

Bley House News

Dorset Historical Society

Winter/Spring 2018

A Seasonal Newsletter

The Dorset Historical Society Advisory Council

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Herman Raspé
Terry Tyler
Susanne Washburn

MUSEUM CURATOR

Jon Mathewson

OFFICE MANAGER

Betsy Olson

MUSEUM HOURS

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

Or by appointment

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info@dorsetvthistory.org

Web site:

www.dorsetvthistory.org

Visit us on Facebook!

At our October 2013 Annual Meeting, President Richard Hittle announced the formation of an Advisory Council to assist the Board. The concept had been under discussion by the Board of Directors for several months, and the mission was “to provide overall guidance to the Dorset Historical Society and its Board of Directors to achieve success in the following areas:

1. Financial soundness
2. Community relevance and outreach
3. Realization of overall long-term Society goals
4. Contribute to the organizational makeup of the Society
5. Participation in Society functions.”

Nine members joined the Advisory Council at that time and two (Chip Stokes and Rob Gaiotti) still serve. Since 2013, several members of the Council have joined the Board and several retired Board members have joined the Council.

During the past four and a half years the Council has met three or four times a year. As a Board member who has attended all of these meetings, I can say the Council has fully met its stated objectives. A number of observations or suggestions surface at each meeting and many have developed into initiatives. The Board has also kept the Council up to date on finances, programs, events, collection care and the many activities of our curator, Jon Mathewson.

The concept of an Advisory Council four-and-a-half years ago was a good initiative, and on behalf of the Board, I wish to thank both past and present members for their contributions and dedication.

Current Advisory Council members include Pauline deLaszlo, Andrew Longacre, Chip Stokes, Rob Gaiotti, Bob Davidson, Suzanne Hittle, Vickie Lenz, Nate Merrill, Art Gilbert, and Jerry Dole.

John Cave

Welcome New Members

Pauline deLaszlo
Vicky Eng
Marilyn and William Kinney
Thomas and Victoria Lenz
Brian and Gabriela Maggiotto
Megan Lawler Thorn

Please become a member of the Dorset Historical Society and help support its activities and the preservation of Dorset's history!

Explore Dorset's history with *Dorset History GO!* on your handheld device. Walk or drive through Dorset history at your leisure. Go to www.dorsetvthistory.org for instructions!

Curator's Corner

Every so often some rare and unique part of Dorset's history shows up out of the blue. In one week in December, two incredible artifacts appeared. Both are ledgers from North Dorset from the 1820s and 1830s. They are similar, but from different sources.

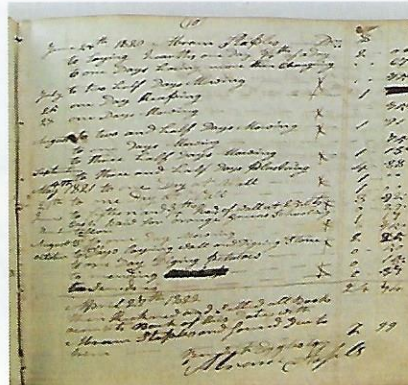
Jerry Jordan, a Dorset purveyor of old paper, calls the Dorset Historical Society every four years or so to let us know of a great Dorset-related find. This time, it was the ledger of East Dorset mason Benedict Eggleston (1764-1859). The daybook included mentions of Eggleston's business with contemporaries John Marsh, Jonathan Fenton, and the Dorset Furnace Company, among others. In fact, until now, we never knew the name of the North Dorset foundry from that era. The North Dorset foundry was purchased in the 1840s by Welcome Allen, but specifics of the foundry before that have been largely lost in the mists of time. The daybook includes other interesting data, as well. For instance, Eggleston lists the whereabouts of his wife on certain days. The entry for April 6, 1861 reads, "Wife gone to Wellmans" (neighbors of the Egglestons). The next day reads, "Wife gone, nobody knows where," and the entry for April 17, 1831, "Wife gone twice at once." One becomes bewildered by the physics of such a scenario.

The ledger contains so many more interesting tidbits. Slipped into the front are state tax lists for the property owners of Mt. Tabor in 1808 and 1809. This is interesting because most of what is now Mad Tom Road in East Dorset was a part of "Tabor's Leg," which had been part of Peru, but at the time stretched five miles from Mt. Tabor to Manchester, and is now part of Dorset, so now we have lists of the owners of property now located in Dorset. We purchased the ledger from Mr. Jordan for a fair price, but a price which wiped out our acquisition budget, which was fine. After all, what are the odds of something else also so incredible coming our way in the next few years?

The following week, Vermont Historical Society Librarian Paul Carnahan reached out to me regarding a North Dorset ledger from the 1820s. A dealer in Portland, Maine, had offered a ledger from the Dorset Furnace Company to the Vermont Historical Society, but for a price they were unable to afford. Word of this new find got out in Dorset, and several local angels agreed to chip in on the final price. The dealer and I agreed on a price that was a third lower than the original figure, and the ledger came home to Dorset.

Now we know the company's name, when it was founded (1824, which replaces the former estimate of circa 1825), and the names of the four partners in the business. Previously, we knew Daniel Curtis ran the operation, now we know that he partnered with and financed by three friends from Danby. We also now know that in the 1820s the foundry was producing and selling far and wide cast iron plows, cauldrons, and stoves.

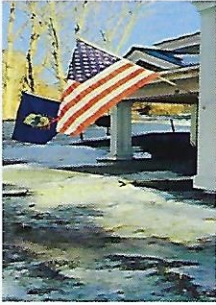
These two incredible finds are now part of our collection of ledgers composed of 115 hand-written books that document financial affairs of Dorset industrialists, merchants, and farmers over the centuries.



Jon Mathewson

Left: Views of the Eggleston Ledger from 1831. The ledger is now part of the Dorset Historical Society permanent collection.

Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming DHS Events in 2018



Third Thursday Luncheon Lectures: With the exception of the February 15 lecture, all speaking events are 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, February 15: Bonnie Burke and Shawn Harrington will explore “The History of Wilson House,” to be held at Wilson House in East Dorset at 12 noon.

Thursday, March 15: Jeremy Davis will speak about “Lost Ski Areas of Southern Vermont.”

Thursday, April 19: Veterinarian Robert Treat of Manchester on “Changes in the Northshire Over 75 Years.”

Thursday, May 17: Nora Rubinstein will introduce “The Art of Spinning.”

Thursday, June 21: Michele Pagan will explain “The Art of Textiles.”

Thursday, September 20: Tim Bryant, semi-retired farmer from Pawlet, will read from his book, *A Father's Gift*, about growing up on a farm in Manchester, Vermont, and from his new writings.

Special Events:

Saturday, June 16: Organized hike to Gettysburg Quarry and Owl's Head led by Art Gilbert and Jon Mathewson. Meet at Bley house at 9 a.m. and return about 2 p.m.

Saturday, June 23: Organized hike to Freedley Quarry led by Art Gilbert and Jon Mathewson. Meet at Bley House at 9 a.m. and return about noon.

Saturday, July 14: The Dorset Historical Society's Annual Ice Cream Social on Bley House lawn, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Free Wilcox ice cream for all.

Saturday, July 14: Organized hike to Folsom Quarry led by Art Gilbert and Jon Mathewson. Meet at Bley House at 9 a.m. and return about noon.

Saturday, August 11: Organized hike along the Mad Tom Trail with Marilyn Kinney and Andrew Triplett, Forest Archeologist. Meet at the Dorset Town Offices in East Dorset at 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, August 25: Organized walk through East Dorset Village with Ruth Stewart.

New Exhibits Opening Saturday, June 2:

Five new exhibits at Bley House will be presented June 2 at an opening reception from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Exhibits 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

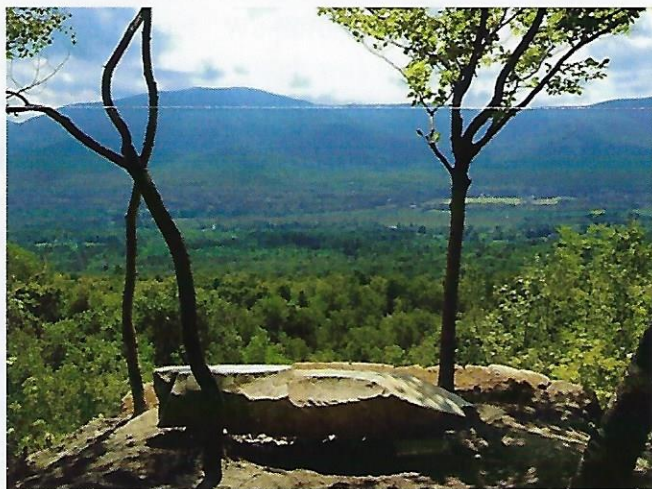
At this time, we are looking for information and not things.

There were two churches in the village of Dorset in the 1800s and there is almost no trace of them. The first was the Baptist Church, which was located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Route 30 and Peace Street. Across Peace Street was the Dorset Academy, run as a non-denominational secondary school from 1817 to 1840. The building has been a private residence for more than a century and a half. The church is no longer there. It was built in 1804 and was torn down in 1840.

The second church was the Methodist Church located on Church Street, across the road from the Congregational Church (now the United Church of Dorset and East Rupert). It was built in 1830 and was torn down around 1873. In fact, the Methodist Church was the first church on Church Street. The original Congregational Church, located in Maple Hill Cemetery, burned down in 1832 and in the same year was established across the street from the Methodists on Church Street.

Any information about these churches and their history would be welcomed.

Bench at Gettysburg Lookout Honors Art Gilbert



Above: Art's Bench overlooks Dorset to the west from the Gettysburg Quarry.

During the summers of 2016 and 2017, crews from the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps worked on improving the trail from a new trailhead up to the Gettysburg Quarry and then on toward the Gilbert Lookout on Owl's Head. In 1932, the Gilbert Lookout was named for George Holley Gilbert, who had spearheaded the creation of the Dorset Trail.

More recently, his grandson, Art Gilbert, has been instrumental in renovating local interest in Dorset's old hiking trails, so the VYCC built a marble bench at the Gettysburg Lookout and dedicated it to Art Gilbert.

You can see Art's Bench on a hike with Art on Saturday, June 16, when he leads the DHS annual trek to the Gettysburg Quarry.

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.