 community heritage organizations from throughout



Vermont are engaged as institutional members of the VHS, enjoying the many benefits of that association, including the weekly *Local History*

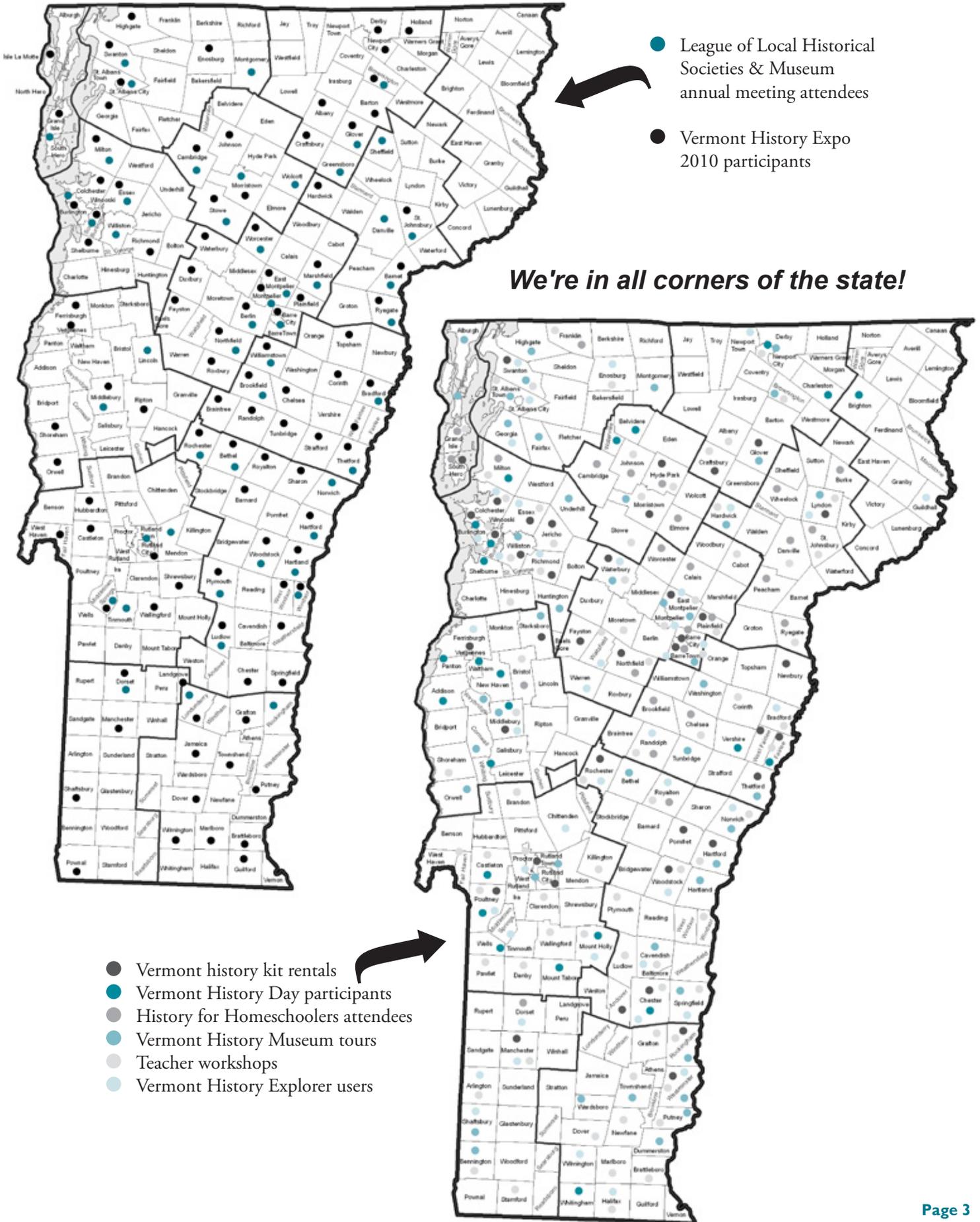
E-newsletter, inclusion in the online directory on the VHS website and access to various other resources and services. Vermont History Expo 2010 attracted exhibitors from 110 Vermont towns and we anticipate an even broader participation for this year's event.

While this examination of our statewide impact is impressive, the fullest measure of our significance lies in the many ways we impact the lives of Vermonters. Whether it is a grateful comment from a fourth-grade teacher, the satisfied smile of a History Day award recipient, or the community pride on display at History Expo, the VHS demonstrates each day that "an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities."

Mark S. Hudson
Executive Director

Although our facilities are located in Montpelier and Barre, our programs and services reached all corners of the state.

VHS is EVERYWHERE



Please pardon our appearance as we prepare our new exhibit gallery space.

Soon you will see more Vermont treasures!



Watercolor painted by James Franklin Gilman in 1885 shows the Charles Cross home at 56 East State Street with a view of Montpelier in the background.

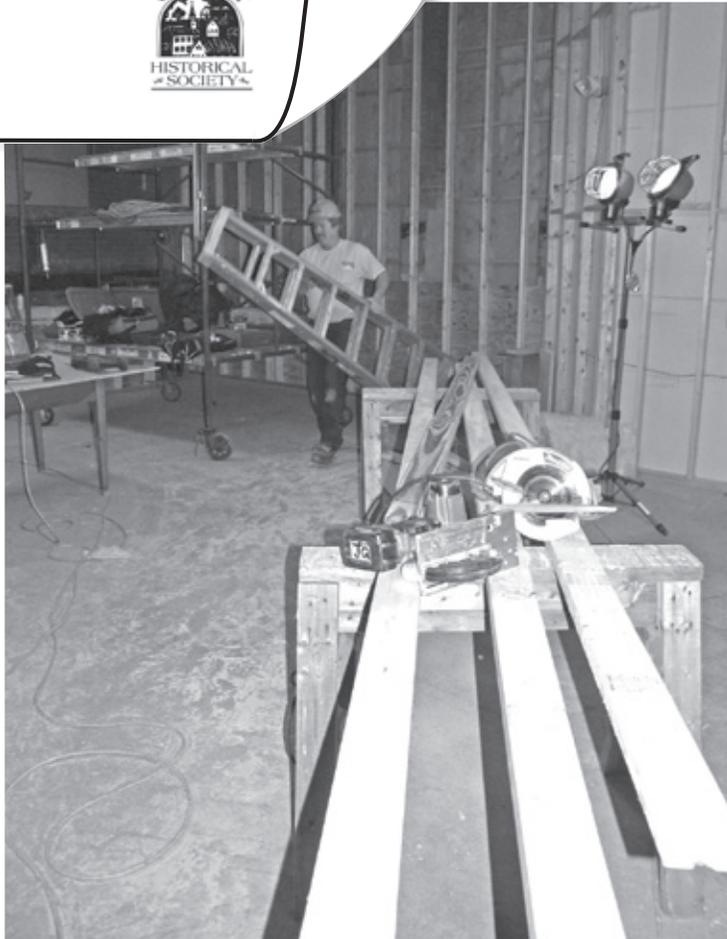
Gilman painting returns You'll be able to see the grandeur of Montpelier past

At the end of last year, we were contacted and asked if we wanted to purchase a painting by James Franklin Gilman. The artist is well known in central Vermont for the many landscapes and portraits he painted in the late 1800s. VHS has an extensive collection of Gilmans—over 50 paintings and prints.

When the image of the new painting came via email from Massachusetts, we quickly recognized it as a familiar landmark in Montpelier, the house at 56 East State Street. The large watercolor (24" x 40" unframed) shows the beautiful Italianate home in 1885. The owner inherited the painting from her mother, who was given the painting by her employer, Henrietta Winslow.

Frank and Henrietta Winslow owned the house from about 1905 until 1946, the year Henrietta died. But who owned the house in 1885 and commissioned Gilman to do the painting? Research in the census records indicate that Charles Cross, the founder of Cross Bakery, lived in the house with his family. A VHS Leahy Library photograph of Charles Cross looks just like the bearded man in the painting.

This latest acquisition to the museum collection just needs a new frame and then we hope to put it on exhibit in Montpelier.



hints of exhibits to come . . .



White House secrets revealed

You can go behind-the-scenes in the White House of Vermonter Calvin Coolidge through a new manuscript collection at the Vermont Historical Society's Leahy Library! The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation has transferred the papers of White House housekeeper Ellen Riley to the VHS where they will be made available for researchers.

Riley was hired in 1926 to replace a woman who had held the position since 1909 but who made the Coolidges feel uncomfortable with her extravagance. Riley had worked for a close friend of the Coolidges in Boston, running the cafeteria in the R. H. Stearns Store.

Riley's approach to the job was compatible with the Coolidges' lifestyle. The collection includes a note on White House stationery showing that Riley had cut White House spending in 1927 to \$9,116.39 from \$11,667.10 the previous year. Written across the bottom is a note "To Miss Riley. Very fine improvement. C.C."

She also coordinated the personal needs of the first family, much to the relief of Grace Coolidge, who commented on how "carefree" she felt after Miss Riley arrived at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The admiration was mutual. In an undated letter to her mother, Riley wrote: "Mrs. Coolidge is I think quite a remarkable woman. The paper said recently she is worth a million dollars to the Republican Party and I believe it. She is as near perfect as any person I ever met."



White House housekeeper Ellen Riley (center) visits the home office of Swift and Company at the Union Stock Yards while on a tour of Chicago in 1928.

Riley wrote: "Mrs. Coolidge is I think quite a remarkable woman. The paper said recently she is worth a million dollars to the Republican Party and I believe it."

of Romania, she spent 5 cents for a large red pepper and \$15.38 for 20 pounds of lobster.

Riley lived in two rooms directly over the front door of the White House, where she could see visitors coming and going. She kept a detailed diary of her activities and wrote to her mother every week,

The 1920s title of White House "housekeeper" is misleading to modern ears. Riley was, in fact, in charge of the White House staff of 18 and oversaw all White House meals and entertainment. The collection includes detailed menus of every state dinner she oversaw, including meticulous records of the cost of every item on the table. For example, she records that for a 1926 dinner honoring Queen Marie

Mapping the way



(At top) Librarian Paul Carnahan and volunteer Judy Barwood work to stabilize an 1858 map of Orange County while paper conservator M.J. Davis of Washi (bottom photo) supervises intern James Durham working on an 1853 map of Montpelier. These maps will soon hang in storage units created for this purpose under a Preservation Assistance Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities as a We the People project. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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VHS begins 2012 with gusto



Author Elise Guyette stands highlighted by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Guyette's programs followed the lives of three generations of free blacks in Vermont. The author's book, *Discovering Black Vermont: African American Farmers in Hinesburgh 1790-1890* was the backdrop for remembering Dr. King and the jagged path of civil rights in Vermont. These activities were sponsored by SerVermont, Noyle W. Johnson Insurance, and Rubin, Kidney, Myer & DeWolfe.



Students hail from near and far to do research in the Leahy Library at the Vermont History Center in Barre. Assistant Librarian Marjorie Strong is seen here instructing Vermont Academy students with a project about womens' suffrage—other topics included the Ku Klux Klan and eugenics in Vermont. Vermont Academy is an independent private boarding school located in Saxtons River.

The year of the event . . . *Continued from page 1—*

winter calendar and join us February 21 at 7:00 pm in the Snelling Room at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier.

School Vacation Fun

In February and April, the VHS Education Department will again host *School Vacation Fun* at the History Museum in Montpelier from 12:30 to 4:00 pm. The cost for these learning adventures is only \$8 per child or \$6 per child for members (or families with three or more participating children). This includes a museum tour, crafts, games, and snacks.

On February 29, kids ages 6 to 12 can enjoy a little time off with a museum tour and a featured Abenaki history and culture learning session, *Malian's Song*. On March 1, *Aaron and the Green Mountain Boys* will provide lessons about the Revolutionary War.

During April vacation (April 25 and 26), kids can sign up for *Mr. Lincoln's Drummer* to learn about the Civil War or register for *Counting on Grace* to investigate immigration and industry. Pre-registration for *School Vacation Fun* is required. Please call (802) 828-2180.

Women's history

March blows in celebrating **Women's History Month**, March 21 at noontime at the Unitarian Church in Montpelier. Teaming up with the Vermont Commission on Women, The Vermont Women's History Project will present "Women of Change: Making Strides in Women's Legal Rights in the '70s and '80s." A luncheon and panel discussion will be led by Vermont Law School professor Cheryl Hanna.

Archeology Heritage Center to open

And, don't forget, before the summer is over, the Vermont Archeology Heritage Center will be open at the History Center in Barre, supplementing the vast historical resources already available to researchers at our Leahy Library. This collection of Vermont treasures includes hundreds of thousands of artifacts recovered from Vermont's archeological sites over the past 35 years. As one legislator commented, "The collections will receive better care, be more accessible to the public, and cost the State less." Watch for more details as summer rolls along.

Only the beginning . . .

And, just think, this is only the first half of 2012! We look forward to seeing you at one, or all, of these VHS events and exciting exhibit openings. 

White House secrets . . . *Continued from page 5*—

providing details of the private and public lives of the Coolidges. When the Hoovers came to the White House they got rid of everything related to the Coolidges—including Ellen Riley, and ending her term of service.

This remarkable collection was given to the President Coolidge state historic site in 1995. The papers had been kept by Riley's close friend J. Marjorie Bailey, until she passed away, when her sister gave them to the state. The appearance of the collection in 1995 was a complete surprise to the site's curator. "It is remarkable about what's out there," William Jenney said at that time. The papers now come to the Vermont History Center where they will be stored in proper archival conditions and where researchers can easily access them. 



June 16 & 17

Vermont History EXPO 2012
History's Country Fair

Tickled pink that it's an Expo year!

- local history displays
- festive foods
- heritage animals
- children's games
- music
- genealogy exhibits
- reenactments:
Vermont in the Civil War
- live country auction

Contact Tess Taylor
at (802) 479-8505 or
tess.taylor@state.vt.us




The Vermont Historical Society Legacy Circle

If you have already included the Vermont Historical Society in your will or estate plan, would you please let us know? You may, if you wish, become a member of the Vermont Historical Society Legacy Circle and receive:

- A Vermont Historical Society Legacy Circle membership certificate
- Invitations to special Circle programs
- Inclusion in Legacy Circle member list

Your legacy will live on.

Thank you!

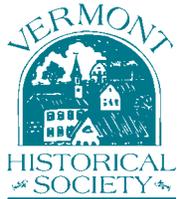


Peggy Abbott at her desk in 1983 in the VHS Library.

In memoriam

With sadness, we tell you that Laura "Peggy" P. Abbott, assistant to the Librarian at the Vermont Historical Society from 1957 to 1966 and Librarian from 1966 to 1983, passed away in Northfield, Vermont, on January 20, 2012. She was 94.

Peggy came to work for the VHS in 1957 when the organization was in the Supreme Court building. She moved the library in 1960 to the Administration Building and again in 1971 to the Pavilion Building. In retirement Peggy worked on processing the library's extensive Rugg Collection, which had arrived at the VHS the year after she did.



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Mystery Photo



Do you recognize this?

This issue's mystery photograph is of an impressive brick house. It is on a postcard that has been kicking around the library for several years. If anyone recognizes this building, please contact the VHS Librarian Paul Carnahan at paul.carnahan@state.vt.us or at (802) 479-8508.

From last issue . . .

No one recognized the village scene we presented in the last issue, but we were able to identify a house in Montpelier through our Facebook site and the Montpelier newspaper *The Bridge*. If you are curious, the photographs can still be viewed on our website at <http://www.vermonthistory.org/mystery>.

