



September 2018

Bennington Historical Society News

“Practical Geometry—What’s That?”

Knowledge your ancestors used for construction that was lost during the Industrial Revolution

September 16 at 2:00 pm at the Bennington Museum

Using our local buildings as examples, Jane Radocchia will illustrate how early framers of our houses, churches, and barns assured that their measurements and constructions were accurate and trustworthy. House-wrights, joiners, and masons used geometry for layout and design in the Western World until the late 19th century. Taught through the apprenticeship system--by hands-on teaching rather than through the written word--Practical Geometry and facility with a compass was almost lost when much of the knowledge was no longer passed down. You may hate math, but you’ll be fascinated by what you can build with a circle and a square.



About Jane Radocchia

Jane is an architect and architectural historian who works with old houses, their framing and design. Jane is particularly interested in the implications of technology on American residential construction from the Revolution to the 1850s, and the ways in which the early Industrial Revolution changed architectural design. Jane holds a Bachelor of Arts from Oberlin and a Master of Architecture from MIT. A member of our historical society’s Board and the museum’s library committee, Jane will share her research in the use of geometry and regulating lines in early house and barn design. She feels that her true education developed from houses she worked on and the contractors with whom she worked.

President Calvin Coolidge

**RETURNS TO BENNINGTON TO MARK THE
90th ANNIVERSARY OF HIS FAMOUS SPEECH**

“Vermont is the State I love”

September 21 at 2:00 pm

Bennington Railroad Station

Parking Lot in front of the caboose

The President traveled throughout the State of Vermont viewing the havoc caused by the flood of 1927. Coolidge re-enactor, Tracy Messer will be giving the speech. Jennifer Sayles Harville, Coolidge’s great granddaughter will accompany him. If any one has a recollection of this occasion that has been passed down through the family we encourage them to share them with the audience.

In This Issue

Next Program	1
Calvin Coolidge Program	1
Calvin Coolidge Comes to Bennington. . 2-3 by Bill Morgan	
<i>Bygone Bennington</i> by Joe Hall	3
From the Museum’s Collections	4
Introduction to Doing Research	4
View Past Presentations on Video	4
Upcoming Programs.	5
From the President	5

Calvin Coolidge Comes to Bennington

by Bill Morgan

Our nation's 30th President, Calvin Coolidge was born in Plymouth Notch, Vermont, on the Fourth of July, 1872. When Warren Harding died unexpectedly in 1923, Coolidge, as Vice-President, was sworn in. He ran for re-election in 1924, winning by a wide margin, but in 1928 he decided not stand for re-election. He retired to Northampton, Massachusetts and died there in 1933 at the age of 60.

Until Tropical Storm Irene hit in August of 2011, the most devastating flood in Vermont's history was probably the storm of November 2-4, 1927. An unusually heavy rainfall dumped more than 7 inches of rain across the state. Bennington itself received 7 1/2 inches of rain during the 2 day period. The downpour immediately caused the streams and rivers to overflow their banks and swept away dams, bridges and roadways. The towns in the valleys suffered when some rivers reached more than 13 feet above flood stage. In Bennington, the rising water reached Main Street. In Vermont, 84 people lost their lives including Vermont's Lieutenant Governor S. Hollister Jackson who was drowned while trying to escape from his flooded car in Barre. 9,000 people were left homeless, 1,258 bridges were destroyed or badly damaged, and 23 mills were put out of business. In the days after the flood, President Coolidge remained in Washington, but praised

the citizens of his home state for their strength during the recovery efforts. He didn't visit Vermont for nearly a year after the floods because he didn't want to get in the way of the work of rebuilding. When he did come, he traveled by special train up the eastern side of the state along the Connecticut, White, and Winooski Rivers and then down the western side examining the damage and the recovery efforts. The Presidential party made its final stop in Bennington on his way back to Washington. He had made no speeches

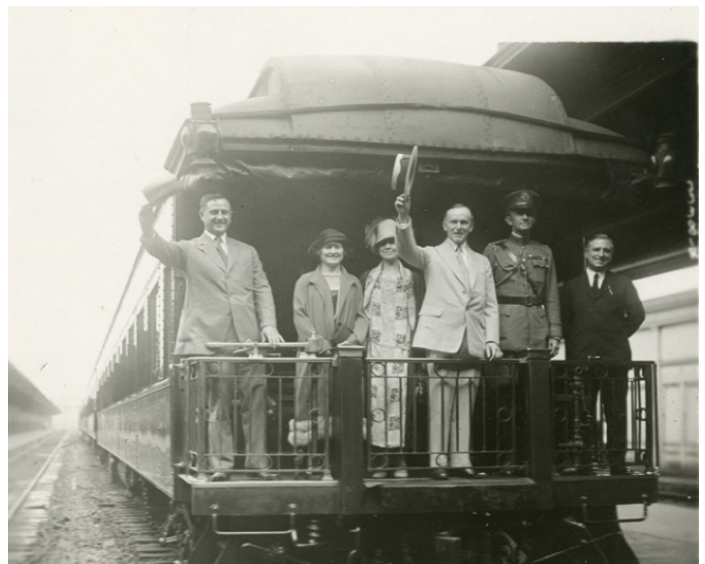
"ORATORY IS AN ART OF WHICH COOLIDGE IS NOT A MASTER."

— Bennington Banner

during his trip until he stepped onto the rear platform of the station, the same station that still stands here today.

When the train pulled into the station, Miss Marion White, representing the Girl Scouts, gave Mrs. Coolidge a large bouquet of gladiolas and the Bennington Municipal Band and the American Legion drum corps

continued on p. 3



Underwood & Underwood, "President & Mrs. Coolidge on train," Vermont: A Project of the Vermont Historical Society, Courtesy Vermont Historical Society.

played patriotic songs. Judge Barber and Hall Park McCullough had planned to give some opening remarks, but they were late in arriving and the President began his remarks without introduction.

The Banner reported that "Oratory is an art of which Coolidge is not a master," but the comments he made proved them wrong. It was the most heart-felt and emotional speech that the President would ever make, and one of the shortest. The train stayed for only 10 or 15 minutes and then the whistle blew and with a jerk he was gone.

Coolidge began: "For two days we have been traveling through this state. We have been up the East side, across and down the West side. We have seen Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, Windsor, White River Junction and Bethel. We have looked toward Montpelier. We have visited Burlington and Middlebury. Returning we have seen Rutland. I have had an opportunity of visiting again the scenes of my childhood. I want to express to you, and through the press to the other cities of Vermont, my sincere appreciation for the general hospitality bestowed upon me and my associates on the occasion of this journey. It is gratifying to note the splendid recovery from the great catastrophe which overtook the state nearly a year ago. Transportation has been restored. The railroads are in a better condition than before. The highways are open to traffic for those who wish to travel by automobile.

"Vermont is a state I love. "I could not look upon the peaks of Ascutney, Killington, Mansfield and Equinox without being moved in a way that no other scene could move me.

"It was here that I first saw the light of day; here I received my bride; here my dead lie pillowed on the loving breast of our everlasting hills.

"I love Vermont because of her hills and valleys, her scenery and invigorating climate, but most of all, because of her indomitable people. They are a race of pioneers who have almost beggared themselves to serve others. If the spirit of liberty should vanish in other parts of the union and support of our institutions should languish, it could all be replenished from the generous store held by the people of this brave little state of Vermont."

***Bygone Bennington* by Joe Hall**

The Historical Society is proud to announce the publication of Joe Hall's new book: *Bygone Bennington*. For many years, Joe has been writing and broadcasting a popular radio program by the same name on the local AM radio station WBTN. A member of the BHS Board and a past president, he has put all his talks into an interesting and entertaining book.

Profits from its sale will help fund the programs of the Bennington Historical Society. Joe's book is for sale at the Bennington Bookshop, the Museum Gift Shop, the Monument Gift Shop, and the Village Salon.

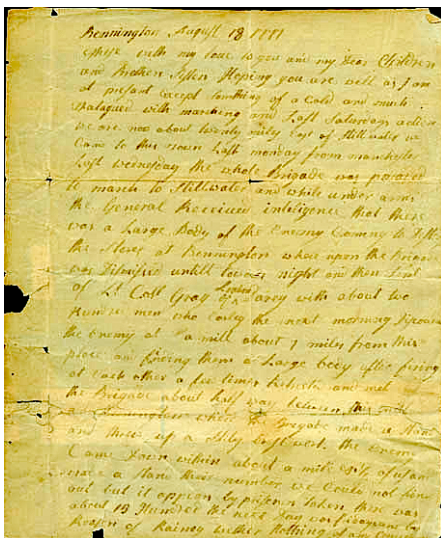


From the Museum's Collection

The Museum recently published the letter below from Peter Clark on its Facebook page:

Letter from Captain (later Major) Peter Clark, of Lyndeborough, New Hampshire to his wife and family describing the Battle of Bennington which he had recently participated in under General Stark. Dated August 18, 1777.

These with my love to you and my Dear Children and Brothers Sisters Hoping you are well as I am at present Except something of a cold and much Fatagued with marching and Last Saturdays action We are now about twenty miles East of Stillwater we Came to this town Last monday from manchester Last wednesday the whole Brigade was paraded to march to Stillwater and while under arms the General Received intelligence that there was a Large Body of the Enemy Coming to Destroy the Stores at Bennington whereupon the Brigade was Dismissed until towards night and then sent of Lt Coll Gray of LondonDarey with about two Hundred men who Early the next morning discovered the enemy at a mill about 7 miles from this place and finding them a large body after firing at Each other a few times Retreated and met the Brigade about half way between this mill and Bennington where the Brigade made a stand and threw up a slity brest work the Enemy Came down within about a mile & ½ of us and made a stand their number we could not find out but it



Being at this time on Every part of them and as near as I can tell I think the battle held about ½ an Hour and was Equal to Bunker Hill Excepting there was and leave behind them two more Brass field peaces small arms and other things So God gave us a Compleat Victory over them many think it to be all things Considered the greatest Victory Won since the War by the Americans and leave behind them two more Brass field peaces small arms and other things So God gave us a Compleat Victory over them many think it to be all things Considered the greatest Victory Won since the War by the Americans

Introduction to the Research Library of the Bennington Museum

by Jane Radocchia

You wonder about your great, great uncle. Your mother said he built your bedroom dresser. When was he born? Did he live in Bennington? Maybe Hoosick ? Did he build furniture for a living?

The Research Library of the Bennington Museum may have answers. Come share your questions: we can guide your search.

We have files on everyone who was born and/or died in Bennington. We may have your uncle's obituary in the newspaper – on micro-film. We may know in which cemetery he was buried.

A street listing for his family might lead you to his sisters and the mills where they worked. An old map may show their neighborhood, pinpoint their house. Perhaps we have a photograph of their school with the girls in the front row!

Did they move? Our town and county histories for Vermont and New York may find them. Our many family histories may add details to their lives that will delight you.

Next Month: What internet resources we have, how to access them, how to use them.

View the Past Presentations of the Bennington Historical Society on Video

Did you know you can view presentations going all the way back to 2012? Thanks to Jackie Marro, who has videotaped these presentations and put them online, we can learn whether Ethan Allen was a hero or a traitor, hear the memories of a Mill Girl, or hear about the Mickie Kane murder. Or download a driving tour of historical sites. Old photos, old documents, and much more! Just go to: <https://benningtonhistory.org/> and enjoy yourself.

From the President

Greetings and welcome to the first issue of the Bennington Historical Society Newsletter.

The Board Members and I would like to welcome you back to the Historical Society programs after what has been a long, humid summer. We're all looking forward to the fall season with lots of new plans and programs, including this short publication. Ray Rodrigues has graciously volunteered to act as editor for our newsletter which we hope will be informative and entertaining.

In one form or another the Historical Society has been around since 1876 when it was incorporated for the purpose of creating a monument to commemorate the Battle of Bennington. It also planned to establish a museum for relics and historical memorabilia.

The monument was the first order of business and that structure was dedicated in 1891. It took a more few years, but on August 16, 1928 the Bennington Museum was opened. Since then the historical society has taken an active role in preserving information about the history of the Bennington region and our mission now is to share that information with the community. To achieve this, the Society offers monthly programs at the museum and makes recordings of them available on CAT-TV and DVDs. We also support various publications and other activities related to local history. In the past few years we have re-issued titles such as *The Bennington Souvenir*; *The Shires Of Bennington*; *David Redding Who Wash Hanged*; and now *Bygone Bennington* by board member Joe Hall. In the months ahead we hope this newsletter will serve as an additional source of information about Bennington's history.

This fall our programs will include a re-enactment of President Calvin Coolidge's historic "Vermont Is A State I Love" speech, and talks by architectural historian Jane Radocchia on the geometry of old houses; a discussion of "eateries" in Bennington by Ted Bird; and a look into the Colgate family of Bennington by Cindy Butler. These talks are always of interest to local residents and those just passing through. And in the very near

future a display case in the museum will be used to exhibit some of the early treasures given to the Historical Society over the years. We hope that each of you will take a few minutes to look over the newsletter and offer us any suggestions that you might like to make as we develop a new source for community history. Please join us in making history come alive again.

Upcoming Meetings

September 16 at 2:00

"Practical Geometry—What's That" (see p. 1).
Ada Paresky Education Center of the Bennington Museum.

September 21 at 2:00 pm: Calvin Coolidge will be at the old railroad station. A reenactor will recreate Coolidge's whistle-stop tour in 1928, the only speech he gave in Vermont

October 21 from 2:00 - 4:00 pm: "From Village Nook to the Paradise: Bennington's Eateries." Ada Paresky Education Center of the Bennington Museum.

Ted Bird will take us on a trip back to the restaurant's of Bennington's past. Take a journey down memory lane and revisit many of the places to eat in Bennington. With his usual flair, Ted, using his vast photo collection, takes us from place to place adding bits of information about each stop.

November 18 from 2:00 - 4:00 pm:

The Colgate Family of Bennington." Ada Paresky Education Center of the Bennington Museum.

Cindy Butler has spent the last few years researching the J.C. Colgate Family and the time they spent in Bennington. James C. Colgate owned about 3,000 acres in Old Bennington which was called Fillmore Farm. Here he raised a variety of farm animals including milk cows and his prize winning horned Dorset Sheep. Cindy will talk about the contributions the family made to the town and the Village of Old Bennington.

Bennington Historical Society Board Members

Officers: Bill Morgan, President; Anne Bugbee, Vice-President; Charles Dewey, Secretary; Joe Hall, Treasurer

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

Do you have an item you'd like to share through our newsletter--an historical anecdote, something from your family history, an historical artifact, a question for someone else to answer, a remembrance from Bennington's past? If so, send it to Ray Rodrigues at raymond_rodrigues@msn.com