

History Connections

Vermont Historical Society

News &
Notes

Spring 2009 / Volume #3 / Number 3



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Many thanks to our newsletter sponsor:



Say Hello to Our New Executive Director!

We are so pleased to welcome Mark Hudson as the new Executive Director of the Vermont Historical Society! Mark comes to us from Maryland, where he has served as Executive Director of the Historical Society of Frederick County for eleven years.

Under Mark's leadership, the Historical Society of Frederick County received the prestigious Award for Outstanding Commitment to the Preservation and Care of Collections, and accreditation by the American Association of Museums. It is the only county historical society in Maryland to receive AAM accreditation.

Mark has a Master's degree in Historical Administration and Museum Studies and he also has a Master's degree in Library Science. His background also includes work at libraries and historical societies in Missouri and Kansas. Mark and his wife Julie have moved to Vermont with their beloved Jack Russell Terrier, Hobbes.

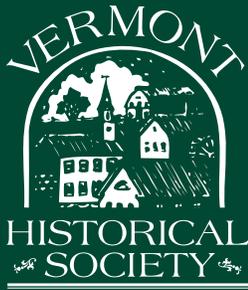
Though they've already been warned about mud season, they are looking forward to indulging in Vermont's many outdoor activities. Mark said, "I am very excited about working with the Vermont Historical Society! VHS clearly has dynamic programs and exciting opportunities, and I look forward to getting to know the many members and volunteers around the state."

VHS President Sarah Dopp noted that in our nationwide search, we were looking for someone especially gifted in team building with staff and volunteers, generating increased financial support from a variety of sources, and guiding the organization to the next level by spreading a strategic vision. Mark had that kind of success in Maryland, where he brought a county historical society from a modest local role into prominence within the state, with innovative programming to stimulate interest among children and adults.

Mark has already tackled a self-education program in Vermont history and he has begun to travel within the state. His personal zeal for the job is already evident, and we feel very fortunate to have attracted such a multi-talented new Executive Director. Stop in and say hello to Mark the next time you're in Barre. 



*Mark S. Hudson,
Executive Director*



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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: Alan Berolzheimer
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Business Hours

Vermont History Center, Barre
Administrative Offices & Store:
Monday – Friday / 9am - 4pm
Library:
Tuesday – Friday / 9am - 4pm;
Wednesday / 9am - 8pm; second
Saturday of each month / 9am - 4pm
Tel: 802-479-8500
Fax: 802-479-8510

Library Admission:

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

Museum & Store

Pavilion Building, Montpelier
Tuesday – Friday / 10am - 4pm
Tel: 802-828-2291
Fax: 802-828-1415

Museum Admission

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

www.vermonthistory.org
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From the Director

As I begin to compose this article, it is the morning of my first day as Executive Director. I am deeply honored to have been selected by the Board of Trustees to lead the Vermont Historical Society and will do all that I can to contribute to the continued success of this amazing organization. Having just arrived from our former home in Frederick, Maryland, my wife Julie and I have been delighted by the warm welcome we have received in Vermont. We look forward to exploring this beautiful state and encountering many of the colorful characters for which Vermont is known.

I hope to meet many of you personally in the coming months and wish to share a little about myself. History has been my passion since my childhood in Kansas and I have enjoyed a career in public history for over twenty years. After receiving degrees in history and museum studies from the University of Kansas, I traveled across the border to the University of Missouri, where I met Julie, the love of my life (I also earned a degree in library science while at Mizzou).

For the past eleven years I served as Executive Director for the Historical Society of Frederick County, where I was able to contribute to the growth and success of that organization. Among our most notable accomplishments were the attainment of accreditation by the American Association of Museums, the development of an award-winning collections management facility, and the development of dynamic public programs and exhibitions.

Although it was difficult to leave such an exciting organization within a wonderfully historic community, I found the opportunity here in Vermont too good to pass up. As I prepared to apply for the position, I was impressed with every aspect of the Vermont Historical Society's programs and operations, particularly its outreach efforts to all corners of the state. My initial impressions were confirmed during my visit to Vermont in early January and the reception we have received here has served only to confirm what a great place this is!

The enthusiasm and dedication of the staff, board, and volunteers of the Vermont Historical Society have been energizing to me as I prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. Present financial conditions have been particularly challenging for nonprofit organizations, and the VHS has been no exception. Increasing operating expenses and diminishing revenue from all sources have required the Society to make difficult decisions and will require more hard choices as we move forward.

Despite this, I believe that the Vermont Historical Society has its greatest accomplishments still ahead. The further development of the Vermont History Center, the enhancement of programs in support of school curricula, the creation of new exhibitions, as well as other activities that will preserve and celebrate the history of the Green Mountain State give me tremendous cause to look forward to the future. At times I am so excited that I hardly know where to begin.

I am grateful for the trust that has been placed in me by the Board of Trustees and am thrilled to be the newest member of the Vermont Historical Society family. Together we will accomplish many great things in support of the Society's mission to promote an understanding of the past to change lives and build better communities.

– Mark Hudson, Executive Director

New Hours:

Vermont History Center, Barre: Library: Tuesday-Friday/9am-4pm;
Wednesday /9am-8pm; second Saturday of each month/9am-4pm.

Administrative Offices & Store: Monday-Friday/9am-4pm.

Museum & Store, Montpelier, Pavilion Building: Tuesday-Friday/10am-4pm.

Library hours extended:

Our experiment of keeping the library open on Wednesday evenings until 8:00 pm has proved successful. Although initially announced for only the period from Labor Day through Memorial Day, we will now be keeping the library open until 8:00 pm year round.

The Future of the Vermont History Expo

In January and early February, Director of Education and Public Programming Tess Taylor and Expo Committee members held three sessions for local historical societies and others to discuss the future of the Vermont History Expo, which was suspended for 2009. Forty-five people attended these meetings held in Barre and in Grafton. The general feeling was that although everyone loves the Expo, many find it very difficult for their societies to have the energy and resources to create a new exhibit every year. To them, it was understandable why the Vermont Historical Society might elect to take a year off. Nancy Woolley of Rochester put it this way: "In a way, we are relieved to have Expo suspended. Local historical societies need to have a closer connection with neighboring towns. This break in Expo will give the local societies a chance to learn more about each other and find common areas to explore."

Support for having Expo return to Tunbridge in 2010 was high, and the idea of running it every other year was discussed and thought to be the right route for us to take. The VHS Board of Trustees will take the opinions expressed at the meetings under consideration as it decides when to hold the next Expo in Tunbridge.

In discussions about what could happen in the off years, participants were very supportive of having regional events coordinated with the help of the Vermont Historical Society. Some thought of central regional fairs, others offered ideas about having open museums and exhibits in each town. We discussed making a Vermont map with all the local societies plotted on it with contact information, hours, etc. All of the discussion centered around having events to encourage visitors to travel around the state and get to know what the local societies do and what they have to offer.

For 2009, several groups of local societies are planning regional history mini-fairs in different areas of the state. The Vermont Historical Society is looking forward to participating in some these fairs. We have a list of events, and it is growing! Here are some highlights:

The Montpelier Historical Society is hosting the Washington County History Fair at the VHS Museum in the

Pavilion Building in Montpelier on Saturday, June 20, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The full list of exhibitors was not available at the time of printing this newsletter, but you can keep posted on these and other fairs as they materialize on the VHS website.

The White River Valley Historic Fair will be held on Saturday, August 15, at Whitcomb High School in Bethel. Towns planning to participate are Bethel, Rochester, Stockbridge-Gaysville, Pittsfield, Royalton, Sharon, Tunbridge, Hartford, and Barnard. More may join them as plans progress.

On Saturday, August 15, on the Courthouse Common in Newfane, the First Annual Windham County History Fair will take place, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a booth for each of that county's historical societies, plus crafters, craft demonstrations, music, and other activities.

To see updated information, please visit our website at: www.vermonthistory.org/calendar. 

The VHS is also planning to participate in these other events:

- ☛ **Cabot Cheese** celebrates its 90th anniversary this year with a Dairy Festival, Saturday, June 13, 10 a.m to 3 p.m. There will be food, entertainment, and games.
- ☛ **The Ethan Allen Colonial Fair**, June 20-21 in Colgate Park, Bennington, promises to be a lively history fair with games, demonstrations, and exhibits.
- ☛ **The Vermont Quilt Festival**, June 18-21 at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds. VHS will be at the event fundraising for our quilt preservation project. We will select a quilt from our collection to have on display.
- ☛ **The Lake Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration**, July 11 at the Burlington Waterfront. VHS will have items for sale and a wonderful display.

History Day 2009

History Day happened on April 4 at Spaulding High School in Barre. This year 153 students participated in a total of 81 projects, on the theme "The Individual in History." Many Vermonters were among those researched by students, including Ethan Allen, James Canfield Fisher, Calvin Coolidge, John Deere, Ann Story, Madeleine Kunin, Snowflake Bentley, Matthew Lyon, and Ben and Jerry. We will report more fully on History Day in the next issue of the newsletter. In the meantime, if you want to find out the results they'll be posted on the VHS website shortly after the competition: www.vermonthistory.org/historyday.

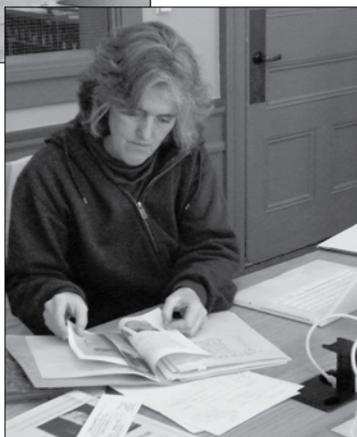
Primary Sources

In the last few months the VHS library has hosted several classes of students and teachers, all interested in using primary source documents in their studies. The recent flurry of visits was led off in February by two classes of seventh and eighth graders from U-32 in East Montpelier under the leadership of Chris Williams. They were followed by eighteen students in the AP U.S. history class at Spaulding High School taught by Jerry Desmarais. In March we were visited by three home-schooled students from Chittenden County eager to view early historical documents firsthand.

Although these groups differed in their ages and subject interests, they all shared a desire to interact directly with documents created many, many years ago. The students from U-32 were shown a variety of primary source materials, ranging from the earliest known photographic view of Vermont to mill girl letters of the 1840s to letters from a tuberculosis sanatorium in 1917. The Spaulding students focused their inquiries on the Depression and World War II so the library staff pulled out materials including Civilian Defense publications from Townsend, letters to Barre band members serving abroad, a Vermonter's letters from North Africa and Italy, classic World War II propaganda posters, and numerous memoirs from men and women who served abroad. The home schoolers' interests lay in the earliest period of our history, so we showed them the recently acquired Johnson Family papers from Newbury, among other items.



Students Grant Davis and McKinley James look over documents from Vermont's early statehood period in the VHS library in March.



Nancy Lewis, a Claremont, New Hampshire teacher, researching VHS Leahy Library materials for the Flow of History project.

The library was also visited recently by a group of teachers engaged in a multi-year project to develop curricula based on primary source materials to be used in their classrooms. The group of five teachers and two instructors are part of "The Flow of History," a history education network for Vermont and New Hampshire communities along the Connecticut River watershed (www.flowofhistory.org). Each teacher was engaged in his or her own projects but many focused on Vermonters who moved west, Vermont girls who went to the textile mills in Lowell, and Revolutionary War-era documents.

Another teacher, Jen Boeri-Boyce of Hartford Memorial Middle School, found a Civil War diary from a soldier from Hartford in the VHS collections. George Bemis kept a diary for 1861, 1862, and 1863. He died of wounds received in the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864. His body was never recovered, leading one to think that his diary for 1864 was buried along with him. These are the stories that make history riveting, according to the teachers using original documents with their students. As Nancy Lewis of Stevens High School in Claremont, New Hampshire, stated, "American history is extraordinary. If it is viewed through the lens of ordinary people, it gives a dimension that is not available in history books." 📖

Mystery Photo

Inset: We did not have any response to last issue's Mystery Photo of a skier skiing through a snow-covered village, so the locale remains a mystery to us. Perhaps it isn't Vermont.



Does anyone recognize this Vermont schoolhouse? We found this in a collection of family photographs that recently came to us. It could be Waitsfield Village School because one member of the family taught there, but the family also had connections to Fayston, Rochester, and Granville. If you can identify this building, please contact the Society's librarian, Paul Carnahan: paul.carnahan@state.vt.us or 802-479-8508.



A Vermonter on the Trail of the Middle Ages

Over the years, the VHS library has benefited from the assistance of many young people eager for experience in a research setting. We usually lose track of these folks who move away from Vermont, history, and libraries. We were pleased, then, to learn of one summer volunteer from fourteen years ago who has gone on to make the study of history his life's work. Here is Brett Whalen's story:

Looking out my office window at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and seeing a rare January snowfall, I am reminded of Montpelier, Vermont, and also of how far I have come from there. In the present, usually warmer climes of Chapel Hill, I am an adult (at least in theory) and an assistant professor of medieval European history; in the past, for most of my life in Montpelier, I was a child and a student.

During the summer of 1995, the Vermont Historical Society fell at an unlikely intersection between my childhood and adulthood, between a youthful passion for history and my professional life as a scholar and teacher of the Middle Ages. That summer, preceding my enrollment in the history MA program at the University of Vermont, I had returned home to make some money working for the family business, Louis Marineau and Sons Painting and Papering. At the same time, anticipating my new scholarly adventure in the fall, I wanted to spend some of my summer engaged with history. Needless to say, opportunities for working on "medieval" history (as traditionally defined, anyway) were few and far between. But as a native of Montpelier, I knew one place I could go to find an active engagement with the past and a spirit of inquiry into historical events: the Vermont Historical Society.

I approached Paul Carnahan and asked about the possibility of performing some sort of internship at VHS. He agreed and put me to work on a variety of projects. One day a week, I left behind the lucrative toil of the paintbrush, changed my clothes, and entered the air-conditioned VHS library at its former location in Montpelier. As part of

my duties, Paul asked me to process a manuscript collection, the Beattie Family Papers, organizing and indexing them for future researchers. During the 1830s, one member of the Beattie family, William Beattie of Ryegate, Vermont, had gone south to Alabama, where he became involved in the deportation of Creek Indians on the infamous "Trail of Tears." The collection contained some fascinating correspondence between William and his family back in Vermont, some of whom openly disapproved of his new profession.

Here, at last, I was working with "primary source" documents, the raw materials of history, actual letters from the nineteenth century! The collection proved so interesting that, at Paul's suggestion, I produced a piece called "A Vermonter on the Trail of Tears, 1830-1837," for Vermont History (vol. 66, 1998). This was my first publication as an historian and remains on my CV to this day. Long after leaving VHS, while a doctoral candidate at Stanford University, I had the fortunate opportunity to do research at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the British Library, and the Vatican Library, holding, for example, a ninth-century Carolingian Bible in my hands (from this perspective, the life and times of the Beattie Family seem like current events). Nevertheless, wherever my intellectual and professional odyssey brings me, I take great satisfaction in the fact that part of that journey involved VHS. 🇺🇸



Brett Whalen in Japan.

Brett Edward Whalen teaches medieval history at UNC, Chapel Hill. His first book, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, will appear from Harvard University Press in October 2009.

Winter Events

Right: Linda Radtke performing at the State House in the VHS Farmers' Night presentation.

Far right: Participants in VHS Family Fun "Creating Wigs & Silhouettes" workshop.



Look What You've Done – Thank You!

Scratch the surface of any town meeting or legislative issue, and you'll see Vermonters balancing individual rights with the need to pull together as a community. Our state's "Freedom and Unity" motto is as alive today as ever. Your membership helps people learn from our collective past and use that wisdom in our present-day lives. Here are some examples of how many people you help each year:

5,000	Schoolchildren from 80 Vermont towns in museum field trips
3,200	Other Vermont museum visitors
800	Out-of-state or out-of-country museum visitors
4,000-7,000	Vermont History Expo visitors (approximately 20% are out-of-state tourists)
2,600	Individuals, libraries, schools, businesses and other members served year-round
196	Local historical societies depending on the Society for technical assistance and information
80-100	Participants learning about Vermont civil rights history in our Martin Luther King, Jr. Day program
60	Attendees at our Farmers' Night program on Vermont history
1,500	Visitors to the Leahy Library and Vermont History Center in Barre
60-80	Children and parents participating in hands-on history family workshops
240	Orders of history books
7,850	Website visitors per year, viewing 29,000 pages (not including online museum or online library catalog visits!)
5-10	Scholarly articles and books published on specific aspects of Vermont history
150	Representatives from museums and local societies around the state participating in annual League conference and workshops for local historical societies
30	Teachers in professional development workshops on teaching Vermont history
150	Middle school and high school students participating in Vermont History Day
30	Middle school and high school students representing Vermont at National History Day
196	Local historical societies listed in visitor catalog and receiving biweekly statewide calendar of local society news and events
180	Museums, local historical societies, and other heritage organizations exhibiting at Expo
1,100	Library information requests
55	Organizations using conference meeting rooms in Barre and Montpelier
65	Museum collections information requests
115	Artifacts, documents, and other historic items added to Society for use by anyone interested in Vermont history, now and in future generations
500-600	Attendees learning about Vermont history at presentations in all corners of the state
Countless!	Number of people who learned from Vermont's past to inform present-day choices in their lives or communities.

Thank you!

Cate Fellowship Now Biennial

The Board of Trustees of the VHS has decided to extend the deadline for the Cate Fellowship so that it runs on a two-year cycle, to expand the quality and quantity of work under consideration. The deadline for the award will now be March 31st in even-numbered years. The next deadline is March 31, 2010.

Nominations for 2009 Hathaway Award

VHS is now accepting nominations for this year's Richard O. Hathaway Award. This annual prize recognizes outstanding work in Vermont history produced in any medium, including but not limited to publications, exhibits, works of art, documentary films, radio programs, websites, and dramatic works. All projects released and/or made available during calendar year 2008 are eligible. For information on the nomination process, please visit the VHS website at: <http://vermonthistory.org/hathaway>. The deadline for submissions is July 1, 2009.

George E. Little, Jr. (1921-2009)

Vermont lost a dedicated public servant and the VHS lost a supporter with the passing of George E. Little in February. Little was the founder of the George Little Press of Burlington in 1950. He was a Burlington alderman (1961-67), member of the Vermont House (1969-1972), and member of the Vermont Senate (1983-1992). In the Senate he chaired the Committee on Natural Resources. He was also a civic activist who was involved in creating several Burlington institutions, including the ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center.

Little, a 7th-generation Vermonter, was one of a group of five citizens who helped establish the Ethan Allen Homestead in Burlington's Intervale in 1987. Later, Little gave four collections of his papers to the Vermont Historical Society, where they are now available to researchers. These include papers from his tenures in the House and Senate, two folders of papers related to his publishing business, and a small box of records from the Vermont Council for Effective Government that was active in the state between 1976 and 1982.



Donate to Receive Limited Edition Lake Champlain Atlas!

The VHS is commemorating the 400th anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's exploration of the lake that bears his name with a special offer of the limited edition facsimile of William Chambers' 1779-80 manuscript atlas of the lake.

Chambers' stunning work includes 31 detailed plates of small sections of the lake's shoreline, each rendered in black ink with blue and brown watercolor shading. Most plates include soundings and physical features, especially those that could be hazardous to sailors. This edition being offered to donors includes a 3' x 10' composite map of the entire lake, a map that was not included in the paperback edition of this facsimile. The plates are as much works of art as they are navigational tools. Since many of the place names used by Chambers are now obsolete, the facsimile includes a handy glossary for modern readers.

The original atlas, one of the Society's treasures, will be on display at the Fleming Museum in Burlington from April 14 through September 2009. Now, thanks to the generosity of J. Kevin Graffagnino, former VHS director and editor of the facsimile, we are making available 100 copies of the 1984 limited edition of this prized volume. Each volume is bound in dark blue half-leather with a matching slipcase. These volumes are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

We are offering this collector's edition during the Quadricentennial for each new or increased donation of \$400. To make a donation and receive this special book, please contact Jane Campbell, at 802.479.8516 or jane.campbell@state.vt.us, or donate online at: <https://payments.auctionpay.com/ver3/?id=w014083>.

U p c o m i n g E v e n t s

Friday, May 8

Almost Utopia, Searching for the Good Life in Mid-Century America, photographs of Jamaica, Vermont in 1950, by Rebecca Lepkoff, opening at the Vermont Folklife Center, Middlebury. Original photographs from the book *Almost Utopia*, published by VHS in 2008. For additional information about dates, hours, and related programs, contact the VFC at 802-388-4964 or www.vermontfolklifecenter.org.

Saturday, June 13

Cabot Cheese Dairy Festival, celebrating their 90th anniversary, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Food, entertainment, and games.

Saturday, June 13 and Sunday, June 14

Vermont Days: The VHS Museum will be open, free of charge to everyone, as part of the statewide celebration of parks and attractions. Pavilion Building in Montpelier, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Thursday, June 18-Sunday, June 21

Vermont Quilt Festival, at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds. VHS will have a quilt on display and be fundraising for our quilt preservation project.

Saturday, June 20

Washington County History Fair, at the VHS Museum in the Pavilion Building in Montpelier, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Saturday, July 11

Lake Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration, Burlington Waterfront. VHS will have a display and items for sale.

Saturday, July 25

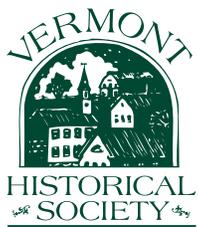
Barre Heritage Festival. The Vermont History Center will highlight Barre's Scottish heritage with a celebration of poet Robert Burns' 250th birthday plus the 110th anniversary of the dedication of the granite statue of Burns that graces our lawn. Scottish piping and dancing, games, tours of the History Center. Free. 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Saturday, August 15

White River Valley Historic Fair, at Whitcomb High School in Bethel. Towns planning to participate are Barnard, Bethel, Hartford, Pittsfield, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, Stockbridge-Gaysville, and Tunbridge.

Saturday, August 15

First Annual Windham County History Fair, on the Courthouse Common in Newfane, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Booths for town historical societies, craft demonstrations, music, other activities.



Vermont History Center
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