



Artifacts and Fiction

The Montgomery Historical Society Quarterly Newsletter

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Chairman's Message: A Montgomery Story

Scott Perry, Chairman
John Kuryloski, Vice Chair
Marijke Dollois, Secretary
Pat Farmer, Treasurer

The MHS Board meets the third Thursday of the month at 5:00 p.m., at Pratt Hall May-Sep, and at the Public Safety Building Conference Room or on Zoom Oct – Apr

History Quiz:

- From 1900 to 2010, the number of Americans living in rural areas shrunk from 40% of the population to ____%.
a. 29% b. 18%
c. 13% d. 9%
- What percentage of the US landmass is now considered rural?
a. 90% b. 80%
c. 70% d. 60%
- In 1976 the hourly wage at the Lowell Asbestos mine was among the highest in the region. What was the average hourly wage?
a. \$4.15 b. \$5.25
c. \$6.25 d. \$7.10

Not long ago I received an online order for a Town history book, 2025 calendar, and quilt raffle tickets from a woman I didn't know. I always wonder what the Montgomery connection might be in those cases but figured time would tell. I put the package in the mail to Massachusetts and emailed the USPS tracking number to the woman.

Several days later I was waiting to pay my car service bill and Derek was talking to a guy making arrangements for winter driveway plowing. It reminded me of my wife and I doing the same thing in the same place thirty years ago with his dad. I smiled as they discussed mud season. Derek then said "here's one of your new neighbors" and introduced me to the new property owner. I welcome him to the neighborhood, mud season and all. It turned out he was the husband of the woman who placed the order. I said "I just mailed a package to you." and thanked him. He looked a little perplexed.

A few days later at the Farmer's Market my wife, Sharon, met the woman who had placed the order. Sharon passed on the story of me meeting her husband and she laughed; the book and calendar were supposed to be surprise gifts for her husband. I had inadvertently spilled the beans but hoped he hadn't put 2+2 together. She assured me she would intercept the package before he saw it.

What were the odds of our paths crossing like this? We both agreed that this was one of the great things about small towns in general and Montgomery in particular. "We love Montgomery" she said. Amen"

Scott

P.S. I didn't tell this story in the October newsletter because they became members and I didn't want to chance her husband reading it in the newsletter!

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS OPEN

Applications for our annual scholarships are online. High school seniors from Montgomery are eligible. They are due May 1st. Please email us if you have any questions.

YOUNG WRITERS

Pratt Hall hosted the Friends of the Library's "Young Writers Contest and Pizza Party" in late October. Each young writer read their creations to the audience and judges. Congrats to all our young authors.

MEMBERSHIP

Our numbers have partially rebounded, and new members are up. You can renew / join online anytime. If you have questions or concerns please drop us a line. As always, thank you for your support.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

The Society sponsored a festive weekend in December consisting of "Holiday Happiness" and "Candles and Carols"

"Holiday Happiness" was well attended and included puppet shows and puppet making, horse drawn wagon rides, and Santa arriving on the Montgomery Fire Department's pumper truck. Candy canes, cookies, and cocoa abounded. Our thanks to the Library for partnering with us and all involved.

Our singing during "Candles and Carols" was led masterfully by Steve Hays once again. The "Twelve Days of Christmas" was another energetic tour de force! Some lords barely leapt, but the swans swam the length of the hall and back.

Jay Farnham read "The Night Before Christmas". The jury is still out on the jokes. Again our thanks to all involved, including Master Elf, Noela McGroarty for the wonderful decorations.

VT WOMEN AND THE CIVIL WAR

We teamed with the Friends of the Library for Howard Coffin's return to Pratt Hall, this time to present his research on Vermont womens' Civil War support from the home front. Aside from running things at home and sending supplies (food, blankets, clothes, quilts, etc) to the troops, they honed their organizing skills. Howard maintains this experience served them well when it came to the suffrage campaigns to follow.

As a special treat Carolyn Babcock presented a handmade Civil War replica potholder quilt she made to a stunned and very appreciative Howard. We are raffling another of her replica quilts and will draw the winning ticket this summer. Tickets are available on our web site.

SMITHSONIAN TRAVELING EXHIBIT ON RURAL AMERICA

The St. Albans Museum hosted a traveling Smithsonian exhibit "Crossroads: Change in Rural America" on how the U.S. population and culture have changed. It was comprised of about two dozen display boards that took up almost the entire first floor of the building. What do you think of as rural? How has it changed over your lifetime?

SIERRA CLUB TRIPS COMING TO MONTGOMERY

In the October 2023 newsletter we mentioned a friend who leads Sierra Club trips and how he was assigned their 2024 Vermont Fall foliage trip. He asked for recommendations on hikes, activities, etc.

He visited Montgomery after that trip, which he had to base out of Stowe, and met enough local people to plan a Summer trip which he will base out of Montgomery this year. He hopes to move the Fall trip to base out of Montgomery in 2026. He includes cultural and historical activities as parts of these trips. We expect to offer them a program at Pratt Hall.

NEW ARCHIVE BUILDING UPDATE

We've finalized our preliminary design enough to submit a building permit application and the requisite request for a Development Review Board (DRB) Conditional Use hearing from the town. We also sent letters to all the abutting property owners and hosted a meeting for them to address any concerns / questions in an informal atmosphere. So far all have been supportive of what we are trying to do.

We are optimistic for getting the green light from the town when we meet with the DRB, probably in late January. After that, we will start fund raising in earnest.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

We attended a regional societies meeting in Georgia, VT in October. Beside the exchange of items and networking we were treated to a presentation on "Jeffrey Brace, Blind African Slave" by Joanne Polanshek. Brace served in the Revolutionary War only to suffer the indignities of slavery after independence from England. He eventually took up residence in Georgia, VT and was granted a long overdue pension for his service. The next regional meeting will be in October.

This meeting had a new twist. Societies were invited to bring an object from their collections to share. We brought an early Toy Factory bus, and a newer and smaller painted bus to show how things had changed over the years. Our collection of Montgomery made toys includes a wonderful double decker bus / checkers set and numerous trains, vehicles, and games. A line of "Montgomery Schoolhouse Toys" is still made/sold by Maple Landmark in Middlebury.

BITS AND PIECES...

- There is a new front porch light at the Hall. After several months of accurate time keeping the clock has stopped again. We are working on it!
- The Farmer's flash mini-market in October was a success. It was chilly but well attended.
- There is State initiative to commemorate the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence. They are giving small grants to encourage exhibits/programs. We're thinking about it.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

We recently accessioned information on the asbestos mine operated out of Lowell and Eden. It was in operation from 1901 until 1993 before closing down. It was owned by its workers for the last 20 years. In 1976 about 20% of Montgomery's working age men worked there, with a company bus providing transportation daily.



ca.1960 Company Publication

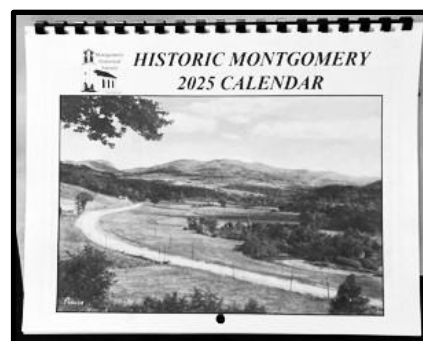
MONTGOMERY CENTER MAIN STREET



Postcard of Wedel Inn Postmarked March 1969

LAST CALL FOR HISTORIC MONTGOMERY CALENDARS

Just a few left. Available at Lutz's, Crafty L'il Gift Shop, and at our online store.



HISTORY QUIZ ANSWERS

1. b. 18%, Rural population declined from 40 to 18%
2. d. 90%, This is the percent of the U.S. landmass classified as rural.
Source: Smithsonian Exhibit, "Crossroads: Change in Rural America" Definition of "rural" used was less than 2,500 people.
3. a. \$4.15, was the average hourly wage at the asbestos mine in 1976. It reported an annual payroll of 1.7 million dollars.

THIS QUARTER IN MONTGOMERY & VT HISTORY

January: 1933 Calvin Coolidge dies in Northampton, MA.

February: 1776 National memorial service in honor of Gen Richard Montgomery.

March: 1993 Students move to new Montgomery Elementary School.

Thank you for supporting the Montgomery Historical Society



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Thanks to the following businesses for their 2024 membership and support. Let them know you appreciate their civic mindedness by your patronage. 2024 Business Members so far...

Black Lantern Inn ~ Community Bank N.A. ~ David Howe Memorial Library
Ficoceillo Real Estate ~ Lucky Dog Maple ~ Lutz's Automotive
Manosh Properties LLC ~ N.A. Manosh Inc. ~ Phineas Swann B&B
Sherm D. Potvin Consulting ~ Sunset Motor Inn ~ The Inn