

Bley House News

Dorset Historical Society

Winter/Spring 2016

A Seasonal Newsletter

A Message from the President, John Cave

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MUSEUM HOURS

W-F 10 to 4, Sat .10 to 2

Or by appointment

Corner of Kent Hill Rd. &
Rte. 30 in Dorset

(802) 867-0331

info@dorsetvthistory.org
www.dorsetvthistory.org

Thanks to all of you, 2015 was an outstanding year for your historical society. Membership reached a record high of 249 members and, as always, we welcome new members. Enclosed is a return membership envelope for your convenience for 2016.

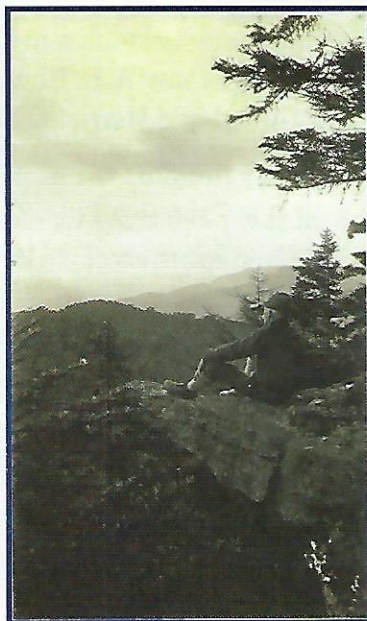
This year will be another active one. Our Third Thursday Lunch Lectures will continue and upcoming scheduled lectures are mentioned on Page 3. The annual Ice Cream Social will take place on Saturday, July 9th, and we will collaborate with the Dorset Library again this year to make it both fun and appetizing for the entire community. The Society plans to have an antique appraisal booth at this event where attendees may consult an expert. More information to follow.

On Saturday and Sunday, June 18th and 19th, the Vermont Historical Society's Vermont History Expo will assemble in Tunbridge. Local historical societies from across the state participate in this exciting event. The Dorset Historical Society will partner with the Manchester Historical Society once again and present an exhibit on this year's theme of "The Power of Water in Vermont's History."

We are also working with the Town of Dorset to develop historic signage for the trails on the newly acquired Owl's Head property.

I encourage you to visit Bley House often and view the changing exhibits and new acquisitions that come to us regularly. We thank you for your support both monetarily and through the bestowal of historic artifacts, including letters, ledgers, maps, art work, photographs, and interesting objects of all kinds.

John Cave



Above: October, 2015 photograph of Gilbert Lookout on Owl's Head taken by a drone camera. Photograph courtesy of Ben Cooper.

Left: George Holley Gilbert at the ledge on Owl's Head, later named Gilbert Lookout in his honor. Gilbert Lookout was dedicated in 1932. This photograph, taken c. 1930, is part of the DHS permanent collection of historic photographs.

Curator's Corner

Every year, the library or conference room, of the Dorset Historical Society gets a makeover. The paintings and photographs by local artists are replaced by new ones. The new ones are oftentimes recently donated, newly cleaned, or pieces that have not been exhibited in a few years. This annual renewal keeps the exhibit fresh while decreasing environmental and light damage to the works of art.

Three pieces of art were donated to the museum this year: Gilbert Smith's oil painting entitled "Dorset Hollow" (1952), John Lillie's "Mt. Equinox #2" (c.1920), and a rug hooked by Esther Knipe in the early 1950s. The Lillie painting is currently with a conservator, and the rug needs some stabilization work before it can be displayed. All three will be part of this year's exhibit. The rest of the images will be of Prentiss Pond, also known as Mill Pond, a constant favorite of local artists. These images include paintings by contemporary Dorset artists Patti Campbell and Peter Salmon, and deceased artists such as Rose Kent, Lester Farnum, and Caroline Holley. Also included are an 1858 handbill advertising the sale of a home on the pond, and a stencil used on products from the Dorset Grist Mill, as well as photographs of Ernie Edgerton harvesting ice in the 1930s, postcards, and photographs by Marshall Brooks.

There is one photograph from the 1890s by Bertha M. Pratt. The photograph is an okay print made from a glass-plate negative. I had never heard of Bertha Pratt. A quick look provided no information, no previous research on her. With a little bit of digging, I found out a few details of Bertha's life.



Bertha Pratt, "A Dorset Quarry," 1898.

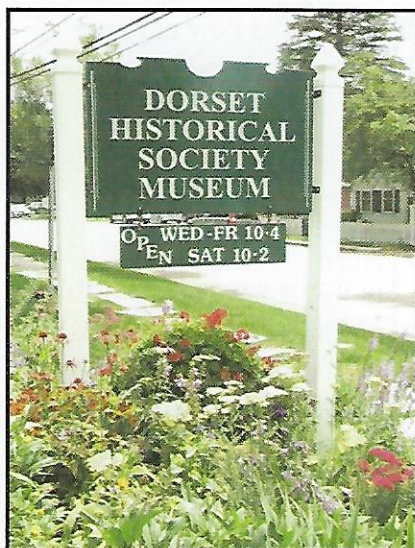
Born in 1858, daughter of local minister Parsons Pratt, she lived in Dorset her entire life, and died on a trip to Burlington in 1904. In 1883, she was the Dorset librarian. The Dorset Historical Society preserves a scattering of her photographs.

Bertha Pratt was an early landscape photographer in Dorset. Henry S. Allen of Manchester photographed many Dorset scenes for his stereoview series in the 1870s, and by the end of the 1800s there were several photography studios in Manchester. In Dorset, the early 1900s saw A.L. Bowen, Charles Parker, Huntington Gilbert and Harriet Gilbert photographing outdoor scenes, but Bertha Pratt seems to be the earliest landscape photographer in Dorset.

So, I think it behooves us to know more about this pioneering woman. How did she initially become interested in photography? How did she influence those who came after her? These, and other questions, could possibly be answered. Close inspection of her photographs may provide clues as to when she was actively taking pictures. Also, the Dorset Historical Society archives contain sixty years of her father's diaries (through, unfortunately, 1903), and perhaps he discusses her photography in those pages. There may be advertisements or mentions of her work in local newspapers of the day. Or, perhaps there is information on her, or copies of her photographs, in attics or on the walls of houses around Dorset. There is always new history to discover.

Jon Mathewson

Mark Your Calendar for Forthcoming DHS Lectures, Hikes, Walking Tours and Special Events



Third Thursday Luncheon Lectures: Held at Bley House at 12 noon. Please bring a sandwich. Refreshments and dessert will be served. All lectures are free and open to the public.

Thursday, February 18: Jim Henderson presents a lecture and slide show about “The Ghost Town of Glastenbury,” the story of the town that disappeared.

Thursday, March 17: Peter Henry presents “The Al Henry Years at Burr and Burton, 1943-1969,” recounting of his father’s tenure as headmaster.

Thursday, April 21: Gary Shattuck presents “A History of Opiate Use in Vermont,” based on his recent article in the *Vermont History Journal*.

Thursday, May 19: Danielle Epstein presents “The Marble House Project.”

Thursday, June 16: Jon Mathewson presents “Early Religious Fervor in Vermont—a Mormon Prelude.”

Thursday, July 21: Tour of off-site barn storage housing transportation vehicles and farm implements that comprise the DHS permanent collection of historic artifacts of large size.

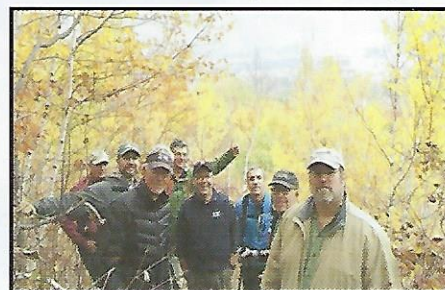
Quarry Hikes: Conducted by DHS board member and former president, Art Gilbert, and Jon Mathewson, Curator. Meet at Bley House at 9 AM and car pool to trail heads. Free and open to the public. Return to Bley House around noon.

Saturday June 11: Gettysburg Quarry

Saturday, June 25: Freedley Quarry

Saturday, July 9: Folsom Quarry

Right: Art Gilbert and Jon Mathewson join members of the Dorset Conservation Commission and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps on a hike to the Gettysburg Quarry, Fall 2015.



Special Events:

Saturday and Sunday, June 18 and 19: Vermont History Expo in Tunbridge, Vermont. 10 AM to 5 PM. Come enjoy the scenery at the historic Tunbridge Fair Grounds and explore more than 150 exhibits from historical societies around the state. Lectures, book signings, bluegrass music, historic reenactors, heirloom animal breeds and Morgan horse demonstrations are also featured. This year The Dorset Historical Society and The Manchester Historical Society will present an exhibit surrounding the theme of “H2O: The Power of Water in Vermont’s History.” Free parking and a small admission charge with a two-day pass.

Saturday, July 9: 1 PM to 3 PM. The DHS annual Ice Cream Social will offer free Wilcox ice cream on the Bley House lawn to all visitors in tandem with Dorset Library activities across the street. An opportunity to tour the Bley House Museum and participate in an antiques appraisal by a local authority. Free and open to the public.

Lacunae: Dorset Poets

Wish List

Dorset is known for artists, and for writers: novelists, essayists, memoirists, but not poets. There are no poets from Dorset included in Abby Maria Hemenway's "Poets and Poetry of Vermont" (1858), nor in John Walter Coates's "Vermont Verse" (1932). Early on there have been poets in Dorset. In 1927, local poetry appeared in each issue of the *Dorset Docket*. John Vance Cheney grew up in Dorset, and began publishing his books of poetry after he moved away. Mary Hannah Field was born in Michigan, lived in California, and then retired to Dorset, publishing her books everywhere she went. Mark Whalon was born, delivered mail, wrote poetry, and died in East Dorset.

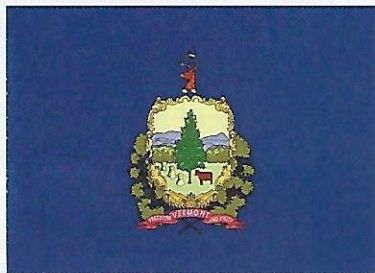
So, there are some books we would like to add to our library, if any kind souls are willing to part with them:

- John Vance Cheney: *Poems* (1905)
The Time of Roses (1908)
- Mary Hannah Field: Actually, any of her books, but especially *Selections from Poems* (1914)
- Wayne Kelley: *Fools Like Me* (1997)

And, we are open to other poets we may not know about.



Happy Birthday Vermont!

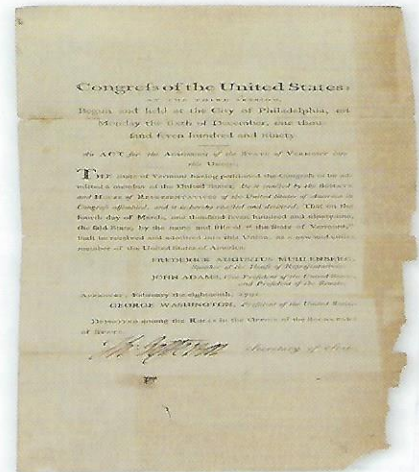


On Friday, March 4, 2016, Vermont celebrates 225 years of statehood. Please come to Bley House between noon and 3 PM for birthday cake and refreshments! A copy of Vermont's Statehood document signed by Thomas Jefferson will be on display. Fly your Vermont flag for all the see!

From time to time DHS needs to replace obsolete technologies. This year its two tired printers need replacing. Any contributions toward the purchase of two new printers would be greatly appreciated. If you care to donate toward these purchases, please call Jon Mathewson, Curator, for more details at (802) 867-0331.

Thank You To Our Steadfast Volunteers

- Carol Cone
- Cynthia Elliott
- Linda French
- Suzanne Hittle
- Jean Kingston
- Linda Long
- David Parsons
- Ruth Stewart
- Dottie Streeter
- Susanne Washburn



Above: Photograph of original Announcement of Statehood for the State of Vermont signed by Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson in 1791.