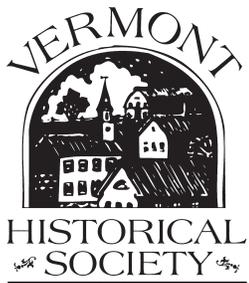


History Connections

Vermont Historical Society
News & Notes

Winter 2014 / Volume #8 / Number 2



HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Since 1838

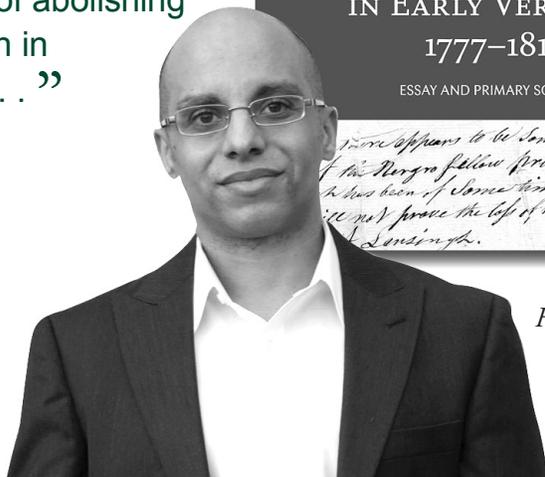
Vermont Historical Society
60 Washington Street
Barre, Vermont 05641-4209

Inside This Issue

- Virginia Close lives on
- Weston Cate award deadline
- Bibles and Vermonters
- Sharples and Paine
- Events

“Challenging myth with careful reasoning and thorough research, Harvey Amani Whitfield deftly reveals the challenges of abolishing slavery even in Vermont . . . ”

See full quote on page 3.



Harvey
Amani
Whitfield

The Vermont Historical Society dares to ask Did the 1777 Vermont Constitution really end slavery in Vermont?

Vermonters have always been proud that our state was the first to outlaw slavery in its constitution—but is that what really happened? Textbooks and scholars of early America routinely highlight Vermont’s landmark act as proof of the absence of slavery in the state.

VHS tackles tough topics

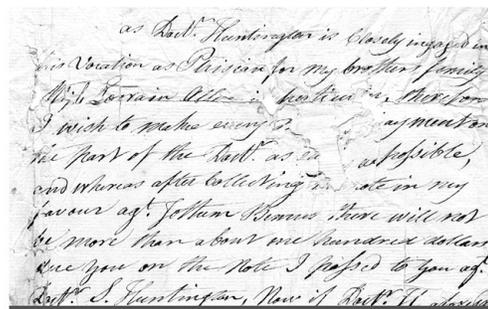
You’ll often find thought-provoking subjects in the books and journals we publish. This newest book introduces revealing new research from Harvey Amani Whitfield, author and associate professor of history at the University of Vermont.

What did freedom mean for African Americans in Vermont?

This new book forces us to squarely consider the deepest questions about what freedom actually meant for African Americans in Vermont well into the nineteenth century, even as anti-slavery sentiment continued to swell. The story is revealed in this collection of 31 documents—including laws, legislative proceedings, bills of sale, a probate record, runaway slave ads, and other sources—and the accompanying essay by Whitfield. Without diminishing the significance of Vermont’s unprecedented abolition clause, Whitfield shows that some in the Green Mountain State persisted in human trafficking and many others turned a blind eye, tolerating the extreme exploitation of black people.

The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont will be enlightening to Vermont teachers and students, scholars of the early national and antebellum periods of U.S. history, and anyone interested in the history of Vermont.

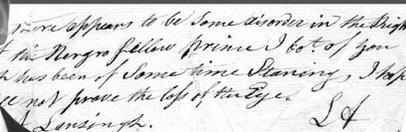
We will also present teachers’ workshops focusing on this topic. Please contact Victoria Hughes at (802) 828-1413 for



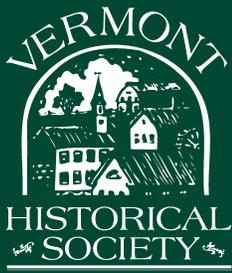
HARVEY AMANI WHITFIELD

THE PROBLEM OF SLAVERY IN EARLY VERMONT, 1777–1810

ESSAY AND PRIMARY SOURCES



continued on page 3—



Since 1838

Winter 2014

Volume #8 / Number 2

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 Museum & Bookstore

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

Vermont History Center

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

• **Vermont Heritage Galleries, Offices & Book Nook**
• Monday–Friday 9am to 4pm

• **Leahy Library**
• Tuesday–Friday 9am to 4pm
• Wednesday 9am to 8pm
• Second Saturdays 9am to 4pm
• (802) 479-8509

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

One admission fee gives access to both the Vermont Heritage Galleries & Vermont History Museum:

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 couldn't do it without you!

Each day at the Vermont Historical Society something amazing happens. Volunteers of all ages, from all walks of life, from all parts of the state, arrive at the museum and History Center to serve as volunteers. Their commitment to our important mission and dedication to the activities they carry out are worthy of our praise and gratitude.



- Front desk volunteers greet and assist visitors to the History Museum in Montpelier and the History Center in Barre.
- History Helpers share the wonders of the museum with thousands of schoolchildren each year.
- Library volunteers aid researchers and prepare collections for future use.
- Deep within the History Center, collections volunteers catalog and care for museum artifacts.
- History-loving folks from around the state volunteer as judges at Vermont History Day.
- A passion for Vermont's heritage is shared by the many volunteers who help with Vermont History Expo.
- Volunteers even help with our development efforts by calling VHS members and preparing mailings.
- And, of course, I would be in big trouble if I did not mention the extraordinary service of the Board of Trustees and committees who guide the organization and provide oversight for our administration and programming.

each day
something
amazing
happens

Dozens of volunteers serve in other ways, too numerous to list individually. Last year, VHS volunteers provided over 7,000 hours of service. In addition to their time,



our volunteers also give inspiration and remind us why the work we do is important. Clearly we cannot do it without them!

While getting to know many of our volunteers, I have been fascinated by their individual stories of how they became associated with the VHS and why their volunteer service is important to them. For each the story is unique but all are bound by a common passion for Vermont history, a desire to be around people who share that passion and a commitment to community service.

With that being the case, we relish each opportunity to bring the

Vermont History Day brings history-loving volunteer judges from all over Vermont.

continued on page 6—

Thanks for your membership

VHS dares to ask . . . *Continued from page 1—*

workshop details and registration information.

Kudos from learned colleagues

Joanne Pope Melish, Associate Professor of History at the University of Kentucky, says, “The belief that Vermont’s 1777 constitution categorically abolished slavery, making Vermont the only state to have done so before the end of the American Revolution, is still widely asserted in textbooks and scholarly monographs alike. *The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont* explodes this myth, demonstrating conclusively that the enslavement of people of color under various guises persisted in the state for another thirty years . . .

Amani Whitfield provides a rich array of documentary evidence demonstrating the legal ambiguities and contradictions of efforts that were primarily aimed at limiting, rather than ending, slavery, and the determined efforts of many whites to evade or resist such efforts . . . A wide-ranging collection of primary documents, accompanied by brief, very accessible explanatory overviews, makes this book an invaluable tool for classroom teaching.”

Alan Taylor, Thomas Jefferson Professor of History at the University of Virginia agrees, “Challenging myth with careful reasoning and thorough research, Harvey Amani Whitfield deftly reveals the challenges of abolishing slavery even in Vermont, so long assumed to have been founded on equal rights and universal freedom. Whitfield’s insightful introduction and eloquent documents illuminate how private property rights complicated the promotion of human rights in the early American republic. The work of an exemplary historian, *The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont* reveals the tangled interplay of freedom and slavery in the American past.”

And from T. H. Breen, James Marsh Professor at the University of Vermont, “From time to time, an historian comes along and overturns everything we thought we knew about an event in the past. Harvey Amani Whitfield is such a scholar. Employing impressive skills as a historical detective, he has mined the archives to show that contrary to the claims of many respected textbooks, the celebrated Vermont Constitution of 1777 did not in fact end slavery. Whitfield reconstructs how for almost three decades leading figures in the state owned and sold black people. This is an important contribution to the study of race and racism in Revolutionary America.”

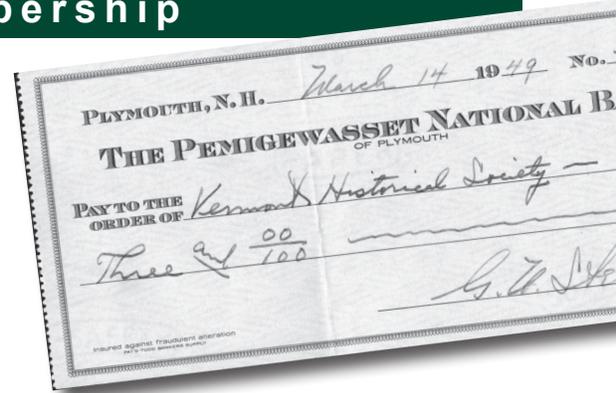
From the author himself, “We need to understand the struggle between . . . continued slavery and the movement toward freedom. These tensions in early Vermont beg for further study.”

Book is available

This book is available at the Book Nook in the Vermont History Center, Barre, and in the museum bookstore at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier. You can also find it easily online: vermonthistory.org/shop.

Our bookstore coordinator, Polly Bentley, can also assist you. Call her at (802) 828-1414. The book retails for \$19.95. Remember, VHS members get a 15% discount!

The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont explodes this myth . . .



Dear Captain G. U. Stewart,

Thank you for paying your dues to the Vermont Historical Society for the year beginning January 1949. We appreciate your support of our organization. You may be wondering why you never received your membership card. We just now in 2014 found your check for \$3.00 in the World Federalists papers of director Earle W. Newton, who resigned from our organization in 1950. Mr. Newton was chairman of the Vermont chapter of the United World Federalists, which as you probably know advocated for a worldwide governing body and a world court. Mr. Newton was a busy man. He also founded two magazines, *Vermont Life* and *American Heritage*.

Somehow, while juggling all of these responsibilities, Mr. Newton misplaced your check and filed it with his World Federalists’ material.

Please excuse the tardiness of our response and thank you for your interest in Vermont history.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Carnahan, librarian
February 2014



Whitfield shows documentary evidence that slavery continued.

Today your membership is handled promptly by Diane Campbell at (802) 479-8503. !

“Dear Bill Doyle,

We have known each other for many decades, and we have often toiled in the same vineyard. A fund in your name that encourages Vermont youth to discover some of the joy you and I have found in our history will touch the generations that of necessity must follow us. I have sent the Vermont Historical Society a donation to your fund, and I hope others will do as well. ”

—H. Nicholas Muller

Learn how you can help, too. vermonthistory.org/doylefund

CLEARANCE SALE continues!

Vermont Historical Society publications:

Prices slashed!

Books are available at the Book Nook at the Vermont History Center in Barre, and in the museum bookstore at Vermont History Museum, 109 State Street in Montpelier

Or shop easily online: vermonthistory.org/shop

Virginia Lee Close Her love of history will carry on . . .

Virginia Lee Close found a way to carry her lifelong interest in history beyond her lifetime. During her own history, she earned two bachelor's degrees as well as a master's degree in history. She worked at Dartmouth's Baker Library from 1945–1993 and eventually became the Head Reference Librarian.

By the time Virginia retired, she was the bibliographer and editor of the *Dartmouth College Library Bulletin*, and in 1986, Dartmouth awarded her an honorary Master of Arts degree.

In retirement she researched a variety of subjects and collaborated with Dr. Richard Hoefnagel in the publication *Eleazar Wheelock and the Adventurous Founding of Dartmouth College*.

Her lifelong interest in history and her work with the Norwich Historical Society was honored in 2006 with a Vermont Historical Society Achievement Award as “a person who has made a significant contribution to the advancement and study of local history in our community.” Her most recent project was the preservation and conservation of some of Norwich's oldest and most fragile town records through creation of digitized files.

We were honored that Virginia chose to leave a bequest to the VHS to carry on the work she valued—preserving and researching our shared history.



Each of Us Leaves a Legacy

Is your research a winner? Weston Cate Fellowship applications due

Every two years the Vermont Historical Society awards the Weston A. Cate Fellowship. The \$1,200 fellowship supports research in any aspect of Vermont history and is open to all individuals. The recipient is expected to complete research and writing on his or her topic by creating a final product, typically an article for publication in *Vermont History*.

The fellowship was created in honor of Weston A. Cate, Jr., director of the Vermont Historical Society from 1975 to 1985.

For more information about the Cate Fellowship, guidelines and application, and a list of past recipients, please visit vermonthistory.org/awards. Application materials must be received by the Vermont Historical Society by March 31, 2014.



Weston A. Cate, Jr.

Cate was a frequent public speaker and contributed many op-ed columns and letters to local newspapers, often offering wry reflections on Vermont history and what it means to live in Vermont. For many years the radio broadcast of his reading of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas was a tradition for local families.

What do Bibles tell us about Vermonters?

We now have nine Bibles and a New Testament on display on the second floor of the Vermont History Center, ranging in date from 1698 to 1862 and in size from 2.25 inches to 11 inches tall. Bibles are often repositories for family history and sometimes served as enclosures that preserved artifacts and documents—shedding light on the activities of the day and what Vermonters deemed important.

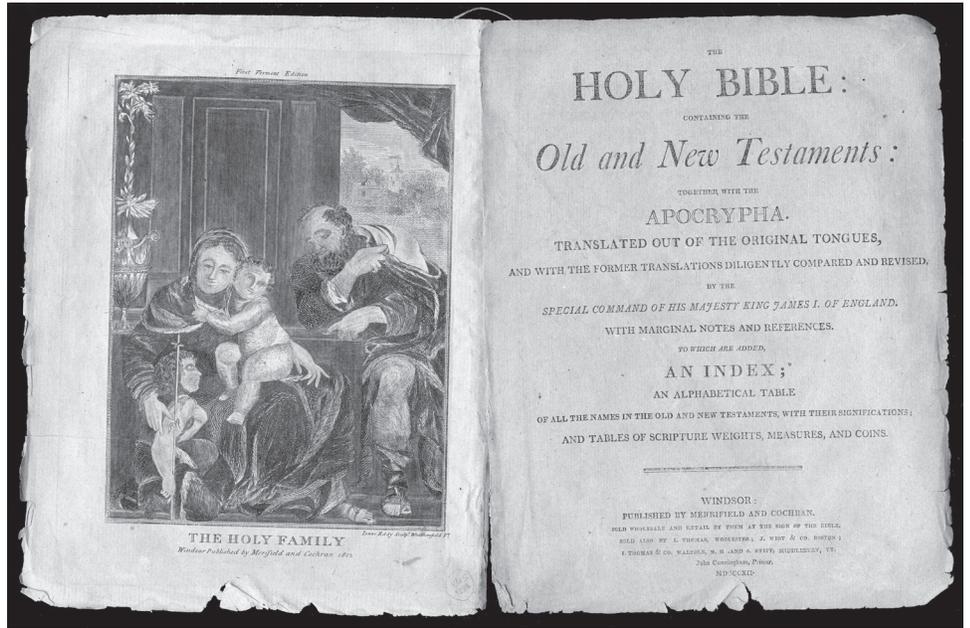
The first full-length Bible printed in Vermont was published in 1812 by Merrifield & Cochran of Windsor. Known as “the Vermont Bible,” it was issued in three different versions, two with plates engraved by noted artist Isaac Eddy of Weathersfield, Vermont, and one without illustrations—we have one of each.

Most Vermont Bibles were printed in Brattleboro and Woodstock. John Holbrook, a pioneering publisher from Brattleboro, first published a Bible from stereotype plates he purchased in 1815, just one year after the process

“... so low in price it would be within the means of every one . . .”

was first used to publish a Bible in the United States. In an advertisement from

the period, Holbrook boasted, “As a standard work, and in point of beauty and neatness, nothing is before it in



Vermont Bible illustrated by Isaac Eddy of Weathersfield, Vermont.

this country.” He went on to opine that his Bible would be “so low in price it would be within the means of every one.”

The earliest Bible in our exhibit was printed in London in 1698 and was inscribed to Samuel Robinson of Bennington. Robinson was appointed by Governor Benning Wentworth as the first justice of the peace in the New Hampshire Grants. In 1766, Robinson was sent to London to present the case of the New Hampshire Grant settlers to the Crown. Robinson died of smallpox in London in 1767, and the Bible was handed down to his children and grandchildren.

Two unusual Bibles in the exhibit were both published for children.

One was abridged and published in Barnard, the only example of a Bible from that Vermont town. Another interesting artifact is a miniature or “Thumb Bible,” abridged and published for children by the entrepreneurial John Holbrook in 1816.

An 1862 New Testament on display belonged to Charles W. Ross of Starksboro, Vermont, Company G, 14th Vermont Infantry Regiment. Ross was killed during the Battle of Gettysburg and the New Testament was found clutched in his hand. Clearly, this Bible meant a great deal to Ross.

As part of our ongoing effort to computerize the library’s catalog, 46 editions of the Bible can now be found in our online catalog. This significant effort took careful study of the volumes to distinguish editions and not include duplicates. Today, our library collects only unique Bibles printed in Vermont that are not already in our collections. We also collect important family information removed from Bibles, not the actual Bibles. 



SAVE THE DATE!
June 21 & 22, 2014

Contact Amanda Gustin
for more information
at (802) 828-2180
or amanda.gustin@state.vt.us

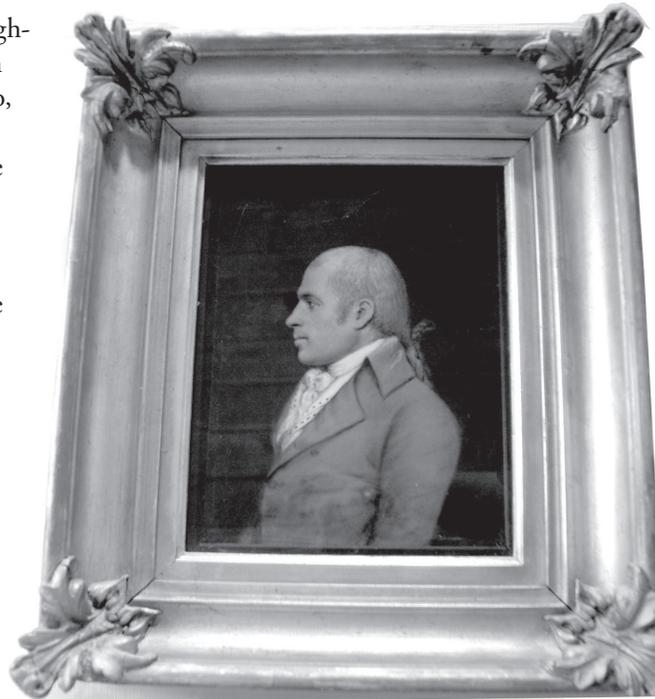
Artists and Artisans: Vermont’s Creative Heritage

This artist shows us the face of an early Vermont politician

The thread running throughout this year is a focus on artists (e.g., History Expo, Vermont Women's History program). Through their eyes, we can visualize the past and get a glimpse of how life was different from today. The VHS recently received a portrait of Elijah Paine from Francis Paine of New Hampshire, a direct descendant of U.S. Senator Paine.

James Sharples (1751/52–1811), the English born artist who created this portrait, made his reputation and fortune painting portraits of famous politicians such as Washington, Jefferson, and Adams, then selling copies to the public. Sharples was known for his accurate likenesses, and this pastel of Elijah Paine is a beautiful and well-preserved example of his work.

Elijah Paine (1757–1842) moved to Vermont at the end



*Pastel portrait of Vermont's U.S. Senator Elijah Paine
by James Sharples, circa 1800.*

of the Revolutionary War. A Connecticut native, he served in the Continental Army and then attended Harvard. He moved to Windsor, Vermont, in 1784 and practiced law there for a few years before starting a settlement in Williamstown. In the neighboring town of Northfield, he built a saw and gristmill and became active in politics serving as a state representative, a probate judge, and a justice of the Vermont Supreme Court. He was elected a U.S. Senator in 1794 and was re-elected in 1800. The portrait of Paine was completed while he was serving in the Senate in Philadelphia, which was then the capital city of the United States.

Elijah Paine resigned his senate seat in 1801 to accept an appointment as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont. 

We couldn't do it . . . *Continued from page 2—*

VHS volunteer corps together for fellowship, food, and fun. On Monday, March 17, we will celebrate this spirit of service at our annual VHS Volunteer Luncheon. At 11:30 am we will gather for a feast that has been lovingly prepared by the staff, followed by an informative and entertaining program.

All current volunteers and anyone interested in the volunteer experience at the Vermont Historical Society are invited to attend. This is one way that we can express our gratitude for our amazing volunteers.



Become a History Helper

History Helpers, or volunteer tour guides, lead groups of students through the *Freedom & Unity* exhibit at the museum in Montpelier. No experience is necessary; training is provided. If you are enthusiastic about Vermont history and enjoy working with children, please contact Victoria Hughes: victoria.hughes@state.vt.us or (802) 828-1413.



Photo above: volunteers are also treated to a field trip each year during the summer.



Experience Vermont's history

Third Thursdays have begun Join us for lunch!

In January, Third Thursday lunch hour presentations began at the Vermont History Museum at 109 State Street in Montpelier.

"Bring your lunch to the museum for animated talks steeped in Vermont history," says Vermont Historical Society's Public Programs Coordinator, Amanda Gustin. "Talks will take place from 12:00 to 1:00 pm in the Snelling Room at the museum. We'd love to have you join us!"

Please see sidebar at the right. You can pick your favorite topic or come to all Third Thursdays. The topics continue through May 2014. The presentations are free and the site is handicapped accessible.

For more details, please contact Amanda Gustin, public programs coordinator, at amanda.gustin@state.vt.us or call (802) 828-2180. 

Farmers' Night at the State House The Music of World War I

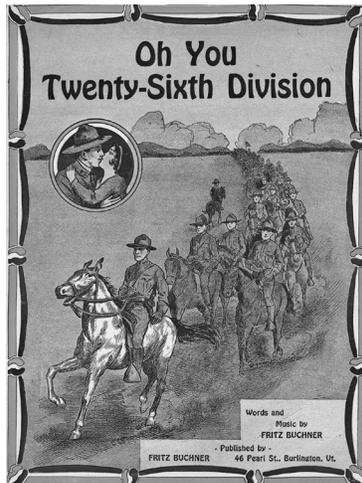
The annual Farmers' Night program presented by the Vermont Historical Society will commemorate WWI by featuring "Oh You Twenty-Sixth Division," sheet music written and published in Vermont by Fritz Buchner.

Copyrighted in 1919, the song pays homage to the New England men of the 26th Infantry Division, nicknamed the "Yankee Division," part of the American Expeditionary Force in World War I.

The Vermont Philharmonic Chorus and Bethany Baritones will add their resounding harmony for a musical evening filled with choral emotion and tribute to the soldiers who served in the "Great War."

The evening will also include history behind the music. At the outbreak of war, many songs were calling for young men to sign up. After a few months of rising deaths, the recruitment songs disappeared and were replaced by songs dreaming about the end of the war.

Farmers' Night is February 26 at 7:30 pm at the Vermont State House on State Street in Montpelier. This event is free, thanks to sponsors Denis, Ricker & Brown, Isham-Berwick Agency, Inc., and the American Legion Auxiliary. 



Events February to April

Thursday, February 20 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm

**Third Thursday:
H.P. Lovecraft and
"The Whisperer in Darkness"**

F. Brett Cox
Vermont History Museum, Montpelier

Wednesday, February 26 at 7:30 pm

**Farmers' Night:
The Music of World War I**

Vermont Philharmonic Chorus & Bethany Baritones
Vermont State House, Montpelier

Wednesday, March 12 from 12:00 to 2:00 pm

**Vermont Women's History Project:
Vermont Women in the Arts**

In partnership with Vermont Commission on Women
Vermont History Museum, Montpelier

Thursday, March 20 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm

**Third Thursday:
Joseph Smith & Brigham Young:
A New England Heritage**

Joseph Mender
Vermont History Museum, Montpelier

Saturday, April 5 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Vermont History Day

Spaulding High School, 155 Ayers Street, Barre

Thursday, April 17 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm

**Third Thursday:
Porches of North America**

Thomas Visser
Vermont History Museum, Montpelier

Wednesday, April 23 from 4:30 to 6:00 pm

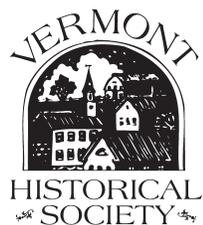
Vermont Undergraduate Research Forum
Vermont History Center, Barre

**Offered in Barre and Montpelier
History for Homeschoolers**

CLASSES CURRENTLY FULL.

Vermont History Center & Vermont History Museum
More information: Victoria Hughes (802) 828-1413

**Find out more on our web calendar:
vermonthistory.org/calendar**



Since 1838

Vermont Historical Society

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Barre, Vermont 05641-4209

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Mystery Photo

From last issue . . .

- **M**embers Ann Gray and David Coburn recognized David's
- father, Carroll L. Coburn of East Montpelier, who is the
- second man from the left. The rest still elude identification.
- We have dated the photograph as having been taken in 1957.
- Carroll Coburn was a trustee of the University of Vermont and
- member of the Vermont legislature.



Do you recognize this?

This issue's mystery photograph is from a postcard. It was postmarked in Plainfield, Vermont, in 1908, but we can't match this view with any image in our collection. If you can identify this, please contact VHS Librarian Paul Carnahan at paul.carnahan@state.vt.us or at (802) 479-8508.

In the fall issue we identified last summer's mystery photograph as being taken in Middlebury. On further consideration, this is not correct. Thanks to member Natalie Peters of Middlebury for bringing this to our attention and to Eva Garcelon-Hart for comparing it to photographs in the collections of the Sheldon Museum.