



Bennington Historical Society News

“Windmills and Their Effect on the Bears of Searsburg” —Oct. 20 at 2:00 pm

On Sunday, October 20 at 2:00 pm, the Bennington Historical Society presents *Windmills and Their Effect on the Bears of Searsburg*. Jaclyn Comeau is a state biologist who has spent many years studying the effect the windmills on Searsburg Mountain have had on the bears who live in that area. Is there any measurable effect on their feeding and reproduction, or have they adapted?

Beechnut and acorns form a large part of a bear’s diet, so when a group of windmills are placed near those trees,



Credit: Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife

what is the impact upon the lives of bears? The researchers involved have been locating bear dens, tranquilizing the bears, including their young, placing global positioning satellite collars on them, and tracking their movements--

where they feed, what their travel patterns are, and where they cross public roads.

The research findings note the differences in travel patterns between male and female bears, how different types of roads lead to different travel patterns, and how bears deal with changes in human living patterns. The results help inform those who are planning different types of roads. In addition to learning about bear travel and eating patterns, studies note the relationship between bear habitat and that of other animals such as moose, turkeys, coyotes, foxes, bobcats, and deer.

Replica Cannon Goes on Display

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Bennington Banner, 2019.

Located in the Sloane Gallery at Bennington Museum is the original bronze cannon that was captured by American forces in the Battle of Bennington. Weighing only 213 pounds, it was well suited for mobile campaigns as it could be transported across rugged terrain on a carriage hitched to a

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single horse.

While the cannon is great to look at, local woodworker Charles Dewey, a descendant of the Dewey family who fought at the Battle of Bennington in 1777, decided he would provide visitors the opportunity to get up close with an historically accurate reproduction of both the cannon and the carriage that carried it. The result is now on display in the Sloane Gallery.

Dewey consulted with experts at Saratoga Battlefield National Park and researched contemporary military publications. The carriage uses historically accurate oak wood and is painted the same dark gray used by the British army. The cannon on the carriage is a replica made of pine. The tires and hub bands are steel, but the black straps and hardware on the carriage body are replicated in wood, painted to look like metal. While in use, the carriage would have held ammunition boxes on either side of the cannon above the axle. The axle itself is a copper pipe.

While the majority of what is on display at the museum cannot be touched, visitors are invited to get a hands-on experience with this replica cannon and carriage.

The History

American forces captured four cannons at the Battle of Bennington, August 16, 1777. Two were new bronze "three pounders" (they shot three pound balls) made at the Woolwich Arsenal by Jan and Pieter Verbruggen. One of those two is on display in the Museum's Sloane Gallery, while the other is at the Vermont State House in Montpelier.

The captured cannons were used by the American army throughout the rest of the Revolutionary War, and during the War of 1812. The original wood carriages were repaired and replaced as needed, and eventually discarded. New carriages were made in 1848 at the Watervliet Arsenal. The carriage that has been replicated for the gallery, was removed from the Bennington Museum's gun in 2002.



Charles Dewey stands with the replica cannon he constructed of wood. The genuine article, seized during the battle is in the case to the left.

View Videos of the Bennington Historical Society

Here are two YouTube videos for you to consider viewing this month:

Bennington Triangle

<http://tinyurl.com/BenningtonTriangle>

This makes a good Halloween video: Five people disappeared within a short time in the mountains outside of Bennington and around Glastenbury. All sorts of theories developed about their disappearances, ranging from Bigfoot to wild pigs eating one of the disappeared. Matt Garland created this video, with key presentations by Tyler Resch, research librarian of the Bennington Museum and author of the book *Glastenbury*, and Joe Durwin, author of *These Mysterious Hills* and numerous articles about strange events in Vermont.

History . . . Where It Happened – the Old Bennington Cemetery

<https://tinyurl.com/BenningtonCemetery>

Dick Smith takes us through the Old Bennington Cemetery, “Vermont’s Sacred Acre.” Most of have probably seen it, even walked through it, but here we learn how the people there relate to the history of Bennington. What is the difference between a man’s consort and a man’s relic? Stephen Faye, Jonas Faye, Jedediah Dewey, Elijah Dewey, Moses Robinson, and James Breckinridge are a few of the people Smith talks about. Finally, he interviews Charles Dewey, who talks about how he preserved the tombstone of Jedediah Dewey.

Permission of Dick Smith and GNAT TV

BHS Natty Bumppo--A Grave Dispute

The presentation by Joyce Brewer and Corinne Eldred from the Hoosick Township Historical Society on September 14 explored Nathaniel Shipman’s identity as the inspiration for James Fennimore Cooper’s Natty Bumppo/ Leatherstocking/Deerslayer. Their talk focused on the years-long dispute between Ostego County and Hoosick Falls over which town had the real “Natty Bumppo” buried there: Nathaniel Shipman or David Shipman. They described their investigation into Nathaniel Shipman and their discovery of a file box with key documents.

Nathaniel Shipman lived in areas around the Walloomsac, went to Ostego County to hunt, fish, and trap, and met Cooper while there. Shipman fled the Hoosick Falls area during the Revolution because he would not fight the British, among whom were a number of friends. His son-in-law John Ryan, married to Shipman’s daughter Patience, later went to Ostego Lake, where he found Shipman in a cave nearby. He succeeded in bringing Shipman back to Hoosick Falls, where Shipman died and was buried.

In 1865, town members wanted to erect a stone monument in Shipman’s honor, with Judge Chandler Ball among the major advocates for Shipman being the model for Natty Bumppo. Ms. Hiram Mallory, the great-granddaughter of David Shipman, argued that David was Natty and that she had a bible with entries proving it. In 1874, Ostego County took the side of David. Newspapers picked up the dispute, and it continued for many years.

Historian Floyd Shumway argued that perhaps there were two models for Natty—David and Nathaniel.

In any event, the Hoosick Falls Historical Society determined to erect a gravestone over Nathaniel’s grave and recently did so. The Ostego Lake claimants have not argued against the historical society erecting both a gravestone and an historical marker.

Fay's Tavern or the Catamount Tavern

by Bob Tegart

Stephen Fay came to Bennington from Hardwick, Massachusetts, in 1766, to join his fellow Separatists who had recently formed a new community in the wilderness of what is now Southern Vermont. Fay had operated a tavern in Hardwick for about 15 years and, shortly after arriving in Bennington, established the Green Mountain House on what is now Monument Avenue just up from the cemetery. The building was a store as well as an inn and tavern and carried such items as cloth, linen, handkerchiefs, mittens, stockings, leather, salt, nails, and small tools.

Ethan Allen arrived in 1770 and lodged at the tavern for several years. He became the colonel of the local militia, and the tavern became a regular meeting place for the group to plan, over a cup of rum and cider, operations to defend their land against the claims of New York, or the "Yorkers." They became known as the Green Mountain Boys.

During that period of conflict, a large stuffed catamount--or mountain lion--was hung from the tavern's signpost as a sign of their defiance, its snarling face and bared teeth facing New York. The Green Mountain House now earned the name Catamount Tavern.

In 1774, the Green Mountain Boys seized Dr. Samuel Adams, who had been heard making comments supporting the New York claims, and brought him back to the tavern. After a short trial presided over by Ethan Allen acting as both prosecutor and judge, he was charged with using "offensive language and deserting the cause of the settlers." Adams was sentenced "to be tied in an arm chair, and hoisted up to the sign and there to hang for two hours as a punishment merited by his enmity to the rights and liberty of the inhabitants of the New Hampshire grants." He was then hung from the sign in a chair for a few hours as the locals jeered and mocked him.

In May of 1775, just after the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Allen mustered together the Green Mountain Boys and, after making plans at the Catamount Tavern, he marched out from Bennington to attack Fort Ticonderoga. Benedict Arnold, hoping to take a leadership part in the battle, stopped at the tavern hoping to speak with Allen. Upon entering, he found that Allen and the militia had already begun their march to Ticonderoga. Arnold abruptly left the tavern, mounted his horse, and sped north to hoping to overtake Allen and his Green Mountain Boys.

Bennington and the Catamount Tavern became an important location in the Revolutionary war. In 1777 the Council of Safety met at the tavern to coordinate the defense of the area and, when they learned the British forces were advancing on Bennington, issued the call for support from Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

When General Stark arrived, he established his headquarters at the tavern and planned his strategy to stop British forces advancing on the military stores in

Bennington, leading to the Battle of Bennington.

Innkeeper Fay sent five sons to fight in the Battle of Bennington, and John, his oldest son, was killed in the fighting. When Fay was told of the death of his son, he asked if he had fought bravely. After he was assured that his son had fought valiantly, he said, “then I am satisfied.” John’s body was carried from the battlefield, prepared for burial at the tavern and buried in the Bennington Center Cemetery. His youngest son, David, also fought in the battle, caught the flag of the Green Mountain Boys when the flag bearer fell and carried it into battle.

After the battle, captured German officers were brought back to Bennington and held under heavy guard on the upper floors of the tavern until their fate could be decided.

The Vermont General Assembly met there in 1778 and conducted the trial of David Redding, a loyalist captured after the battle. Redding was convicted of treason and hanged.

When Stephen Fay died in 1781, the inn was taken over by his son Benjamin and then by his granddaughter Sarah Fay Robinson, who ran it until 1789 when it became a residence occupied by Judge David Fay.

The building burned in 1871. Legend has it that the fire was caused by boys overturning a lamp. Today a bronze statue of a snarling catamount mounted on a Barre granite base, dedicated in 1897, marks the location of the Catamount Tavern on Monument Avenue.

Note: Quotes in this article are from an unpublished manuscript by John Spargo. For a complete bibliography, see this list: <https://tinyurl.com/bibliograpy>



Credit: Rockingham Free Public Library’s Cataloged Photograph Collection

The History of the Bennington Historical Society

by Don Miller

Interest in a Bennington Historical Society can be traced back to the mid-1800s. One of the first objectives was to erect a monument to the Battle of Bennington. This article will highlight some of the events that have led us to where we are today.

As early as 1853, a group of prominent Vermonters began planning a monument to commemorate the battle. Hiland Hall, the Bennington Historical Society (BHS), and the Bennington Battle Monument Association (BBMA) all worked to bring the idea to fruition, but with little success. In the end, each could claim to have helped make it happen.

In 1875, Hiland Hall became the founding President of the BHS. The constitution of the BHS, adopted on November 16, 1875, described the purposes of the organization:

“... first, to assist in the proper observance of the centennial anniversary of the battle of Bennington.

Second, to revive and bring to a successful consummation the long cherished project of erecting an appropriate monument at Bennington Center, to commemorate the deeds of the heroes of the battle of Bennington.

Third, to mark by stone pillars and other suitable tokens, with appropriate inscriptions, the many historic localities of the town and vicinity. . . .

Fourth, to collect documents, books, pamphlets, records, journals, and papers . . . also relics and mementoes of all our wars, and to provide a suitable room or building for their preservation.

Fifth, to procure a genealogical record of the older families of the town”

In 1877, the Legislature created the BBMA, authorizing the BHS to elect seven of its members to membership in the BBMA.

The purpose of the BBMA was to “assist in bringing to a successful consummation the long cherished project of erecting an appropriate monument at Bennington Center to commemorate the deeds of the heroes of the battle of Bennington.”

For 18 years, the BHS faithfully elected seven of its members to membership in the BBMA. The two organizations both separately and together, worked to build the Monument.

On August 11, 1896, at the Regular Semi-Annual Meeting of the BHS, the BHS was dissolved and all its books, papers, property, rights and privileges were transferred to the BBMA.

In 1924, the BBMA acquired the church building and in 1928 opened it as a museum. In 1954, the organization changed its name to the Bennington Museum.

Beginning in November of 1991, the Museum and others worked to revive the BHS. Despite several proposals, the effort to finalize the relationship between the BHS and Museum remained tenuous until the summer of 2019 when it was agreed that the BHS will be recognized as a volunteer-operated program of the Museum.

The Museum’s Director of Public Programs will provide oversight and support to the BHS.

President's Message:

On Sunday, Oct. 20, the Bennington Historical Society will hold its annual business meeting and election of officers just before the regular program. This month's program will focus on the impact that windmills have had on the bear population around Searsburg, VT.

The discussion will be led by Jaclyn Comeau who has been studying the effects there for a number of years. It should be an interesting and informative afternoon.

After two years as Board President of the Bennington Historical Society my term will come to an end. I hope that over the past two years I have been able to convey to you how privileged I feel to have had the opportunity to serve as President. I know that I have learned a lot over the past years and look forward to learning even more about the history of our community. It has been something that I've enjoyed immensely.

In addition to the fun part of the job, learning about the local history, I've had the pleasure of chairing discussions between the Bennington Historical Society and the Bennington Museum. Nearly a year ago, the museum's Executive Director asked us to redefine our association with the Museum and we have agreed upon our role as a "program of the museum." That designation will give us a small budget each year and help solve some basic problems of finance and membership which were raised by the Museum's board. In the future we'll be able to report on budget and organizational issues more efficiently, so we're looking forward to a long, continued association with them.

At the October 20 meeting our nominating committee will place before you the names of candidates for officers for the next two years. Don Miller will automatically move from his position as President-elect to become the next President. Congratulations Don! I will then become the immediate Past-President and provide back-up help where needed. Board member Robert Tegart has agreed to place his name in nomination for the position of President-Elect which means that in two years he will become the Society's President. Anne Bugbee, our previous Past-President, is being nominated to fill Bob Tegart's position on the Council. We could never survive without her support and hard work and I'm honored to have served under her leadership. Additionally the terms for Council Members Beverly Petrelis, Joe Hall, and Ray Rodrigues are ending and they have each agreed to serve for another two year term, with the membership's approval.

Our plans are to do all this in as short a time as possible so that we can move on to the discussion about the "Bears of Searsburg." I hope you'll join us at that meeting and bring up any new business that you'd like to address to the society. And please remember that all contributors to the Historical Society are welcome to come to the council meetings which are held at the Museum on the first Monday of every month.

Once again I'd personally like to thank each and every one of you for your support and attendance over the past years of my presidency. We've managed to squeak by with no hint of scandal, which seems like a miracle nowadays. I've enjoyed serving you and look forward to helping Don Miller bring you more informative programming during the next two years. Please feel free to become more involved with the Society--we need and appreciate all the help we can get.

Bill Morgan
President

Bennington Historical Society Upcoming Events

November 17, 2019 at 2:00 pm. Steven Butz speaks on "Shay's Settlement in Vermont: A Story of Revolt and Archaeology." After fleeing the 1787 uprising in Massachusetts, led by Daniel Shay, many settled in the wilderness of Sandgate, Vermont. Rediscovered in 1997, the site of this settlement has been studied since 2013.

Bennington Battlefield Upcoming Events

October 12th, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM hourly tours of the battlefield will be offered as a part of Path Through History weekend. A mix of driving and walking is required. Visitors will meet under the flagpole.

October 13th, 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM a naturalist will lead a hike along Battle Loop trail. Visitors will meet under the flag pole. Appropriate shoes and long pants are recommended.

October 25th, 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM there will be a Fireside History presentation. The subject will be "Blame for Bennington: Reactions of the British and Their Allies to Defeat." Visitors will meet near the upper parking area and enjoy an open fire and refreshments during this informal talk.

October 30th, 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM the book discussion group will meet at Brown's Walloosmac Taproom to talk over *Valiant Ambition: George Washington, Benedict Arnold, and the Fate of the American Revolution* by Nathaniel Philbrick.

November 3rd, 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM there will be an early bird tour of the battlefield. Don't forget to set your clocks back! This will be the final public tour of the season. A mix of driving and walking is required. Visitors will meet under the flagpole.

November 11th at 11:00 AM the battlefield will host a commemoration ceremony to mark Veterans Day. This will also be the final day of the site's 2019 season.

Bennington Historical Society

A volunteer-operated program of the Bennington Museum

Officers: Bill Morgan, President; Charles Dewey, Secretary; President-Elect, Don Miller; Past-President, Anne Bugbee

Committee members: Beverly Petrelis, Ted Bird, Jackie Marro, Scott Maguire, Ray Rodrigues, Bob Tegart, Joe Hall

Newsletter editor: Ray Rodrigues

*Thank you for your donation to Bennington Museum in support of
Historical Society programs.*