



Bley House News

The Dorset Historical Society

OFFICERS

John Rodenburg, President
Megan Thörn, Vice Pres.
Mary Stevenson, Treasurer
Erica Shott, Secretary

DIRECTORS

Nan Bambara
Anne DeSchweinitz
Katharine Dickenson
Andy Longacre
Nancy Ludlam
Rache Simmons
Susanne Washburn

DIRECTOR EMERITUS

Terry Tyler

MUSEUM CURATOR

Jon Mathewson
curator@dorsetvthistory.org

COLLECTIONS DATABASE MANAGER

Cynthia Elliot

NEWSLETTER

Andy Longacre

MUSEUM HOURS

W-F 10 to 4, Sat. 10 to 1

❖ OPEN ❖

or by Appointment

Corner of Kent Hill Rd. &
Route 30 in Dorset
(802) 867-0331

E-MAIL:

info@dorsetvthistory.org

WEBSITE:

www.dorsetvthistory.org

Visit us on Facebook!

Winter 2023

A Seasonal Newsletter

Curator's Corner – Looking Ahead into 2023!

With any luck, 2023 will see a further opening of society as more people feel comfortable mingling with others and visiting museums. Already, we had a busy foliage season, and fully expect a year full with general visitors and researchers. As always, we will also forge ahead with different projects that serve to conserve the artifacts and archives placed in our trust, interpreting those materials, and making the stories of Dorset and Dorseters more widely available.

The new exhibits will open on Saturday, June 10, and will be displayed until Spring, 2024. The new exhibits will include (a) a final showing of the best of the 1,000 Huntington Pratt Gilbert negatives we have digitized and exhibited in the last dozen years, (b) an update on Charlie Wade and the houses he moved to Dorset (c) a new view of the autograph collections in our care; Dorset, 1840-1870 and (d) several recent acquisitions.

This summer, Art Gilbert and I will lead the always popular hikes to the Gettysburg, Freedley, and Folsom quarries. Also we are thinking about a fourth hike (details to come later).

In addition to properly housing new acquisitions and preparing / cleaning items for exhibition, two areas of collections care I will work on are continuing with micro-inventories of the collections, and updating any location or condition data on the collections management software, as well as cleaning and wrapping large items in off-site storage.

Our online databases will continue to expand. One hope for the near future is to get every issue of *The Dorset Docket* newspaper accessible to all, as well as the parody newspaper *The Dorset Donkey!* This may also be the year that the massive genealogical research compiled by the Rev. Parsons Pratt in the 1870s will become accessible through our website.

Other exciting projects include putting together a series of Dorset History podcasts, and being involved with the Bennington County 250th Anniversary Committee, which is working on ways to commemorate the events of 1775 through 1777.

There is so much local history to explore, and everyone here at the Bley House strives to make it more available to everyone. Feel free to come help us!

Jon Mathewson



Tennis Anyone?

This photograph from the 1920's (donated by Terry Tyler) shows some afternoon activity in Dorset. Can you identify where the photo was taken?

... Around the Museum ...

Our new exhibits for 2023 will open on Saturday, June 10, to much fanfare.

❖ The Main Gallery... will feature an overview of the History of Dorset from 1840-1870, years that saw the rise of the marble industry, the change from sheep farming to dairying and cheese-making, and the Civil War.

❖ In the Venetian Red Room — for the last dozen years, we have been digitizing a collection of hundreds of negatives taken by photographer Huntington Pratt Gilbert, and exhibiting the best of those. The digitization process is done, and this year we will wrap things up with an large overview of Gilbert's work in the Venetian Red Room gallery.

❖ Upstairs Hallway—about twenty years ago we had an exhibit on Charles Wade and his house moving projects, most notably, from the towns that became the Quabbin Reservoir. In the last two decades, further research has brought more fascinating things to light, which will be highlighted in an exhibit in our upstairs hallway.



Charles Wade, 1913



❖ In the DHS Library... we will mount our usual "Recent Acquisitions" exhibit. The highlight this year will be a 6' tall oil painting of ← an active marble quarry rendered by Wallace Fahnestock. For decades, this painting hung in the Dorset School, and after some cleaning and restoration work, it will be displayed once again.

❖ Throughout the Museum — people have been collecting autographs for centuries. Several local collections have been donated to the Dorset Historical Society. Letters, photographs and autograph albums will be on display.

* **PLEASE NOTE** * — the DHS Museum is kept "Open" on Saturdays (and occasional weekdays when the Curator must be away) by volunteer docents. Please consider if you can help us in this effort!

Upcoming Historical Society Events

Third Thursday Lunchtime Lectures

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

- February 16 Alexandra Langstaff, "Virtuous Sinner" — A Memoir Made in Vermont.
March 16 Andy Longacre, "Scenes from a Pandemic: How Dorset Church (& other local institutions) managed their way through a 2-year shutdown."
April 20 Anne DeSchweinitz, "Things I've Learned Growing Up in Dorset"
May 18 TBD — visit <www.dorsetvthistory.org/calendar/>

Open Houses +

- June 10: Exhibit Opening *-plus-* @ 1:00 pm "A Soldier's Life", a Fort Ticonderoga presentation *-at-* the Dorset Library →
 - July 8: Ice Cream Social (1 to 3 pm)
 - December 10: Holiday Open House



Hikes (starting 9:00 am from the Museum)

- June 17: Gettysburg Quarry Hike
 - June 24: Freedley Quarry Hike →
 - July 8: Folsom Quarry Hike



Jon Mathewson & Art Gilbert at Freedley Quarry

Hike Dorset: a Townwide Scavenger Hunt!



"Hike Dorset", the Outdoor Recreation program for the Town, has since 2019 been providing programs in collaboration with local organizations like the Dorset Library, Historical Society, schools, and more! Starting in 2023, Hike Dorset plans a fun new program for ALL: the Hike Dorset History Scavenger Hunt. We will provide a passport that can be printed or picked up starting April 30, 2023. Once participants have completed the self-paced scavenger hunt, they can go to the Town Office and get a cool prize! This challenge will be open to all ages so anyone can do it. There are many wonderful spots in Dorset and we at Hike Dorset want these resources to be enjoyed by everyone. Natural environments are intertwined with history and physical exploration as an exciting way to learn! If you have any questions, please email hikedorset@gmail.com. — Rachel Batz: Outdoor Recreation Director

Welcome, New DHS Members!

Jonathan M. Ams • Kenneth & Irene Angiletta • David Beebe • Michael & Julie Bradley
Steven Brown • Paul & Chrissy Carroccio • James Coleman • Stephen Drunsc
Equinox Village • Jay & Natalie Flamme • Rebecca Forster • Sara H. Garay
Barbara Germano • John Greenwood • Glen & Linda Hueckel • Zachary Karas
Anne Lauritzen • Debra H. Lebar • Ronald Lissak • Lou & Laura Maguire
Stephen Maloy • Sarah McClintock • Allison McGowan • Jim & Peggy Moody
Peter K. Raff • Carter Rawson • William & Julia Ruffa • Regina Ryan • Tracy M. Sykes
Paul Theophilopoulos • Charles & Michelle White • Dori Wollen • John Woodruff

Lacunae

Every year, we have a museum-wide exhibit on the history of Christmas in Dorset, which includes Christmas trees from several eras. Because of this and that change, we find we need an artificial full-size Christmas tree, as well as some ornaments from the 20th century. Are you ready to divest yourself of some clutter?

Jon Mathewson

A Lineage of "Dorset Artists" - meet Ada L. Davis



John Lillie (1867-1942) was an early self-taught "Dorset Artist" and co-founder of the Southern Vermont Artists. He was a prolific creator of local landscapes like ← this depiction of wintertime Logging with Morgan horses. He and his family spent their entire lives on West Road.



John Lillie, wife Nettie & daughter Ada



Arthur Jones (1928-2020) was Lillie's modern day counterpart, a lifelong Dorset resident who lived on Nichols Hill Road. At an early age Arthur became the youngest member of the Southern Vermont Arts Center. His landscapes and still-life's, large and small, have become highly prized. →



Bridging the gap in a sense is Ada L. Davis (1887-1978), artist & teacher, John's daughter *and* Arthur's early mentor, completing the "lineage." Her oil paintings, relatively rare, seem to have a gentleness, an atmospheric quality and an almost pastelian color pallet that's distinctive and very appealing, though perhaps also formulaic (not representing any identifiable scene or location).



Lake in the Mountains.

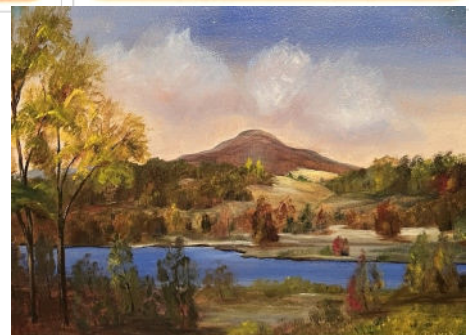
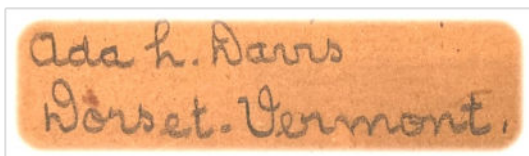


Summer in Vermont.



Winter in Dorset

But especially intriguing are the handwritten labels found on the back of her artist boards. Your editor had occasion to ask Arthur Jones about these, and he chuckled a bit, then sat forward and recounted watching Ada pull out her special calligraphy kit and very carefully inscribe an appropriate, albeit nondescript(!), title on each finished piece. Be on the lookout for these!



Vermont. !