

NEWS FROM NICKWACKETT

VOL. 12 NO. 2

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2005

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HISTORY DAYS

The "History Days" program on 30 April was offered for the first time this year. The participation of Living History units and personnel was great but the weather left much to be desired. Clouds in the morning turned to light drizzle by noon and by afternoon the baptism by water was complete. In spite of the weather, early visitors enjoyed the Living History offerings. Some programs at the Society had a fair attendance and an early morning walking tour was full. Downtown businesses provided interesting pictures of Rutland's past in their windows.

In spite of the negative weather all groups involved are ready to carry on with another program next year. It is to be hoped that annually these Saturday events will merge with the Sunday Loyalty Day parade to offer a full weekend of history and entertainment in Rutland.

VERMONT HISTORY EXPO

On Saturday 25 June and Sunday 26 June the Society presented a Rutland and Vermont Covered Bridge exhibit in the Vermont Structures offering at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds Memorial Arena. The chief representative of the Society's presentation was local covered bridge expert Robert Cassidy who is not yet 30. Meanwhile in the Presentation Tent Society member Anna Whooley, not yet 20, was presenting a dramatic monologue of two women of the Civil War era; one Southern and the other Rutland's Julia Dorr. As the Board of Directors of the Society discuss how to recruit new and

younger members, these two young members give the Society great hope for the future.

MEETINGS

As a partner to many local groups the Society has tried to attend their significant public meetings.

On 6 June Tom Carpenter and Jim and Helen Davidson attended the Annual Meeting and Open House of the new facilities of the Rutland community television stations. These folks have been most cooperative and helpful in the production of the monthly "Historically Speaking" series of the Society.

Jim Davidson attended the annual breakfast meeting of the Downtown Rutland Partnership at the Howe Center on 14 June. The Partnership is a Sponsor Member of the Society and was actively involved in History Days. The future should offer numerous opportunities for reciprocal services between the Partnership and the Society.

On 16 June Jim Davidson attended a community meeting at the Rutland Free Library on the Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the naming of Lake Champlain (1609-2009). Numerous thoughtful and excellent ideas were presented by those in attendance as to the appropriate celebration of this anniversary. This meeting was an opportunity to be a part of the planning for the celebration in 2009.

**REMEMBER YOUR
2005 DUES - CHECK
THE MAILING LABEL**

"HISTORICALLY SPEAKING" ON CHANNEL 15 IN RUTLAND

The Society produces "Historically Speaking" on cable Channel 15. A new program is produced each month. The series includes interviews and historical pictorial material in a rather flexible TV magazine format. The programs can be seen every Wednesday at 4:00 p.m., Thursday at 1:30 p.m. and Friday at 7:30 p.m. Videotapes of the following episodes can be obtained from Channel 15, Rutland Region Community Television, 1 Scale Avenue, Suite 108, Rutland VT 05701-4460. They are \$10 for each episode. Make checks payable to the above. You must provide a self-addressed padded bag with postage or \$1.50 for shipping and handling. Channel 15 provides the tape. Personal pickup is available. Call (802) 747-0151 for further information.

Episode # 62 - Jim Davidson hosts Tony Romeo, Sons of Union Veterans, Ripley Camp # 4, and Mary Ann Goulette, executive director of the Downtown Rutland Partnership in a program about Rutland History Days, 30 April and 1 May 2005. History Days is an attempt to develop an activity on Saturday to accompany the annual Loyalty Day Parade on Sunday. It focuses on Living History military encampments and programs. It is a free program sponsored by the Rutland Parks and Recreation Department, the Sons of Union Veterans, the Rutland Historical Society and the Downtown Rutland Partnership.

Episode # 63 - Jim Davidson hosts Michael F. Dwyer in a program on "The Family Photo Album As Social History". The program focuses on the period from pre-World War I through the 1920s. It shows the viewer how to extract social history from a variety of photographs that are typically found in the family scrapbook or photograph album.

Episode # 64 - Jim Davidson hosts Anna Whooley in a discussion about her new dramatic show, "The North and South: A Woman's Perspective" which will have its first presentation at the 2005 Vermont History Expo. The program shows Anna in the costume of one of the two characters that she will portray. The discussion revolves around her choice of subject, research problems, and a behind the scenes look at how the script and program are put together. There is also a brief notice of the Society's exhibit at the Expo.

The month of July has been "rerun month". Five shows were selected from the first year and a half of the "Historically Speaking" series. Each show ran for one week. The shows selected were: Episode # 3 "A Climb To the Star", Episode # 7 "David Sawyer's World", Episode # 9 "Banks, Banking and Money", Episode # 12 "The Restoration of Antique Wedding Gowns" and Episode # 16 "The Clothing and Equipment of the Civil War Soldier".

COMMITTEE CORNER

Chairpersons

Archives Committee

Tom Carpenter - 773-3626

Artifacts Committee

Ann Glagola - 775-1302

Building Committee

Morris Tucker - 773-7356

Exhibit Committee

Jim Davidson - 773-7525

Finance Committee

Tom Carpenter - 773-3626

Historic Preservation Committee

Library Committee

Ann Glagola - 775-1302

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Mary Segale - 773-2326

Personnel Committee

Mary Segale - 773-2326

Program Committee

Michael F. Dwyer - 483-6993

Publications Committee

Jake Sherman - 775-2784

Research Committee

Patty Pickett - 438-2759

Society Historian

Mary Segale - 773-2326

President

Dorothy Whitford - 776-1018

Board Chairperson

Mary Fregosi - 459-2723

ELWERT ESSAY CONTEST

The first annual Elwert Essay Contest was completed in March 2005. First prize of \$100 was won by Kahner Dowdy, Grade 6 of the Rutland Area Christian School for her essay on "The Berwick Hotel Fire". (See below). Second prize of \$50 was won by Elizabeth Lambert, Grade 6 of the Rutland Area Christian School for her essay on "The Flood of 1947". Third prize of \$25 went to T. J. Engler, Grade 6 of the Rutland Area Christian School for his essay on "The Howe Scale Company". Certificates of participation were received by Jim Besaw, Nathan Hogarth, Mikey Napolitano and Kylie Peterson, all of the Rutland Area Christian School.

The Berwick Hotel Fire by Kahner Dowdy, Grade 6, Rutland Area Christian School

On Saturday night, January 7, 1973, the worst blaze ever recorded in Rutland's history, reduced the once majestic Berwick Hotel to a pile of ashes. Firemen worked tirelessly all night in attempts to control the blaze. Sadly, they failed.

Guests in the Tiki Lounge, at the Berwick Hotel, at first did not believe that there was a fire; when the fire became larger, however, they could feel the heat. Finally, they realized that it was dangerous to be in the building. To escape the horrible fire people were jumping out of the building into the parachutes below. Thirty of the guests and fifty employees escaped. Five of the guests did not make it out in time.

Mr. Joe Chrusciel, a volunteer firefighter in West Rutland at the time, answered the red phone on that fateful night and raced to the scene. When he reached the hotel he joined the other firefighters and began battling the blaze. There was no word from him until after the fire was extinguished. At that time firemen were unable to communicate with each other during a fire, as they do today. In addition to not having modern communications, firefighting gear and equipment was much less protective and effective. There were no oxygen tanks. They had only handkerchiefs to cover over their mouths. The fire could be seen and felt blocks away. To make things worse the weather that night was brutal. It was thirty degrees below zero and there was six inches of ice forming on the roads from the houses. Thankfully, none of the firefighters were seriously hurt. Upon hearing that, Mr. Chrusciel's family was incredibly relieved.

The Berwick Hotel was known as the Town House. The mayor Gilbert Godnick and his brother Edward owned the Berwick. The majestic hotel was the favorite hotel among children and adults. For adults it had a relaxing and elegant lounge, called the Tiki Lounge. For the children it boasted the best candy shop in the city, Cinderella Sweets! Architects did not overlook safety. They put fire walls between every building, so if there was a fire the whole block would not burn down. The cause of the fire is officially unknown although chemicals used to refinish the wood floors were found by firefighters.

Time goes quickly and things change. Our little town of Rutland has increased in size and it is now a true "city". Time, however, was not so good to the Berwick Hotel. That beautiful hotel is now known as "the pit". The Rutland Herald and many others dream of what that spot might become someday. Some wish it would become another hotel. Others wish that it would become something like a L.L. Bean outlet store. People who have never heard of the hotel think that it is just some free parking space, but when I drive by it I think of the beautiful hotel that used to be there. I can not help but wonder what it would be like to be a guest at the once majestic Berwick Hotel.

A RUTLAND & LUDLOW CONNECTION

Jim Davidson was invited to speak to the Ludlow Rotary Club at their luncheon on 5 July. Jim remembered a photo album in the Society's collections that included items of both Rutland and Ludlow. Andrew H. Catozzi,

Sr., a Rutland pharmacist moved to Ludlow in 1921 to establish his own drugstore. Catozzi was a World War I hero who also participated in World War II. He remained in Ludlow for 14 years. The mix of Rutland and Ludlow photos and the evolving story of Catozzi's life confirm Jim's thesis that local history often involves other communities.

SPECIAL VISITS TO THE SOCIETY

The months of May and June were particularly busy with various group visits. On 26 April the Twilight Homemakers Club met at the Society for a singalong program provided by the Society. On 20 May Grade 3 from the Rutland Intermediate School made a visit to the Society. On 31 May a graduate school summer course on teaching the social studies came from the College of St. Joseph for an orientation program on the resources of the Society. On 6 June the first and second grades from Northwest School made a visit to the Society and were shown the video "David Sawyer's World", a program of 1898 Rutland photos with a narration. On 9 June a group from the Rutland Junior High School who had visited Canada wanted to know more about the French in Rutland and their history. The Society provided a video on French genealogy in Rutland which deals with French names and name changes against a brief historical background of Canadian-French immigration to Rutland. On 20 June a summer Vermont History class from the College of St. Joseph made an visit to the Society to familiarize the students with the resources of the Society. On 23 June Chuck Piotrowski, new Records Manager at Central Vermont Public Service Corporation and a long time staff member, Gerald Cook, visited the Society to review the Society's holdings that involved CVPS. On 27

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DUES SCHEDULE

Sponsor	\$50.00	Students	\$8.00
Contributing	\$20.00	(18 & under)	
Regular	\$10.00	Senior citizens	\$8.00
		(62 & up)	
Life Membership		(Individuals only)	\$200.00
Memorial Membership			\$200.00

June and 30 June the Society provided walking tours for two Recreation Department summer camp groups. On 28 June a young woman made arrangements to produce a family video using the Society's ELMO video recorder. Although May and June were particularly busy months the Society is happy to schedule group visits for a variety of custom designed services. The Society also is pleased to make the ELMO video recorder available for free use. Users will need to provide their own videotape.

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION DELAY

This issue of the Quarterly [Vol. 35, No. 2] has been in preparation for over two years. It was expected to be published in June. Just recently the Society found photos of the National Park Seminary buildings where Charlotte Chaffee spent many of the days mentioned in her diary. With the help of the Save Our Seminary organization in Maryland, the Society was able to include them in this issue. The Society apologizes for the delay.

WEB SITE REPORT

The Society web site has been operational at <http://www.rutlandhistory.com> since 14 February 2005. Since then the site has received over 25,000 "hits" or usages. The web site committee has been pleased with the usage of the site and the positive nature of the responses it has received from individuals. The free message board has received a number of queries and some queries have received answers. The committee has continued to meet and fine tune the site. It has also had a number of workshops with the Society consultant to train committee members to maintain and update the content of the site.

**THE FACILITIES OF THE
RUTLAND HISTORICAL
SOCIETY ARE OPEN ON:
MONDAYS 6 - 9 PM
SATURDAYS 1 - 4 PM**