Welcome to Spring! The season of renewal is upon us, heralded by daffodils, and of course landscaping trucks, returning to line our quiet byways.

Last month here at the BHS, we hosted Avis Hayden’s captivating presentation tracing the history of the Kelley family, and their namesake hotel in Sunderland, a landmark that served local millworkers and passing travelers for decades. Our own Ray Rodrigues recounts Hayden’s talk; a video is up on the Bennington Museum website.

And we’re looking forward to Jane Beck’s visit on May 19th, when she’ll share the story of the Turner family, as detailed in her 2015 book *Daisy Turner’s Kin*. Be sure to come by for her riveting account of one family’s journey from west Africa to the United States, and how they endured enslavement before finally winning freedom in Vermont.

BHS secretary Bill Morgan continues his series on local monuments with the Seth Warner statue. The granite carving marked the first attempt at rendering Warner’s likeness. Bill deftly draws out the story of how local industrialist Olin Scott’s commitment to honoring Warner’s service at the Battle of Bennington drove the project to completion.

And new contributor Steve Edwards shares a story about a curious trophy he found one afternoon, right outside his house in Old Bennington.

That discovery illuminated a friendship between two prominent Bennington-ians. Check out Steve’s terrific feature for a tale of friendly rivals, backyard duffers, and an artifact lost for 100 years, recovered in the grass.

We’ve also got Don Miller on the Federalist Papers, Jane Radocchia on Bennington’s woodworking history, and a photo of a couple of local characters whom you may recognize.

So take some time to enjoy the May issue of the BHS newsletter. The hills are alive with the sound of rotary blades, and your lawn isn’t going to mow itself. But you’ve got some reading to do; so right now, just enjoy the sound of it growing.

— Robert Ebert
UPCOMING PROGRAMS

May 19, 2:00pm
*Daisy Turner’s Kin*

Folklorist Jane Beck began interviewing Daisy Turner, then 100 years old, in 1983. Beck uses Turner’s storytelling to build her family’s saga; the enslavement of Turner’s African ancestors; her father learning to read; his return as a soldier to his former plantation to kill the overseer; Daisy’s childhood stand against racism; and her family’s life in Vermont.

June 16, 2:00pm
*Moses Robinson and the Birth of Democracy in Early Vermont*

A member of one of Bennington’s first families, Moses Robinson served as our town clerk for 20 years, then as governor, then Vermont’s first U.S. senator, and chief justice of the state Supreme Court. Robert Mello’s biography of Robinson is one of Vermont’s most important. Mr. Mello, a retired Vermont Superior Court Judge, will discuss Robinson’s role in promoting the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and the inviolability of elections.

TAKING A STAND

*Avi Hayden tells the story of Kelley Stand Road and Hotel*
by Ray Rodrigues

Genealogist Avi Hayden, in her April presentation, asked one simple question; what’s a “stand”? The answer? Not so simple. A hotel or a place to stop appear to be the likeliest historical definitions.

In 1831, 13 lumber mills operated along Roaring Branch, accessible via Kelley Stand Road. William and Hannah Kelley built the Kelley Stand Hotel there, running the inn from 1837 to 1866. It even had a bowling alley. Later it became Summit House, from 1883 to 1917. But logging operations declined, and by 1932 the hotel was deteriorating. Hayden displayed a hotel ledger containing poems written by William Kelley.

The presentation may be viewed on the Bennington Museum’s website, via the BHS page.

AUTUMN PROGRAMS

**September 15**
*A History of Bennington College Through Its Books*
Presented by Jeffrey Perkins and Oceana Wison

**November 17**
*Edith Roosevelt Comes to Bennington*
Presented by Bob Tegart

**October 20**
*Elm Street: What We Dreamed of 100 Years Ago*
Presented by Jane Radocchia
MISSING THAT V_RMONL L_FE
You got issues? We need issues.
by Dave Pilachowski

Couple months back, we made a request; please consider donating any back issues of Vermont Life you may have. The response was... crickets. We had more luck when we asked strangers on the internet (Front Porch Forum, whatever same thing).

So we’re asking again; will you take a look around, see if you have any old copies of Vermont Life, and get in touch? We’re in particular need of issues from Spring 2008 through 2018. We need them for the Regional History Room because Vermont Life is, of course, regional history. And we know you love regional history because you’re reading this right now. Maybe check the basement? OK thanks. Good talk. Here’s my email: librarian@benningtonmuseum.org

OUR HVAC IS ON; SO IS OUR SPRING APPEAL
How do we stay so cool? With a little help from our friends

Spring heralds new beginnings. And here at the Museum, we’re welcoming the arrival of two brand-new HVAC units. In fact, at the time of this writing, they’re being hoisted onto our roof and installed. Make way for ducting, indeed.

These new units will replace two that expired just a few weeks ago – four whole years ahead of schedule! The many artworks, artifacts, and documents held in trust with the Museum require close environmental monitoring, and our commitment to the collection demands that the building have reliable climate control.

On the upside, our new HVAC units will ensure that we can steward the collection for our patrons and community through many decades to come.

But this unforeseen expense comes at the end of our fiscal year. Not great timing. Turns out, buying a big machine and putting it on top of a museum isn’t cheap. In fact, it’ll cost us about $100,000.

Bennington Museum’s Spring Appeal is underway this month, and if you were considering a donation, now would be an opportune moment. And as the weather gets warmer, please stop by soon to experience for yourself the power of our new AC!

Thank you in advance for thinking of us in this season of renewal.
GOT ANY COOL STORIES?
We bet you do
by Ray Rodrigues

We’re looking for stories about the history of the Bennington area. Would you or a friend have an item to offer? Perhaps something about the history of your house, or an account passed down from one of your relatives, or simply something we should hear about? Doesn’t have to be long -- a paragraph will do. But if you want to write more, go for it. And send it to raymond_rodrigues@msn.com.

NEWEL POSTS AND BALUSTERS
Circa 1850
By Jane Griswold Radocchia

Sydney Colvin built his new house on Bank Street in the early 1850s. He had been displaced from his original farm when the railroad came to North Bennington. Here is his newel post and balusters in his front hall. (1)

The newel was shaped by turning a log on a lathe run by waterpower or possibly steam power. The balusters were turned from lengths of lumber.

Bennet’s Tavern (circa 1850), in White Creek, NY has the same newel and balusters. So does the Allen House across the road (2). Below the Allen House stair treads are curlicues which are similar to, but not quite as complex as, those at the Old First Church in Bennington, built in 1805.

Swirls like these can be found on stairs on Monument Ave in Bennington. Many Federal /Neo-Classical houses built in New England between 1790 and 1815 had scrolls like these. The Allen House was built circa 1770 and first renovated about 1810. The stair was again updated, along with the rest of the house, in the 1850s.

A similar upgraded staircase – these 1850s newel and balusters above the steps with the curlicues below - is in a circa 1810 house on Monument Avenue in the center of Old Bennington.

Four staircases with identical newels and balusters indicates that a master woodworker in our community had a steady power source. Hiram Waters had a showroom and workshop attached to his house on Monument Ave. Did he have a workshop with waterpower somewhere else? Who else was turning wood in Bennington County in 1850? Was there a millwork factory in Bennington County? Or did the parts come from Troy courtesy of the new railroad?
When the first Bennington Battle Monument designs were being considered in 1884-85, the one submitted by John F. Weir, a professor from Yale University, was rejected after a heated debate. It had featured a smaller monument which incorporated the statues of five soldiers in the overall design.

Hiland Hall and Charles M. Bliss opposed this plan, feeling that historical depictions would detract from the majesty of the battle's victory. They favored an obelisk designed by architect J. Philip Rinn, and it was their motion that carried, resulting in the tower we have today.

Olin Scott, a wealthy Bennington industrialist and philanthropist who was on the design committee, strongly disagreed. He felt that the patriots should be honored by representations of their military leaders, and a few decades later he succeeded in convincing a majority of the members of the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Society to add a memorial to Seth Warner on the grounds at the top of Monument Avenue.

Seth Warner (1743-1784) was a local farmer and one of the leaders of Vermont's Green Mountain Boys. Warner had helped plan the American victory over the British, leading the local New Hampshire militia in the battle of Hubbardton in July, 1777. At the Battle of Bennington, just one month later, it was Warner's troops that arrived in the nick of time to reinforce General Stark's men in the battle's pivotal second phase, saving the day.

Since Olin Scott felt that Warner had never been given his rightful share of credit for turning the tide of the battle, he made certain that the lengthy inscriptions on the statue's base highlighted all of Warner's achievements. Scott even went so far as to have the wording on the monument reviewed twice before he approved it.

On November 24th, 1909, Olin Scott donated the first thousand dollars towards the four thousand dollars needed for the statue, and commissioned it as a gift to the town. The finished work was unveiled on August 22nd, 1910, in front of a large crowd, but wasn't officially dedicated until the following year. That unveiling featured an address by Olin Scott in which he proudly presented the work to the town.
The statue proved to be very popular, drawing visitors and earning their praise. On Wednesday, August 16th, 1911, the ceremonies for the formal dedication took place. A parade line was formed downtown, and the participants marched up to the new statue. At 10 o’clock, the bands, carriages, guests of honor and civic groups gathered to hear the former Speaker of the House, James K. Batchelder, deliver the keynote address. Governor Mead was on hand to accept the statue on behalf of the state, and John Robinson acted as the overall chief marshal.

The statue and base have a combined height of 26 feet, with the figure of Warner rendered in heroic scale. It was carved by Harry J. Bertoli (1864-1911), who owned a stone carving firm in Montpelier. Bertoli had come to Vermont in 1888 from Carrara, Italy, a town famous for its marble and sculptors. No images of Colonel Warner were available to the sculptor, so he used photographs of Warner’s descendants to render a likeness. The granite for the statue was quarried in Barre, and the 10-foot square base was engraved with four long historical inscriptions. These inscriptions read as follows:

On the south face of the monument: “Colonel Seth Warner. Born in Roxbury (then Woodbury) CT May 17, 1743. Resided in Bennington VT 1765-1784. Died Dec 26, 1784 at Roxbury CT where he was buried with honors of war. Age 41. ‘Tell future ages what a hero’s done’. This memorial erected by Colonel Olin Scott. Bennington, A.D. 1910.”


On the north face: “An able statesman and soldier. He assisted the people of Vermont to establish their independence and to organize an independent state government under which they existed for a period of 14 years when the state was admitted to the Federal Union. And during the Revolutionary War aided the 13 colonies in acquiring their independence.”

On the west face: “Col. Warner with the Green Mountains Boys won a decisive victory over the British reinforcements in the second engagement at Bennington, Aug. 16, 1777, thus saving the military stores at that place, crippling Burgoyne’s Army so as to stop his invading march and establishing a turning point in the war of the American Revolution.”

Olin Scott had hoped to add more sculptures to the monument grounds, though this ambition was never realized during his lifetime. He proposed images of General John Stark and Parson Thomas Allen, but it would take another century to realize any additional figures. In 2000, a statue of General Stark was erected on the north side of the battle monument.
ARTIFACT TELLS A CENTURY-OLD STORY
Documenting time, place, and players
by Steven Edwards

My family and I owned an 1820s home in Old Bennington for 34 years before we moved, in 2017. As I renovated and repaired our home and grounds during our years there, I constantly turned up traces of former residents. Artifacts revealed stories of those who had lived in our home long before we did.

While tilling my backyard garden, I turned up an old, half dollar-sized object — a golf medal with scalloped edges. It bore the legend, “Mt. Anthony Country Club” and a maker’s mark, “John Frick NY Jewelry Co.” It featured a bas relief of a rearing mountain goat. Why a mountain goat? The country club once lay just on the grounds of the Edward Everett mansion, below the slopes of Mount Anthony.

A name was engraved on the back; “F.B. Jennings Jr.”


WINNER’S CHOICE
Located in what is now Wall Street, Frick created trophy items for the Mt. Anthony Country Club, and tourneys up and down the eastern seaboard

With further research, I found a record of the 1911 Vermont State Amateur (Golf) Championship at the Ekwanok Country Club in Manchester, Vermont. F.B. Jennings Jr. won the event and, presumably, the medal. But how did it end up buried in my back garden?

In the early 1900s, our home and property, surrounding properties, and the shingle-style mansion next door belonged to the Holden family, wealthy owners of the Holden-Leonard Mill down the hill in Bennington. Clarence Holden was a golfer who had won the Ekwanok championship the year before Jennings. Jennings was a well-to-do New York lawyer whose palatial summer home and property are now home to Bennington College.

Doubtless the men knew one another; both competed in tournaments; both belonged to the Mt. Anthony Country Club.
ARTIFACT TELLS A CENTURY-OLD STORY

It’s not hard to imagine Mr. Jennings and Mr. Holden sharing a sunny summer afternoon in 1912, driving a few golf balls in what would become my backyard. I see Jennings lean to tee-up and accidentally drop his prize medal, where it lay for the next 75 years until I turned it up in my garden.

Here’s what I find fascinating. This lost artifact and a little research brought to life a scene that took place over 100 years ago in my own backyard. When I conjure that image, I can see Mr. Jennings drop his prize medal — indeed, I had the evidence.

*Postscript:* When we moved from Old Bennington, I donated the medal and other artifacts to the Bennington Museum as “a gift of the Steven Edwards Collection.”

*About the author:* Steve Edwards lived in Old Bennington for 34 years. He’s fascinated by stories from the past, as told by the artifacts he found while renovating his 1820’s home. Steve and his wife, Nancy, now reside in Cornwall, Vermont.

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**WIN SOME, LOSE SOME**
As prominent members of the country club and Bennington society, Jennings and Holden were bound to meet eventually. But becoming friends was never a sure thing.

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**PARADISE, PRE-PICKLEBALL**
The Mt. Anthony Country Club in 1909
For this, the fifth installment in our Book of the Month series, we're recommending an essential collection of essays that record one of the central debates in our nation's government, the Federalist Papers.

Written over 1787 and 1788, the Federalist Papers were meant to encourage citizens in the separate states to vote to ratify the United States Constitution.

Of course, the path to the Constitution we have today required a long series of proposals, debates, and compromises. That effort began on June 12th, 1776, when the Second Continental Congress resolved to appoint a committee of 13, a committee which would include one representative from each colony, to prepare a draft of a constitution for a union of the states.

John Dickinson of Pennsylvania served as chairman of the Committee of 13. The result, the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union of the States, was completed on November 15th, 1777. Dickinson and his cohort achieved consensus by including language guaranteeing that each state retained its sovereignty. It established a unicameral legislature with limited and clearly delineated powers. Once written and passed by the Congress, the individual states had to ratify the instrument by popular vote. It would take over three years before the Articles were ratified by all 13 colonies, finally taking effect on March 1st, 1781.

**BOUND AND DETERMINED**

Written over a two-year period, the Federalist Papers were not collected into one volume until 1788, after all 85 articles had been published in newspapers.

But six years later, dissatisfied with their dispersed governing power, the Congress approved a Constitutional Conventional to amend the Articles. Twelve states sent delegates; only Rhode Island declined. A quorum was achieved on May 25th, 1787. On September 17th, the Constitutional Convention signed the new Constitution and on September 28th, the Confederation Congress called for state ratifying conventions.

The first state to call for a ratifying Convention was Pennsylvania, with Rhode Island again declining to participate. Delaware ratified the new Constitution first, with Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, and Connecticut following close behind.

The conventions of Delaware, New Jersey, and Georgia voted for ratification unanimously. Pennsylvania and Connecticut and those that followed were more divided, with many offering amendments in the process.
The debate continued in the press, with various authors arguing for and against adopting the new governing document. Patriots of many stripes, eager to weigh in but wary of the risks they could face if publicly identified, took pen names to ensure anonymity. Writers “Cato,” and “Brutus,” for instance, took the anti-Federalist position, writing persuasively that the new constitution should be viewed skeptically.

In October of 1787, “Publius” wrote the first of the 85 Federalist Papers, promoting ratification of the strong federal government. Publius was the pseudonym shared by three Founding Fathers: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. Their essays, addressed to the “Voters of New York,” were published as a series in New York newspapers throughout 1787 and into the next year, and eventually published as a single volume in 1788, and distributed to the other states.

A noted thinker in the roiling debates over how best to design the new nation’s laws, James Madison was perhaps the most prolific author of all those who contributed to the Federalist Papers. He was also a confidante of George Washington, who reviewed his friend’s essays before publication. Dissatisfied with the weak national government established by the Articles of Confederation.

Madison then helped organize the Constitutional Convention. An influential voice at the Convention, Madison, with help from fellow Virginia delegate Edmund Randolph, devised what came to be called the Virginia Plan, and that framework served as the basis for the convention’s deliberations. He became one of the leaders in the movement to ratify the Constitution.
In Federalist No. 39, Madison gives us a clear understanding of the nature of our “federalism”; in Federalist No. 51, he expounds on the arguments for checks and balances; in Federalist No. 78, Hamilton lays the groundwork for the doctrine of judicial review by federal courts of both federal legislation or executive acts; and in Federalist No. 70, Hamilton presents the case for a one-man chief executive.

During the 1790s, Madison aligned himself with Thomas Jefferson against the Federalist faction, who were led by John Adams and Hamilton. Later, he served as Secretary of State in Jefferson’s cabinet, succeeding Jefferson as President in 1808.

Alexander Hamilton was a New Yorker, and had also been a close friend of George Washington during the Revolutionary War. Hamilton wrote over 50 of the essays in the Federalist. He became the first Secretary of Treasury in 1789, serving in Washington’s cabinet.

John Jay, another New York native, drafted that state’s first constitution in 1777, and was chosen president of the Continental Congress the following year. Shortly thereafter, Jay served as the key negotiator at the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which ended the American Revolutionary War and recognized the independence of the United States. Washington appointed Jay to the Supreme Court, where he served as the first chief justice in 1789.

In Federalist No. 1, Hamilton comments on the unique nature of the U.S. Constitution:

**STRICTLY ON BACKGROUND**
Under British rule, seditious libel was subject to corporal punishment. And in a fledgling nation without speech protections, the Federalist Papers’ authors took grave risks by expressing their political opinions.

“It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on accident and force.”

The Federalist Papers stand as a testament to the passions, spirited debate, and heady intellectual discourse that our nation’s founding charter arose out of, bearing fruit as the remarkable document that has served as our Constitution for 235 years.

For more information on the BHS Reading Program, go to the Program’s page on the Bennington Museum website: benningtonmuseum.org/programming-events/bennington-historical-society/the-bhs-reading-program/
About the BHS

The Bennington Historical Society is a volunteer-operated program of Bennington Museum based in the Regional History Room. Meetings take place on the first Monday of every month from 4:00 to 5:00 pm, but we encourage you to stop by the Regional History Room during our open hours to say hello and talk about projects that you might like to be involved in.

The Regional History Room is open Monday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons, 1-4 pm (by appointment when the Museum is closed January–March: library@benningtonmuseum.org).

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Make a gift to the BHS today to help keep our programming and newsletters free and frequent this coming year!
75 Main Street, Bennington, VT 05201
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BHS programming is made possible in part thanks to support from:

historia ad haec locui
Good Neighbors Make Good Fences

In March, Charles Dewey (at right) and Scott Maguire (left) set the last length of the Old First Church’s cemetery fence, at the corner of Main Street, into place. This was the final section repaired after the fence sustained storm damage in September, 2023. Charles repaired and restored the damaged sections, and is shown here reinstalling them. An emeritus member of our BHS Board, Charles has volunteered on many community projects throughout the years. For Scott, a one-time board member, the BHS is a family affair; his father-in-law is BHS member Joe Hall. —Judy Matz