



## Bennington Historical Society News

**Next Program:** *Anne Sullivan* portrayed by  
Phyllis Chapman

**March 15, 2020 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**  
**Ada Paresky Education Center of the**  
**Bennington Museum**

### Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller's Teacher

*Anne Sullivan*, Helen Keller's teacher, is portrayed by Phyllis Chapman in the next Bennington Historical Society presentation.

Anne Sullivan couldn't have had the odds stacked against her any higher. Born in poverty, orphaned and partially blind, she was sent to live in a gruesome poor house.

After graduating from the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, she took on a formidable task: educating the young deaf and blind Helen Keller in Alabama. That she succeeded was not a miracle but the result of taming an angry, frustrated child and using innovative teaching methods that enabled Helen to learn and communicate.

Helen, with Anne's assistance, graduated from Radcliffe College and became an accomplished writer and humanitarian. Together she and Anne advocated for educational opportunities for people with disabilities.

Not only does Ms. Chapman present the life story of Ms. Sullivan, but she involves the audience in the process.



Phyllis Chapman as Anne Sullivan

Phyllis Chapman is the founder of Vintage Ladies Presentations, which offers living history presentations of strong women who have made a difference.

### In this Issue

|   |   |
|---|---|
| "Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller's Teacher" . . . | 1 |
| "Historic Parish Moments". . . . .            | 2 |
| Don Miller's February Talk . . . . .          | 2 |
| "Lydius's Otter Creek Tract". . . . .         | 3 |
| Help Us Identify These Photos . . . . .       | 4 |
| Crossword Puzzle. . . . .                     | 5 |
| Vermont's Presidential Elections . . . . .    | 6 |

## Historic Parish Moments

by Bob Tegar

In 1859, there were about 25 French-Canadian families living in Bennington. This number would fluctuate based on the economy and the state of the local textile



industry. Over the next 30 years, with the booming economy and growth of the textile industry in the area, the French-Canadian population grew dramatically. That population

more than quadrupled by 1880.

These French-Canadian families attended services at the St. Francis de Sales Church in Old Bennington; however they yearned for their own parish and pastor where they could worship in their native language. In July of 1880, they sought out Rev. Joseph Brouillet in Albany to come and offer a French Mass for their community.

The early masses were offered in the home of Leon Lamarre on School Street. However, they quickly outgrew that location and services were moved to the Noyes building on Main Street. The number of parishioners grew and about 200 people attended these masses.

By 1883 it was clear that a proper church was needed for the parish and land was purchased on School Street. Fundraising efforts were conducted and the monies were used to build a 30' x 60' wooden church on the site. The church was dedicated in 1885 by Bishop Louis de Goesbriand and served the French-Canadian community until 1929, when a new chapel and school were built on School Street.

## Don Miller's February Talk on Religious History

Last month Don Miller described the religious history that eventually led to the forming of the Old First Church (see the [November newsletter](#)). Here is his outline of that history:

- 1629 Massachusetts Bay Company charter a joint stock venture. Colonists start migration to Boston, including Deweys. Allens join the Massachusetts Bay Colony in Boston.
- 1636 Thomas Hooker leads a group to Hartford. Hooker writes Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. Roger Williams leads a group to Providence.
- 1643 Parliament calls Church Leaders to Westminster.
- 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith, establishes order.
- 1648 Cambridge Platform: Congregational of biblical origin follows Westminster Confession, with exceptions. Savoy Declaration, English Congregations order set follows Cambridge Platform, with minor changes.
- 1662 Half-Way Covenant—allows partial membership.
- 1662 Act of Uniformity establishes Church of England as only legally approved church in England and Congregational and others as “Nonconformist.”
- 1708 Saybrook Platform replaces Cambridge Platform in CT; creates county-wide oversight; rejects One-Way.
- 1733 Jonathan Edwards and Great Awakening (Revival).
- 1761 Samuel Robinson leads Separatists to Bennington.
- 1763 Jedidiah Dewey called to lead Bennington Separatists. Remember Baker and Seth Warner move from Connecticut.

## Lydius's Otter Creek Tract: Did he give Benning Wentworth the idea?

by Tyler Resch

Recent visitors to the museum's library were a couple from Fort Edward, N.Y., who dug into an episode of eighteenth century regional history that will need further exploration. Conducting research for a book, they came to inspect a series of handwritten documents dealing with the bold real-estate schemer John Henry Lydius, who chartered lands in today's Vermont several years before Benning Wentworth did – and perhaps even gave Benning the idea.

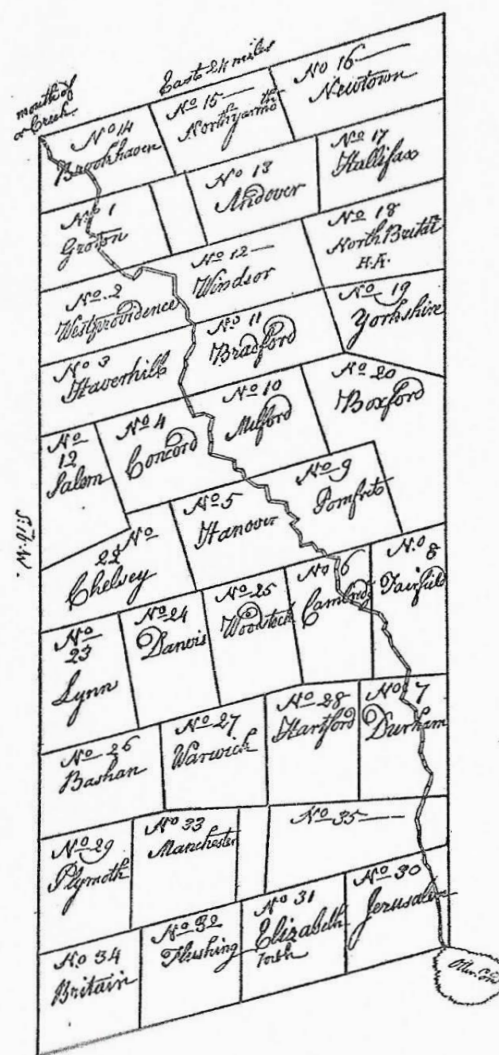
Lydius was an early Indian trader and so-called land jobber who was born in Albany, N.Y., in 1694 and lived to the age of 98, so he spanned nearly the entire eighteenth century. Hiland Hall's "Early History of Vermont" describes Lydius as a character of dubious repute who was at one point suspected of carrying on an illicit trade with the English, was tried as a spy, and in 1730 was banished.

But Lydius bounced back to Albany, and in 1732 produced a document purporting to prove that he had purchased two parcels of land described by Hall as "of most extravagant dimensions." One of them was called the Otter Creek tract, located east of Lake Champlain, which measured 58 miles in length north-south and 24 miles wide, east-west. It spanned the entire length of Otter Creek, from Dorset in the south to Ferrisburg in the north.

Lydius claimed to have purchased lands from the Mohawk Indians, on which he chartered 35 townships in today's Bennington, Rutland, and Addison counties, and offered them for sale to would-be settlers. Each town, like Wentworth's, had 36 square miles and a name, plus a number. The only township ever settled was called Durham, No. 7, which later became one of New York's many "paper towns" and after that became Wentworth's town of Clarendon.

As his authority for this action, Lydius claimed in 1744 to have the backing of Governor Shirley of Massachusetts, whose confidant he had become. Except for the Durham situation, nothing became of Lydius's towns in today's Vermont. Author Hall concluded of him, "His land claims certainly have a bad odor."

We look forward to the book that this New York couple from Fort Edward is planning to write.



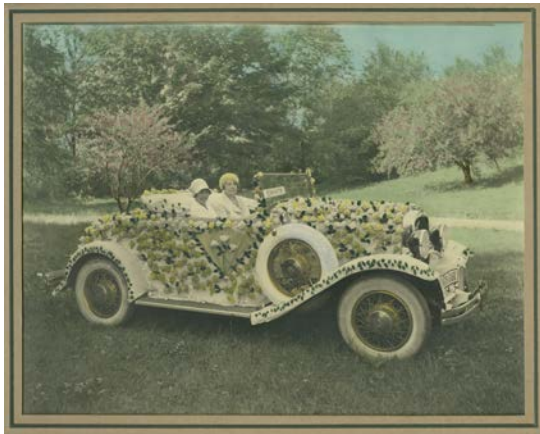
Credit: Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society  
Vol. 1, No. 4, December 1930, 178.



## Can You Provide Information About These Photos?

by Jamie Franklin

In the mid-1900s Bob Weichert started collecting historic photographs of Bennington, work later continued by Tordis Isselhardt. The collection includes images of Bennington's streets, people, businesses, and buildings, dating largely from between 1870 and 1940. In 2019 the Museum purchased approximately 200 from this collection. Our plan is to present approximately 30 of them in an exhibition later this year, but we need your help. The images have been already been catalogued by the museum, with digital images that are accessible online. We'd love the community's feedback on these images as we plan for the exhibition and make our selection of highlights. You can access the images and much of what we already know about them using this web address: <https://tinyurl.com/rt45twv> If you have any information to share please contact our collections manager, Callie Raspuzzi, at [craspuzzi@benningtonmuseum.org](mailto:craspuzzi@benningtonmuseum.org) or 802.447.1571 x 214.



B & B Studio (Blanche Boscoe and Clara Brown)  
Bennington Garage car at parade celebrating the  
opening of the Ethan Allen Highway, 1930  
Hand colored gelatin print, 12" X 14"  
Museum Purchase, from the Weichert-Isselhardt  
Collection

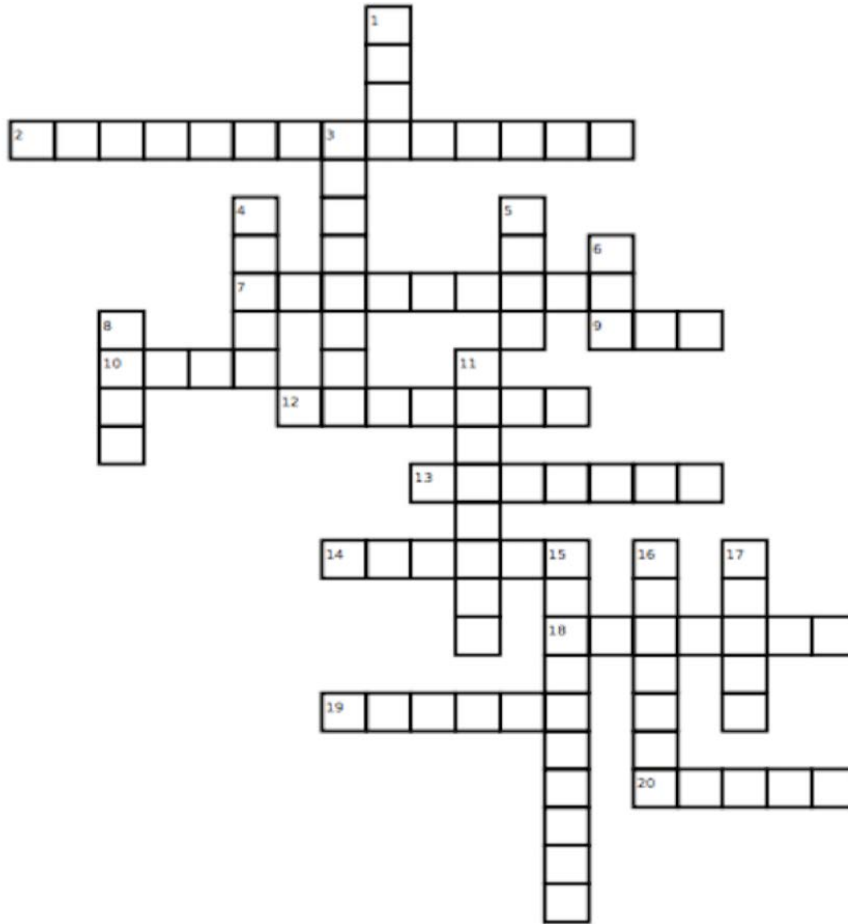


F.J. Taylor & Co.  
John Ayers Taylor Shop, ca. 1885  
Albumen print, 4.25" x 6.5"  
Museum Purchase, from the Weichert-Isselhardt  
Collection



Eli S. Gokay  
Bennington Battle Monument under construction,  
1887-1888  
Albumen print, 5.25" x 8.5"  
Museum Purchase, from the Weichert-Isselhardt  
Collection

# Bennington History



## Down:

1. Hosp.
3. People disappeared here
4. Early morning minister?
5. Hiland's son-in-law
6. Org. explores the past
8. 25th Governor
11. New Museum director
15. Revolutionary troublemaker
16. New York opponents
17. He thought he knew whose woods these were

## Across:

2. Architectural icon in Bennington
7. Colonial governor
9. Defunct coll.
10. Gazetteer author
12. 14th state
13. Elder Moses
14. Freezing swim
18. Farmer diarist
19. Early pottery maker
20. Molly's husband

*Puzzle by Ray Rodrigues. Answers will be included in next month's newsletter.*

From the BHS Newsletter Editor:

## **Vermont's Presidential Election History**

These days, most people think of Vermont as being a very liberal state. But it wasn't always that way. In fact, ever since the Republican party was created in 1854 up until 1964, Vermont always voted for the Republican Presidential candidate. Vermont and Maine even voted against Franklin D. Roosevelt every time he ran for President!

Prior to 1854, Vermonters voted for Federalists, such as John Adams; Democratic-Republicans, such as James Monroe; once for a National Republican—John Quincy Adams; once for the Anti-Masonic candidate William Wirt; and several times for Whigs such as Benjamin Harrison.

Why does Vermont seem so liberal these days that it tends to favor Democrats for President? One reason is that the Republican Party in its early days was more liberal than the Democrats. In the 1940's, though, the Republican party began to splinter due to in-fighting. In the 1950's, the rural population, which tended to be more conservative than urban areas, began to decline. Some would argue that the influx of hippies in the 1960's really contributed to the liberal leanings of Vermont. But if you look at which parties our governors came from, there's no consistency at all. Perhaps someone reading this would like to give a talk to the Society someday and straighten all this out?

### **Upcoming Programs**

Bennington Historical Society  
"Campaign to Bennington," by Eric Schnitzer  
Ada Paresky Education Center of the Bennington Museum  
April 19, 2020

AAUW Centennial Program: Sojourner Truth  
"Ain't I a Woman," by re-enactor Kathryn Woods  
Bennington Performing Arts Center — Home of Oldcastle Theatre  
March 21 at 2:00 pm

### **Bennington Historical Society**

*A volunteer-operated program of the 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.*