For one long, intensive day, board, staff, volunteers, and invited guests explored Vermont Historical Society’s Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations. Using input from interviews conducted throughout the state, the group shared insights, stories, and developed interesting “what-if” scenarios for our organization. These exercises helped the group focus on what the Society can and should be doing as we look five, ten years into the future.

Some of the projects and dreams really pushed the envelope of possibility, but the kernels of truths began to emerge. We saw four broad themes develop: Access to VHS Collections, Interactions with and Support of Local Societies, Support of Education and Curriculum, and Statewide Programming.

What strategies can we use to address these broad themes? Ideas that emerged multiple times included: digitization of collections and content; building a physical presence throughout the state (beyond our existing facilities); providing the technology for local societies to digitize and catalog collections; coursework and specific online offerings for teachers, students, and adult learners; and producing professional development opportunities such as workshops, classes, and mentoring.

These themes and strategic ideas will be refined over the next few months with concrete strategies and measurable results. Staff and board committees will dig deeper into some of the great suggestions from our members and supporters, ultimately creating a strategic plan that will move the Vermont Historical Society into exciting areas while maintaining the rich program and traditions we have all come to love. This is a thrilling time for the Society – I look forward to your support and input as we chart its course into an exciting future.
### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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### IN THE GALLERIES

#### History Center Exhibits
- Icons, Oddities & Wonders
- Anything for Speed: Automobile Racing in Vermont Through March 30, 2019

#### History Museum Special Exhibits
- Calder Gallery: Solzhenitsyn in Vermont Through October 20, 2018
- Calder Gallery: Seeds of Renewal Opens November 6, 2018

### BRATTLEBORO IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The newest exhibit in our Local History Gallery explores how Brattleboro’s central New England location has been attractive to people throughout history. And one particular period of time shaped the town rather dramatically. Brattleboro: The Defining Decades showcases Brattleboro from 1870-1920, when the Main Street we recognize today began to take form, industry and commerce expanded, and arts and culture began to flourish. Explore the growth of this southeastern Vermont town through maps, photos, and other items from the Brattleboro Historical Society collection. You can even learn to play the “Brattleboro Waltz” on an Estey organ!
Thunder Road car lineup, c. 1965. Photograph from the Cho Lee Collection, courtesy of Lloyd Hutchins.
When you picture Vermont, you probably imagine peace and quiet and bucolic mountain views—but the state’s faster, louder side has a proud history too. We are thrilled to celebrate Vermont’s racing history at our new exhibit Anything for Speed: Automobile Racing in Vermont.

The first automobile races in Vermont took place in St. Johnsbury, at the Caledonia County Fair in September 1903. Tragedy struck when a ridealong mechanic was killed after a crash, and newspapers around the state condemned the very idea of racing cars. The Morrisville News and Citizen opined that the clamoring for speed was a societal ill, asking “How much cool judgement is left in a man’s mind after making a rushing speed of 30 or 40 miles per hour? Not a particle.” Despite the opposition, over the next few decades, every fairground in the state held at least one automobile race—and many of them continued for years.

At the same time as regular racing took hold on repurposed horse tracks, Vermonters found other ways to compete via automobile. Rallies, meant to test the limits of a vehicle and crew’s endurance, crisscrossed the state and all of New England, driving as many as two hundred miles in a day. Hill climbs, which displayed the muscle of new cars, were a natural fit for Vermont’s landscape.

In 1941, America entered World War II, and the full might of the auto industry turned to wartime production. Steel and rubber were all directed toward making tanks and airplanes, and hardly any new cars were produced. In 1946, when they turned their attention to automaking again, postwar America was ready. New prosperity, better roads, and returning soldiers with mechanical training and a taste for adrenaline all combined for a surge in interest.

Cars were cheap, readily available, and mechanically simple. With newer models available, 1930s models found a second life as young men across Vermont hauled them to filling
stations, mechanic bays, and barns. Many of them found work in nearby fields: as mechanics themselves, driving plows or delivery trucks, or working as engineers. At night and on weekends, they raced cars.

Some of the earliest dedicated tracks were simply dirt ovals in back fields. Enough cars went around enough times to grind out a rough path. Convenient hillsides served as grandstands. Local doctors brought their families to stand by in case of accidents. Competition was fierce, and a tightly-knit community formed.

The first officially established and dedicated track was Dog River Speedway in Northfield. It quickly drew massive crowds, and was followed in the early 1950s by tracks around the state – Brattleboro Speedway in West Brattleboro, Mallett’s Bay Race Track in Colchester, Fairmont Park Motor Speedway in Fair Haven, State Line Speedway in North Bennington, Otter Creek Speedway in Vergennes, and Pico Raceway in Rutland, among others.

From the start, borders were fluid, with some Vermont tracks literally on state lines or just a stone’s throw away. Fans, mechanics, car owners, and drivers flowed back and forth in and out of the state and shaped its history. Vermont hosted out of state drivers such as Harold Hanaford, the Ingerson brothers, Lee Marving, and Jean-Paul Cabana, but it also fostered homegrown talent. Johnny Gammell, Pappy Forsythe, Stubb Fadden, Larry Granger, Tony Colicchio, Ronnie Farnsworth, and more all began racing in modified jalopies that they often owned and worked on themselves. Car dealerships and local mechanics became some of the sport’s earliest sponsors, and crowds came to see their neighbors face off against each other in high speed duels.

Some of Vermont’s most famous individuals involved in racing were not themselves drivers. Ken Squier of Waterbury began calling trotting races at state fairs at a teenager, thanks to his involvement in the family business of running radio station WDEV. He quickly became hooked on stock car racing, and booked jobs all over the state calling races. His love of the sport and flair for nicknames and vivid descriptions propelled him to the national spotlight as the on-air announcer for CBS’s earliest NASCAR coverage.

**Local doctors brought their families to stand by in case of accidents. Competition was fierce, and a tightly-knit community formed.**
As the 1950s closed, racing entered a new era in Vermont. Northeastern Speedway in Waterford opened in 1959 and brought two crucial advances to the scene: guaranteed purses and a season-long points system. Over the course of the first season, the track owners had to build additional grandstand seating, and after three months were regularly drawing crowds of 3,000 or more.

In 1960, Ken Squier founded the ambitiously-named Thunder Road International Speedbowl in Barre. He set racing on Thursday night, to capture the earnings of just-paid granite workers, and on the first night of racing on July 1, more than 5,000 people crowded into the stands on Quarry Hill – with more than 1,000 turned away at the gate.

Catamount Stadium, a partnership between Squier and several others including Ray and Reginald Cooley and Jack Dubrul, opened in Milton in 1965. Devil’s Bowl Speedway opened in West Haven in 1967, and Bear Ridge Speedway followed in Bradford in 1968, and it was this quartet that would take Vermont stock car racing through the next quarter-century.

By the 1970 and into the 1980s, there was a true northern NASCAR circuit in Vermont, with five nights a week of consistent racing, including Sanair International Raceway in Quebec and Airborne Speedway in Plattsburgh. New stars like Dave Dion, Tom Tiller, Robbie Crouch, Ron Barcomb, and Joey Kourafas rose to prominence, and drivers who had been young men in the 1960s now came into their own in subsequent decades, as the Dragon brothers, Clem Despault, Fadden, Cabana, and others found success in the Late Model divisions. Racing became generational, as young members of the Dragon, Laquerre, and Bigelow families all began driving.

The Anything for Speed exhibit is open now through March 2019 at the History Center in Barre. Learn more at vermonthistory.org/autoracing

Ken Squier (right) interviewing Norm Andrews (left), c. 1975. Photograph from the Cho Lee Collection, courtesy of Lloyd Hutchins.

Thunder Road’s high banks have been a feature since its construction, c. 1965. Photograph from the Cho Lee Collection, courtesy of Lloyd Hutchins.
In their Spring 2015 newsletters, the Vermont and New Hampshire regions of the American Red Cross announced their merger into a single region based out of New Hampshire. This brought to a close an approximately 100-year independent Vermont Red Cross. In the intervening years, as new efficiencies were realized, the Vermont administrative offices in Burlington came to be redundant. This spring, the Red Cross region approached Vermont Historical Society to preserve photos, archives, and artifacts relating to the Vermont Red Cross before the facility was emptied and the property sold.

Librarian Paul Carnahan and Director Steve Perkins travelled to Burlington and sifted through years of items, selecting those that uniquely told the Red Cross story in Vermont. The collection, split evenly between the VHS library and museum collections is now in the process of being cataloged.

A standout portion of the collection, sure to become a display in the near future, is a selection of Red Cross nurse uniforms documenting the change in dress and service from WWI to the 1980s, at which time Red Cross nurses stopped wearing special uniforms. Early uniforms feature floor-length, heavy skirts, high-necked blouses, and thick, wool capes. As the century progressed, the hemlines rose to mid-calf and the material became lighter and more utilitarian. By the later years, slacks were introduced.

Capes gave way to jackets and pinafores came into use until the modern medical “scrubs” replaced the whole kit. Surprisingly, the most consistent part of the uniform remained the nurse’s peaked cap. Though the color and material changed over time, the design of the cap remained basically the same until the cap was dispensed with altogether in the 1970s.

Also included in the archive are photos, signs, and posters representing now-shuttered Red Cross chapters from throughout the state, such as Springfield, Rutland, Bennington, and St. Johnsbury. Medical kits and Vermont-branded backboards and neck braces illustrate the changes in emergency response over the years. Booklets and loose documents relate the Red Cross response to the 1927 flood, World War II and disasters in the 1980s and 90s.

We look forward to integrating these new resources fully into our existing collection of Vermont Red Cross material to better tell Vermont’s Story to visitors and researchers for years to come.
NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

by Natasha Fortin

Photo by Raphael Talisman for National History Day
Natasha Fortin is an 11th grader at Black River High School Middle School in Ludlow. Her senior individual documentary project for History Day 2018 was entitled “Frontier of Change: Nichelle Nichols’ Conflict and Compromise Regarding her Role in Star Trek.” This was Natasha’s 3rd time at National History Day.

I was so excited to attend National History Day! When the time finally arrived to drive to the University of Maryland, I was ready! We left far too early in the day; made it for registration in record time; and the pin trading began! People from American Samoa are so nice! After setting up the dorm room and having a dining hall dinner, it was time for the Welcome Ceremony, starting on the first day of the competition. National History Day is really a place to gather new friends with common interests. At the mealtimes in the dorms, people trade pins to collect them all, as if it’s a game of Pokemon. I have new friends from North Dakota (all five of them!) and Montana. Judging at National History Day has nice judges and they give good feedback. They’ve always asked good questions, that made me think about my values, and makes you think more about what things mean, and regurgitate information less.

To get to Washington DC, we took the Metro, and that was actually fun. Public transport is always an adventure. This year, we went to the International Spy Museum, a very interesting place. It had not only history in television, but also history in crime (so many spies and their methods/gadgets!). We also went to the Zoo, and saw the Komodo Dragon and a few Red Pandas playing and napping. Did you know there are two cows (not to mention the goats, alpacas, pigs, and chickens) in the National Zoo? We lunches at the Washington Monument; saw the White House (it’s so small!); strolled past the WWII Monument; and there it was -- the Reflecting Pool with water in it! Hadn’t seen it when it wasn’t under construction! After a short visit with the Lincoln Memorial we walked across the Potomac and we caught a glimpse of Arlington, before catching the Metro back “home” for a dining hall dinner with Mountain Dew!

We prepared for the closing ceremony by creating signs and inflating the Cabot Cows! The Awards Ceremony began with the parade; there were many prizes; and the final chance to trade pins. People from Guam are so nice! After we packed up and left to return home, I just smiled to myself as I thought about next year’s History Day theme...
This month’s highly unusual mystery photo came to us from the LaVigne family of Hinesburg. These young women are all dressed in matching outfits and are holding up brooms. Are they an early broomball team? Other than the brooms they are displaying there is nothing in the photograph to suggest a winter sport. If anyone knows what these women are doing or what they represent, please contact VHS librarian Paul Carnahan at paul.carnahan@vermonthistory.org or (802) 479-8508.

No one was able to identify last issue’s mystery photo of a tree-lined street with a church hidden behind the trees (left). However, member Richard Petit of Fayston was able to identify the mystery photo that appeared in our Spring 2018 issue. He found the same photograph of a sawmill in an article by author Bill Gove of Williamstown. The subject was the Lost River Sawmill in North Woodstock, New Hampshire.
Earlier this year the Vermont Historical Society received a wonderful and generous bequest from Eleanor Angell. Eleanor, a life member of the VHS, moved to the state in 1984, the only member of her family not born in Vermont. She settled down in Burlington and became involved with genealogical research and the family history of her Vermont ancestors. In 2000, after twelve years of research, Eleanor published the book *Three Early Vermont Settlers: Amos Morse, George Trow, and Ephraim Ainsworth*, which explores the genealogy of the three settlers, their American ancestry, and many of their descendants through several generations.

Eleanor was an enthusiastic member of many Vermont groups and organizations, and left a bequest to the Vermont Historical Society to ensure that Vermont’s many unique stories, like those she researched and published, are passed down to future generations.

If you too share Eleanor’s passion for Vermont history and would like more information on legacy giving, please call Kate Olney at (802) 479-8525, or visit our website vermonthistory.org/give/legacy-giving.

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*New Book!

Secrets of Mount Philo: A Guide to the History of Vermont’s First State Park* guides you to more than 30 historic sites in the park, detailing what’s there and placing it within the context of the park’s, state’s, and region’s landscape history.

Visit our website at vermonthistory.org mtphilo for information on purchasing, upcoming programs, book signings, and talks with author Judy Chaves.
Researchers using the VHS’s online catalog (catalog.vermonthistory.org) may have noticed a new look on their screens. On July 1 we switched from a library cataloging system shared with the Vermont State Colleges to our own system.

For the user, the new online public access catalog (OPAC) retains the same functionality as the old system, but behind the scenes we will be able to better control our subject headings and forms of authors’ names. We have been able to customize the appearance of the catalog to fit our unique collections and to meet our patrons’ needs.

The VHS library now has close to 40,000 descriptive records for books, manuscripts, maps, and related items in its OPAC and is continuing to add records as the staff strives to complete the conversion of its old card catalog to the computerized system.

Users who had bookmarks to our old catalog may need to update their bookmarks to the simple URL: catalog.vermonthistory.org. Suggestions for improving the OPAC can be sent to VHS librarian Paul Carnahan at paul.carnahan@vermonthistory.org.
Join us Saturday, October 6 at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier for the VHS Annual Meeting. The meeting will include official business to lead off our 180th year, along with refreshments, awards presentations, a keynote and chance to visit the new exhibit in our Local History Gallery, *Brattleboro: The Defining Decades 1870-1920*, featuring objects from both the Brattleboro Historical Society & Estey Organ Museum.

Online registration & full meeting details: [vermonthistory.org/annual-meeting](http://vermonthistory.org/annual-meeting)

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**Join the Monthly Sustainers Club!**

Make a continuous impact without the continuous effort! Your monthly donation to the VHS, any amount, provides immediate support for our high-quality exhibits and programming.

Become a monthly sustainer today by visiting [vermonthistory.org/give/monthly-giving](http://vermonthistory.org/give/monthly-giving) or call Tori Hart at (802) 479-8516.
Time Travellers Ball

Save The Date
June 1, 2019 | Burlington Hilton | 5:30PM – 10PM | vermonthistory.org