



# Bley House News

## The Dorset Historical Society

Spring 2024

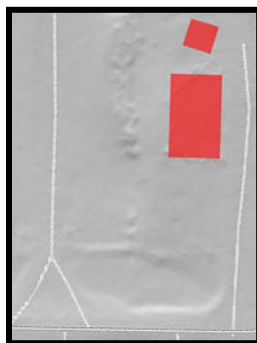
A Seasonal Newsletter

### Curator's Corner – Seeing Invisible History!

Researchers tend to look at history from the perspective of the past or the present. Many of the people who research the past at the Dorset Historical Society look at history from the present, from what is visible today. That is, they are interested in their house, or their family history. Their house still exists, and so does their family. They see a marble quarry and want to know more about that quarry. These are all entryways to learning more about the past. The other way of viewing history is by trying to see what was here, but is no longer visible. This includes researching family lines that died out, houses that



The Manley Tavern stood on Dorset West Road from the 1770s until 1911. It remains an important footnote in local African American history.



This LIDAR image shows what was most probably the foundation of the Methodist Church. The line on the left is the Dorset Field Club driveway.

no longer stand, and the many unseen marble quarries, laying abandoned in Dorset's forests.

Researching non-existent structures can be difficult, but not impossible. Take, for instance, the Methodist Church that stood on Church Street, built before the Congregational Church, and across the road. We know the church was there, and torn down around 1904 to make room for a private residence, and that the carriage barn was moved to create the northern section of the H. N. Williams Department Store at that time. However, as far as I know, there are no drawings or photographs of the church, so we do not know exactly what it looked like. We can tell where it was using LIDAR, which shows where the foundation was.

One of our new exhibits will feature the history of North Dorset. Once a hotbed of industrial activity, and now known primarily for Emerald Lake State Park, there is quite a bit of unseen history there, from the cottages that once dotted the lake, to the large Welcome Allen house, which was moved to the Shelburne Museum around 1960, to the foundries, kilns, and paint factory that once lined Otter Creek. *Continued on Page 2*

*Jon Mathewson*

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Terry Tyler

#### MUSEUM CURATOR

Jon Mathewson  
curator@dorsetvthistory.org

#### COLLECTIONS DATABASE MANAGER

Cynthia Elliott

#### NEWSLETTER

Cynthia Elliott

#### 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:

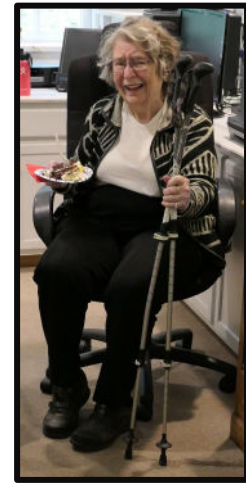
www.dorsetvthistory.org

Visit us on Facebook!



### Happy Birthday DHS!

The Dorset Historical Society turned 60 years old on September 20, 2023, so we had a small birthday celebration. Here Nancy Ludlum cuts a piece of the birthday cake, and Sue Washburn enjoys a slice



### Holiday Open House

Christmas trees from different periods, as well as sweet treats from various local cookbooks, was once again a success! A cadre of volunteers decorated Bley House and made the yummy snacks

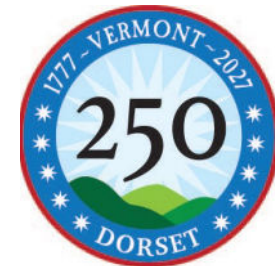


### 250th Anniversary

The years 1775 – 1777 were critical years for Vermont and the fledgling United States, and planning for 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations is already underway.

Specifically concerning Vermont, 1775 saw:

- January 31: General Convention in Manchester
- March 14: The Westminister Massacre
- April 18 & 19: Battles of Lexington and Concord
- May 10: Capture of Fort Ticonderoga
- June 17: Battle of Bunker Hill
- July 27: First Dorset Convention
- September 17: Ethan Allen invades Canada



Some commemorations have already happened, but the big kick-off for the upcoming celebrations will be on August 17, 2024. During the day, there will be an enlarged version of the annual Battle of Bennington Day Parade, and the raising of a Liberty Pole. That evening, there will be a fund-raising gala dinner at the Equinox Hotel. Tickets for the gala are expected to sell briskly, and will be available in early June. More information can be found at [Bennington250.org](http://Bennington250.org).

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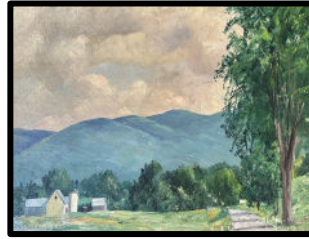
The latter are now only seen as piles of rubble in the woods. Art Gilbert and I lead a hike to the Freedley Quarry, high above Emerald Lake, every year, partly because we know where it is, and it is very visible. I still wonder where the abandoned Hoyt Iron Mine was (somewhere in North Dorset, to the east of Otter Creek).

Which leads to the question: what buildings, businesses, families, and beliefs so important to us in 2024 will still be with us 100 years hence?

*Jon Mathewson*

## New Exhibits 2024 – 2025

A Claude Dern (1906 – 1995) retrospective, which will include paintings from his many years in Dorset as well as examples of the creative outputs of his daughter, Sue Harwood Dern Green, and his son, Claude Dern.



Claude Dern,  
*Hillside Farm IV*,  
oil on canvas, n.d.  
Donated by Betsy Olson

A look at the doctors of Dorset, both the various village doctors, and some of the people from Dorset who became medical providers on the western frontier.

New acquisitions, which include works by Lorenzo Hatch, Natalee Everett, Brian Sweetland, and Bill Aupperlee, plus several interesting photographs.



Dr. Frederick C. Liddle  
(1861 –1945) was the village  
doctor in Dorset from 1889 to 1941

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## Open Houses

June 1: Exhibit Open House

June 13: Ice Cream Social

## Third Thursday Lunchtime Lectures

*Starting at Noon in the Museum: Bring a small lunch if you wish*

June 20: The Socioeconomic Clues Found in 19th Century Schoolgirl Samplers

July 18: Fly Fishing With Jon Ranos

## Hikes

*Starting at 8:00 am at The Bley House Museum*

June 15: Gettysburg Quarry Hike

June 29: Freedley Quarry Hike

July 13: Folsom Quarry Hike

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Founding treasurer Terry Tyler and new Board President Dr. Rache Simmons talk about the past and future of the Dorset Historical Society.



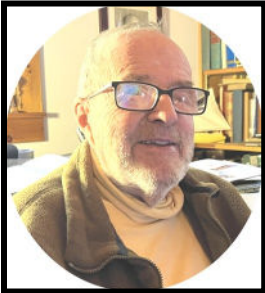
The Dorset Historical Society welcomes two new members of the Board of Directors, Donn Hutchins and Kevin O'Toole.





## Sailing the Atlantic in the “The Picket Patrol”

During a recent chat with David Parsons Jr., a lifetime resident of Mad Tom Road in East Dorset, he recalled that his father served the naval forces during World War II on a Sailboat! In his words: “The ‘Valor’ was privately owned and loaned to the U.S. Coast Guard to be part of a fleet of sailing ships called “The Picket Patrol.” It patrolled off the East Coast listening, with sonar devices, for German submarines. The ships were armed with 30 and 50 caliber machine guns mounted on the deck and with depth charges. When under sail they could listen for the submarine’s motors while the submarines were not able to hear them. When a submarine was detected they would radio ashore for fighters equipped with torpedoes to be sent out to attack the subs.



The 112' schooner “Valor”, commissioned as CGR3080 during WW II



Typical onboard armaments

The Picket Patrol was very effective and not in much danger from the German subs because the Germans, having crossed the whole Atlantic, did not want to waste a torpedo on a sailboat.

“[My father] David T. Parsons, Sr. was in command of the “Valor” during World War II and held the rank of Lieutenant, first in the U.S. Coast Guard and then in the U.S. Navy.”

Another essay discussing “The Wooden Subchasers of World War II” can be found online by searching for “Splinter Fleet.” It tells that “Subchasers could be built in small boatyards on both coasts and the Great Lakes and Gulf regions. They could be built fairly quickly by craftsmen who knew how to build wooden boats. Many of the boatyards were small, family-owned businesses, and the navy wasted no time letting out contracts to fifty such boatyards. By the time the war ended 438 wooden SC-class subchasers had been launched and commissioned.”

Who knew?