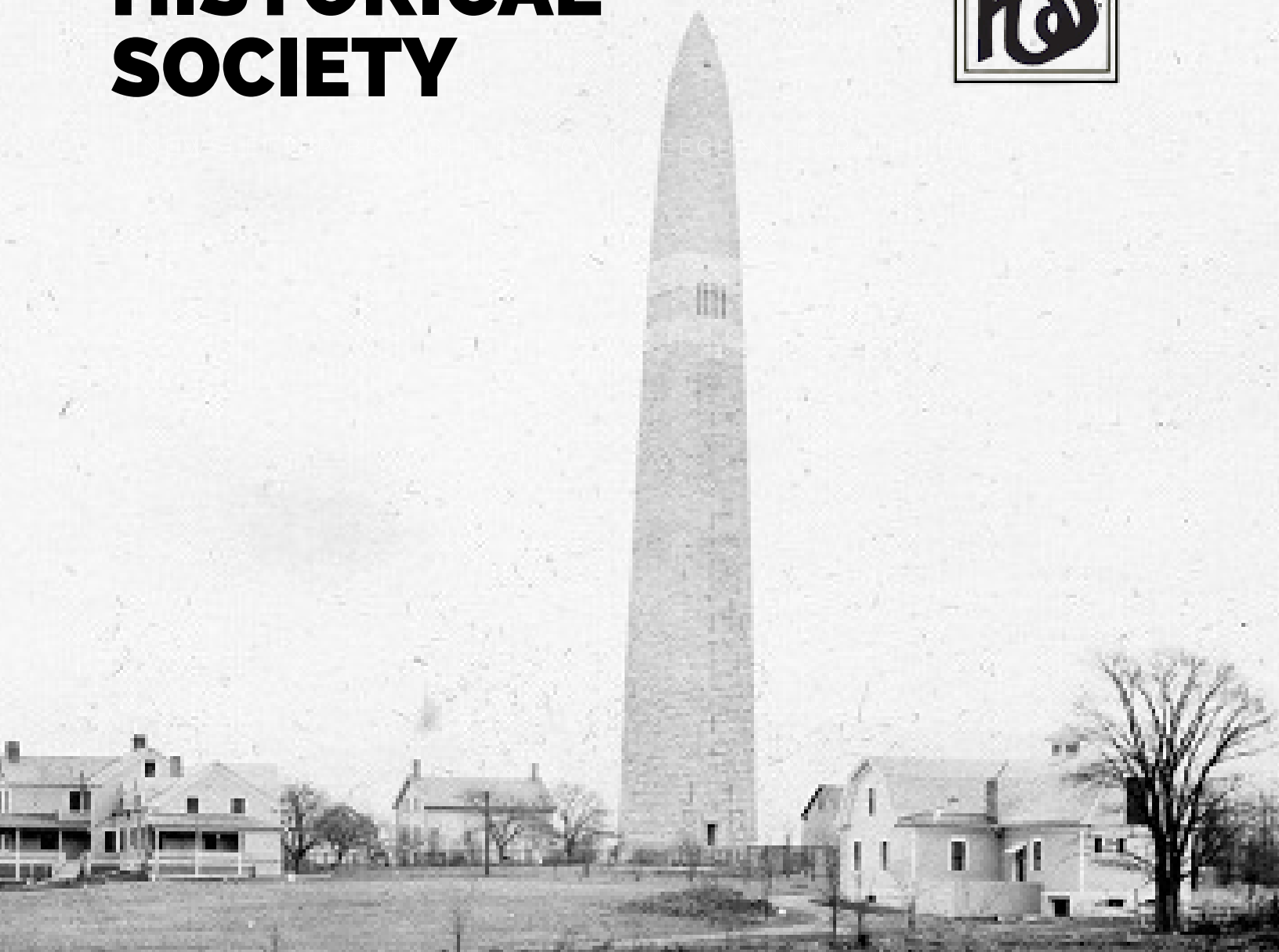


MAY 2019 - 2020

# **BENNINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



## **NEWSLETTER**

**JULY 2021 ISSUE**

**Bennington  
museum**

# BENNINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE HISTORY TOGETHER

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### A Walking Tour of the Old First Church with Vicki Prinz

**Sunday, July 11, 2pm - 3pm**

**Participants should meet at the church just before 2pm.  
No registration required.**

The Old First Church, "Vermont's Colonial Shrine" constructed in 1806, and the adjoining cemetery containing the memorials to many famous local people including governors, founders of the community and soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War.



### The Breakenridge Stand-off: 250th Anniversary Celebration Sunday, July 18, 2pm - 4pm

**Participants should meet at McWaters Park in North Bennington just before 2pm.  
No registration required.**

In July of 1774, about 300 New Yorkers, claiming that the land belonged to New York and not New Hampshire, formed a posse to eject John Breckenridge and his family from their farm near the Henry Covered Bridge. About 250 settlers gathered to stop them. Though no one was killed at the time, the event is often cited as the founding event in what eventually became Vermont.

Bob Hoar, Jonah Spivak, The Descendants of the Green Mountain Boys, the Crown Point Road Association, and the Friends of Bennington, will give a special presentation in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of what is called the Breakenridge Stand-off.

After the event, a walking tour that will take visitors to Seth Warner's house, to the site of James Breakenridge's farm, and then back to Henry House. The walk is on level ground and is less than a mile round trip.

Henry House and McWaters Park will have parking, tents for presentations and tables for displays.



Oil on canvas painting of the Henry Bridge by Gilbert Smith. Henry House in background. Courtesy: Bennington Museum

## REGIONAL HISTORY ROOM AT THE MUSEUM

BY CALLIE RASPUZZI,  
COLLECTIONS MANAGER

Things are moving along in the Library/Regional History Room at the Bennington Museum. We opened the

room to the public in April with Bob Tegart at the desk helping visitors and answering research queries.

Despite only being open 1-4 on Mondays, we've been seeing 5-10 researchers per week so far! Additionally, volunteers have answered more than 20 queries from people who cannot travel to Bennington.

On June 10, Bob hosted a meeting of

interested volunteers. Our hope is to get enough volunteers to staff the library so that we can start offering Saturday hours. If we can get four people to commit to one afternoon a month, we can make this dream a reality and be more accessible to more people than ever.

Other volunteer projects include checking shelves, organizing vertical Ailes, cataloging maps, answering  
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genealogical queries, and researching photographs in the Museum's collections. If any of this interests you, please contact Bob at [library@benningtonmuseum.org](mailto:library@benningtonmuseum.org).

While we are still serving the day to day researchers, we also have wider aspirations and bigger plans that we're setting the stage for. The Museum as a whole is working on a strategic plan and while we don't know for sure how the Regional History Room's resources will fit into that plan, we do know that it will be moving (hopefully closer to the front door). The space we get will surely be smaller, but that's going to be

fine as much of the family history material is easily accessible online and can be accessed through Family Search, Ancestry, or similar websites.

Bennington Museum's most important resource available to researchers is the Museum's vast archival collection—[bennington.pastperfectonline.com](http://bennington.pastperfectonline.com). Basic data is easy to find online, but files in the Regional History Room have compiled histories of local families and topics. Maps and city directories show where people lived and worked. Historic photographs give faces to names and show what our streets looked like 100 years ago. Archival

material in the Museum's collection adds personal details in the form of letters, account books, diaries, and church and business records. Try searching for family names like "Pratt" or "Fillmore" or a topic like "flood" or "battle monument." (Hint: Put quotes around two or more word phrases.)

Some of the highlights are available online, such as the Harwood Diaries ([archive.org/details/harwooddiaries](http://archive.org/details/harwooddiaries)) and early records of the Old First Church ([congregationallibrary.org/nehh/series1/BenningtonVTFirst](http://congregationallibrary.org/nehh/series1/BenningtonVTFirst)).

## THE WEICHERT-ISSELHARDT PHOTO COLLECTION

BY CALLIE RASPUZZI, COLLECTIONS MANAGER

In 2015 the Museum acquired almost 2,000 glass plate negatives from the Weichert-- Isselhardt Collection through the generosity of Tordis Ilg Isselhardt. In 2019 the Museum purchased an additional 205 photographic prints from this collection.

Robert Weichert was working as a photographer for the Bennington

Banner when he acquired thousands of glass plate negatives from Wills T. White that had been stored in the attic above White's old studio. White had purchased the studio from Madison Watson in 1899 and also kept his negatives going back to 1892 when a fire had destroyed his previous studio. Weichert also had an interest in historic photographs and later hired Tordis Isselhardt to help organize the collection.

Upon Weichert's death in 1983, Isselhardt became custodian of this treasure trove of history.

All photographs in the Museum's collection are available through our online database. You can see Wills White's and Madison Watson's glass plate negatives from the Weichert-Isselhardt Collection and vintage photographs below.



**BENNINGTON BATTLE MONUMENT UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

About one quarter complete. Train tracks and Alatbed car on left. Barrels and blocks of stone around base. Crane in front of building with one large block suspended. Several men in work clothes standing on top of Monument and on ground.

*Mounted on boudoir size card, photographer's mark stamped on back.*  
Object: Print, Photographic  
Photographer:  
Eli S. Gokay Date: 1887-1888  
Catalog Number: 2019.15.57



**TROLLEY CAR**

Trolley car marked, "BENNINGTON & WOODFORD ELECTRIC RAIL," carrying a group of people, mostly women. Man at controls in front identified as Ernest Whitman, conductor is Edward Moore, and the man in back with the mustache is George Rugg. Wood platform and bench in the foreground, trees in the background.

Object: Negative, Glass Plate  
Photographer: Madison Watson  
Date: 1894-898  
Catalog Number: 2015.6.979



**FINISHING ROOM AT THE H.E. BRADFORD MILL**

The Bradford Mill, is located on East Main Street, Bennington, Vermont. Photo of large room with mostly young women standing next to long tables with piles of cloth. Two young men standing in middle.

*Mounted on light grey board.*  
Object: Print, Photographic Date: 1913  
Museum Purchase  
Catalog Number: 2019.15.161



# SAVE THE DATE!

VOICES FROM THE GRAVE  
SEPTEMBER 25 & 26, 2021

## SPREAD THE WORD!

Bennington Historical Society is partnering with Bennington Community Theatre, Bennington Center Cemetery Association, Bennington Performing Arts Center, and the First Congregational Church on a very exciting event.

"Voices from the Grave" will highlight memorable people who rest in the beautiful burial ground in Old Bennington. Members of the Historical Society have researched and written most of the 4-minute monologues that will be performed by Community Theatre actors dressed in period clothing. These dramatic and compelling stories will make history come alive, literally!

The event is scheduled for the last weekend of September, the 25th and 26th, with rain dates on the following weekend, October 2nd and 3rd. The program will take place within the Cemetery, with tour groups of 10 people guided through every ½ hour. Tickets can be reserved at the BPAC website: [bpacvt.org](http://bpacvt.org)

## Want to be help with this exciting project?

We need tour guides and costume assistants and publicists and lots of other folks to pitch in!

Contact Dawn Rodrigues  
([Dawn.Rodrigues@gmail.com](mailto:Dawn.Rodrigues@gmail.com)) or  
Voices from the Grave director,  
Ingrid Madelayne  
([ingrid958@taconic.net](mailto:ingrid958@taconic.net))

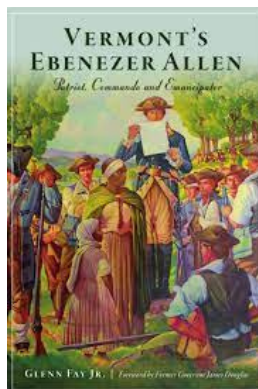
# NEW BOOK

VERMONT'S  
EBENEZER ALLEN:  
PATRIOT, COMMANDO AND  
EMANCIPATOR

*Vermont's Ebenezer Allen: Patriot, Commando and Emancipator*, was recently released by Arcadia Publishing. The author, Glenn Fay, Jr., is a member of the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum Board of Directors in Burlington. Ebenezer Allen lived in Bennington for two years, was a charter member of the Green Mountain Boys, and helped capture Fort Ticonderoga. He was an assemblyman, a signatory of Vermont's Constitution, distinguished hero of the Battle of Bennington, and a slave emancipator who recorded an emancipation for former slave Dinah Mattis and her infant daughter in the Bennington town clerk's office in 1777.

He built and commanded forts in Pittsford, Vergennes, and Castleton and was the commander of the western Vermont militia after the war ended. This prominent Vermont leader lived in the shadow of his cousins, Ethan and Ira Allen.

The book uncovers new stories and anecdotes during early Vermont days. It is available at the Bennington Bookshop, and Northshire Bookstore, as well as other local and online shops.



# SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

DAN PATCH:  
THE HARNESS  
RACING CHAMPION

From 1903 to 1938, Dan Patch was harness-racing's greatest champion. As a child, Joe Hall remembers seeing a board in a stable now gone that indicated Dan Patch stayed there.

We are hoping that someone may have more information about Dan Patch being in our area and even, perhaps, know whether that board still exists.

If you have any information, please tell Joe Hall: [jm\\_hall@comcast.net](mailto:jm_hall@comcast.net)

## STARTING IN JULY, BENNINGTON MUSEUM HAS NEW HOURS!

THURSDAY- TUESDAY  
10AM-4PM  
WITH EXTENDED HOURS ON FRIDAY  
UNTIL 7PM  
THE LIBRARY IS OPEN ON MONDAYS  
FROM 1PM-4PM

## CLOSED ON WEDNESDAY

THE BENNINGTON HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY MEETS ON THE FIRST  
MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH  
FROM 4PM - 5:15PM AT  
BENNINGTON MUSEUM.

ANYONE INTERESTED IN  
PARTICIPATING IN THIS GROUP IS  
INVITED TO ATTEND.

**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, Beverly 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.