



# BLEY HOUSE NEWS

DORSET HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fall/Winter 2015-2016

A Seasonal Newsletter

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## MUSEUM HOURS

Wed- Fri 10-4  
Sat. 10 AM to 2 PM  
& by appointment

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## Historic Holiday Baking in Dorset Recipes from the Archives

Every year we have a theme where we focus on one aspect of the history of Christmas. Toy Trains, Teddy Bears, Christmas trees, music, and winter sports have been the ones featured recently. This year, several of us have delved into the DHS archives to find printed and manuscript recipes from Dorset chefs of yore to try out. Some are hand written in the old marbled composition book you may remember from school days and some were collected and printed by such local groups as *The East Dorset Ladies Fire Auxiliary* and *The Ladies Society of the Dorset Church*.

We tested some of the recipes for the opening day of our exhibit and discovered that our Dorset ladies often used molasses for sweetening instead of sugar, they seldom gave measurements for flour or salt, and they left it up to the cook to decide whether it was to be

a "quick oven" or a "moderate oven. We have printed copies of some recipes to share with you as you enjoy the display of original recipe books from the ladies of Dorset and East Dorset. We offered samples of nine varieties of cookie and cakes at the exhibit's opening, but if you come in to see the books and learn



English Spice Cookies



Ginger Cookies from the Butterick Recipe Book

about the recipes, be sure to ask the docent or curator whether any samples are available. We expect to have some and would be glad to hear your opinion.



## Curator's Corner

Donations to the collections are a random thing. With nearly 250 years of history accumulating things, you never know what may come in the door next. Sometimes the donation is something which adds to our knowledge about Dorset's past without raising a lot of new questions, like a recently received John Lillie painting. John Lillie was a Dorset artist; we know many details of his life, and finding another of his Dorset landscapes just makes sense. It is a straightforward donation that adds to the collection, but is not a galaxy of new mysteries or inquiries.

This brings us to the other type of donation, the type that is a wormhole to unexplored galaxies. For instance, James and Margaret McGovern, who own a home in East Dorset, found three documents from 1860 in their home and wisely chose to donate them to the Dorset Historical Society. Many other homeowners have made similar donations over the years. This sort of donation is the backbone of our archival collection. One of the documents was a simple fire insurance policy (since expired) on the McGovern's house from 1860. The other two documents, however, are the type to open all kinds of doors of inquiry, about past iniquity.

On October 31, 1860, Frederick Field, Alonzo Brophy and William Gardner petitioned Justice of the Peace Reuben Eggleston to search the East Dorset train station for alcohol. Vermont, after all, had become a dry state back in 1852 (this lasted until 1903). The reverse side of the paper has Eggleston's search warrant, made out the same day.

Later that day, after finding a barrel of Medford rum in Daniel Curtis' basement in North Dorset, Eggleston wrote out an order for the barrel to be destroyed. On the reverse side of the order is this statement, dated November 1: *"by virtue of this warrant I took the intoxicating liquor within described and the same poured out and spilled on the ground and the same destroyed ..."*

So, what was life under Temperance like for 50 years? Curtis, whose family opened their tavern in the 1890s certainly continued in the business. How open was his tavern business? Did he continue after this? The original warrant was for rum at the East Dorset train station, and it was found in the basement of a tavern across the street from the North Dorset train station. What led the authorities to look in a North Dorset basement? What, exactly, was Medford rum?

Most of the answers to these questions are likely lost to history, but some can be uncovered. Medford rum was named for its hometown in Massachusetts, and was considered to be of better quality than other New England rums. Field, Brophy and Gardner, marble dealer, farmer, engineer, all lived in East Dorset.

From these documents, we get a glimpse of the events of one day in the life of East Dorset. What we miss, however, are the more intricate relationships between the people involved. Was the petition written solely from civic duty, or were there other motivations at play? And, lastly, how many of us, today, would write out a petition demanding the search of a business under the suspicion of illegal drugs on the premises?

Jon Mathewson, Curator



## Welcome to our New Members

John Alden, Alden Painting  
Mark Daniels  
Barry and Paula Davidson  
Rache Decorato  
Michael and Michele Fleet  
Patricia Hancock  
Gregory and Elizabeth Hopper  
Donn and Abigail Hutchins  
Elizabeth Karet  
Stallworth and Juliet Larson  
William and Charlene Mallman  
Andrew and Patricia Mainardi  
Peter and Gail Mitchell  
Knox and Cherie Thompson  
Nancy Truettner  
Alec Marshall

## Summer Activities at DHS



A Perfect Day for the Ice Cream Social



On July 11th, Art Gilbert led a crew of hikers to Folsom Quarry. Here, some of them enjoy the view of the Valley of Vermont looking south.

## Lacunae

**D**orset has been home to a great number of writers, and the Dorset Historical Library collection reflects that. However, there are some authors whose works are not fully represented. For this issue's Lacunae list, I'm focusing on three authors, and the books that they wrote which would complete our collections.

**Elizabeth Prentiss** (1818-1878) wrote best-selling Christian inspirational books. She and her husband, Rev. George Prentiss, are considered to be the first summer residents of Dorset, coming here in 1866 and building their summer home next to what is now Prentiss Pond the following year. Her classic book, which is still widely read, is *Stepping Heavenward*. We have copies of that book, but none of her other twenty-three books. Any would find a welcoming home on our shelves.

**Edwin LeFevre** (1871-1943) was a Wall Street broker who modernized the Marble House on the West Road. He also wrote a number of books both fiction and non-fiction, about thrilling adventures in the stock market. The DHS would appreciate donations of early editions of:

*Sampson Rock of Wall Street* (1907)  
*H.R.* (1915)

**Zephine Humphrey** (1874-1957) wrote about the history of Dorset, as well as the adventures she and her husband, the artist Wallace Fahnestock, enjoyed at their homes on the West Road and in Dorset Hollow. In all, she wrote eighteen books. The single volume not in the DHS collection is her travelogue, *Green Mountains to Sierras* (1938). Let us know if you have a copy you would like to donate.

## Dorset Historical Society Elects New Officers and Board Members

The Dorset Historical Society held its Annual Meeting on November 15, 2015 at the Bley House Museum. Treasurer Al Eckhardt presented the financial report, noting that the annual cost of operation for the Society remains in the range of \$30,000 to \$35,000 a year. In the past five years, the membership has increased from 195 members to 249 members currently. The major financial undertaking for 2015 was a drive to replenish the funding of the Curator position for a period of five years. Donations and pledges have enabled the Society to make substantial progress toward its goal, but further potential contributors are still to be contacted.

This year operations were benefitted by last year's successful membership campaign. The additional cash flow, aided by a generous donation from Warren and Nancy Fuller, allowed us to purchase for \$12,000 a propane fueled automatic generator. This purchase will assure the safety of our irreplaceable collection of Dorset artifacts and art works in the event of a loss of power; it also places your historical society in the enviable position of securing the safety of its assets, something which few other historical societies in Vermont can claim or afford.

Our Curator, Jon Mathewson, reported that two hundred eighty six visitors signed our guest book this year, and over five hundred attended our events. Visitors came from 24 states, as well as Canada, Scotland, England, the Netherlands, and France. "Interesting" and "beautiful" were the most frequently used comments in the guest book. Special exhibits included the Arts Students League artists, Dorset Schools, Post-Cards, additions to the Hunt Gilbert Photo Collection, and Dorset Patents.

Judy Harwood reported on the public events of the past year which included our fourth year of the Third Thursday Brown Bag Lunch Lectures, two Quarry Walks led by Art Gilbert, the annual Ice Cream Social, an Open House at the Sterns Barn to view our larger off-site artifacts, and several shared events with the Manchester Historical Society and the Dorset Chamber.

The new officers elected to the Board of Trustees were John Cave, President; Heidi Stokes, Vice-President; Barbara Melhado, Secretary; and Al Eckhardt who will continue as Treasurer. New members added to the Board are Kathie Wall Evans and Terry Tyler, replacing John McInerney and Carol Cone, who are retiring due to term limits.

### AN UNUSUAL ARTIFACT

Mark Manley recently stopped by and donated, among other things, this pewter plate owned by his ancestor, John Manley, Jr. The story that comes with this plate is that the Manley family had packed up their belongings in order to flee, along with everyone else in the area, the approaching British troops in August, 1777, and a British musketball hit this plate as the family was heading toward Bennington.



### LOOKING FOR CATALOGS

A local researcher is collecting exhibition catalogs issued by Dorset Artists, Southern Vermont Artists Inc., and the Southern Vermont Art Center from 1922-1983 in order to create a database of local artists. He is missing the following years: 1923, 1925, 1927, 1930, 1931, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981 (also 1966 cover sheet) This does not include Festival of the Arts Catalogs. If you have any of these and would like to donate them, please contact Warren Broderick at email [wbroder2@nycap.rr.com](mailto:wbroder2@nycap.rr.com) or call him at 518-235-4041 for more information.