



GREENSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

Reflections on Last Summer's Programs

By Lacey Smith and Tom Woodward

Professor **Timothy Breen**, seeking to celebrate the construction of a new exhibition hall for the Greensboro Historical Society and a fresh way to stimulate history in the community, offered three college level seminars last summer based on his newly published book, *American Insurgents – American Patriots*. To the Society's delight, the seminars were a huge success. They were initially limited to 15 students but demand led to their expansion to twenty. Attendance varied slightly throughout the summer according to the intensity of the sunshine but we never dropped to less than 14. Free copies of Tim's engrossing book *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* were supplied by Tim and his

publisher along with a paper back edition of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and an 85-page collection of Revolutionary War documents. The advertised theme of these seminars was Tim's book on the vital role of the common man in both the initiation and success of the American Revolution. While the founding fathers were busy laying down the philosophical foundations of the revolution, New England farmers and their wives, town artisans, clergymen, fishermen, and a host of militia men were setting up committees of safety in towns from the Carolinas to Massachusetts and achieving for themselves a vital but little understood revolution quite independent of what was going on in the Continental Congress. Seminars, however, often have lives of their own, and almost from the start another historical question monopolized the discussions: what prevented this undisciplined common-man revolution, lacking leadership of clean fingered gentlemen, from going the path of the French and Russian revolutions, and what curtailed innate violence and allowed, with only a few

exceptions, the rule of law to prevail at all levels of society.

We came away from our brief encounter with college scholarship not only with a sense of personal participation but also with the realization that we had been discussing questions with no firm answers but were nevertheless vital aspects of the entire historical process. Had a poll been taken, every member of the seminar would have extolled Tim Breen's guidance and asked for more next summer.

At the GHS Annual Meeting on August 9th **Allen Davis** was featured who, thanks to popular demand, repeated his lecture of some years ago, "Early Greensboro from the Revolutionary War Forward." Life was unimaginatively hard in those days, with all aspects of land clearing, building houses, farming, animal husbandry, and trying to earn a profit to survive in these cold northern regions. Allen ended his lecture by distributing lists of items in a pioneer's will, indicating some surprising insight into life in those days.

The GHS Annual Book Sale with Cider and Donuts

By Cathie Wilkinson

The GHS Annual Book Sale held on Saturday, September 4th in Janet Long's garage was the most successful yet thanks to the GHS members who donated many almost new books of fiction and non-fiction along with some oldies but goodies. The Vermont cider and Connie's donuts, good weather, the effort put in by the GHS work-a bees who set up and manned the sale, a steady stream of buyers and the prime "downtown" location all contributed to this successful fund raising effort. The funds generated from these donations make up a big part of the GHS operating budget each year and enable us to preserve and share the history of Greensboro and its people. Work-a Bees- Cathie Wilkinson, Ercel Harvey, Debbie Kasper, Janet Long, Marion Babbie and Nancy Hill, with advice and counsel from Lacey Smith who, along with his wife Jean, organized and ran the Book Sale for many years.



*Pour maple syrup on snow, eat a pickle or a donut, maybe finish with a cup of coffee.
The sugaring off tradition carries on today.*

President's Corner

by Jenny Stoner



The summer of 2010 was one of both accomplishments and challenges for GHS. Our rich programs explored the world of early Greensboro through scholarly lectures, seminars and theater. The enthusiastic response to these programs affirmed our community's interest in the larger history of our country and world, as well as our strong interest in knowing more about what makes Greensboro so special. I am especially grateful to distinguished historians Tim Breen and Allen Davis who shared new understandings of our country's early history and Sabra Jones whose efforts allowed us to experience theater from the revolutionary period. Thanks to everyone who helped with these programs: with our collaboration in the Kingdom Crafts Alliance exhibit, our Open House celebration, Ice Cream Social and Book Sale. It was a busy summer.

The challenges have been chiefly in relation to completing our new building. Our architect and builder have done a great job in carrying out their work, but obstruction of the "Old Perrin Road" right of way access has seriously delayed efforts for completion. This has given me a deeper understanding of our town's history as I have read old deeds, met with a lawyer, consulted a surveyor and talked with our town officials. Some questions remain to be resolved, but we have found a way to proceed. By using a right of way shown on the surveyor's map on the right side of our building, David Gendron and Gary Bellavance used an alternative way to access the rear of the building and install our septic tank. The building was finished by November 19th. We'll be on to the new challenges of moving in. This next step will involve moving both the office furniture and archives downstairs into the new climate-controlled space, getting it set up for work, then moving in the Hill collection and other new acquisitions and starting to work on our first exhibit in the new space. It will also be a busy winter.

IN MEMORIAM

Members and faithful supporters of GHS who have died since the publication of last spring's newsletter:

Kitty Byers
Richard Byers
David Broad

Alan Howes
William Igleheart
Stella Lammert

– New Trustees –



Wendy Parrish, a 6th generation Stowe native, comes to us from Morrisville and Greensboro. She and her husband, Bob, are collectors of many things including vintage post cards of Greensboro. For about 20 years, they lived in Lexington MA, where she first got involved as a volunteer with the historical society there. Upon returning to Vermont in 2004, she volunteered at the Stowe Historical Society and currently is the Vice-President. A graduate of Johnson State College, Wendy and her husband Bob have two daughters.



Deborah Kasper has old Greensboro ties: her grandfather built a camp on Caspian Lake in 1906 and Debbie has summered here her whole life. She is married to Earl Kasper, who is also a member of the GHS team. They lived in Columbus, OH for 32 years and raised two children. They retired here in 2005. She joins sisters Cathie Wilkinson and Ercel Harvey in doing a great deal of volunteer work for the Society, serving on the Acquisitions Committee and the Program Committee. She is also Assistant Librarian in Greensboro and volunteers at the "4 C's".



Lee Wright came to Greensboro in 1982, and after renting, purchased the farmhouse across from Aspenhurst, which he lovingly restored. He studied architecture both as an undergraduate and graduate student at Princeton University and became a practicing architect for over four decades, including running his own firm. He retired 2 ½ years ago to live here full time. His interest in history centers considerably on older buildings, especially older farm houses, barns, and older commercial structures and in addition, the old St Johnsbury and Lake Champlain RR. His architectural expertise is particularly welcome.

2011 Summer programs

As members and readers of our newsletters will recall, the Greensboro Historical Society has been focusing more recently on thematic programs which encompass historic themes, lectures, and seminars concerning a subject which relates both to our town and to history generally. In the summer of 2011 GHS will again hold a series of lectures and discussion groups about the history of the **Republic of Vermont (1778-1791)**, a talk on the world of the **Green Mountain Boys**, and little known careers of the **Allen brothers**. Timothy Breen will also organize three special seminars that will examine a collection of original documents from the Vermont Republic. More details will be published in the Spring 2011 newsletter.

Focus Groups Paving the Way for the Best Use of the New Building

How should we be as an effective resource and display local history? Last spring we invited Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, a Smith College senior majoring in history and museum studies, to lead four discussion groups in our new building on the subject of how best to exhibit future themes and to provide for the needs of our public in the displaying historical information through artifacts, exhibits, and databases. The latter will become increasingly important as we trace genealogy, population changes, or persons buried in local cemeteries. We must be able to display videos such as Lewis Hill's regarding the early settlers or, for example, a lecture on early tools and clothing, and how the pioneers made them. Participants discussed how the past teaches us about ourselves; how we might make available important historic photographs or how best to incorporate time lines, map boards, and similar displays. Historical societies are now making use of videos and movies which may accompany lectures and classes. There was active discussion about whether we need a "permanent exhibit" as well as a current, topical one developed annually. Another affiliated topic was how to design various spaces within both buildings - one, perhaps with permanent, available storage, and another for research. Indeed, why is history important? We must show that it is. Members will be discussing how to resolve these matters as we continue our work in the future.



Horse powered treadmill. Cutting firewood before chainsaws!

Hazen Road Dispatch

For over 35 years the Greensboro Historical Society has published this award winning annual booklet which offers a wide variety of articles on new and old history with reminiscences, photographs, interviews, and topics of great general interest. Both in the Greensboro Free Library and in the GHS building there are bound copies in chronological order (numbered by volume): Vol I, 1975-1987; Vol II 1988, 1996; and Vol III, 1997-2001. (More recent issues, which can be found on this shelf, will be bound soon.) As the Library may be more accessible to the public on a given day, back copies of the HRD can be found in the front, first-floor room. There are also, in the same Library section, unbound annual copies which may be easily used to photocopy any article of interest. And importantly, there is an index of articles on the same shelf as that holding the individual copies. Just browse the index for an eye-opening array of interesting articles on subjects you probably never knew about. A great deal of the preserving, indexing, and binding of these volumes is due to the many professional efforts of Pat Haslam, our long-term researcher and genealogist.

A Neat Present for your Children – or Grandchildren!

The Greensboro bicentennial book, *The History of Greensboro: The First Two Hundred Years* was published in 1990, but is still a timely history of Greensboro with photographs, maps, geology of the Lake, Greensboro's charter, early settlers, wildlife, populations, and notes on the immigrations to the town over two centuries. The book is both new and refreshing, particularly to our generations coming along who may have missed reading it. We are offering a 2010 Christmas Special of \$10 per copy (softcover) plus \$2.90 postage, total \$12.90. Please send orders including your check made out to Greensboro Historical Society, Attn: "History book," to P.O. Box 151, Greensboro, VT 05841. A copy will be mailed back to you right away - or to anyone you designate.



Greensboro's Breezy Avenue looking toward Caspian Lake house - on left
Hartson and Miller houses (about 1920).

Kudos. . .

- To **Bridget Collier**, long term member of GHS who is retiring after 26 ½ years as Town Clerk and 3 years as Assistant, doing a fabulous job. Bridget retired November 1st and was replaced by **Valdine Hall**, who has been appointed Interim Town Clerk until Town Meeting in March.
- To **Robert Willey Hurst** who has taken the reins as new manager of Willeys Store and is doing very well.
- To **Tim Breen** for bringing us the best seminar we have experienced so far.

A SMALL EDITORIAL

By Tom Woodward, Editor

Constructing a new building after spending two years raising the money for it in the worst financial recession since 1930's is no easy task. But it achieved success in large part because of the two hundred and twenty-two donors, including foundations, who had faith in us and the importance of Greensboro's history. What is undeniably icing on the cake is that our new building was

designed and built by two very talented people: **Patrick Kane**, of Kane Architecture in East Hardwick, and **David Gendron** of Gendron Contracting in Hardwick. Working with very tight budgets, they did a magnificent job of bringing our planning to fruition, meeting all codes, and leaving behind the magic touch of professionalism. In many cases they saved us a great deal of money. And our hats are off, also, to our remorseless and unflagging president, Jenny Stoner, who took on a second career later in life and became a close-to expert in the matter of researching old deeds.

Some Historical Footnotes

- **The septic tank and retaining wall were installed during the week of November 8-12.** As this goes to press, the new building project is now complete.
- The current issue of *Vermont History* tells members of the Vermont Historical Society that GHS member **Allen Davis** is writing a memoir about growing up in Hardwick in the 1930's and '40's. Reportedly he includes an account of the Davis Camp on Caspian Lake, where cavorting youngsters continue to enjoy summers as members of the 5th generation.
- Historian **Charlie Morrissey** has a book review upcoming in *Vermont History* about Colin Calloway's coverage of Native Americans at Dartmouth College. Charlie is writing an essay for the 2012 edition of the GHS annual publication, the *Hazen Road Dispatch*, about two Greensboro men who enlisted in the Union Army expecting to be sent southward to fight Confederate rebels. Instead, they were sent to the Dakota Territory to quell the 1862 uprising of Dakota Sioux Indians.
- Our indefatigable **Lacey Smith** is writing a commentary for the *Hazen Road Dispatch* about Herman Obermayer's *Rehnquist*, a memoir by a Virginia neighbor of the late Chief Justice of the United States. Lacey will provide a Greensboro-based view of Justice Rehnquist as a long-term summer vacationer.
- **Anniversaries:** November 25th is the sesquicentennial of Bliss Perry, one of the most influential founders of the Greensboro summer community. [ref: *Wikipedia*] In 2011 we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the **Greensboro Bend Grammar School** (1931).
- All historic photographs in this issue are from **the Henry Merrill collection.**

Portrait of Lacey B. Smith – One of our Prominent Historians



[The GHS Newsletter, wishing to feature another of our prominent historians, asked Lacey Smith for some biographical information. Lacey replied with this delightful essay, which we have decided to print as is.]

“My family found Greensboro largely because their red haired, fair skin son came down with sunstroke whenever the family ventured to the New England coast. Therefore, they joined the summer exodus of Princeton academics to Greensboro. At its height 22 Princeton faculty families made the journey and oddly enough the second most prevalent university in the town was not Harvard or Yale but Northwestern, where I would teach for 37 years. The Smiths started coming to Greensboro in 1930, back in the days when it was a two-day trip and the final 100 miles was traversed on washboard dirt roads. We rented for eight years and finally bought a heavily wooded house on Aspenhurst just in time for the hurricane of 1938 to demolish every tree on the lot.

“The pull of Princeton University and my stepmother’s New York City family got me into Millbrook School where, with a totally undistinguished record, I managed, to the embarrassment of Mr. Pulling, the headmaster, to be elected graduation speaker for the Class of 1940. From Millbrook I went on to Bowdoin College, where Smiths had graduated since its founding in the 18th century and again ended up the graduation speaker without even coming close to Phi Beta Kappa. WWII curtailed my college career to two and a half years and only the military could explain why it sent me to “Bombsite and Automatic Pilot School” open only to those soldiers with two years of college physics or two years as a jeweler apprentice, neither of which I could claim. Again, as only the military can explain, I was sent to Bangalore, India,

known in those days not as the Silicone Valley of the sub-continent but as the garden spot of the British empire where I battled the military hierarchy far more often than the Japanese and became a member of a test crew who flew B-24 bombers which had been sent to Bangalore for a two-thousand-hour overhaul to see if they could fly.

“After two years in India and a final semester at Bowdoin on the GI Bill I went on to graduate school in history at Princeton. Those were the days before Graduate Record Examinations; one studied all history, and there was no such thing as women’s history, let alone Gay history. After earning my PhD in 1951 I knew that one thing I wanted to do was to get out of Princeton as soon as possible; I did not want to compete with my father who was professor of Art and Archeology and member of the Ruling Committee of Three. I taught for two years at M.I.T. in the department of Humanities and then accepted as associate professorship at Northwestern University where I remained for the rest of my teaching life, and encountered what was then regarded as a marvelous oxymoron, a really stunning looking graduate student in history – Jean Reeder. She was invited to visit me in London when I was on sabbatical but she turned up with two Smith College friends and I had to find accommodations for them. Mercifully, one came down with appendicitis and spent most of her time recovering, and the other fell in love with the landlady’s granddaughter’s boy friend and ran off to marry him. I had my grandmother’s engagement ring reset and offered it to Jean but forgot to have the ring size cut down. Jean said that if she were wearing the ring when I returned to the states in September, the answer was yes. I sweated out August and September and my ship was delayed five days by a hurricane; but as we all know, the answer was not only yes, but three children – MacAllister, Dennison, and Katherine – followed.

“I started out my research career expecting to be an Austro-Hungarian expert and actually started a doctoral dissertation on the Austro-Hungarian Empire until I discovered that the thesis required knowledge of Hungarian. After two weeks of intensive language study I decided that life was too short to learn Hungarian, the only living language related to Finnish, and became an English Tudor historian instead. I have written ten books, the two of which I am proudest are *Henry VIII, the Mask of Royalty* and *Politics and Paranoia in Tudor England*. My name appears as a co-author of *World History* but I wrote only the introduction. Jean wrote the rest. I was appointed the Peter B. Ritzman Professor of the Humanities, chaired the history department for four years, and am a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

“I did not feel the need to retire at 70 and so kept on teaching graduate students and adult education courses well into my eighties. I also wrote two books in retirement, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors, the History of Martyrdom in the Western World* (1997) and a delightful little book, *English History Made Brief, Irreverent, and Pleasurable* (2007) flavored throughout with cartoons from **Punch**.”

[The Greensboro Historical Society is delighted to have had Lacey’s advice, counsel, summer lectures, and input as a board member over the last three decades. –Ed]

2011 Winter Meeting

Our winter meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 27, at 2 PM in Fellowship Hall**. Linda Radke, well known mezzo- soprano, who has sung with the Mozart Festival and other Vermont singing groups, will sing a program titled "Vermont History Through Song" which includes songs such as "Green Mountain Farmer" (1798), 1850 Temperance Ballads, songs about famous personages (ex., Calvin Coolidge), and songs from the Civil War. Dressed in period costume, she takes listeners through Vermont history and talks about the songs as well. Following the program attendees will be treated to Early Vermont Desserts, supplied by members of the Society.

Many of our GHS members and friends save some of their charitable giving until the end of the year. As the new building project absorbed nearly all of our resources, we have little left to spend on office equipment, new shelving, file systems, and the like.

If you can, please consider an end-of-year gift to the Greensboro Historical Society.

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