



# Bley House News

## The Dorset Historical Society

Spring/Summer 2018

A Seasonal Newsletter

### Curator's Corner: Rediscovering History

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#### MUSEUM HOURS

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History surrounds us. Every building, every road, every tree, every bird song, every bit of body language and verbal language has a history that can be traced. We all know this. Saying this is easy, but the actual tracking of the specifics of these histories can be harder.

A photograph of a house may be labeled "The Smith Place, 1890," but where exactly was the Smith Place? The house in the picture might have been changed, with additions of ells and dormers, and look different today, if indeed it still exists. It is a safe bet that the Smiths no longer live there. And what if there were several Smith families in town? Which one owned this house? Over the years, some people have updated the information on the back of the photograph with a note that reads, "Jones House in 1975." While this can narrow things down, it can also raise the same questions as before. At the Dorset Historical Society, we have been updating the information relating to location with current E-911 information, which, as a more objective locating system, may still be helpful 50 years from now.

We also find history in the woods. Stone walls are easy to find in the forest, as are cellar holes and industrial sites. Again, finding the specifics can be harder. For instance, there are many old marble quarries hidden in the woods of Dorset. One was recently "discovered" along the new trail in the Owl's Head Town Forest. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps created a new loop trail that leaves the main trail, leads to the Lower Prince Quarry, through the Middle Prince Quarry, and back to the main trail. On the new trail, just north and west of the Lower Prince Quarry, is a very small quarry. From written records, the best guess we can make is that this is the "Kent Opening," from the early 1860s, but could be another quarry. Right now, we are not sure. We just know that this small quarry is in the general vicinity of the Kent Opening, and we do not know of any other small quarries in the woods that could also be the Kent Opening. We have found history, but are not exactly sure what that history is.

Then there is the history lost in the history books, which every generation rediscovers and re-writes. All historians have some sort of open agenda or implicit bias when they write. When Zadock Thompson and his peers began writing about Vermont history in the 1830s, they wanted to create a larger-than-life-hero who would represent all of the early Vermont settlers. They chose Ethan Allen. Not only did they choose Ethan Allen, but they did so at the expense of other founders of Vermont. Seth Warner, Thomas Rowley, and the rest became mere footnotes. Since then, every generation of Vermont historians has been re-writing and reinterpreting Ethan Allen.

Then there are the biases we ourselves bring to history. When I was recently choosing which three quilts from our collection to hang in our current textiles

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## Curator's Corner (continued)

exhibit, I noticed that the ones I was considering were all busy quilts: signature quilts, crazy quilts, and the like. It dawned on me that I was choosing ones which, while great for the exhibit, also showed my personal preferences more than an objective view of the variety of quilts made over the years, and that I ought to hang a more “boring” quilt. To that end, I chose to exhibit a bow-tie quilt made by Dency Ward Gates in 1871. Less cluttered, more organized, the quilt adds to a deeper, more diverse exhibit.

*Jon Mathewson*

## Hikes, History, and Husbandry in Dorset's Mountains

This spring and summer, Jon Mathewson and Art Gilbert conducted three hikes to Dorset quarries along Dorset's mountain ridgelines, explaining geological and marble industry history along the way. Each hike takes about three hours and hikers of all ages can participate. Pictured below are some photos. These annual events have become a popular activity of the Dorset Historical Society. On August 11, Marilyn Kinney will lead a hike on the Mad Tom Trail and on August 25, Ruth Stewart will lead a walk through East Dorset Village. See Page 3 for details.



*Left:* Hikers on the way to the lookout after visiting the Freedley Quarry on June 23.



*Right:* Hikers pose in front of the Gettysburg, or Upper Prince, Quarry on June 16.

## Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Returns to Dorset

For the third summer in a row, a VYCC crew made trails in the Owl's Head Town Forest. This year, they created a spur loop trail that brings hikers to the Lower Prince Quarry, the Kent Opening and through the Middle Prince Quarry.



*Below:* Hikers pose for the camera on the way to the Folsom Quarry on July 14.



## Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming DHS Events in 2018



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

Thursday, August 16: Bonnie Burke will explore "The History of Wilson House."

Thursday, September 20: Tim Bryant will discuss "A Tractor Accident Aftermath."

Thursday, October 18: Dorset Historical Society Trivia Lunch!

Thursday, November 15: Ted Hopkins will lead an "Old Tool Identification Workshop."

Thursday, December 20: Judy Harwood will discuss "The History of Dorset Road Names."

### Special Events:

Saturday, August 11: Marilyn Kinney will lead a hike up the Mad Tom Trail in East Dorset. Meet at the Dorset Town Offices in East Dorset at 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, August 26: Organized walk through East Dorset Village led by Ruth Stewart. Meet at Wilson House in East Dorset at 2 p.m.

Thursday, November 15: Dorset Historical Society Annual Meeting at Bley House, 6 p.m.

Saturday, December 1: Holiday Open House at Bley House, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## The 16th Annual Dorset Historical Society Ice Cream Social A Great Success!

On July 14th, more than one hundred visitors came to Bley House to enjoy free ice cream and tour the museum.

*Right:* Board members Carol Cone and Bill Childs welcome guests and serve ice cream at the annual Ice Cream Social.



### Welcome New Members

David and Liz Berard  
Joseph and Mary Blair  
Pamela DeBona  
Sara King DeVries  
Holley Eaton  
Barbara Fontana  
Diane Giddings  
Arnold and Carol Gottlieb

Ellen Hains  
Tom and Samantha Kelly  
Kevin M. O'Toole  
Herbert and Penelope Peterson  
Jaana Pirinen  
Peter and Linda Salmon  
Bob Ford and Mary Thompson  
Diane Welebit

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



## Lacunae

DHS curator, Jon Mathewson, is already planning our 2019 exhibits! One exhibit he hopes to present is a retrospective of Dorset artist Harriet "Tarzan" deSanchez (1904-1957). The Dorset Historical Society owns two of her paintings and will need to borrow several others to make the exhibit happen. While Jon is inquiring about the availability of these paintings from other institutions, he also wants to know if any private collectors may have some deSanchez paintings to lend for the retrospective. Please call Jon Mathewson, curator at DHS, if you are able to lend paintings to the exhibit.

*John Cave*



*Left:* An untitled oil on canvas by Harriet deSanchez donated to the Dorset Historical Society by Elisabeth Sturges.

## Long Trail School Students Help Install Exhibits as Part of Stewardship Day

In May, eight Long Trail School students helped install five new exhibits at Bley House prior to the opening of the show on June 2. Stewardship Day at DHS has become an annual event for Long Trail School students. Featured in the new exhibits are 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. New exhibits will be on display through May, 2019.

To complement the textile exhibit, Michelle Pagan, textile conservator, presented a program on June 21 as one of DHS's Third Thursday Lunch Lectures.



*Left:* Long Trail School Students hang vintage quilts for the DHS textile exhibit.



*Right:* Michelle Pagan, textile conservator, explains "The Art of Textiles" at Bley House.

## 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.