



# *Bley House News*

## Dorset Historical Society

*Fall 2010 A Seasonal Newsletter*

### Letter from the President

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Susanne Rappaport

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Betsy Olson

#### Museum Winter Hours

**Dec. 1 to April 30**

10 AM - 12 noon  
Wednesday

10AM-2PM Thurs. Fri. Sat.  
and by appointment

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**F**all has arrived and that means Annual Meeting time and a look at the accomplishments in 2010. My first thought was that a record number of you have been able to visit Bley House to see the many wonderful exhibits and participate in popular events, workshops and demonstrations to include the ice cream social, marble quarry walks and historic walking tours of Dorset and East Dorset and professional demonstrations of historic paint finishes, wall and paper stenciling and genealogical research methods.

My next reflection is how interesting it is to have exhibits and presentations covering unique figures in Dorset's history from the Gilbert and Manly families. Six sepia drawings by Dean Fausett acquired for the museum's collection this year along with oil and water color paintings on loan from residents and the Canton family of Ohio were introduced. Sandy Read's cartoons are currently drawing intended humor.

Dorset residents and their families continue to generously donate letters, documents, photographs and artifacts pertinent to Dorset's history. Of note this past year are two donations important to Dorset's commercial history from the Malcolm Cooper family about J.K. Adams and Jay Hathaway family about Peltier's Store. The newly-developed Dorset orchard industry exhibit for this year's Vermont History Expo in Tunbridge brought in donations of Dorset orchard memorabilia from around the country. This exhibit will be on display in the Bley House Museum upstairs gallery this fall.

I hope you and your family will join us at the Holiday Open House reception on Saturday, December 11. An exhibit of antique teddy bears and children's toys from private collections in Dorset will be on display with the permanent collection during the holiday season.

Looking forward to seeing you here,

Richard Hittle, President



On a hot afternoon visitors line up for free ice cream at the Annual Ice Cream Social



Kathie Wall Evans shows visitors how to make a stencil design

# The Curator's Notebook

## Exhibitions

The new major exhibitions for 2011, *Unique Figures in Dorset's history* and *Dean Fausett and the 1869 Powell Expedition*, which opened to the public on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, have been well received by all visitors to the museum during the summer months. In addition, the receptions associated with the exhibits, which were informal conversations with family and friends of the artist Dean Fausett and the photographer Hunt Gilbert, created opportunities for a dialogue about them, their work and subjects.

Two smaller exhibits are scheduled for the fall. The first, *The Art of Humorist Sandy Read (1928-2009)*, opened over Labor Day weekend and will run through October. The exhibit includes examples of his paintings, drawings, scrimshaw designs and many of his fabulous cartoons, which are found around the world. Read will always be remembered for his subtle, poignant humor. He was born in Boston and graduated from Yale University. After a career in New York as a member of the New York Stock Exchange, he retired in 1971 and moved to Vermont. He was already a serious ice hockey

player, but in Vermont he also raised sheep and became a hunter and fisherman.

Read served as a selectman in Dorset for several years, and his cartoons in the *Manchester Journal* often featured a delightful family of bears and many local people. His family has provided all the material on exhibit and copies of several pieces will become part of the permanent collection.

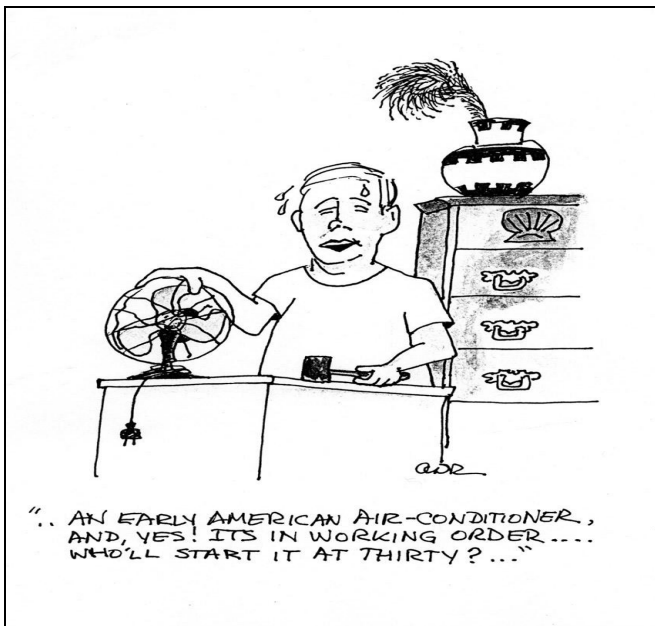
If you missed DHS's exhibit at the Vermont History Expo in Tunbridge in late June, you will have a chance to see it at the museum in November. *Dorset's Orchards Past and Present* was researched and designed by Suzanne Kaiser, a member of the Board of Directors, and explores this important part of life in Dorset, which is still ongoing today.

## Programs

Public program attendance has been consistently strong throughout the summer. The four Saturday morning quarry

walks with Art Gilbert as the lead historian were again very popular events. I learn more about the history of the marble and the quarries on every walk. We also reintroduced village walks around the green in Dorset and along the streets in East Dorset and had large groups of participants in both cases. Terry Tyler, another great teacher of local history, and architect Bill Badger conducted the Dorset walk. Ruth Stewart, a member of the DHS Board and resident of East Dorset, along with David Parsons, also a resident of East Dorset and volunteer at the museum, conducted the East Dorset walk.

Preparing for the walk around the Dorset Green became my course of study for the summer, particularly because of an interest in the history of the Dorset Inn. It fascinates me to try to imagine what the village looked like when the inn was built in 1796; only a few other residences that still stand today preceded it. The inn, 214 years old, has been a central meeting place in the village all those years. It has changed many times as the village we know today grew up around it. Its first guests were travelers en route to the major markets in Albany, Troy, Boston and Montreal. They arrived on horseback, ate a meal prepared from the gardens to the back of the inn and spent their evenings in front of the warm fire-place visiting with other travelers and perhaps doing business with town or itinerant businessmen. Bill Badger thinks that as more summer homes were built in Dorset during the later part of the nineteenth century, the porch was added to create a sense of leisure. At this time many city people took rooms for extended periods of time to escape the heat and squalor at home. Eventually the ballroom on the second floor was given up for more guestrooms. There have been many owners and many changes throughout its more recent history, but it has remained an inn, and a community center of sorts that will hopefully be a landmark on the corner of Church Street and Route 30 for many years to come.



## The Curator's Notebook (cont'd)

### Collections

The Collections Committee has completed a new Collections Management Policy, which has been adopted by the Board of Directors. The committee is presently working on an Emergency Plan for the museum. All Vermont historical societies and museums are being urged by the Vermont Historical Society to develop emergency plans to better protect their valuable and irreplaceable collections and Vermont's cultural heritage.

Volunteers have continued to make remarkable progress on the collection-wide inventory we have been working on since the beginning of 2009. The process will be completed by the end of this year. Many items have been re-housed in archival boxes, which have been placed on new shelving with new labels. We are learning many things about the collection through this process, and an overview of inventory results will be created during the winter with new projects described for the future.



The Dorset Inn – circa 1900

**Many of our visitors talk about how much there is to see and learn at the Dorset Historical Society – no comment could make me happier!**

*Susanne Rappaport, Curator*

The following letter was received in response to an article in our last newsletter

### AHH...AUNT MARIA'S COOKIES

By Anne M. August

Many, many years ago (I believe it was in the early '20s to '30s), a lady by the name of Hortense Staats used to come up to Dorset from New York to play golf with her friend, Helene Girvin. Miss Staats was technically my mother's secretary—in reality more of a family manager and coordinator. Mother's Christmas List was certainly managed by "Staatsie," and the arrival of the glass jar containing Aunt Maria's Cookies was eagerly anticipated by this member of the family. (This was in the late '40s.)

When I moved to Dorset in 1980, I found I was living across the street from Elsie Niles, and I learned from her what I could about Aunt Maria's Cookies. I asked about molds and she said they threw them out the back door. No chance of retrieving them, since a porch had been added on.

Being in the antiques business and remembering the shape (after looking at the pattern of the mold in the Historical Society), I went about trying to find a glass tumbler with a suitable bottom to use as a press. After a long search and several possibilities, I settled on a couple of glasses that *might* do. Thence to the recipe—found in the Dorset history written by Tyler Resch, but the quantities were a

little scary, unless you knew they were going to be okay. So I started with a half-size recipe...room for improvement in both press and edge color. Back to search for a better glass base. Finally found one almost correct...meantime had conversations with Elsie about the process.

Finally I undertook a full batch. I had a small oven, which held only one cookie tray. I did try two trays, but the top of the cookies in one tray were singed, and the edges of the cookies in the bottom tray chipped off or were burned. That settled it: one tray at a time. Baking time could vary by one or two minutes. You had to watch through the oven door for just the right moment to pull them out. I forgot to mention that thickness had to be just right for the edges to be nicely tanned.

So, at the rate of 20 cookies per sheet, it took me most of the day to use the entire mix. They did come out quite well, though with not quite as fine a texture as the originals. I was brave enough to take a couple to Elsie and she gave me a conservative approval rating. (I have not tried another batch.)

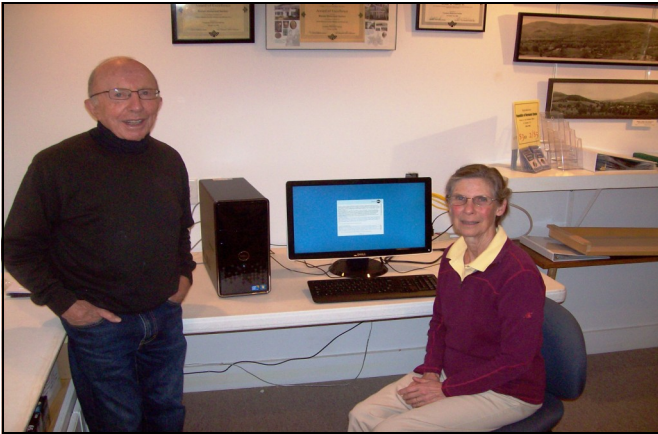
The arrival so many years ago of those wonderful glass jars filled delicately with Aunt Maria's Cookies was a Christmas treat I will never forget.

**Anne August** (former Dorset resident, now at Wake Robin in Shelburne VT)

### Improving our Entrance



Lionel Beaudoin and crew paving the swales and regrading and compacting the driveway



Our last newsletter included the wish for a new computer which has just been installed, thanks to a generous gift from **Claudia and Peter Kinder**. President Richard Hittle and Curator Susanne Rappaport are shown as they welcome the new installation.

## Save these Dates

**Tuesday, October 19** 7:30 PM **DHS Annual Meeting**. Bley House Museum. Business meeting, election & presentation. All DHS members are welcome.

**Thursday, October 28** 7:30 PM **Oral History as Discovery Research**, Greg Sharrow from the Vermont Folklife Center. Israel Congregation, 6025 Main St. (Rte. 7A), Manchester. Sponsored by Vermont Humanities Council Speakers Bureau.

**Friday, Saturday & Sunday, October 29, 30 & 31** 9:00 PM Linda McGinnis will lead a **Halloween Tour of Maple Hill Cemetery**. Meet at Barrows House; bring a flashlight. \$10 donation to benefit DHS & MHC.

**Saturday, December 11** 2:00-5:00 PM Join us for **A Warm and Fuzzy Holiday Open House at Bley House** followed by **Horse-drawn Wagon Rides** departing 5:00 & 6:30 PM from or near the Museum. The rides are sponsored by the Manchester and the Mountains Chamber of Commerce.

**ADDITIONS and CORRECTIONS:** The following refer to the Dorset Orchards article in the last newsletter and are based on new information:

The orchards managed by Rufus S. Gilbert and Sons belonged to Arthur Corwin and Dr. Edwin Goodman; Benjamin Baldwin planted apple tree seedlings in 1768, mostly Northern Spies; Carlton Howe bought out other orchard competitors before and after his retirement from business; Reg Dorr also set up a cider press in the 1930s close to the base of Morse Hill Road; Ernest West managed the Holley orchard and others on the west side of Dorset West Road; for the small grower, marketing and rising costs of labor were factors contributing to the decline of the apple industry.

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Beverly Bee  
 Thatcher and Sarah Brown  
 Margaret and Kenneth Gilbert  
 Dr. John A. Hicks  
 William and Lori Fournier  
 Bruce and Diane Johnson  
 Patti Schulte and Tom Yamin

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