



BLEY HOUSE NEWS

DORSET HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Winter/Spring 2015

A Seasonal Newsletter

The Art Students League's Dorset Artists

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NEWSLETTER

Carol Cone

MUSEUM HOURS

Wed– Fri 10-4
Sat 10-2 PM
& by appointment
802-867-0331
info@dorsetvhistory.org
www.dorsetvhistory.org



Felicia de Sanchez

Each year, The Bley House Museum mounts a retrospective of a local artist in the Venetian Red Room. Recent exhibits have featured artists Edwin Child, John Lillie, Carl Ramsay and Elsa Bley. This year we are featuring a group of sixteen artists who have connections with the Art Students League of New York and with Dorset.

In addition to the art they created here, the exhibit focusses on how they got here, what they did once they were here, and how they marketed their work. They came via a variety of ways. Wallace Fahnestock and Edwin Child each married a member of the Sykes family, making them cousins-in-law. Local artist Lorenzo Hatch brought two of his

Bronxville, NY neighbors, artist Walter Shirlaw and financier Edwin Lefevre. In turn, LeFevre hosted artist W.R. Leigh at his marble house on the West Road. Dr. and Mrs. Edward Goodman were touring Europe with some friends when they met a Parisian chef who wanted to learn English. They suggested he study in Dorset, and so Claude Dern did just that, eventually commuting to New York to take classes at the Art Students League.

Dorset soon became known as an artists' sanctuary.

Lorenzo Hatch organized two group exhibits in Dorset in 1904 and 1905 featuring Dorset artists Hatch, Shirlaw, Child and Caroline Holley. Hatch soon after left for China to design their banknotes, and died there in 1914. A new group of six artists held an exhibit at the village school in 1922. The number grew to ten in 1924, and the exhibition was held at the Equinox Pavilion. In 1933, the group, now much larger, organized themselves as The Southern Vermont Artists, Inc.

The artists featured in this exhibit are Walter Shirlaw, Edwin Child, Wallace Fahnestock, Francis S. Dixon, Herbert Meyer, Jay Connaway, Reginald Marsh, Elsa Bley, Harriet de-Sanchez, James Montague, Claude Dern, Felicia Meyer Marsh, Dean Fausett, Sigrun Taylor and Cleade Enders. The displayed works come from the Dorset Historical Society collections, and some are on loan from private collections. The exhibit will be on display until the end of 2015. We hope to see you there.



Wallace Fahnestock

Hunt Gilbert: Dorset in the Early 1900s



Harriet Gilbert on Piazza

As you climb the stairs to the Venetian Red Room, be sure to look to your right at the photographs along the way. They are more of our collection by Huntington Pratt Gilbert (1876-1962). He lived in Dorset his entire life, and started a poultry business with his sister Anna in 1904.

Around the same time he learned how to use a camera, and took pictures of his friends, family, and everyday activities in Dorset. Some images were sold as postcards. Not only are these images the work of a skillful artist, they also serve as a historical time capsule taking us back to days in a different Dorset. At that time, Dorset had a population of about 1750, the marble industry was waning, automobiles had



Architect Mr. Green

not yet arrived, and there was no electrification. Most residents lived on self-sufficient farms, raising their own vegetables and livestock, and making their own maple syrup and sugar each spring.

The Dorset Historical Society owns several hundred of Gilbert's negatives, dating from 1904 to 1915. These images document the everyday life of Dorset: playing golf, quarrying gravel, returning from a camping trip, readying for a wedding, cutting hay, and more. Each year we digitize another fifty of this exciting collection of glass negatives and exhibit twenty of the best. Some of these images have not been seen by the public in the hundred years since they were first taken.



After 1925, Hunt Gilbert began concentrating more on his poultry business. In later years, he spent his time drawing and painting.

The framed images in this exhibit are digital prints made from Hunt Gilbert's negatives by George Bouret. The portrait of Hunt Gilbert was photographed by Marshall Brooks.



Huntington P. Gilbert

Long Trail Students Visit Museum

On Tuesday, January 13, the Long Trail School's grades 5 to 8 visited the Dorset Historical Society. The 50 or so students and teachers conducted a scavenger hunt throughout the museum.

The visit was part of a larger program that brought the students to several local points of interest, including the Norcross-West Quarry and the Imperial Quarry. They also spent a snowy morning mapping and photographing Maple Hill Cemetery.



Susanne Rappaport



We are deeply saddened by the untimely death in January of Susanne Rappaport, our former curator. Susanne Rappaport came to the Dorset Historical Society in 2008 as its first professional curator, collections consultant, and educator, and during her three years with us she transformed the organization into the smoothly operated museum complex that continues to this day. She put into action the conservation practices that assure the best possible safety and preservation of our collection of more than 5,000 artifacts and documents related to local history, including establishment of new standards and procedures for accepting additional artifacts, accessioning them, entering the description and storage or location of each item, and entering the data into our Past Perfect computer program. She supervised completion of an exhaustive inventory of our collection, as well as an Emergency Plan.

Susanne presented a number of special exhibitions from the museum's collections, including "One Hundred Years of the Stone Church in Dorset," "The Art of the Humorist Sandy Read," "The Story of Aunt Maria's Cookies," "Dean Fausett and the 1869 Powell Expedition," "Discovering Lorenzo Hatch," "The History of the J.K. Adams Company," "The Artistry and Collection of Jessica H. Bond," and "The Apple Industry in Dorset – Past and Present." She was also effective in reaching out to local schools at both elementary and secondary levels, and annually developing history projects with students presenting the results of their work at special programs in the museum.

When Susanne left the Dorset Historical Society in 2011, it was to address one of her longtime goals, the cataloging and organization of the many thousands of negatives left by her late husband, photographer Neil Rappaport, which documented the daily lives and work of the residents in Pawlet, Vermont. Although she was unable to complete that project, she had earlier published a highly acclaimed book of his photographs, *Messages from a Small Town*, and mounted an exhibition for the Vermont Folklife Museum, "After Attica –the Prison Portraits of Neil Rappaport,1971-1974."

Prior to her Dorset years, Susanne served as first Executive Director of the Slate Valley Museum in Granville and Director of Education at Hildene, and recently was involved in inventorying, cataloging and accessioning the important collection of art and golf artifacts owned by the Ekwanok Country Club in Manchester. She also led a team that inventoried and appraised the multimedia art work by Londonderry artist and sculptor, Katherine McCabe. In earlier years, Susanne taught modern dance at Bennington College, and more recently she also maintained a flock of prize-winning sheep.

Only a few months before her untimely death, Susanne was awarded the Vermont Historical Society's Lifetime Achievement Award for her contributions to making history museums more effective in operational methods and furthering their ability to bring a sense of history and the arts to the larger community.

She continued to be involved with the Dorset Historical Society, served on its Advisory Council, and lent her support to its ongoing activities. We have a better and more professional museum because of her guidance, but we have lost a good friend.



Susanne with one of her beloved sheep

Henry W. Westphalen, Jr.

Henry W. Westphalen, Jr. (Hank), former Dorset resident and past president of the Dorset Historical Society passed away in Vero Beach, Florida, on Dec. 6, 2014. He served as president of the Historical Society from 2006 to 2009. Soon after his installation as president, the Bley House museum restoration project was completed and dedicated. His tenure featured the completion of the Marble Gallery, staging of the marble event "It's All About Marble," and arranging for hiring the society's first professional curator, which marked a transition to a far more technically oriented museum entity. The value of that modernization has been continually recognized to this day.

Hank's enthusiastic support of the annual Ice Cream Social ensured its continued popularity as a village summer event, and his knowledge of the publishing industry was valuable in producing the walk-drive tour book of the town of Dorset. Hank continued,

in Florida retirement, to benefit the society with many important artifacts that his researches unearthed. His keen interest in antique currency resulted in his donation of two receipts for transportation of goods via the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad, dated 1854 and 1858, and in banknotes from 1800 to 1863. The oldest of the notes was issued by the Danby Bank, and the newest, a 10-cent bill, was issued by the federal government.

His interest in, and loyalty to the Dorset Historical Society during the months that he summered in Dorset was evidenced by his faithful attendance at the board's meetings, his volunteer activities as a docent, and his willingness to cut back brush and weeds to keep our grounds pristine.

We were fortunate to have had Hank as a member and Board president during his years in Dorset. We send our sincere condolences to his wife, Sally. and to his family.

Curator's Notebook – Little Boxes

Most items in the Dorset Historical Society are stored using archival materials. Some are kept in acid-free file folders, and some in sturdy archival boxes. These folders and boxes are easily purchased from a variety of museum-supply outlets. Some items, though, need to be stored



Blueboard Boxes

in custom-sized boxes, which are made on-site. Some rare documents need extra support when they are filed. For instance, a handbill advertising an oyster-supper fundraiser is larger than most archival papers, and fragile, so it is kept in a custom folder made from durable acid-free, lignin-free, and calcium carbonate-buffered corrugated board,

Save These Dates

Our successful Third Thursday Lunch Lecture Series continues for its fourth year. Come and explore many subjects and individuals from local and state history. You are invited to bring a brown-bag lunch. Dessert and refreshments will be served after the lecture. All lectures take place at Bley House at noon and are free and open to the public. We hope to see you there.

March 19: Walter Klinger presents "European Settlements in Southwestern Vermont Prior to 1761"

April 16 – "Birds and Birding" by Randy Schmidt, The Bird Place

May 21 – "Archival Care of Your Framed Art Work" by Wendy Comar, Jenner Graphics

June 18 – "The History of the Dorset Field Club" by Dudley Barrow

July 16 – "A Visit to Artifacts in our Storage Barn" – car pooling from Bley House

August 20 – "One Dorset Home in Four Centuries" by Sue Washburn

September 17 – "The Story of Samplers" by Maria Timmerman

October 15 – "The Enfield Houses and the Quabbin Reservoir"

November 19 – "Looking Back at Christmas Decorations" by Linda McKeever

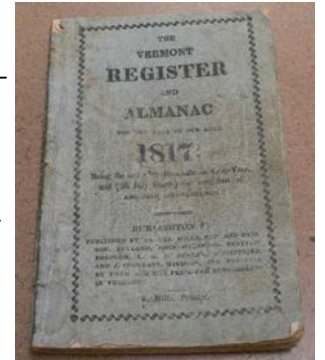
December 17 – "Christmas Treats from Historic Recipes" from DHS recipes or your own favorites from yesteryear. Bring the treats and we'll make copies of your recipes.

Quarry Walks: June 27 – Freedley Quarry

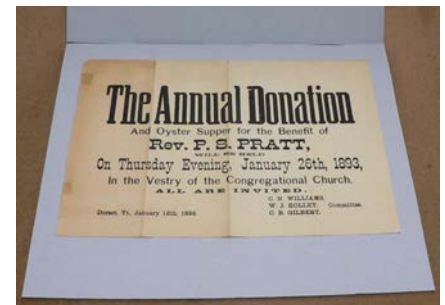
July 11 – Folsom Quarry

usually called "blueboard." This greatly reduces the chance of damage to the material while in storage.

Larger artifacts get their own boxes. In the past year, the Dorset Historical Society has received dozens of copies of Walton's *Vermont Register and Business Directory*. These directories are vitally useful for researching when businesses and churches were active in Vermont. They are also brittle, so they are stored in two-piece archival boxes. I use the work table in the Archives Room to measure and cut the blueboard boxes. Height, length and depth are measured, and 3 or 5 millimeters are added to each dimension, depending on if the piece is the top or bottom half of the box. Lines are scored, and then corners are secured with metal-



backed labels. Finally, the boxes join our ever-growing collection in the DHS Library. The directories are preserved, and yet remain easily accessible for researchers.



Regarding Membership

If you have already joined the Dorset Historical Society for 2015, we thank you for your support. We welcome new members and enclose a return envelope for your convenience, Membership is our principal means of support!

OUR WISH LIST

The Dorset Historical Society collections include a number of documents, journals, letters, and ledgers in a wide variety of sizes. Many of them, because of their age, are quite fragile and therefore not accessible to the general public. In order to share them with visitors and researchers, we need a state-of-the-art flatbed digital scanner with contemporary software capable of scanning document as large as 11" x 17". The approximate cost of such a scanner is \$1500. Any donations toward its purchase will be welcome. Please call Jon Mathewson, Curator at the Dorset Historical Society, (802)867-0331 if you wish to contribute.