



Bennington Historical Society News

Next Program: "The Colgate Family of Bennington"
Presenter: Bill Morgan
November 18 at 2:00 pm
Ada Pareski Education Center of the Bennington Museum.

The Colgate Family of Bennington

Bill Morgan, President of this historical society, will talk about James C. Colgate and his place in Bennington's history.

James C. Colgate founded Fillmore Farms in 1892 when he purchased 3000 acres from Elijah Filmore. Dorset sheep were important in the early years of Fillmore Farms. For many years, the farms raised prize-winning Horned Dorset sheep.

The fifteen farms on the land included a cow barn that became Fairdale Farms Dairy Bar and Restaurant. It is now the Vermont Confectionery, the ice cream, cheese, and candy shop on West Road in Bennington.



Colgate grandmother with James' and Hope's three oldest girls.

The 400 acres on the eastern end of the property, now Camelot Village, was originally called the Hubbel Farm, in honor of his wife Hope's ancestor, Aaron Hubbel, who established a farm on that location in 1781.

The Colgate family's mansion was called "Ben Venue." Even after their mansion was torn down, the family continued to support the town by making the stones from the building available for the construction of the Bennington Museum.

Charles C. Jones, a Bennington resident, was the superintendent of the Colgate estate. Jones was on the Titanic when it sank in 1912.

For more information on the Colgate property, see Joe Hall's *Bygone Bennington*. If you would like an introduction to the Colgate family, refer to local resident Cindy Butler's Facebook page, "A Sense of Place—the James C. Colgate family of Bennington, Vermont" (<http://www.facebook.com/senseofplace.colgate>).

In This Issue

- "The Colgate Family of Bennington" 1
- How to Search Local Newspapers 2-3
- View Past Presentations 3
- Gallery on Fire 3
- Ochre Mines in Bennington 4
- Upcoming Programs 5
- President's Column 6

How to Search Local Newspapers

by Robert Tegart

Newspapers are a great source of information for researching local history. They are the heartbeat of the community and provide good insight into the life of a community. There are several ways to use the papers for your research:

Hard Copy Versions: One way is to use the actual hard copy available in the Bennington Free Library. There are issues available from 1900 to about 1953. However, they are very fragile and bulky, making them hard, almost impossible, to use.

Microfilm Versions: These papers have been microfilmed and are available at the Library and also at the Bennington Museum Research Room. The Museum has the issues from 1779 to 1884 and the Library from 1885 to the present day. These are easily viewed using the microfilm readers at each location. The Bennington Library has an index.

Digital Versions: Over the last few years, thousands of newspapers across the world have been digitized and made available online at Newspapers.com.

Vermont residents can get online access to newspapers at The Vermont State website. This site has papers from 56 Vermont towns — including Bennington—from 1789 to the present.

The Bennington Banner

The Bennington Daily Banner

The Daily Banner

The Daily News

The Journal of the Times

The Otter Creek Valley News

The Vermont Centennial

The Vermont Gazette (from 1789)

The Vermont Gazette

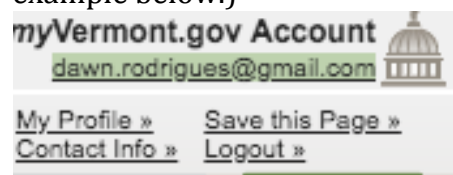
The Weekly Bennington Banner

At this time *The Bennington Banner* issues from 1922 to present day are available only at the Bennington Free Library on microfilm.

To view these papers you need to set up an account:

(1) Go to <http://www.vermont.gov/portal> and click on “not logged in” in the upper right hand corner. You’ll be taken to a new screen to create a MyVermont.gov account. After filling in the requested information, click “create my account.”

(2) Go to <https://www.vermont.gov/myvermont/> and sign into your new MyVermont.gov account. Note: Before searching for newspapers, you will need to fill in personal information to let the system know you are a Vermonter. (See example below.)



To search for newspapers:

Click on Newspapers.com in the Featured Item box (See below).

Featured Item

Courtesy of the [Vermont State Archives and Records Administration](#) and its partners, Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com, Vermonters have free access to Vermont records and Vermont historical newspapers when accessing the following Vermont Only links through the MyVermont.gov portal.

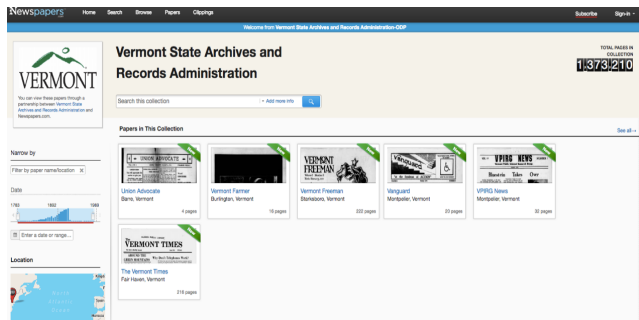
[Ancestry.com](#) (Vermont Records Only)

[Newspapers.com](#) (Vermont Newspapers Only)

Please note that Ancestry.com requires users to open a Free Account to access Vermont records through this link. After creating a Free Account, it is recommended that users first log into their Ancestry.com Free Account and then go through the MyVermont.gov portal to access the above Vermont Records Only link.

You will be able to refine your search. If, for example, you want to search for Edward Everett, just enter his name in the search box. The search feature is nice, as the researcher can narrow the search to topic, year or month. You can set the system up to download clippings.

The newspaper system is very user-friendly. It is by far the best system to research Bennington newspapers. The librarians at both the Museum and the Library are always ready to help.



Example of search box in Newspapers.com

If you need help setting up your account or getting started, you can also contact Bob Tegart (btgart@gmail.com) to make an appointment

Corridor Art Galley on Fire

by Don Miller with Beverly Petrelis

During December, the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center will feature an exhibit on the Bennington Fire Departments in their Corridor Art Gallery.

The exhibit pays tribute to the volunteer fire fighters who have given so much time and talent protecting our community over the years.

"We have 9 fire fighting units organized within the Bennington fire department and the Bennington Rural Fire Departments," according to Bev Petrelis, the BHS project coordinator for

this project. The Bennington Fire Department has four companies, all located in the fire station on River Street. Each has its own management and its own equipment. Each company retains its historic name:

- Hook and Ladder Company
- Stark Hose Company
- H. W. Putnam Hose Company
- Eagle Hose Company

The Bennington Rural Fire Department has 5 companies, each located in their own facility, e.g., Orchard Street and Beech Street.

"Having volunteer firemen saves the town about \$3,000,000 per year. The town does pay for the equipment and the uniforms. Becoming a volunteer fire fighter is not easy. Each candidate must pass a background check and complete 280 hours of training," said Petrelis.

"Each year the hospital Auxiliary asks local nonprofit organizations to prepare exhibits for the Gallery. The exhibits are then installed for the month of December."

For the past 20 years, Bev Petrelis has designed, produced, and installed an exhibit on behalf of the Bennington Historical Society. The idea of featuring the volunteer firefighters came to Bev after she and Jackie Marro encouraged the fire department to tell its story at one of the BHS monthly presentations, which is available online at <https://benningtonhistory.org/archived-presentations/>.



This colorized photo shows a steam pump on Main Street in Bennington, circa 1900.

Ochre Mines in Bennington

by Victor Rolando

Ochre is a natural type clay which is a mixture of iron oxides and varying amounts of clay and sand, ranging in color from yellow to deep orange, red, and brown. Its use goes back to paleolithic time when it was used for body paint, cave paintings, and burials. By medieval times it was mixed with oils for use as building paint.

In colonial America its resilience to weathering made it the popular choice for painting barns, especially the color red. Its



Ochre Mine in Bennington

coverage was so tenacious that when one owner started removing sections of aluminum siding from his historic

Bennington house he discovered it had been coated with ochre paint and had to give up trying to paint over or scraping it off and left the aluminum siding up.

Ochre mining and processing sites in Bennington are shown in the 1869 Beers map, mainly in two places. One is an area a mile or so west of today's Furnace Grove, or where today's eastern end of the Bennington Bypass drops downhill to meet Route 9 heading to Woodford. The other site runs northward parallel to Furnace Brook to just over the town line into Shaftsbury.

Many years ago I inspected both sides of the river from Furnace Grove to a mile downstream and found no surface evidence of the ochre processing plants that historical records indicated in that area. I did, however, see what appeared to be two or three man-made shallow, but significant-size holes, along the north shore of the river, but could not tell for sure if they were ochre or iron deposits (at the time I knew nothing of ochre deposits paralleling Furnace Brook). I found no surface evidence of any buildings, industrial or not, on the south side of the river. Much of the stream-side area behind present buildings on the north side of Route 9 is flat, quite muddy

during rain seasons, and buggy. Many medium-to-large random stones lay here and there, including a few sections of what appeared to have been foundation walls that offered hints of something having been there. The river has fallen victim to many freshets down through the years that essentially wiped out all visible surface evidence of the extensive mining and mineral processing.

Deposits of ochre were usually found in association with deposits of kaolin, which is a pure-white type stone that when crushed found use in the pottery industry. Kaolin mined and processed in eastern Bennington was used by the Norton Pottery and the US Pottery, both of which operated along today's Park Street (formerly Pottery Street), and as a filler for candy!

Also associated with ochre and kaolin deposits were thrust faults and natural springs. The faults generally ran north-south but some east-west and variants in between. These parallel-running geologic features are generally found along the western base of the Green Mountains. Although the line of kaolin and ochre deposits continues northward from Pownall all the way up the valley to Colchester, an exception is a huge kaolin deposit in 1960 at Monkton.

Nineteenth and early 20th century commercial development of these deposits were mainly limited to areas in Bennington and Shaftsbury. The associated faults also line up to some degree by Sand Springs in Williamstown, various active mineral springs in and around Bennington, South Wallingford, Clarendon Springs, Forestdale, *etc.*, which in some places supported late nineteenth century cottage industries in spas.

Editor's note: Victor Rolando is an avocational industrial archeology researcher and author of *200 Years of Soot and Sweat: The History and Archeology of Vermont's Iron, Charcoal, and Lime Industries*.

View the Past Presentations of the Bennington Historical Society on Video

Would you enjoy viewing a presentation from way back to 2012? Just go to: <https://benningtonhistory.org/> and enjoy yourself. The archived presentations are listed in the right hand column. Each month, the newsletter will feature several of these past talks.

The Russell Collection at the Arlington Library (December 2013)

Bill Budde's presentation to the Bennington Historical Society in December, 2013, focused on the George Russell Collection of Vermontiana. Mr. Budde curated the Russell Collection at the Arlington Library. Dr. Russell started collecting books, journals, newspaper clippings, and other Vermont memorabilia as a young boy. His collecting lasted a lifetime and eventually he had impressive documents on Vermont history and the town of Arlington from the early days of its settlement. The collection is housed in a special room in the Arlington Library that is open to the public for research.

See <https://benningtonhistory.org/archived-presentations/archived-presentations-2013/russell-vermontiana/>

The "Big Mill" of Bennington (May 2014)

Jon Goodrich, the owner of the "Big Mill" in Bennington, Vermont, gave a fascinating presentation on the history of the mill to the Bennington Historical Society at the group's May 2014 meeting. The mill, which today is over 200,000 square feet, was built in 1863-1865. The mill made wool shawls which went out of fashion after a few years, starting the mill's long history of boom and bust.

See: <https://benningtonhistory.org/archived-presentations/archived-presentations-2014/the-big-mill/>

Bennington Cemeteries (May 2018)

Take a virtual tour! Join Bill Morgan and Ann Bugbee as they take us on a bus tour of Bennington cemeteries in 2018, discussing the history of each cemetery and people buried there, both prominent and ordinary citizens. See <https://benningtonhistory.org/archived-presentations/2018-2/bennington-cemeteries/>

John Stark Maverick General (August 2013)

John Stark was the General leading Americans at the Battle of Bennington.

In his presentation, Ben Rose, author of *John Stark: Maverick General*, talks to the Bennington Historical Society in August 2013 about his newly published book. Stark played a decisive role in defeating the British at the Battle of Bennington.

See <https://benningtonhistory.org/archived-presentations/archived-presentations-2013/john-stark-maverick-general/>

Upcoming Programs

November 18 at 2:00 pm

The Colgate Family of Bennington
(See cover story)

February 19, 2019 at 2:00 pm

"The Two Streetcars." Presented by Bob Hoar. Hoar will discuss how the Berkshire system, connecting to Bennington with such fine cars as the "Berkshire Hills," could link to the Midwest through the Oneida railway system.

Coming in the Spring: Programs on "The Colonial Storehouse" and "History of the Bennington Police Department"

President's Message

by Bill Morgan

Dear members,

Welcome to the third issue of the Bennington Historical Society Newsletter. I am pleased to report that in addition to our October program which featured Ted Bird's presentation about Bennington's "Eateries" of the past, we held our annual election of officers. Charles Dewey was re-elected as Secretary of the Society for another two year term and four board members were elected for the same term: Jackie Marro, Scott Maguire, Ted Bird, and Bob Tegart. We always pride ourselves on having the shortest business meetings in Vermont and this year was no exception.



The past year saw the publication of two monographs from the Bennington Historical Society. One was a re-issue of John Spargo's 1945 book, *The Story of David Redding Who Was Hanged*. This book tells the little-known story of the Tory who was hanged in 1778 as a British spy. Spargo makes a strong case outlining Redding's efforts on behalf of the British during the Revolution and suggests that he was actually a soldier performing his duty and not a spy working undercover against the colonists. If that were the case he was hung illegally. Ethan Allen famously presided over his execution on the village green in Old Bennington, but the book tells even more about this fascinating case, detailing how Redding's body was not even afforded a proper burial for 200 years. His skeleton was used as an anatomical model for college students and later placed in storage at the Bennington Museum until it was properly interred in the cemetery next to the Old First Church during the American Bicentennial.

The second book is *Bygone Bennington* by Joseph Hall which collects the scripts of more than a hundred of his weekly radio programs broadcast over WBTN. The book is richly illustrated with photographs that bring each of his stories about local people and places to life. Some of the episodes relate to incidents that we can all remember and some evoke the far distant past and a way of life that has long-since vanished. Joe has generously turned the proceeds from the sale of the book over to the Historical Society. Both of these books are available in the Bennington Museum gift shop.

We also want to thank Ray Rodrigues for founding and editing this newsletter. The first few issues have offered us a new opportunity to be in touch with our membership and the future issues promise to be even more informative. A tip of the hat to Ray for his dedication to the cause of Bennington history, we are much indebted to him.

So it has been a busy year for the Bennington Historical Society and 2019 promises to be an even more active one. After our November 18 program, our next program will be in February. We hope you will all join us for our programs and become more involved with preserving the history of our town.

Bennington Historical Society Board Members

Officers: Bill Morgan, President; Don Miller, Vice-President; Charles Dewey, Secretary; Joe Hall, Treasurer; Immediate Past President, Ann Bugbee

Members: Anne Bugbee, Beverley Petrelis, Ted Bird, Jackie Marro, Jane Radocchia, Don Miller, Scott Maguire, Bob Tegart, Ray Rodrigues