



Bley House News

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MUSEUM HOURS

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

❖ OPEN ❖

or by Appointment

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Summer 2022

A Seasonal Newsletter

Curator's Corner – Books & More Books!

The Dorset Historical Society library contains 1,561 catalogued volumes. These range from books about Dorset and surrounding towns to general histories of Vermont & books written by or about Dorseters. We have almanacs, military rosters, general reference books, cookbooks, and songbooks. We even have some page-turning adventure novels that take place in Dorset, like *Murder in Marble* (1944) by Judson Phillips (who also wrote as Hugh Pentecost) and *A Time Traveler's Theory of Relativity* (2019) by Nicole Valentine. As curator, I sometimes find that there are some books we do not have, and in the last week, we have received two interesting ones that I had no idea existed.

The first is a new book by Sharon White, which is a *90 Day Devotional Bible Study using the book "Stepping Heavenward" by Elizabeth Prentiss*. Prentiss (1818-1878) was a widely published hymnist and author of young adult adventure novels: she published two dozen books. Most famous was *Stepping Heavenward* (1869) which remains in print, and which some people still find spiritually inspirational. In addition to the Bible Study, our library also houses two Prentiss biographies and four of her novels.

The second book is actually an unpublished manuscript by Mark Whalon. Whalon (1886-1956) was the rural route postman in East Dorset for many years, but also a published poet. Most of his poems appeared in the *Rutland Herald* in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Some of his poems were collected as the book *Rural Peace* (1933), but many never saw print after their initial appearance in the *Herald*. In fact, I came across one clipped out of the newspaper and saved by Inez Beebe that stood out as a rare-for-its-day anti-eugenics poem. I wrote an article about the context of the poem that was published in the *Walloomsac Review* (Volume 25, Autumn, 2019). Why did Whalon never publish a second volume of poems? We may never know the details, but we now know that he prepared the manuscript around 1936, which he called *The Perfect Crime*. He presented copies to friends, and we now have a copy.

Curator's Corner – More Books (cont.)

Nearly 1,600 volumes. It looks like we will have a hot summer, so feel free to come into our climate controlled museum and read for a while. I'll probably be cataloguing the forty more new books we received this week!

Jon Mathewson



BOOKS?... we've got stacks of books, organized & catalogued for research, plus a pile of new books waiting to be catalogued.

... Around the Museum ...

There's a LOT of Stuff here, and a LOT going on too. For example...



EXHIBITS?... we've got several permanently installed, like the early Fenton pottery, plus some changed annually, like Ellen Terry's collection of ferns.



ACTIVITIES?... these include ↻ Third Thursday presentations monthly & several ↑ Quarry walks. Our Ice Cream Social ↓ is always popular, & museum visitors are greeted by ↵ volunteer docents

... or by our intrepid curator Jon Mathewson.



★ YOUR participation, membership, volunteering &/or contributions are always welcome! ★

Upcoming Historical Society Events

Third Thursday Lunchtime Lectures

(starting at Noon in the Museum; bring a small lunch if you wish)

- June 16 Christopher Smid: "Historic and Contemporary Slate Quarrying in Southwestern Vermont."
- July 21 Dr. Robert E. Treat Sr., DVM: "Call Dr. Treat: Three Generations of Veterinary Practice in Vermont."
- August 18 Julia H. Casey: "Research regarding the Rupert Counterfeiters."
- September 15 Nicole Valentine: "A Time Traveler's Theory of Relativity: A Novel Set in Dorset."
- October 20 Stockbridge-Munsee Community Tribal Historic Preservation Office – Vermont: "The Story of the Mohican Tribe in Southwestern Vermont."
- November 17 Ross Conrad: "The Land of Milk and Honey, A History of Vermont Beekeeping."

Open Houses

- July 9: Ice Cream Social (1 to 3 pm)
- December 3: Holiday Open House

Hikes (starting 9:00 am from the museum)

- June 25: Freedley Quarry hike
- July 9: Folsom Quarry hike

New Museum Exhibits for 2022

- Main Gallery: Histories of the General Stores in Dorset
- Stairway: Hunt Gilbert's Photographs, Part 12.
- Upstairs Hallway: The Green Mountain Club's Proposed Taconic Loop of 1914.
- Venetian Red Room: Ellen Hitchcock Terry's Collection of Dorset Ferns.
- Conference Rooms: Recently Donated Artworks.

🌀 Hot Off the Press! 🌀

A children's book *Pelchers - Childhood Memories of the Village Store* written by Tom Salmon, a son of Dorset, has recently been published. Copies can be purchased in our museum Gift Shop with all proceeds benefitting the Historical Society. Drop by and have a look.



Welcome, New DHS Members!

Bob & Barbara Alexander Penny Charbonneau John & Petra McLaughlin

Sean Osborne Gina Propp-Schmarak Dorothy Thompson

Toby C. Young Dana & Connie Zangrillo

We recently realized that there are at least four published Dorset memoirs that we should have in our library, but do not. If you have one of these books, and are ready to donate it to us, we would love to have it!

- Bill Wilson *My First Forty Years: An Autobiography*.
- Elizabeth Arthur *Looking for the Klondike Stone*. Knopf, 1993.
- Ellen Stimson *Good Grief: Life in a Tiny Vermont Village*. Countryman Press, 2014.
- Alexandra Langstaff *Virtuous Sinner: A Memoir Made in Vermont*. Independently Published, 2021.

Jon Mathewson

“Inside” Dorset’s Marble Church

Legend has it that, after Dorset’s Congregational church burned down in 1907 (the third such conflagration in that congregation’s 123 year history!), the owners of Dorset Quarry effectively hijacked a shipment of marble destined for New York City’s Public Library and donated it



for building a more fireproof structure, the classic marble church we enjoy today, adorned now with beautiful Tiffany-style stained glass windows.

But during a recent expansion of its modern rear wing, importantly adding an elevator, improved stairways and additional meeting spaces, a minor modification to the original marble church revealed an



interesting aspect of its construction: to make room for wider stairs, a structurally-unnecessary rear buttress was removed showing not solid blocks but instead a marble façade surrounding a rubble of junk marble; in the far left photo, the gash running down the left side originally looked just like the protruding buttress on

the right. As our experienced mason remarked, the builders could not afford to waste anything! (This makes one reconsider perhaps how the NY Public Library and Supreme Court building are constructed.)

As a finishing touch, the buttresses' façade was masterfully restored to look just like a finished corner beside one of the new interior stairways.



Notice too the gothic-shaped doorway leading into the sanctuary where a backroom window was removed to provide floor-level access. Not to worry, that original 110-year old leaded-glass window was re-installed in the back wall of the new expansion. Check it out on Church Street!