

Bley House News

Dorset Historical Society

Fall/Winter 2017

A Seasonal Newsletter

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Betsy Olson

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

E-mail:

info@dorsetvhistory.org

Web site:

www.dorsetvhistory.org

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Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Members Honored in August

For the second summer in a row, two squads of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps remained busy on the trail to Owl's Head and the Gilbert Lookout, popular destinations for visitors to Dorset and destinations for DHS organized historic hikes with lectures in summer months led by Art Gilbert and Jon Mathewson that are free and open to the public. On August 11 this year, Dorset Select Board member Liz Ruffa organized a hike led by Jon Mathewson that showed the Corps members and Vermont Lieutenant Governor, David Zuckerman the historical highlights along the trail to the quarry.

The following Wednesday, August 16, Liz arranged a lunch featuring food from the Dorset Union Store at the Dorset Historical Society for the VYCC workers, Dorset Conservation Commission members, local politicians, and Vermont Governor Phil Scott. Rob Gaiotti, Alan Calfee, VYCC Executive Director Breck Knauff, and Jon Mathewson all gave short talks on the history of the Dorset Trail. Breck Knauff spoke about the importance of the work of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps in the state, while Alan, Rob and Jon talked about the dedicated efforts that led to the purchase of the Gettysburg parcel and the current trail improvements. Governor Scott said it is important to come together to do work such as this. Cooperation is key. He ended with a bit of advice: "Tweet others as you would like to be tweeted yourself."

Jon Mathewson



Left: Vermont Governor Phil Scott speaks at the Dorset Historical Society

Right: Members of the VYCC at the Gettysburg Quarry with Jon Mathewson, Vermont Lt. Governor David Zuckerman and Dorset Town Manager, Rob Gaiotti.



Curator's Corner

As we make our way through the extended holiday season, from Halloween to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, much is made of the specific holidays, and whether or not we celebrate them as properly as we ought to.

Holidays change across the generations, reflecting what people want to preserve and what needs to be changed. One example is in the choice of Thanksgiving pies. Still baked and as delicious as ever, very few people use the rendered lard recipes once required. Another food example is the old tradition of "Bobbin for Apples" at Halloween. Greater knowledge of how diseases spread has put an end to that once fun, now disgusting practice. Food historians delight in the succulent history of succotash. The arguments of secular vs. religious Christmas have been raging in this country since the holiday became widely celebrated in the 1840s, and that is what I find interesting about the holidays. They are constantly changing, meeting the needs of each new generation.

The process of that change is the backbone of history. What are the stories we tell ourselves about various holidays? Is Thanksgiving a celebration of genocide or a remembrance of the hardships of immigrant ancestors? Is Christmas a celebration of the birth of Jesus, or is it a time of gift-giving and cheer? Is asking these questions part of the traditions themselves?

Some things remain traditions, although we may not always acknowledge those traditions as such. Famed Dorset author Zephine Humphrey wrote about an enduring Christmas tradition in "Winterwise" (1927):

"Alas! Haste is again beginning to invade our life. In fact, I suppose it has never been completely exorcised, and we have to wait till after Christmas for full emancipation.

But what a word is that to use in connection with Christmas! Who would be emancipated from its glad active ties? Well, honestly, I would, at least partially, at least this year when I am so hungering and thirsting to stop doing things. The Christmas idea is beautiful. As Christopher Morley says somewhere, much must be forgiven the human race which invented Christmas. But, like many other ideas, it suffers somewhat from being put in practice, and surely we overdo it nowadays. Nor can we help ourselves. The World is such a unit that its enthusiasms sweep it through and through.

Yesterday, neither Christopher nor I did a stroke of professional work. With one accord and with no discussion, we spent the morning writing Christmas notes to go with the personal card which we always send to our friends; then we had an early lunch and a drive to Manchester to do some Christmas shopping."

Jon Mathewson

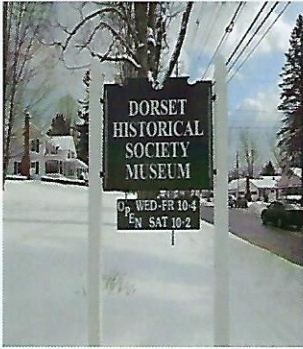
Dorset Historical Society Annual Meeting, November 15, 2017

President John Cave presided over the meeting at 6 p.m. Susanne Washburn and Marilyn Kinney were approved as new board members to replace retiring members Peter Davis and Art Gilbert. Membership now totals 244 families, with twelve new membership families added in 2017. There were 364 new catalog entries this year, as well as initiatives such as the installation of new interpretive trail signs at the Gettysburg Quarry, the development of five interactive maps at *Dorset History Go!*, the digital charting of Maple Hill Cemetery, and a television appearance by Jon Mathewson on Stephen Perkins' "A Place in History," filmed at the Vermont Historical Society. Visitorship continues to expand, especially for genealogical and specific historic reasons. Thirty-one states and five foreign countries were represented in our guest book this year.



Above: Susanne Washburn (left) and Marilyn Kinney at the DHS Annual Meeting.

Mark Your Calendar for Forthcoming DHS Events in 2017



Third Thursday Luncheon Lecture: Held at Bley House at 12 noon. Please bring a sandwich. Refreshments and dessert will be served. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Thursday, December 21: Jon Mathewson will give a “Holiday Exhibit Talk.”



Special Event:

Saturday, December 2: Holiday Open House, Bley House. Refreshments and festivities from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Drawing for table-top Christmas trees with lights designed by local residents and businesses will be held at 1 p.m. Raffle tickets are \$5 each or three for \$10. Proceeds from the raffle will benefit the restoration of the Hunt Gilbert photograph collection, numbering more than 500 negatives. Fifteen trees are on display at Bley House and a few of the trees can be seen here (right).



Thank you to all those individuals and businesses who participated in this fund-raising event. They include H.N.Williams Store, the ladies of the Berkshire Bank Dorset branch, Three Pears Gallery, Flower Brook Pottery, Josiah Allen Real Estate, J.K. Adams, Dorset Library, Mettowee Mill Nursery, Dorset Elementary School students, Hoa and Orland Campbell, Sheila and Bill Childs, Suzanne Hittle, Michelle Pagan, Amy Thebault, and Heidi and Chip Stokes.

New Exhibits Coming in 2018:

The staff at DHS is busy planning five new exhibits for next year. These include 19th Century Dorset Artists, The Dorset Village Historic District (Part II), recently donated paintings and images of the Dorset Village Historic District (Part II), more newly-printed photographs from the Hunt Gilbert collection, and Dorset Textiles and Quilts.

Lacunae

A novel and two magazine articles related to Dorset are missing from the Bley House Museum collection, and DHS would appreciate having them donated to the museum.

The novel is Judson Phillips' "Murder in Marble" (Dodd, Mead, 1940). The articles are Edward Sprague Marsh's, "John Strong's Diary of Criminals and Delinquents, 1779-1782," from *The Vermonter*, Volume 28, October, 1928, and John Kouwenhoven's "He Runs a Garage," from *Harper's* magazine, January, 1944.

Welcome New Members

Joy and Tom Brass
Alice and Craig Gilborn

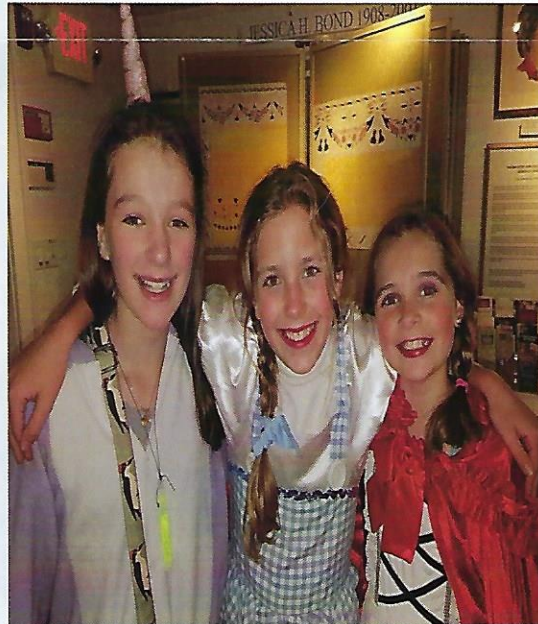
David Ives
Steven O. Ladd

Mystery Photo From the DHS Collection

There are several unusual photographs of Dorset in the DHS collection of historic interest. Can any of our readers tell us where or when this one was taken? The winner will be announced in the next Newsletter! (Hint—it's an octagon house).



Halloween at Bley House



More than 200 trick-or-treaters came to Bley House Halloween night and were greeted by DHS president John Cave and director Heidi Stokes, handing out treats. This has become a popular annual event at DHS!

Bequests to the Dorset Historical Society

If you are considering making a bequest to the Dorset Historical Society in your will, here is the sample bequest language to use:
I GIVE, DEVISE AND BEQUEATH TO THE DORSET HISTORICAL SOCIETY (TIN 03-0262977), A SOCIETY EXISTING UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF VERMONT AND LOCATED IN DORSET, IN SAID STATE, _____ DOLLARS (\$ _____) OR _____ PERCENT (____%) OF MY RESIDUARY ESTATE, WHICHEVER IS LESS, FOR ITS UNRESTRICTED USE.