



February 2019

Bennington Historical Society News

**Next Program: "A Tale of Two Street Cars:
Bennington and the Peak Inter-urban
Years—1900-1910"**

Presenter: George Lerrigo

February 17 at 2:00 pm
Ada Pareski Education Center

Our next program features George Lerrigo, who will share the results of his research into the trolleys that moved through Bennington at the beginning of the 20th Century. He has visited the Kennebunk Seashore Trolley Museum and will share photos of the remaining trolley cars.

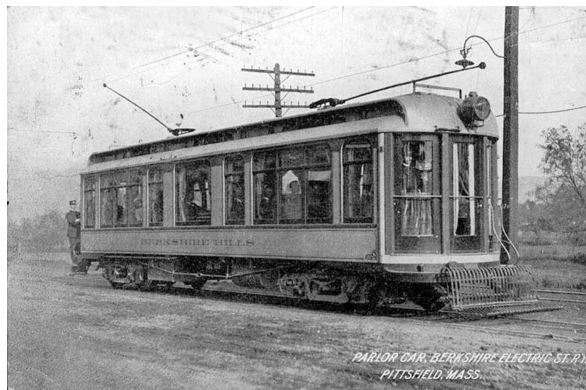
By 1910, he tells us, "it was possible to make a continuous trolley-interurban trip well into the Midwest" by a series of connected inter-urban railways.

Locally, riders had twice daily trips to choose from between Bennington and Great Barrington. For only \$1.00 for a round-trip plus a chair fee of 25 cents for the Ratan chair, riders could "enjoy the opulence of the *Berkshire Hills* and the *Bennington*, both dedicated to this service." Both parlor cars can be seen at the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine—a museum that has streetcars from many cities in the United States and across the globe.

The companies running the streetcars in Bennington changed over the years, from the Bennington & Woodford Electric Railway to the Bennington Electric Railroad to the Bennington & Hoosick Valley Railway to the

Bennington & North Adams Street Railway from 1902 to 1910, and then to the Vermont Company, after which it was discontinued. Much of the route still remains in Bennington and Pownal.

The photo below shows the Berkshire Hills in Bennington when it began its service to Williamstown in 1907.



The "Berkshire Hills" was built by Wason Mfg Co in 1903. It was retired in 1922, and the body was sold as a diner in 1932. There was a fire in 1994, and the remains were given to the Seashore Trolley Museum.

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The Moodus Drum Corps and the Bennington Monument

by Kerby Levallo

Although I live in Bennington and am a member of the Bennington Historical Society, I am proud to continue my membership in the Moodus Drum & Fife Corps of Moodus, Connecticut. The Moodus Drum & Fife Corps played for the dedication of the Bennington Battle Monument back in 1891 and returned to Bennington for the first time perform at the monument and to march in last year's parade. Our corps historian has a ribbon given to the corps by the Bennington Battle Monument dedication organizers in 1891. This is likely the first time that the corps has returned to Bennington since the dedication — 127 years! We are one of the few musical units from the dedication who are still performing.



“The Moodus drum corps plays something very, very close to the kind of fife and drum music that would have sounded very familiar to Nathan Hale and General Washington.”

—Connecticut’s Fife & Drum Tradition by James Clark

What makes Moodus distinctive is that it plays on drums from the 1800s, made by Eli Brown in Connecticut, with calfskin heads and no muffler inside to dampen the sounds, which are quite loud! When drum rolls are played, each tap is heard distinctly, unlike modern rolls. The whole effect is grand, emphatic, and powerful. In the *The Dedication of the Bennington Battle Monument*, The Vermont Centennial Commision wrote that “they were fifteen in the corps . . . [and] their music could be plainly heard for a long distance and would have aroused martial sensations in a stone post.”

You can see more history at this website: [Ancient Music Unraveled: Roots Music](#)

And you can listen to music at the [Ancient Fife and Drum Corps](#) YouTube site.

Soldiers in The Battle of Bennington: Jonathan Holton and Sipp Ives

Two participants in the Battle of Bennington were introduced to the public recently by Jamie Franklin, Phil Holland, and Lion Miles in talks at the Bennington Museum. Franklin discussed the fortunate discovery of a drawing of Lt. Jonathan Holton. (See photo.)

The museum already possessed a tintype of the drawing, but an observant antique dealer spotted the original, notified the Museum, and worked with Museum staff to obtain it for the Museum.



Museum purchase, with support from David A. Schorsch and Eileen M. Smiles and Members of the Collections Committee

“African-Americans were here and fighting side by side with white Americans for liberty. Black people did not arrive in Vermont or fight for Vermont only recently — they have been there from the beginning.”

— Phil Holland

Phil Holland and Lion Miles worked together to learn about the life of Sipp Ives, a black Patriot soldier who died at the Battle. Miles had seen a reference to a black soldier's body in 90-year old Daniel Brown's pension application and worked from there to determine what the man's name was. Holland joined his effort to learn more about black soldiers who might have served at the Battle. Enrollment lists indicated that several fighters in Seth Warner's regiment were probably black.

As Holland told the *Bennington Banner*, “African-Americans were here and fighting side by side with white Americans for liberty. Black people did not arrive in Vermont or fight for Vermont only recently — they have been there from the beginning.”

For anyone who wants to explore many town records, Holland recommended archives.com. To conduct research on Revolutionary War pension applications, go to the site ancestry.com.

Miles has studied the Battle of Bennington and the Stockbridge Indians, has published a dictionary of Mohican, and has uncovered the names of German soldiers who died in Bennington after the Battle. Holland has published *A Guide to the Battle of Bennington and the Bennington Monument*, *Robert Frost in Bennington County*, *The Dance Must Follow: Sixteen Cantos and an Epilogue*, *If Vegetables Could Talk* (a children's book), and a recent article revealing who the “young wretch” was in Robert Frost's “To a Young Wretch.”

View Past Presentations of the Bennington Historical Society

[The Village of North Bennington around 1856](#)

Jane Radocchia, an architect specializing in the repair and restoration of old houses, made this presentation to the Bennington Historical Society. Her talk focused on North Bennington before the Park-McCullough House was built. She used the 1856 map of village as a guide for the homes, stores and mills that she discussed.

[Bennington, Vermont, in the Civil War](#)

Bill Morgan, president of the Bennington Historical Society, has done extensive research on southern Vermont's involvement in the Civil War. This is his presentation on the topic which was given to the Historical Society at the Bennington Museum April 2013.

[Faces of Vermont](#)

From 1972 to 1978 John Hubbard, a reporter for the Bennington Banner, took over 2000 photographs of Bennington residents. The collection of photographs was donated to the Bennington Museum. Most of the photographs were not identified, so the Bennington Historical Society invited the community to a meeting at the museum to help connect names with faces. Jamie Franklin, museum curator, selected 28 of the photographs for a special exhibit at the museum and lectured on them at the March 2014 Bennington Historical Society meeting.

[The Ghost Town of Glastenbury](#)

Jim Henderson of the Bennington County Regional Commission showed slides and discussed the Town of Glastenbury, one of seven unorganized towns in Vermont and now very much a ghost town. The story includes virgin wood, charcoal kilns, a train, a hotel, disappearances, . . . and more.



To access the entire collection of Past Presentations, visit the Archived Presentations Site: <https://benningtonhistory.org/archived-presentations/>

Recently Discovered Pictures – Can You Help?

by Joe Hall

At a Bennington tag sale a few years ago, Tom Freeman purchased a box of eighty-three glass photograph negatives. With research, we were able to determine that they were taken circa 1903 by a Bennington photographer, Frank Belisle (1876-1923). Many of the pictures were taken in the Mill, River, and County Streets area. We believe most of the people were his family and friends in the Bennington



French community.

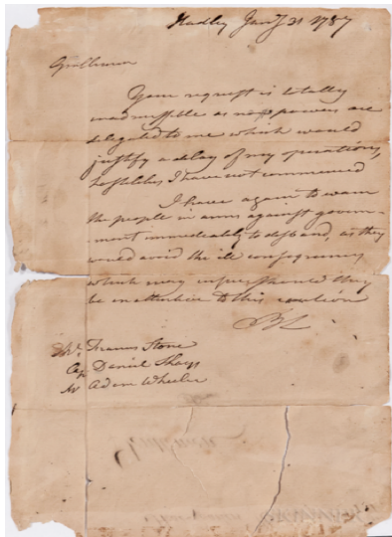
Frederick Sausville and his wife Armenia were in a number of the pictures. They were married on July 8, 1903. The wedding picture on the left was taken on the steps of the Rutland Railroad freight office.

The building is now the E-Z Way Rental Center at 115 County Street. Bennington Historical Society members are in the process of identifying the people in the Belisle pictures. We would love to hear from anyone with old family pictures which can be matched with the

people in the Belisle pictures or anyone who can in some other way to identify people in the pictures. If you can help, please email me at: jm_hall@comcast.net.

Daniel Shay's Letter Auctioned Off

Recently this letter came up for auction at an on-line site. It was signed by Daniel Shays, Adam Wheeler, and Francis Stone, leaders of the Shaysites who settled in Vermont to escape the Massachusetts authorities.



Hadley Janry. 31, 1787

Gentlemen

Your request is totally inadmissible as no powers are delegated to me which would justify a delay of my operations. Hostilities I have not command

I have again to warn the people in arms against government, immediately to disband as they would avoid the ill consequences which may ensue, should they be inattentive to this caution.

BL
(signed)

Francis Stone, Chairman
Daniel Shays, Captain
Adam Wheeler, Lt

A Fascinating Website: Little Brown Jugs

If you enjoy learning about Norton pottery, take a look at "Little Brown Jugs" (www.littlebrownjugs.com).

This website focuses upon one particular topic—Norton Potters' small, often specifically designed jugs, Little Brown Jugs (LBJ'S). The site includes many old photos of the old pottery, unusual jugs, including those celebrating special events. The photos of potters' tools, like stamps, grinding wheels, and jug stackers, adds a depth to the site that helps all of us understand more about the processes used.

Greg Santise, the creator of the website, explained his passion for collecting little brown jugs in a recent email message:

"I started collecting little brown jugs over 40 years ago. My family used to visit Bennington and the surrounding areas for vacation. At some point I married, and my wife Joy and I started collecting Norton Stoneware and LBJ's. Being young and poor, we focused on LBJ'S.

"I set up the website to show our collection; that is where it started to snowball. We got caught up in the history of the LBJ's and then in any history associated with the miniatures . . ."



Cologne Jug



Decorated Jug



Floret Jug

Upcoming Meetings

The meetings listed below are from 2:00 pm to 4:00pm in the Ada Pareski Education Center of the Bennington Museum.

Feb. 19 - "The Tale of Two Streetcars" with George Lerrigo

March 17 - "The Continental Army Storehouse" with Robert Hoar

April 28 (Easter is April 21) - "Tim Wager's Colorized Bennington" with Callie Raspuzzi

May 19 - "David Redding" with Bill Morgan

June 16 (Father's Day) - "Bennington Police Department"

The photo below of the Bennington & Woodford Electric Railroad, which ran to the Glastenbury Hotel and Casino, was taken in 1898, the only summer the railroad was in operation before being destroyed by a massive flood. Colorized by Tim Wager. (Bennington Banner, Nov. 8, 2018)



The Bennington & Woodford Electric Railroad ran to the Glastenbury Hotel and Casino

President's Message

As we welcome 2019, I'd like to wish all the members of the Bennington Historical Society a very happy new year. We are planning a year of very exciting programs and new publications, and we hope you'll all take part. On Feb. 17, George Lerrigo will present "The Tale of Two Streetcars," a program about the magnificent trolleys that once ran all the way from Bennington into Massachusetts. Then on March 17, Robert Hoar will discuss the history of the Continental Army's storehouse which once stood near today's Battle Monument. These were the focal point of the British incursion into Vermont which was stopped at the New York State border in the Battle of Bennington. Later in the spring we'll discuss David Redding, a local Tory who was hanged as a spy on the Old Bennington Green in the late 18th century.

We also plan to continue our series of publications which focus on Bennington's history. We now have four reprints available in the Bennington Museum gift shop and local book stores: *Bygone Bennington*; *Bennington Souvenir*; *David Redding*; and *The Shires of Bennington*.

A walking tour of Monument Avenue is also in the works, and more will follow.

The Historical Society is also assisting the Bennington Museum with preparations for a display about the iron ore industry in early Bennington as well as a display case devoted to the history of the museum itself. Charles Dewey, the secretary of the Society, has also finished work on a reproduction of an 18th century gun carriage which will support the cannon barrel from the Battle. Currently the barrel is on display in the battle gallery, and the mounted cannon will be a focal point for our Revolutionary history. It will be unveiled in the next few months.

And so it goes. 2019 promises to be even more exciting than 2018. As a member, please come to the meetings and programs and become involved in the work of the Bennington Historical Society. We love ideas, suggestions, and volunteers.

Bill Morgan
President

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