



Bley House News

Dorset Historical Society

Spring/Summer 2010

Dorset Historical Society Presents New Exhibitions

UNIQUE FIGURES IN DORSET'S HISTORY

and

**DEAN FAUSETT AND THE 1869 POWELL
EXPEDITION**

*Opening Reception for Friends and Members
Friday, May 21 from 5:00-7:00 p.m.*

*With Pat Carmichael reading from Elsie Niles McWayne's
Journal telling the story of Aunt Maria's Sugar Cookies*

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Museum Summer Hours

May 15-Oct. 15
10 AM - 12 noon Weds.
10AM-4 PM Thurs-Sat
& by appointment

802-867-0331
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www.dorsetvhistory.org

Curator's Notebook

New Exhibitions

Unique Figures in Dorset's History, a new exhibit, will include: Ralza M. Manly, Educator (1822-1897); Huntington P. Gilbert, Artist, Photographer, Poultryman (1876-1962); Elsie Niles McWayne and Marjorie Niles, owners of the Aunt Maria's Sugar Cookies (1947-1970); and Jay and Terri Hathaway, owners of Peltier's Market (1977-2004). This exhibition will be in the Main Gallery while the other major 2010 exhibit, **Dean Fausett and the 1869 Powell Expedition**, will be in the Venetian Red Gallery.

There are many significant figures in the history of Dorset and it has been difficult to choose a group to focus on in our exhibitions this year. We have in the collection good evidence of the "life work" of many residents, the material culture from which exhibitions are created. As a curator my challenge is to select the artifacts and organize and interpret them so that individual stories come alive. In earlier issues of the newsletter I have written about Hunt Gilbert and Dean Fausett, and Sue Washburn has written about Jay and Terri Hathaway, so here I would like to introduce Ralza Morse Manly, Elsie Niles McWayne and Marjorie Niles, fascinating people with ties to Dorset.

Ralza Manly was the great grandson of Deacon John Manly, one of the early settlers of Dorset. He graduated from Wesleyan University in Connecticut in 1849. He was the principal of schools in Randolph and Northfield, Vermont and later principal of his alma mater, Troy Conference Academy (now Green Mountain College). Although ordained a clergyman for the Methodist



Label created for the boxes and jars of Aunt Maria's Sugar Cookies

From the Curator's Notebook (cont'd)

Episcopal Church, he chose teaching as his life work, believing strongly in the importance of the educator in a young person's life.

The next chapter in his life is the most interesting. Ralza Manly was a white Vermonter who served as a chaplain for the First Colored Regiment during the Civil War. After the war he moved to Richmond, Virginia to become the first superintendent of black schools under the Freedman's Bureau. Later he established the first "colored normal school"



Ralza M. Manly, Educator

where he was principal and helped open an elementary school, one of only four in the city for black children. By 1873, the schools were being praised for the exceptional quality of education received by the students. Maggie L. Walker, the first woman in the United States to open a bank and John Mitchell Jr., the editor of the Richmond Planet, a prominent black newspaper, went through Manly's schools.

Later in his life, with his second wife, he taught at Wellesley College. He was the only male on the faculty at that time. Finally, for reasons of ill health, he and his wife moved to a warmer climate and he died in California in 1897.

Elsie and Marjorie Niles began spending summers in Dorset in 1939 and by the mid- 1940s their family became permanent residents. Shortly after that the sisters began Aunt Maria's (pronounced *Mariah*) Sugar Cookies. They sold homemade sugar cookies, based on an old family recipe, at first just locally but later, as the business grew, primarily by mail order. The cookies were tightly packed in glass jars or cookie tins bearing the Aunt Maria label. Eventually they added local cheddar cheese, maple syrup and maple sugar to their list of products. Marjorie had once worked for Alice Marks in New York City, a retailer and mail-order marketer of fine chocolates on Fifth Avenue, so she knew a lot about running a small business. Even though the sisters had a relatively small enterprise, they enjoyed many years of success.

What makes this a particularly wonderful story, I think, is that Elsie created a record for all the years they were in business, in the end over two hundred handwritten pages that chronicle the whole history. Reading the journal is, I have to imagine, like having a conversation with Elsie. The chapter names give you an idea of her thoroughness: Finding a name for the cookie business; The Aunt Maria cookie press; Friends volunteer to help; An inspection; A big break for the cookie business; Specialty stores; The kitchen in the new house; Cookie business on the rebound; The busy season....

Sugar cookies made from the original recipe will be served at the opening reception for the new exhibits and Pat Carmichael will read excerpts from Elsie's manuscript.

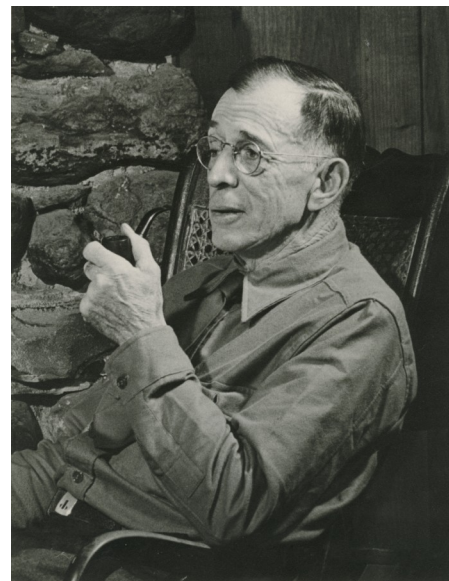
The Collection

I am very pleased to announce that Dorset Historical Society has recently received a gift of materials from Malcolm E. Cooper Jr., president of the J.K. Adams Company, including seven large albums of company archives with photographs and paper documents. The albums cover the history of the business from 1944 through 2006. Many examples of products made in the early years of the company are also part of the gift.

Susanne Rappaport, Curator

SAVE THE DATES:

- **Friday, May 21** 5:00-7:00 p.m. Opening Reception for new 2010 exhibits for friends and members of the museum.
- **Saturday mornings:** Quarry Walks 9:30—noon. June 19 *Gettysburg*; July 17 *Folsom*; July 24 *Gettysburg*; August 4 *Freedley*. Meet Art Gilbert, retired geologist and Susanne Rappaport, curator, at the museum and carpool to trailhead. Donations welcome!
- **Saturday, July 24 1:00—4:00 p.m.** *Annual Summer Ice Cream Social* and activities. Museum lawn. FREE
- **August** (Date to be announced) Visit with Gerald and Darleane Canton to talk about their friendship with Dean Fausett
- **September** (Dates to be announced) *Dorset and East Dorset Village Walks* FREE.

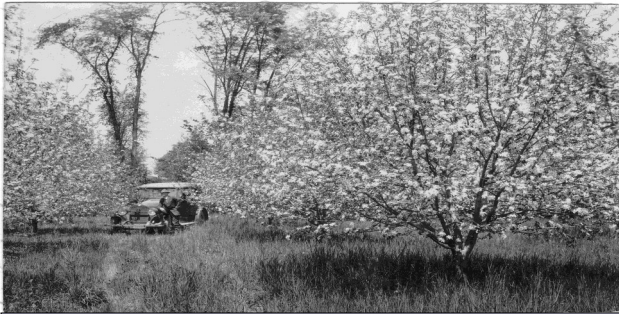


Huntington P. Gilbert
(photograph by Marshall Brooks)
Artist, Photographer, Poultryman

Vermont History Expo Update

By Suzanne Kaiser

At a time when apple orchards are disappearing in the Vermont landscape, Dorset shows obvious evidence of thoughtful protection of its orchard heritage and in several instances, a reclamation of old orchards and the planting of new ones. A walk through forested areas brings one to old trees planted in purposeful rows. New houses are built around existing trees. New trees are being planted in East Dorset. The



Peter Corwin Orchard, 1930s

Dorset Historical Society decided Dorset’s orchards would suit this year’s Vermont History Expo theme “Back to the Land Again: Heritage Ways for Today.” We will present “Dorset’s Orchards Past and Present” on June 26 and 27 at the History Expo in Tunbridge and will retain the exhibit in the Bley House Museum for all to enjoy throughout the summer and fall. The Dorset Historical Society thanks the many local residents and their relatives, some as far away as Ohio, for contributing to this exhibit in oral histories and orchard industry memorabilia.

It is estimated that Dorset had more than 40,000 seedlings planted between 1760 and the present day. At the height of the industry between 1914 and 1946, there were more than 8,000 mature trees producing 30 bushels of fruit each. The orchards were a mainstay of local seasonal employment. Children could also pick apples for fifteen cents a bushel after school. The industry became so prosperous that migrants from Florida arrived every fall to pick apples on 14-foot ladders carrying deep canvas bags. Apples were crated in hand-made boxes and shipped, first by rail beginning in 1863, and then by truck beginning in the 1930s, to major cities such as Boston, New York and onward to Philadelphia and Chicago

Dorset’s orchards began with settler Benjamin Baldwin in 1768 who brought apple tree seedlings, mostly McIntosh and Northern Spies, with him and planted a 100-acre apple orchard on Kirby Hollow Road. He was followed by George Holley, who “set out” an orchard on Dorset West Road. His grandson, Ernest H. West, began a commercial enterprise in the early 1900s, managing the Holley orchard and other orchards such as the Sexton and Mountain Ledge orchards on the west and east sides of Dorset West Road as well as his own orchard off route 30. At this time the Delicious apple variety was added to the mix. By 1940 Carleton Howe had proved himself an expert businessman who was managing others’ orchards after West and was also buying out competitors after he retired from the marble quarry business in 1916. Among them was the 100-acre Milliken orchard on Morse Hill and Dorset Hill Roads which had its own large storage facility. Howe had his own trucks and East Dorset resident Joe King would drive apples to New York City for Howe. Howe lived in the current Marble West Inn and some of his trees are still visible on the Tyler property on West Road.

Rufus S. Gilbert and Sons managed the orchards of Arthur Corwin and Dr. Edwin Goodwin on West Road and Nichols Hill Road in the 1930s and 40s. According to Jim Gilbert, the cost of labor caused these “gentleman farmer” enterprises to cease. The trees still exist and can be seen by hikers walking through the forests of Nichols Hill.

From its earliest days, the apple was a versatile fruit. It could be stored for many months. It could be dried and made into pies. There were apple slicing parties called “Apple Bees” to thread apple sections and hang them in a warm room to dry. Damaged apples, mostly Macs and Cortlands, were used in a cider industry from September to November each year. In the 1930s Reg Dorr set up a press at the base of Manchester West Road in South Dorset and produced \$15 barrels of cider or 25-cent gallon jugs from fallen apples costing 25 cents a bushel. Hard cider would develop after three months, and a clandestine industry began with knocks on the door at night for \$1-gallon jugs.

The demise of the local apple industry came about because of the rising cost of labor and the introduction of refrigeration, which brought greater fruit selection to the grocery shelf throughout the year.

The most visible orchard in Dorset which is still producing and which includes 60-year-old trees “with 20 more years of life in them,” as well as 800 new ones, is the Mad Tom Orchard in East Dorset, owned by Sylvia and Tom Smith. Smith’s father, who had worked for Carleton Howe, bought the dairy farm and



Manufacturing apple crates, believed to be in Dorset Orchard

orchard from Carla Parsons in 1960 and made it a U-Pick operation. “We could not operate unless we were a U-Pick business,” said Tom Smith. He maintains that the cold air drawn off the valley on the Southwest-facing slope of Mad Tom Road adds an extra two degrees of coldness to the air in May which makes a difference in the quality of his Macs, Cortlands, Gala, Honeycrisp and others. “Delaying the time of blooms is important in the quality of the apple,” says Smith. As Robert Frost said to his orchard:

“Keep cold, young orchard, Goodbye and keep cold,
Dread fifty above more than fifty below.”

Because of its unique location, a hobbyist neighbor of Smith has now started his own orchard of 40 trees with new varieties such as Jonathan, Freedom and Liberty apples. His harvest, which began producing after four years, is donated to the Vermont Food Bank.

An old orchardist reminded me that if an apple tree is not cared for over more than four years, it will never produce quality apples again. With care, it may produce for a hundred years!

Wish List

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

John Antonez
Alan Calfee
Frank Donnelly
Joyce and Edward Papke
Jane Griswold Radocchia
Carroll A. Rice
Norman and Ann Stewart
Heidi and Sydney Stokes
John Straus and Liza Ketchum

The Society is laboring mightily to catalog its entire inventory of 5,000+ items; it has undertaken this herculean task with a lowly laptop. We need a desktop computer with a full size keyboard and large screen to accurately key-enter all the data. Price: about \$800.

NOTE TO MEMBERSHIP:

We are actively trying to use email and our website to communicate what's happening at the Dorset Historical Society — notices on programs, new exhibits, exciting donations, awards, recognitions, news. If we do not have your email address and you would like to be added to our list, please let us know at info@dorsetvhistory.org

Corrections: In our last newsletter, the Executive Director of The Vermont Historical Society was incorrectly identified. His name is Mark Hudson . Also, one Quarry Walk was incorrectly scheduled. They all take place on Saturdays.

MANCHESTER VT

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