



Bennington Historical Society News

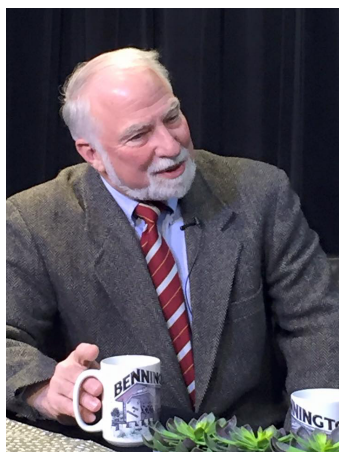
Religion Comes to Bennington: From the Puritans to the Separatists

Speaker: Don Miller

In our February presentation, Don Miller will trace the development of Bennington's religion as it appeared in 1761. Below is a summary of his talk:

The settlement of Bennington in 1761 was an extension of the Puritan migration which began in Boston in 1630. The Puritan migration spread first westward, then southward, and finally north to Vermont. Unlike the Pilgrims, the Puritans did not separate from the Church of England.

In 1636, Thomas Hooker led a band of followers to Hartford where they founded the Colony of Connecticut. In 1638, Hooker and friends wrote the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, the first written constitution in the New World. Among those who split from the Bay Colony at that time were the ancestors of our own Ethan Allen.



Don Miller, BHS President

These Puritans weren't the first settlers in Connecticut. Windsor, Hartford, and Wethersfield all made claims to settlement in 1633. And, there were settlers along the Connecticut coast even before that. What was unique about the Puritan migration was that they intended to create a faith-based community and a civil authority side-by-

side. The leaders of the church and the community were often the same individuals. Taxes raised by the civil authority helped fund the church.

In addition to building a church, the local government would lay out roads and boundaries and provide for a meeting house and schoolhouses. Then, grist mills and sawmills needed to be built. Connecticut obtained its royal colonial charter in 1663.

About the same time, Roger Williams and his followers settled in Providence, Rhode Island. Unlike the popular Hooker, Williams was often at issue with his colleagues in Boston. He was especially concerned about the way the Puritans treated the native leaders. The Rhode Island communities were slower to organize at the community level, but they did obtain a royal charter in 1663. Not surprisingly, the Providence churches followed a Baptist path rather than
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the mainline Protestant denominations.

The churches maintained some consistency and control through adopting agreements like the Cambridge Platform, a doctrine describing the system of church government.

The Great Awakening in the 1730s stirred the pot. Leaders like Jonathan Edwards of Northampton and the itinerant minister George Whitefield reenergized the Puritan churches. The "New Lights" battled the "Old Lights" to bring new excitement and new expectations to the life of the church. The established elements of the church often resisted.

In churches like those in Hardwick, Sunderland, and Westfield, Massachusetts, the New Lights separated, forming new churches across town. The Separatists became disenchanted when they learned that the town's tax money would not be shared with their new Separatist church: only the established church would continue to receive a tax subsidy. What could they do?

With the end of the French and Indian War, it became more feasible to move north into Vermont. The threat of Indian attacks had diminished. Enterprising leaders like Samuel Robinson found a pool of land titles available through the New Hampshire Governor, Benning Wentworth. In June of 1761, the first 22 settlers arrived in Bennington, eager to form their own faith community. Vermont and Bennington were born.

Hear more on Sunday, February 16 at 2:00 in the Paresky Education Center at the Museum. 🐼

Research in the Museum Library by Tyler Resch

Most regional museums, it's fair to say, do not include a library for patrons to use. Bennington Museum is unusual in this way, and its library has become a great asset to the greater community.

For many years since it began in 1961, the museum's library has been known for its genealogical collection. During its early years, more than 1,000 patrons signed in each year to look into their family history. As a result, large quantities of research material have been developed and archived. Since the growth of the Internet and expansion of such programs as Ancestry.com and Family Search, that kind of patronage has declined.

Nonetheless, because a great deal of research has been filed away, the residue of years of genealogical research is still available on paper in twenty-four deep file drawers – material that is not available online. This material has been divided into separate files of New England family history research, with another file on correspondence since the early 1960s, with the questions asked and their replies indicated.

When Vermont was first settled, in the timeframe of 1760 to 1790, its European population virtually exploded from near zero to 85,000. That number doubled, and doubled again. Then there was a gradual turnaround as settlers found land elsewhere that had fewer rocks and mountains and a warmer climate. The typical pattern was for Vermonters to relocate in New York State, stay for a while, and then move on west to settle the Midwestern states such as Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa. In the second half of the twentieth century, hundreds of the original Vermont descendants have been delighted to find documentation of their ancestors in the Bennington Museum's library. Librarian Tyler Resch has handled inquiries and

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"Research," continued from p. 2

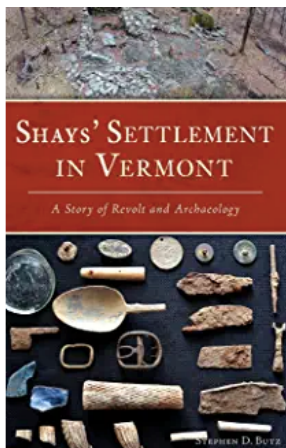
correspondence from every state in the nation.

Libraries today are heavily invested in digitizing, so a continuing question for the Bennington Museum's library is to what extent its collections should be made available online. The library's most distinguished collection, the Harwood Diaries, thirteen thick volumes of them, have been digitized and are available on benningtonmuseum.org or just by googling the name. Other digitizing projects are being considered.

The library is open Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, from 1 to 5, for those who pay admission to the museum or are members of the museum. For those who need help with their research, Tyler is always available. 🐼

Stephen Butz Discusses Daniel Shays' Town Site

At our November meeting, Stephen Butz described how he learned the location of what is apparently the site where Daniel Shays and some of his "Regulators" settled after escaping from Massachusetts.



Shays, who had been an officer throughout the Revolution, led a group of farmers against the State of Massachusetts because these ex-soldiers, men who had not been paid for all their service, were in debt and likely to lose their properties. In January, 1787, when the Regulators attempted to attack the armory in Springfield, they were driven away, with four of them killed, and escaped to Vermont. In April, about 100 of them gathered in Shaftsbury and Arlington, then the capitol of Vermont. In January 1788, Shays purchased land somewhere in Sandgate.

Butz had been shown what people in the area knew as "the Fort" on Egg Mountain outside

Sandgate and became intrigued. So he got permission to excavate, and since then has led 119 students in grades 9 to 12 in 16 summer archaeology programs.

They have noted that the back wall of "the Fort" apparently was never completed, and they have discovered a number of house foundations, a mill foundation, and a tavern foundation. Butz believes foundation 5 may have been Shays' home. Artifacts include bones from cows, sheep, goats, poultry, and wolves. All buildings show evidence of fire, so the cause of the fire became one of the mysteries for them to solve.

Shays officially sold his property to John Bay in 1788. It's likely that Shays was able to openly sell his property because the Shaysites were pardoned in that year.

Butz believes the reason for the evidence of fire may lie in the following: In 1813, typhus, dysentery, or "the Black Death" broke out in the area. Many died. A "standing stone" grave they found may contain some of those who died then. So all the buildings may have been burned as an attempt to clean out the disease. In fact, "Egg Mountain," where the buildings were discovered, may originally have been called Ague Mountain, in memory of the disease.

To view Butz's presentation, go to: <https://benningtonhistory.org/archived-presentations/2019-2/936-2/> To learn more, read Butz's book, *Shays' Settlement in Vermont: A Story of Revolt and Archaeology*. 🐼

To learn more about the Shays' settlement, view Dick Smith's two-part program depicting his visit to the site on the following:

- History. . .Where it Happened: Shays' Rebellion, part one: <https://gnat-tv.org/history-where-it-happened-shays-rebellion-part-one-10-30-15/>
- History. . .Where it Happened: Shays' Rebellion, part two: <https://gnat-tv.org/history-where-it-happened-shays-rebellion-part-two-11-09-15/>

Reminiscences of Charlotte Lyons

Born July 12, 1888 died Nov. 11, 1977

In 1975, Charles Dewey sat down with his great-Aunt Charlotte and a tape recorder. This is his transcript of part of their conversations. It serves as a good reminder for all of us to capture such memories before they are lost.

My great-Aunt Charlotte was a dignified lady with a generous and sympathetic heart whose amusing stories over cookies and milk entertained family and friends in a rich tradition of neighborliness. Her stories encompass the nostalgic past of Bennington, Vermont, in which my family and our ancestors have lived for generations. When I asked her to recall some of her experiences with horses and carriages, she gladly related the following episodes.

I was seven years old at the most. I don't know if I was even that. I wasn't in school at the time. I remember that the 'Talley-Ho's' used to come down from the Walloomsac Inn with six horses. Sometimes, it would only be four. Then again it would be six. There would be three in a seat, all ladies, and they were always elderly ladies. They would be sitting straight up with their little small parasols, no bigger than that.

Up front next to the driver was a man who blew a coach horn. He always played a tune when he went past the farm or came to a road crossing so people knew that they were coming. And we would scoot through the tall grass to watch them go by.

They would go to Williamstown for dinner and then come back. We could always hear them coming. Every time they came to a junction in the road, the coach horn would be blown, and we would all dash to see it again. That went on for a number of years.

We had a lot of fun in those days, but we worked, too. Every morning there were six lamps lined up on the pantry shelf. It was my job to clean the chimneys and to fill them with kerosene before I went to school. It was my brother's job to fill the wood box, and if I was fortunate enough to finish early, I helped fill the wood box, too.

When we came home from school, the wood box would be near empty. So, we had to fill it again. We all toted wood.

We didn't have any refrigerator then, so we stored the winter's food in the cellar. Father lined the cellar walls with barrels of apples, potatoes, salt pork, and other things.

Online Research in Internet Collections

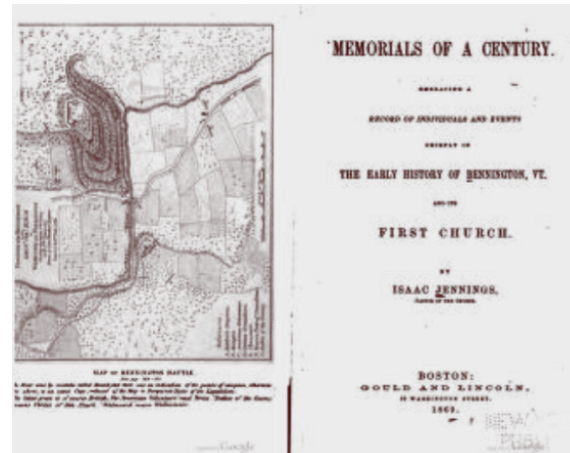
by Stephen Beck

The following websites provide free online access to original records and older publications about Bennington (and everywhere). All three are not-for-profits with added benefits for joining, but membership is not required for access.

1. **Family Search:** familysearch.org provides free access to early Vermont town records, including Bennington, from anywhere. Click on Search > Catalog. In the search box, type "Bennington, Vermont" for a list of available records. Sponsored by the LDS/Mormon Church (officially, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), but with no need to be a member, FamilySearch is in a multi-year process of putting all their millions of microfilmed records online. Records not yet accessible from home (denoted by a key icon) can be viewed at local Family History Centers, which can be located in the "Site Map" at the bottom of the webpage under "Get Help." Eventually, all records will be accessible from home.

2. **Congregational Library and Archives:** Congregationallibrary.org provides free access to original church records and other historical materials, including digital images of Bennington's First Church records, now held at the Bennington Museum Library. Original records can be searched by locality. Click on Digital Collections > New England's Hidden Histories, to link to an interactive map with the locations of the original records available digitally, including the [The Bennington First Church records](#).

3. **The Internet Archive:** archive.org provides free access to 20+ million books and other texts published over 70 years ago, thus no longer under copyright, for online reading or free downloads, including virtually all older histories and most genealogies related to Bennington. Those include Isaac Jennings, *Memorials of a Century*; Abby Maria



Book image from the Internet Archive

Hemenway's, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*; and E. B. O'Callaghan's, *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*; as well as the classic local histories of Hardwick, Sunderland, and Norwich, origins of Bennington's first settlers. Besides out of copyright texts, the Internet Archive hosts full-length documentary videos, like the lecture series by the Bennington Historical Society and the Old First Church on Catamount Access TV.

If you need any research help, please let me know. From obscure historical documents to basic fact-checking, I can help a lot from New York City. Email: stephenbeck1959@gmail.com 📧

Help Tell the Story of the Suffrage Movement in Bennington County

Do you have any photos, letters, newspaper articles, or family stories about the suffrage movement in Vermont?

If so, please send an email to Raymond Rodrigues (raymond_rodrigues@msn.com)

From the BHS President, Don Miller

2020 is upon us. It's a year in which we will mark some important events. February has President's Day and is Black History Month. I will present a talk titled "Religion Comes to Bennington: From the Puritans to the Separatists" on February 16 at 2:00 pm at the Bennington Museum. The talk is not to be missed. Free admission.

The opening ceremonies of the 400th anniversary of the landing at Plymouth Rock take place on April 24, 2020. The Pilgrims gave us the rock, but not much else. Our settlement owes its roots to the Puritans from the Massachusetts Bay Colony who followed the Pilgrims by about 10 years. Still, Plymouth was a significant event for all who looked to the New World with hope and expectation. The opening ceremony will be followed up by an official Maritime Salute on the weekend of June 27-28.

March 15 will be the Maine Statehood Day, the 200th anniversary of the Maine statehood which was created as a part of the Compromise of 1820. The youngest of the New England states, Maine was a colony within a colony. (Note: Vermont never was a colony.) There will be a Sailing Ships Festival June 21-July 20 up and down the Maine coast. On October 10-12, there will an "Innovation Expo" in Bangor, 40 minutes north of Ellsworth, Maine, from which our Museum's new director, Joshua Campbell Torrance, is coming. 🍷

The BHS Hosts History Day Contest

Once again, the BHS will host the History Day Contest for high school students. The students who write the top three papers will be encouraged to enter the Vermont History Day Contest hosted by the Vermont Historical Society in April in Burlington.

Top papers in the Vermont contest will be eligible for the National History Week Contest in Washington DC in June. The topic will be "Breaking Barriers." The papers will be evaluated based on how well the students analyze and interpret their subject.

Each year, the Mount Anthony Union High School Students (MAUHS) have qualified for the National Contest. MAUHS has sent one student to the Washington event in each of the last three years.

Bennington Historical Society

A volunteer-operated program of Bennington Museum

Officers: Don Miller, President; Bob Tegart, President-Elect; Bill Morgan, Immediate Past President; Charles Dewey, Secretary.

Committee Members: Anne Bugbee, Beverley Petrelis, Joe Hall, Ted Bird, Jackie Marro, Scott Maguire, Ray Rodrigues.

Newsletter Editor: Ray Rodrigues

*Thank you for your donation to Bennington Museum in support of
Historical Society programs.*