



Number 18
April 2009

Scott Perry - Chair
Bill McGroarty - Vice Chair
Marijke Dollois - Secretary
Sue Wilson - Treasurer

The MHS Board meets the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30, at Pratt Hall May-Sep, and at the Public Safety Building Conference Room October - April.

Note cards based on the Stained Glass Windows of Pratt Hall make a wonderful gift.

Vermont History Quiz:

1. What is a Shire Town in VT?
2. True or False. All VT towns were supposed to contain the equivalent of 50 square miles?
3. What is Montgomery's rank in area, with 1st being the largest and 255th the smallest?
A. 16th B. 49th
C. 110th D. 195th

Artifacts & Fiction

Montgomery Historical Society Newsletter
P.O. Box 47
Montgomery, VT 05470
e-mail: pratthall@gmail.com
www.montgomeryvt.us/mhs.htm

Chairman's Message

Last newsletter we included a picture of Pratt Hall showing what we think was the installation of the clock and bell circa 1870. Elsewhere in this edition is a picture of the Hall, circa 1905, when Route 118 was still a dirt road, and the Parker store structure was yet to be built. These photos remind us that everything changes, and preservation is a task complicated by the passage of time, availability of resources, and purpose.

As I write this I'm waiting for a call from the VT Dept of Historic Preservation hoping for grant suggestions for a major structural repair we need to make to the western wall of the Hall. The supporting posts on that side of the building have rotted at their bases, and the wall is hanging from the timber frame trusses it is supposed to support. This would be less serious if we were only concerned about cracks in the wall, but the three stained glass windows in that wall may be at risk too.

As reported before, the Board and I used a small grant from VT Historic Preservation to fund an architectural evaluation, and we used another grant for a technical report from nationally-known timber framer and restoration expert Jan Lewandowski. The project would involve removing the exterior clapboards and sheathing, jacking up the wall, rebuilding the foundation, replacing the rotted sill and timbers, and then closing everything back up. The estimated restoration cost is \$130,000.00.

This project is "shovel ready" as folks are fond of saying these days and we are beating the bushes for funding. Federal stimulus funds were not channeled into any preservation activities. Hopefully there may be other options. At the very least, we will probably need to come up with some matching funds. As always your membership donation and support of any kind will be huge. If you have any ideas on funding sources or can help in anyway, please let me know.

Scott Perry
Chairman

Memorial Day Commemoration

Our annual Memorial Day remembrance will be Monday, May 25th at 10:00 a.m. at the Montgomery Village Cemetery. Speaker, Honors by American Legion Post 32, and light refreshments.

Annual Meeting June 19th

Our fun filled and informational Annual Meeting will be at 6:00 p.m at Pratt Hall. Preview exhibits, enjoy food, and receive the Chairman's report (a veritable multimedia extravaganza). Invitations will be mailed to the membership in May.

Stained Glass Note Card Fundraiser Continues

The sales of these elegant, beautiful note cards, featuring photo close ups of Pratt Hall's stained glass windows, are moving along. They make a wonderful gift, are locally produced, and help fund our mission. They are available from many local merchants, including Lutz's Automotive, and the Town Clerk too. The photos are on our web site, www.montgomeryvt.us/mhs.htm.

A complete set of 16 different cards is just \$16 for members. They are professionally printed on linen stock and include matching linen envelopes. Titles and captions are printed on the back.

Thanks to Suzanne Dollois for her photographic expertise and LG Printers in Swanton.

Concerts By The Common News

Steve Hays is trying to arrange another Concerts By The Common series...writing grants, soliciting sponsors, and booking groups. Tentative dates are July 18th and August 1st and 15th. More details soon

Exhibit of Marion Towle's Paintings

The Board hopes to mount several special events to celebrate our 35th anniversary this year including an exhibit of Montgomery's Marion Towle's (nee Gillman) paintings and embroidery. Please let Parma Jewett know if you have any items we might be able to photograph or exhibit. Thanks.

Montgomery - E. Berkshire Stage Restoration

Also in commemoration of our 35th, the Board will be attempting to restore the horse drawn covered wagon, or stage, used as a principal means of transportation between Montgomery and the railroad stop in East Berkshire. Are you interested in participating in this project? Do you have photos or stories you would be willing to loan or pass on? Please let Parma or any Board member know.

Pratt Hall Circa 1905



Scholarship Program

We are accepting applications for our annual Lalia Pratt Hays scholarship. The application is on our web site. The deadline is May 15th.

Financial Matters Redux

Our Treasurer and financial maven, Sue Wilson recommended, and the Board agreed, to use our signature loan account to payoff the remaining balance of our mortgage on the former Heaton property. The interest rate on the signature loan was lower than the mortgage rate, and the bank no longer required flood insurance once the mortgage was paid off.

The net result was a significant drop in our monthly costs. We are using part of those savings to pay down the principal on the signature loan and project we will have it paid off in as little as 6 years, instead of the remaining 14 on the mortgage.

Bottom line: We will end up paying less and have it paid off sooner than originally planned. BTW, the only portion of our property in the flood plain was a tiny corner of land on the former Heaton property.

TD Banknorth Affinity Membership Program (AMP)

Here is a way for you to contribute to the MHS that doesn't cost you a thing. As part of TD Banknorth's community support mission, they will make annual contributions to the MHS based on the average balance in the accounts you have with them. So if you have an account with them, or are opening one, simply designate it for the AMP to benefit the MHS. All information is confidential and no individual information is shared with the MHS. Contact Sue Wilson at 933-2116 if you need assistance or have questions. See included flyer for more details. Thanks to TD Banknorth and all of you.

2009 Membership Campaign Underway

Our membership drive for 2009 is off to a great start with 65 members as we go to press. Welcome to new members: Stuart & Ellen Archambault; James Kyle; John Giroux & Sally Lussier; Michael & Marnie Bimm; and Patty Perl.

Membership, and all donations, are tax exempt. Please let us know if you need a receipt. A copy of our membership 2009 letter and donor card are available on our web site at www.montgomeryvt.us/mhsdonor.html Thank you.

Pratt Hall Bugs Update

Paul Grenier of Grenier's Pest Control will be treating the attic and basement of Pratt Hall for powder post beetles and carpenter ants in June. While we can't be certain, it's likely these historic bugs and some poor drainage contributed to the problem on the west wall. Hopefully this treatment will help stabilize and prevent damage to the rest of the structure. One final prep day will be scheduled before the treatments. (BTW if those Asian lady bugs are driving you crazy, give Grenier's a call!)

Pratt Hall Clock Update

That clock will be the death of me! The clock stopped working this winter, and we've been waiting for warmer weather to diagnose and repair it. At least we didn't have to worry about springing forward. At this point it doesn't appear to be a problem with the hands, and we're hoping a good cleaning and lube job will do the trick.

Would you be willing to help us save money by receiving this newsletter and other MHS notifications by email? Just send your email address to pratthall@gmail.com. We pledge to only use it for MHS business and will not share it with anyone. Thank you.

Sad News

Clare Coy has died - she was 93. She and her husband, Felch, became members in 1974. In 1976 she became Secretary of the Board and she was President from 1980 to 1984. Throughout her life she was very active in the Society and participated in many events. She was a great person - full of life, had an active mind, volunteered where she could and had a deep, hearty laugh and twinkling eyes. A memorial service has been scheduled April 25th at Pratt Hall at 11:00a.m. Our condolences to her family.



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Treasurer's Report March 11, 2009

Cash

Checking - \$ 3,208.99

Lalia Pratt Hays Scholarship CD - \$578.01

Capital Improvements CD - \$1,881.15

Stained Glass Window Fund CD - \$5,611.73

Liabilities - Line of credit loan - \$16,760.00

Vermont History Quiz Answer

1. The Shire Town is the County Seat, e.g. St. Albans for Franklin County.
2. True. Not many were.
3. A. Montgomery is the 16th largest town in Vermont by area.

First Successful U.S. Producer of Canned Meat? We have been queried several times over the years by people looking for details on Montgomery native, William Baker Clapp, and his "first successful commercial production of canned meat" in the U.S. In fact, a Fairbanks museum exhibit on VT inventors credits him with this, as does a Vt History text from 1966, but we have not been able to find any real details. He was born in 1831 and was the grandson of Joshua Clapp, Montgomery's first settler. He moved away at some point, surfacing with his brother in the Chicago area in the late 1800s. He apparently also won a patent infringement case related to the process but we haven't been able to locate a patent either. If you have any information on this topic we would love to hear from you.

We're an open book. All minutes etc are posted on our web site. Meetings and events are open to all. The Montgomery Historical Society Board is... Scott Perry, Bill Branthoover, Marijke Dollois, Sue Wilson, Bill McGroarty, Parma Jewett, Sally Newton, John Beaty, Jo Anne Bennett, and Pat Farmer.