



GREENSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

Highlights of Summer 2014

The very active summer for GHS kicked off with our exhibit at the Vermont History Expo at the historic State Fairgrounds in Tunbridge June 19-20. The exhibit, which the committee informally called “Dead Artists” (apologies to Robin Williams’ *Dead Poets’ Society*) was called Past Perspectives of Caspian Lake. Thanks to all who helped by loaning paintings or other objects, assembling a most attractive and interesting display, transporting the exhibit to and fro from Tunbridge and staffing our exhibit. This was a fine opportunity to showcase both the beauty of Caspian Lake and the talent of our residents.

The summer exhibits in Greensboro opened with a reception on June 29 and both the *Hill Family Legacy* and the *Fun and Games, Come Play with Us* were open until Labor Day. Our July program featured Mike Metcalf sharing details from his experiences in the Teacher in Space program, and displaying many unusual artifacts from both his space and other experiences. (For more details about Mike, consult his profile in our Summer 2014 newsletter, available on our website if you no longer have your copy). Our August program on slavery in Vermont is reviewed in a separate article.



The Opening Reception gave young and old a chance to enjoy puzzles and games (See the baby by the window? He loved the toys!)



Gina shows she can mow the lawn as well as talk about it

Our summer seminar was *Lawns: an American Obsession*, led by Dr. Gina Jenkins. The seminar traced the origin of the front lawn aesthetic, the development of the lawn-care industry, and the impact of the game of golf, using a combination of reading, displays, videos and accounts of many fascinating life experiences. A participant wrote, “What fun we had sitting around the table discussing lawns in all their infamous glory. We had no idea how strong an impact on our way of life the lawn could be- a force to recognize, embrace or reconsider. Thank you, Gina, for the extensive research, concise presentation and above all humor. What would our villages look like without lawns.?”

closed the season with our annual Book Sale. Thank you to everyone who helped to organize and put on these outstanding programs.

And of course, we hosted our ever-popular Ice Cream Social on a beautiful sunny day and

Ice Cream servers Cathie Wilkinson, Debbie Kasper and Gene Meyerowich



President's Corner

Change is in the air.



Circus Smirkus is bringing their circus camps to the middle of town giving our young people opportunities they've never had before.

Greensboro Arts Alliance and Residence is building a theatre which will

serve all of the town's people and embrace our town's music and arts heritage.

Jasper Hill is merging acres of grassland in Greensboro Village into a model farm which will bring cows back to Greensboro and will save our rural character with value-added agriculture. At the beginning of the last century there were at least 5 farms in the Village.

The Hill Farmstead Brewery and the Cellars at Jasper Hill are continuing the work of those who have gone before to establish our town as a place that produces quality products, attracting young families to work here.

And we, as the Greensboro Historical Society, are in a unique position to observe and record the changes.

Did you know?

That over 100 authors with ties to Greensboro were represented in our summer exhibits on authors, and that the information about them, gathered for the exhibits, is available at our museum?

That video resources available on the GHS website include all our program meetings since 2012? If you want to learn about the Vermont knitters who changed federal law or people's reminiscences of the Kesselmans, all you need to do is go to our website and download the chosen program.

Newest Board Member

Erika Karp, our newest GHS board member has strong ties to many parts of the Greensboro community. She has run a farm, raised her children here, taught kindergarten at Lakeview for many years and has a broad spectrum of volunteer service to the community.

Born and raised in California, as a child she spent long summer vacations on an island in Maine. She credits this time for instilling her with a love of New England and the outdoors. After college (where she majored in history), she earned a graduate degree at Antioch College in Putney and she and her husband got teaching jobs in this area. They bought the old Babcock farm on Shadow Lake Road and learned first hand how people of an earlier era enjoyed and were challenged by the daily chores of care of animals and crops. The farm is still working, under the stewardship of her son Josh and his wife Maria, while Erika enjoys the beautiful house next door that her sons built for her.



Since retiring from teaching a few years ago, she has volunteered for many different jobs for the historical society, from keeping membership rolls up-to-date, helping to organize the highly successful toy exhibit this summer and helping both with archival work and our outreach to school children. Welcome Erika.

Can you help?

For our special exhibit in 2015 *Health Care in Greensboro*, we would like to borrow an iron twin-sized bed. If you have one available, please send a note to Gina Jenkins at virginiascottjenkins@gmail.com.

The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont

Dr. Harvey Whitfield, professor of history at the University of Vermont, was the guest speaker at the Annual Meeting on August 11. Following a brief business meeting, Dr. Whitfield gave a lively talk from his latest book "The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1777 - 1810," published by the Vermont Historical Society in 2014.

Most of us know that the 1777 Vermont Constitution was the first in the United States to forbid slavery and assumed there was none in Vermont. However, the constitution provided for the gradual emancipation of enslaved adults and did not end slavery or establish meaningful freedom for all African Americans here. The social reality was that child slavery continued, the buying and selling of individuals was condoned, and many free blacks were kidnapped back into slavery. Many Vermonters supported the fugitive slave laws in the early 19th century, and many communities banned blacks from living there.



Dr. Whitfield discussed the meaning of slavery in Vermont political discourse and why it was such a popular metaphor. The patriots who talked about political slavery to England were often slave holders themselves. Later, Vermonters were afraid that their fledgling state would be taken over by New York, New Hampshire, or Canada and that they would lose their property rights. This was referred to as political slavery. This seeming contradiction was often explained by blaming the victims for being enslaved, since enslaved people must be cowards or lack honor to end up in such a position, unlike the free American citizens of the new republic. Dr. Whitfield said that the point of his book was to advance a more nuanced story of race relations, emancipation, and ideas of black citizenship in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. His stories of individuals in Vermont were fascinating, and his book promises to be an interesting read.

Winter Program



The Greensboro Bend Band was an important community group for many years. Here they assembled in front of the Methodist Church about 1910.

As you think about year-end giving, please remember Greensboro Historical Society at Box 151, Greensboro, VT 05841

On Sunday, March 1 at 2 PM in Fellowship Hall you will have the chance to visit historic Greensboro and share memories of "the old days". Most of you know that Henry Merrill had an extraordinary collection of photographs of the people, places and events of Greensboro village and the Bend that spans a century and a half. For the Greensboro Historical Society winter meeting, his daughter, librarian Mary Lee Metcalf, will show some of his collection in a relaxed format that will encourage audience members to share the recollections prompted by the photos, and to help further identify people and places.

Plan to join us for the program *Images of Greensboro* and an afternoon of fun. You may have seen the photos which were shown several times during the summer of 2013, but we are counting on you tell the stories that go with them.

Statewide History Award

In recognition of her long-term dedication to preserving and understanding the history and traditions of Greensboro, Willie Smith, President of GHS, was recently awarded the *Lifetime Achievement Award* by the Vermont League of Historical Societies.



Willie was totally surprised by her award

From the time Willie and David moved to town, she started researching and preserving local history from both documents and people. Her interviews with long-term residents were recorded, so others can still hear the stories of the past in authentic voices. She was a major contributor to the writing of the *History of Greensboro, the First Two Hundred Years*. In 1994, when the former library building was vacated, she was a leader in helping to obtain a lease from the town for the former library to become our GHS building, and joined other dedicated members to rehabilitate it.

The new space gave more opportunities. She learned to be an archivist and has recruited others to help preserve and catalog our collection so that the whole collection is accessible to all. Willie has been deeply involved in most of our annual exhibits from helping to choose the focus, to collecting items and organizing the display, to photographing and putting into binders pictures of the exhibits to preserve all the information for the future. If you want to learn about Greensboro barns, one room school houses or any of a multitude of topics, Willie has ensured that you can.

Her work with the school, involving teachers and students in learning local history, bringing classes to see the exhibits at the building and leading historic walks, continues to be instrumental in fostering a love of our town by the next generation.

Willie played a key role in persuading the town to preserve the former high school and transform it to our town hall. She served as a vital member of the committee that took the historical society through all the steps from: “We have an offer of a wonderful collection; where are we going to put it?” to obtaining a grant to explore feasibility, exploring several different possible ways to obtain new space, and finally working with our selected architect to construct a fine addition that met both our needs and budget. And as if that weren’t enough, she chaired the dedicated committee that mounted our distinguished exhibit: *Hill Family Legacy*

Hazen Road Dispatch Anniversary Edition Coming

Next year’s *Hazen Road Dispatch* will be a full-length book celebrating 40 years of publication. We have reason to be proud; there’s nothing equivalent to it in all of Vermont. From its beginning in 1975 as a newsletter of the town’s Bicentennial Committee, headed by Daniel Metraux and Nancy Hill, through the long editorship of Sally Fisher, followed by Stephanie Cravedi and Andrea Perham, and current editor Gail Sangree, the *Dispatch* has preserved the local history of five towns: Walden, Hardwick, Stannard, Greensboro, and Craftsbury. We hope you will like next summer’s special edition, which will feature articles from some of the best writers of past issues.

Fun and Games: Come Play with Us!

Children's Toys Before 1960

This summer, we had a wonderful display of toys and games before 1960 including trains, dolls, a doll house and furnishings, board games, construction toys including an Erector Set, a Noah's Ark, toy soldiers and animals, trucks, cars, puzzles, marbles, and much more. All summer the Greensboro Free Library hosted a second exhibit of toys and games in the exhibit case outside the children's room, a display that complemented the one at the Historical Society. At the Historical Society, people young and old played with modern versions of many of the toys, including jacks, marbles, pick-up-sticks, Slinky, puzzles, Legos, jump rope and hopscotch. The contest to match 29 international costume dolls with their country of origin was also very popular. Many young visitors came with their parents and grandparents, as well as summer campers from Wonder and Wisdom, a group of Home Schoolers from the Library, the Senior Trotters, and three groups from Lakeview Elementary School.



One of the very special toys was this wooden battleship built by Victor Perron. Another home-made masterpiece was the beautiful doll house built by Clive Gray and his father for Clive's sister Nancy.

Each group of children that came to explore our exhibit was greeted by GHS members. GHS member Tom Hurst helps children enjoy the old fashioned toys.



Home Schoolers explore the toy exhibit. Here one is discovering the wonders of a kaleidoscope

A great big thank you to all those who contributed to our 2014 summer exhibit: Tom Anastasio, Tim Breen, Judy Carpenter, Anne Cassidy, Anzley Crafts, Judy Dales, B. J. Gray, Clive Gray, Hal Gray, Anne Harbison, The Highland Lodge, Nancy Hill, Gina Jenkins, Janney Johnston, Erika Karp, Josh Karp, Debbie Kasper, Nancy Gray Keyes, Peggy Lipscomb, Janet Long, Meg and Clark Maser, Alice Perron, Laurette Perron, Emily Purdy, Renaud's Floorcovering, Jim Sowles, Willeys Store, Paul Wood, and George and Beverly Young.



Explore the GHS Website

If you haven't checked our GHS website recently, you'll find several new treasures. In addition to the organizational information, glimpses of Greensboro history and information on recent programs and exhibits, you'll find the Greensboro Cemeteries survey and a video of the summer 2014 program on *The Problem of Slavery in Vermont* given by Professor Harvey Whitfield.

You can read GHS Newsletters, both current issue and from the archive of Newsletters back to Spring 2009, under the "Publications" link on the website www.greensborohistoricalsociety.org.

Plans are afoot for a major project to digitize the GHS genealogy collection. The collection currently exists in paper form and is stored in standard office file cabinets where it is frequently used by one of our trained volunteers. When digitized, the collection will be searchable - and read - from any web-connected computer.

Would you prefer to receive the GHS Newsletter by email rather than by US Postal service? You'll get it faster, save trees, and save the Society money, too. If you'd like to get your Newsletter by email, please send an email request to secretary@greensborohistoricalsociety.org. We'll use the email address from which you send the request to send you your future newsletters.

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