



Bley House News

Dorset Historical Society

Fall 2013

A Seasonal Newsletter

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MUSEUM CURATOR

Jon Mathewson

OFFICE MANAGER

Betsy Olson

MUSEUM HOURS

W-F 10 to 4, Sat 10 to 2
Corner of Kent Hill Rd. &
Rte. 30 in Dorset

(802) 867-0331

info@dorsetvthistory.org
www.dorsetvthistory.org

Message From the President

It is an honor to serve as president of the Dorset Historical Society and I look forward to the delights and challenges each day provides there. In the years I have been working at the Museum, I have learned so much about our town and our remarkable collection. I have met wonderful people, many of whom are drawn to Dorset by ancestors, property, artifacts, and history. It is inspiring to hear their stories and to help them find those connections. I look forward to the opportunities the coming year will bring, and to the growth that our Society will enjoy with the addition of our new board members and advisory council, and with our loyal base of volunteers.

Some interesting projects ahead include the opening of our holiday exhibit on a theme dear to the childhood memories of many of us — toy trains. 2014 will see a retrospective for Elsa Bley, whose generosity has provided the Historical Society with a permanent and comfortable home. Other plans include our display in conjunction with the Manchester Historical Society for Expo 2014 in June in Tunbridge about the founding artists of SVAC, and also more beautiful restored photos from the Huntington Gilbert collection and a DHS Cabinet of Curiosities. We hope you will come by to see them all.

Yours in preserving the past,

Carol Cone
President



Outgoing president, Dick Hittle, passes the gavel to incoming president Carol Cone at the annual meeting, October 3.

Thank You From the Board of Directors

The Board acknowledges with gratitude Dave Lawrence and his staff from Rising Sun Maintenance in Dorset for their charitable contribution to the maintenance and beautification of the Bley House Museum over the years. The Board also thanks its loyal volunteers who contribute many hours to the Museum each month. These include Cynthia Elliott, Kathie Wall Evans, Jean Kingston, Linda Long, Kaye Manly, Dave Parsons, Ruth Stewart, Dottie Streeter and Sue Washburn. The Board also thanks Directors' family members who help with special events.

Welcome to Our New Members

Polly Forcier	Joseph Ruggiero and Howard Marcus
William and Gertrude Horridge	Rob and Barbara Sammons
Andrew and Virginia Longacre	Peter and Patricia Thompson

Dorset Historical Society Annual Meeting, October 3,

The annual meeting of the Society was held at 7 PM on Thursday, October 3, 2013 at the Bley House Museum. A change in the bylaws was approved to allow more flexibility in filling officer positions on the board. Two new members were elected to the board: Peter Davis and Herman Raspé.

Treasurer Al Eckhardt reported a current membership of 239 members and a stable financial position. The membership year begins November 15, so the Society will be contacting current members with renewal reminders.

Programs and publicity were handled successfully by Suzanne Hittle and her committee. Publicity appeared for nearly every event in the Manchester News Guide, Manchester Journal, Hill Country Observer, Stratton Magazine calendar, and Manchester Events quarterly publication. There has also been an ongoing display at the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

The Third Thursday luncheon lectures continued through the year with a succession of interesting speakers and topics. New exhibits including "Mapping Dorset" opened with a special reception. The "Discover Dorset" day highlighted by a cider-making operation with Art Gilbert's apple press, and the annual Ice Cream Social and accompanying Southern Vermont Cheese Festival in July brought more than 300 visitors to the Historical Society.

The 50th Anniversary of the Dorset Historical Society has been celebrated throughout the year, and the special hand-painted pottery items by local artist, Roseanne Henning, created for the anniversary have sold well. Raffle tickets for a Scott Thompson bird house and for a Brian Sweetland painting will continue to be for sale until the morning of December 7.

The Annual Meeting also included a report from Curator Jon Mathewson on the status of the collection, on new donations received throughout the year, details of the Collection Assessment, and an account of the Chinese visitors (see article on Page 3).

President Hittle announced the formation of an Advisory Council for the Society, whose mission is to provide overall guidance to the Society and its board to achieve success in the areas of financial soundness, community relevance, overall long term goals, organization makeup, and participation in Society functions. The council will meet twice a year with president Carol Cone.

The board thanked retiring president, Dick Hittle, for his expert guidance throughout his term, and also gave thanks to retiring board member George Long, under whose guidance our Long Range Plan was revised and strengthened.

As required by the bylaws, a brief board meeting was held directly after the annual meeting. The board approved the election of Carol Cone as president, John Cave as vice-president, John McInerney as secretary, and Al Eckhardt as treasurer. Former president Dick Hittle was elected Director Emeritus along with Hank Westphalen.

Carol Cone

President

Lacunae

In 1818, Montpelier publisher Ezekiel Parker Walton published a small directory called "Walton's Vermont Register and Almanac." Over the years, the book, although it had various names, became known simply as "Walton's Register." Walton himself died in 1855, but the book remained in print with major updates every year, until 2006. That was a run of 188 years.

Walton's Register is an amazing compilation of details. By the mid-19th century and on, it featured listings for elected officials, churches and ministers, as well as listings of the various businesses in town. In most cases, this is information which now cannot be found anywhere else.

The Dorset Historical Society has one Walton's Register in its collection from 1916. The running price for them is about \$15 apiece. If you have or find any and donate them to the DHS, we would be most grateful.

Visitors From Afar

In any given year. The Bley House Museum hosts visitors from about half of the United States, a few Canadian Provinces, and a smattering of European nations. This year visitors came from Belgium, Germany, Ireland and Scotland, for example. We also welcomed a significant group of visitors from China, who came to Vermont specifically to visit Dorset to research their hero, Lorenzo Hatch.

Chinese engravers Zhao Qiming, and his son, Rocky Zhao, along with translators Clarence Chan and Crystal Gong, and photographer Mingming Zhao arrived August 7 at 5 PM, and left the area the next day at 12:30 PM.

As a quick reminder, Lorenzo Hatch (1856-1914) of Dorset, began engraving on copper at the age of sixteen. Two years later, he became the youngest apprentice at the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington. His career saw him engraving bank notes in Chicago and New York.

He is perhaps best known for the engraving of Ulysses S. Grant that appeared on the face of the Series 1886-91 \$5 Silver Certificates and on the back of the Series 1896 \$5 Silver Certificates.

In 1908, he was hired by the Chinese government to create engravings for their paper currency. He died of kidney failure while still in China in 1914. Chinese government officials accompanied his coffin to Dorset to ensure a proper burial in Dorset.

Usually, that is the end of the story. However, in China the story continues, as the steel engraving industry grew and flourished in China, Lorenzo Hatch took on a heroic stature, as the beginning of a tradition. It is significant to Zhao Qimong that he was taught by an engraver who was taught by Lorenzo Hatch.

During their whirlwind visit, the guests, Art Gilbert and I toured Lorenzo Hatch's home, now the Josiah Allen Real Estate Office, and his studio, which is still in the back yard at the edge of the marsh. After that we paid tribute to his gravesite across the street in Maple Hill Cemetery.

At nine the following morning, I met with them here to go over the records we have, and they showed me a few interesting things, as well. Dick and Suzanne Hittle joined us as we went over to see the Hatch display at the Bickford House, where we met Barbara Melhado. Then we were off to the Southern Vermont Arts Center, where Barbara showed us the Lorenzo Hatch portraits of his mother and his wife on display there.

In 2014, we will see a graphic novel on the life of Lorenzo Hatch published in Chinese and English, and, if everything aligns correctly, there will be a commemorative coin in circulation with Lorenzo Hatch's portrait engraved on it. There is even some talk of having a "first day of issue" ceremony here in Dorset.

Jon Mathewson

In August, visitors from China toured the former studio of Lorenzo Hatch located behind the Josiah Allen Real Estate Office on Route 30 in Dorset. Pictured from left to right are: Crystal Gong, Zhao Qiming, Jon Mathewson, Arthur Gilbert, former DHS board member Bob Gibney, Rocky Zhao and Clarence Chan.



What A Summer It Was!



Volunteers serve ice cream at the annual Ice Cream Social in July



Free ice cream for all at the annual Ice Cream Social.



More than 300 visitors attended the Southern Vermont Artisan Cheese Festival in July.



Art Gilbert demonstrates antique cider press on Discover Dorset day.

Raffle Tickets, 50th Anniversary Commemorative Items For Sale at Bley House

Raffle drawing for Scott Thompson bird house replica of Bley House and Brian Sweetland painting of Bley House will be held December 7 at the Holliday Open House. Tickets are \$5 each, or three for \$10, and are available for purchase at the Bley House Museum. Proceeds will benefit educational programs at the Dorset Historical Society.



Handpainted pottery ornaments commemorating the Dorset Historical Society's 50th Anniversary are for sale at the Bley House Museum Gift Shop. They have been created by local artist, Roseanne Henning, who trained with Elsa Bley when she lived in Bley House. Proceeds will benefit educational programs at the Dorset Historical Society. Globe ornament, \$20. Flat ornament replica of Bley House Museum is \$10. Coffee mug is \$20.



Curator's Corner: *Preserving the Museum's Framed Art Collection*

The most active part of the Dorset Historical Society collections is pieces of framed art. We have two in-house art exhibitions each year, one in the Conference Room highlighting various local artists, and one in the Venetian Red Room spotlighting a single artist. In addition, we have some on loan exhibited in the Dorset Town Offices, and this summer and fall, more than 70 were displayed as part of the "Dorset: Then and Now" exhibit at the Bickford House.

Framed pieces of art are kept in the basement in a series of wall cubicles called the Art Bin. Over the years, how and where things have been stored there has changed, and some things have been misfiled there until the situation arose where it was almost impossible to find anything in the bins. Therefore, this summer and fall, especially while reuniting the items on display at the Bickford House, I re-organized the art bins, which contain about 266 works.

This meant putting the pieces in accession number order, removing any eye-hooks or wire from the back, cutting custom sized pieces of acid-free, lignin-free corrugated board buffered with calcium carbonate, updating location information on the database, and placing them in their new homes. Fun, essential, and time consuming work.

The art bins are now better organized, and potential for damage has been lessened; however, that does not mean the work is done! Future phases of work on the art in our collections include placing carpet fragments on the bottoms of the bins to soften the placement of the frames in the bins, and performing conservation work on individual pieces. Some need to be cleaned. Some need acid-rich mattes and backing boards removed. Further down the line, they will all need to be reframed with solid backing boards and special tape applied to the frames to insure that the canvas does not stick to the frame.

Basically, everything here at Bley House is well-kept and in stable condition, thanks to the efforts of scores of people over the decades. However, storage and exhibition techniques are always being improved.

Jon Mathewson

Curator

Save These Dates

Holiday Open House: Saturday, December 7, 11 AM to 1 PM Opening of Model Train Exhibit at Bley House.

Third Thursday Luncheon Series. Free and open to the public. Visitors are invited to bring their own sandwich and dessert and refreshments will be served. All lectures are held at the Bley House Museum.

Thursday., November 21, 12 Noon "Arming the Union: Vermont Gunmakers and the Technology that Shaped America." by Carrie Brown, PhD., in conjunction with the Vermont Humanities Council.

Thursday., December 19, 12 Noon "Dorset's Former Train Depots and Stations," by Bill Badger, architectural historian.

Thursday., January 16, 12 Noon "Collecting and Displaying Model Trains," by John Schaub, curator of the Rutland Railroad Museum and of the Rutland Model Railroad Club.

Collections Assessment Program

On July 11, the Dorset Historical Society underwent a Collections Assessment through the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Heritage Preservation in Washington, D.C. Architect Tom Keefe inspected the buildings and grounds, and conservator M.J. Davis assessed the collection storage areas.

Their final reports spelled out suggestions for improving the physical plant and the collections storage to bring the DHS to the next level of best museum practices.

The last assessment of this type was conducted in 1993, and most of the recommendations made then have been put in place. Some of the suggestions then included having curated exhibits with interpretive labels, and to create collections storage areas with artifacts stored in archival housings.

These are now all implemented and standard fare here. In fact, comparing the Dorset Historical Society which was assessed in 1993 with the DHS of today really is like comparing apples to oranges.

The assessors had to work harder than usual to find suggestions to make. Most of the institutions they have evaluated are like the DHS of 1993. Their final reports, however, do contain many ideas on how to better conserve the artifacts placed in our care. Implementing the new round of suggestions will make the DHS an even stronger institution in the area of collections care.

Dorset: Then and Now

In 2011, some Dorset artists, under the leadership of Georgine Holman and Barbara Melhado, got together and staged a month-long exhibit in the Bickford House on Dorset Green, just west of the Dorset Union Store. The first floor of the building was filled with contemporary art, the second floor contained an exhibit of older Dorset artists, curated by Barbara Melhado. About 18 of the works of art in the “Then” section were from the Dorset Historical Society collection. In 2012, the event was repeated, only this time, Barbara went further afield with artists from around southern Vermont. In 2013, she turned the task over to the Dorset Historical Society.

From the beginning of August through mid-October, the Dorset Historical Society collections were represented by more than 70 pieces of work by Dorset artists. Included were oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, carpentry, quilting, stencil work, needlework and photography. This was an excellent venue to showcase our collections, and to bring the wide breadth of our collections to an audience which might not see similar exhibits at the Bley House.

The Then and Now components were both very well received, and extended from the original end date of mid-September to mid-October.

Model Train Exhibit Opens Saturday, December 7



The Dorset Historical Society is seeking loans of model trains and accessories to display in its holiday exhibit December and January. Loans will be acknowledged with a DHS Loan Agreement and returned in February. So far, the Society has loan donations of some circa 1950 HO scale trains and Lionel trains, but we would welcome more. Advertising and authentic packaging are welcome, also. Call Jon Mathewson at 867-0331, if you are able to loan items to our exhibit.

Membership

MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

Yes, I want to join the **Dorset Historical Society**.

Please enroll me at the level indicated:
Enclosed is my check, payable to **Dorset Historical Society -Membership**

Membership runs from January 1 to December 31

Membership Levels (please check one):

Regular - \$35 Supporter - \$50
 Sustaining - \$100 Patron - \$250
 Benefactor \$500 Other \$ _____

Mail to: Dorset Historical Society PO Box 52, Dorset, Vermont 05251

Name _____
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Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
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