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Artifacts and Fiction

Montgomery Historical Society Newsletter

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Chairman's Message

The final chapter of Albert Camus' "Myth of Sisyphus" ...compares the absurdity of man's life with the situation of Sisyphus, a figure of Greek mythology who was condemned to repeat forever the same meaningless task of pushing a boulder up a mountain, only to see it roll down again. Camus' essay concludes, "The struggle itself...is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." Source - Wikipedia.

Scott Perry, Chairman
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 great Christmas cards and wonderful gifts.



Montgomery History Quiz:

The clock in Pratt Hall is called a turret clock and has two trains powered by two weights. What are the two trains' names?

- going train
- coming train
- warning train
- striking train
- chiming train

Keeping the clock at Pratt Hall going sometimes seems like a Sisyphusian task. Just when we think we've accomplished a long term fix something else goes wrong or needs attention, again. We've been hard pressed to find a reliable repairman, or expert to advise us or train us, so we've done what resourceful Yankees have been doing for hundreds of years, experimenting and teaching ourselves. This winter when the clock stopped we diagnosed the cold weather and the stiffening grease. We let it stand still then restarted it when the weather warmed, and after a light cleaning and lubrication it has been running fine, but...

It no longer chimed the hour. In September we decided to try to figure out why. After a quick consultation with the "Turret Clock Keepers Handbook" we started tracing the works (ankle bone connected to the foot bone) and were able to get it to chime as intended, but...

Now it chimes every hour, despite a relatively modern modification that is supposed to prevent it from chiming late at night or early in the morning in deference to our immediate neighbors. This is obviously a highly technical module because it includes an old hinge, spring, and electrical conduit clamp.

Over the past 25 years the care and feeding of the clock has been the responsibility of several hardy souls who have been willing to climb 65 feet to the top of the tower at least weekly, and wind the clock or trouble shoot repairs. You can imagine what it's like in the middle of January. Clock winders have included George Roberts, Sonny Lumbrá, Rocky Elkins, Pat Farmer, and yours truly. Most recently Luke Scheffler has joined the brotherhood which I like to call the Pratt Hall Quasimodo Society. Our thanks to all of them.

So when I drive by the Hall I always look at the clock (and the building) and am reminded "it's the struggle itself", and smile. Thanks for joining the struggle, I hope you smile too.

 Scott Perry
Chairman

Restoration Work to Begin in October

Our historic timber frame expert, Jan Lewandoski, has had his hands full working on the Breeding Barn at Shelburne Farms and said he will begin work on Pratt Hall in late October and stay with it until it is finished. We started demolition of the steps earlier this summer but stopped when it became apparent earlier concrete pours had penetrated the rubble stone foundation. We expect the jack hammers to see action soon. We are looking for donations of labor, materials, and anything else we can use as part of our in kind grant match so don't be shy. Contact Bill McGroarty at 933-2673 or drop us an email.

2010 "Concerts By The Common" Wrap

Our annual concert series treated us to quite a variety of live music - Brass, Jazz, and Harp/Flute. Thanks once again to Steve Hays for pulling all this together.

This year's series saw attendance dip but revenues hold steady so we will break even financially. Thanks to all of our sponsors and patrons, the Eastman Foundation and the Vermont Arts Council. We wouldn't be able to keep the series going without all of you.

The Board and Steve will be discussing the future of the series between now and February when next year's grant application is due. We solicit your ideas and comments on what we might do to improve attendance. Please email us or drop a note. We are eager for your feedback and ideas. Would you be willing to lend a hand working on the series?

Vermont Magazine and St. Albans Messenger Articles

Montgomery and the Society are about to be featured in two publications. Vermont Magazine's November-December issue will likely feature Montgomery under its Vermont Towns regular feature. They took pictures at Pratt Hall and may discuss some of our recent accomplishments. Also, the St. Albans Messenger plans on doing a special section on the County's Societies to include a series of articles on each Town. We provided the MHS skinny and an article based on the Nelson and Hall packing case exhibit.



Award Nomination

As I write this I'm waiting to hear from the Vermont Historical Society. The Board nominated Betty Stanton for a League of Local Historical Societies Lifetime Achievement Award, citing among other things her 17 years of service on our Board and four years as President. She's already a winner to us!

UPDATE: We were just notified Betty was selected. More details in the Jan 2011 newsletter. Yea Betty!

Tentative Candles and Carols Date

It's never too early to start thinking about Christmas and of course that means Carols and Candles. We're tentatively planning on Sunday evening, December 19th but will need to confirm that after we get some snow on the ground. Stay tuned.

Recent Accessions, Thanks To:

Dee Pratt recently sent us a daguerreotype of Jim's great grandfather and his wife, Edward and Nancy Fernald, along with information regarding the Pratt Farm (now Beth Crane and Morgan Daybell's) and their former house in the Village. Thanks Dee!

If you have something you think should be part of our collection please don't be shy. We'll give it a good home if we can and can even provide a receipt for your taxes.

Did you know...

When Joshua and Naby Clapp settled in Montgomery in 1793, no one lived in any neighboring town for over two years afterward. That's isolated!

Designate the MHS Your Affinity Beneficiary

Thanks to our members that bank with TD Bank and designate the MHS their Affinity non-profit charity. TD Bank will make an annual contribution to the MHS based on our level of participation.



Treasurer's Report September 2010

Checking \$10,256.47
Scholarship \$591.66
Stained Glass CD \$5758.26
Domina Print Account \$582.57
Still inbound this fiscal year... a \$1,500 grant from the Eastman Charitable Trust and a \$7,500 grant from the VT Div. For Historic Preservation.

No Debt!!

Affinity Program Members - 73.

Estate Planning and Bequests

In the past we've been approached by people who wanted to include the Society in their estate planning and asked that we provide the necessary tax information and documentation of our non-profit status. They said they were looking for a way to make a tax deductible contribution to a local group and the MHS fit the bill. We were honored to be considered. Similarly we've received money and artifacts specified in people's wills over the years, or donations in lieu of memorial flowers.

Including the MHS in your will or estate plan is as simple as inserting this language in your will:

"I give _____ to the Montgomery Historical Society, having its principal offices at 2044 North Main Street, Montgomery, Vermont 05470, for its general purposes." Or you might designate the MHS as the recipient of a gift annuity, or retirement plan proceeds, or name the MHS as the recipient of a percent of your estate. Likewise you could donate an item to our archives so future generations could learn from and enjoy it. The MHS is a 501.c.3 non-profit organization.

We know this can be a delicate subject but want you to know that we are very grateful for such support and would be honored to work with you if you have similar desires. Please contact us for more details.

New On The Web

We've added data on Montgomery and Franklin County census from 1800 to present and a listing of historic dates in generic calendar form. Check our "history" link next time you're on line.

2010 Membership Report

As of this writing our membership stands at 196 households and \$9,300. Thanks to all of you for joining or renewing. We'll continue to accept memberships through the end of the year and I'm confident we'll hit our 200 member / \$10,000 goal.

Town History Book Update

Jo Anne Bennett reports she's completed her initial round of research for the Third Edition of the Town history. It will include significant events from 1990-present. "Now the fun part begins" where she sits down and interviews people on their recollections. This is an iterative and interactive process and she's looking forward to hearing from you. We're looking forward to publishing it sometime in 2012.

Pratt Hall Bugs

A rose, is a rose, is a rose...not, at least when comes to Powder Post beetles. Montgomery resident and State forester, Dan Dilner, stopped by Pratt Hall early this summer and took samples of the bugs that are still active in the Hall. The State entomologist identified them as Anobiid Deathwatch beetles, not a true Powder Post but pretty much the same. Their name is certainly terrifying.

The State also gave us a recommendation on what to use to treat for them. We will be working with business member, Paul Grenier, (Grenier's Pest Control) for another treatment, concentrating on the tower after the renovation project is completed.

Teaching American History Grant Update

In an earlier newsletter we told you about a grant UVM graduate student Scott McLaughlin was writing aimed at improving the teaching of American history by putting together a network of teachers and local historical organizations. Scott reports "we were awarded the Teaching American History grant!" Two one million dollar grants were secured, one for southern VT and the other for programs in Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle Counties. The Society will be a supporting organization.

Michael Domina Print Raffle Winner

Dee Cumbie was the lucky winner of a limited edition Michael Domina print raffled off during the course of the summer ending with our Harp and Flute concert in mid August. Congratulations Dee! You can purchase your own print at Lutz's Automotive.

Montgomery History Quiz Answer

The going train keeps the time and the striking train rings the bell the appropriate number of times every hour. A third train, called the chiming train is found on many clocks that chime every 1/4 hour, but not on ours.

The MHS Board is... Scott Perry, Bill McGroarty, Sue Wilson, Marijke Dollois, Pat Farmer, Tim Chapin, Ken Secor, Elsie Saborowski, Jo Anne Bennett, Parma Jewett, Bill Branthoover, & John Beaty



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Still Time To Send Your 2010 Membership Renewal. Better Late Than Never. Thanks!