

BULLETIN



Number 115

Orleans County Historical Society, Inc. • Brownington, Vermont 05860

Fall 2008

Celebrating horse power on Old Stone House Day



A window of glorious summer weather broke through the persistent summer rains for Old Stone House Day on August 10, bringing with it crowds of people and all the horse power we could have hoped for. Neal Perry gave rides in his white wedding carriage, pulled by a sharp team of black Morgans. Bob Lawson loaded passengers inside and on top of the big red stage coach that he bought from Fred Webster. In the field east of the Twilight House four teams of draft horses cut hay, plowed, and harrowed. For the grand finale two teams were hitched together for the first time for a four horse hitch pulling the big harrow. All the teamsters took turns driving them, and by the end of the day the horses worked together as if they'd worked together forever.

Besides the impressive display of horsepower, there were demonstrations of traditional crafts like chair caning, blacksmithing, basket making, violin making, spinning,



weaving, quilting, and rug hooking. The Old Stone House was filled with volunteers in every room so that visitors could roam freely throughout the building at their own pace. The Brownington Ladies Aid served lunch, and lively music was provided by Country Pure and Simple and friends. The new exhibit on Horse Transportation

was open in the Eaton House Carriage Barn, and Kim Brookes set up the Mobile Harness Racing Museum nearby. Local town historical societies had tables displaying their projects under a tent along with volunteers demonstrating Internet genealogy searches on laptop computers. Children tried out our stilts and old fashioned games, and put on outfits from our dress-up trunk. It was a great day. Amazingly, the rain held off until an hour after everyone was gone, when the sky broke loose with a downpour accompanied by thunder and lightning. We couldn't have asked for a more perfect day.

Schedule of Events

Hands on History—“Leisure Moments” Saturday, September 13, 10 a.m. to noon

Even during busy times children like to play games and have fun. Try a few of the outdoor games and leisure activities popular in the 1800s. *For families with school age children, \$3 per child, pre-registration required, 754-2022.*

Fall Harvest Day Tuesday, September 23, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Students in grades 3–6 from public, private and home schools rotate among hands-on demonstrations of traditional skills. Pre-registration required.

Apple Pressing Saturdays starting at 1 p.m., September 20–October 11

Bring your own apples and containers and make delicious cider on the museum apple press. Share a few cups with our other visitors and take the rest home. No charge, but donations gladly accepted.

Fall Craft Classes September 27–October 25

Learn traditional skills, and get a head start on home-made Christmas presents. Rug braiding, quilting, paper making, knitting, candle dipping, wood carving, wreath making. Pre-registration required. See enclosed brochure or check our website at www.oldstonehousemuseum.org for details.

Photograph Preservation and Digitization Saturday, October 4, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Eileen Corcoran, director of the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance, will lead a workshop for historians on preserving old photographs and scanning them to computer images. We invite local historical societies to bring in photographs of their military veterans that can be scanned, so that they can take home a CD with the digitized image, and we can also have a copy for our collection to be displayed at our annual Big Band Dance honoring veterans in June. Cost \$15. Space limited. Call 754-2022 to register.

Hands on History—“Apples” Saturday, October 11, 10 a.m. to noon

Apples dried and apples fried, Cider pressing. Learn ways people kept apples for the long winter. *For families with school age children, \$3 per child, pre-registration required, 754-2022.*

Old Stone House Museum closes for the season Wednesday, October 15

It’s the last day for guided tours until next May 15. We will draw the winner for the Quilt Raffle. If you fill out the enclosed sheet of tickets and mail them to us with your check by October 15, you too will have a chance to win the beautiful Sampler Quilt made by the Stone House Quilters.

Hands on History — “Book Binding” Saturday, November 8, 10 a.m. to noon

Learn to marble fancy end papers, construct and sew a small volume suitable for a copybook. Journals were often given as New Years gifts. *For families with school age children, \$3 per child, pre-registration required, 754-2022.*

Holiday Open House Saturday, November 29, 10 a.m. to 3p.m.

Drop in at the Twilight House. Adults and children can make old fashioned Christmas decorations, share tasty holiday treats, custom decorate your own balsam wreath, and help decorate our tree in the parlor where musicians create a warm and festive atmosphere. Our gift shop will be open, selling old-fashioned toys, books, and fine local crafts.

Hands on History—“Candle Light” Saturday, December 13, 10 a.m. to noon

Families will prepare and tie wicking then dip a pair of tallow and wax candles to take home. We will look at lighting of the early 1800s in our collection. *For families with school age children, \$3 per child, pre-registration required, 754-2022.*

Ongoing Craft Circles—Spinning: Wednesdays, September 17 & October 15, 1 pm to 4 pm – contact: Joan Hudson 754-2713; **Quilting:** Wednesdays, September 17 & October 15, 1 pm to 4 pm – contact Cathie Sheehan 755-6223; **Basket Making:** Saturdays, October 4 & 18, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. – contact Carolyn Starr 626-4539; **Rug Braiding:** Saturdays, September 27 & October 25, 10 am to 4 p.m. – contact Deni Mayer deni5@comcast.net; **Knitting:** Sundays, September 4 & Oct. 5, 1 pm to 4 p.m. – contact Diana Foster 744-6440.

Samuel Read Hall House progress report



The northeast view of the Hall House shows the new stone terrace built by John Rodgers.

Restoration of the Samuel Read Hall House is progressing beautifully. As this *Bulletin* goes to press at the end of August, the Old School Builders are taking advantage of the long awaited sunny summer weather to shingle the roof with flame retardant western red cedar shingles, paid for by a \$15,000 grant from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation. John Rodgers is surfacing the massive granite terrace he built on the east side of the house with blue stone, which will make a firm flat surface easy to walk on and smooth and level enough to accommodate a walker or wheelchair. We are choosing a design for the iron railing for the perimeter of the terrace, which Dennis Gibson will build.

John Rodgers is also doing the groundwork. To create a 100 foot flat spot for an event tent, he took out a line of trees in the northeast corner of the yard, which also opened up a spectacular view of distant mountains. We plan to rent the property for weddings and other events to bring in revenue to help maintain the rest of the museum buildings.

Work on the Hall House, which started at the end of May, with Earl Kinsey, assisted by his daughter Leanne, jacking up the building and replacing the sills and floor joists, has become a real family affair. John Rodgers, helped by his son Johnny, rebuilt the water damaged east stacked stone foundation wall of the basement, which was clearly constructed by master craftsmen almost 200 years ago. Bill Roddy and his son Luke rebuilt the brick section between the foundation and the sills. Ben Barnes and his brother Dean, assisted by Jim Daniels and Keith Stone replaced the kitchen floor and built a long narrow closet

that opens into the kitchen. This extends the space underneath the stairs for storing tables and chairs when not in use. As an added bonus, the wall of the closet replaces a supporting wall that was removed sometime in the past. The windows have been restored, new custom storm windows built; the bathroom floor has been rebuilt, and the plumbers and electrician have done the initial phases of the plumbing and wiring.

We have been awarded grants from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (\$78,000) and the Preservation Trust of Vermont (\$35,000), and Vermont Community Foundation (\$5,000). Donations for the restoration have been received from the Passumpsic Bank, Community National Bank, Texas Instruments, and Curtis Britch Funeral Home and other capital campaign donations have been coming in steadily. Since the capital campaign started, we have collected \$50,000.

Work of the Hall House is scheduled for completion by the end of October, with a total restoration bill of \$300,000. Only \$74,000 remains to finish paying for the project, so with your help we are confident the goal will soon be met. Thank you all for your support for this wonderful project.

Please stop by to see this beautiful addition to the museum. The Hall House will add a whole new dimension to our capacity for programming. Events with food and cooking classes, teacher education classes, and expanded craft classes will all now be possible. In addition there will be exhibit space for paintings and photographs, a meeting space, and a place for celebrations. The Hall House is a new gem for the whole community.



Ben Barnes, left, and Jim Daniels, right, have a stretch of sunny weather to put the fire resistant cedar shingles on the roof.

- Peggy Day Gibson, Director

Education news



Archaeologists-in-training investigate a primary source at the Time Travelers Day Camp, the gravestones of Alexander and Mercy Twilight.

In July our annual **Time Traveler's Camp** took place on the Museum grounds sponsored by a grant from the Turrell Foundation. Forty-six children chose to participate in activities with expert instructors, including Decorative Trades of the 1800s, Water Power, Blacksmithing, Wood Riving, Weaving, Straw into Gold, Farm Animals, and Book Binding. Several of these new offerings for campers were very popular such as Bowl and Spoon, during which children learned to cook and preserve using techniques of the early 1800s, and Archaeology, in which campers learned basic principles and practice of historic archaeology and experienced a dig. Of course, Blacksmithing and Wood Working are always popular choices.

Hands On History, our family oriented program, continued through the summer. In August participating children concocted two old-fashioned summer beverages "Shrub & Switchel," politely serving the drinks to their brave parents! We made the most of our warm weather to hold sessions out of doors. Coming up soon will be **Leisure Moments** on September 13, a program of games and amusements, and **Apples**, on October 11. Call to pre-register for any second Saturday morning HOH program. Enrollment is limited and costs \$3 per child, with accompanying adults free. Check *the Chronicle* for our monthly theme.

Educators take note: Programs in the planning stage for the academic year are: **NEK History Fair**, a compe-



Troy Ufford-Chase threshes rye at the Time Travelers Day Camp while junior counselor, Alexia Voilte, looks on.

tition open to all students in public, home or private school; a new visiting outreach program set to begin in October, **History Comes Calling**; and **Fall Harvest Day** which is scheduled for September 23.

For information on any Education Program and to obtain the Years Schedule Poster call Susanna at 754-2022 or email education@oldstonehousemuseum.org.

- Susan Bowman, Education Program Coordinator



The Water Power group tested the wheels they built on Friday at the Time Travelers Day Camp. Earlier in the week they had diverted a portion of the stream just beyond our pasture with a sluice they made using rain gutters supported by stakes. They tried both overshooting and undershooting the stream of water, and counted the revolutions per minute to see which was faster.

Collection News

Horse drawn transportation exhibit

The Eaton House has a new area for an exhibit: the Carriage Barn. After grading the area around the barn away from the building, and replacing two sills, the barn was slightly jacked up and leveled off, and a new coat of paint applied. Now there is a self guiding exhibit to show off our three beautiful buggies, two side saddles and a sleigh soon to be installed. Also there are several antique chains and pieces of tack hung on the walls. A conservator of buggies came to teach us how to clean and restore the horse transportation (buggies, sleigh and tack), and that work is now under way.



Douglas Burnham gave the museum this lovely cedar rowboat, built around 1906 for use on Lake Memphremagog. It has been stored in a boathouse on Eagle Point for many years, and now it is in our Lawrence Barn. The man Mr. Burnham got it from about 30 years ago thought it was the same boat that Derby author Edwin Earle referred to in his book *I Can't Remember Being Born*. Mr. Burnham was given a signed copy of Mr. Earle's book along with the boat, and he would pass that on to us if we can replace it with another copy of the book. On the stern are remnants of the name ALIKA in brass letters. The boat is sided with northern white cedar lapstrake planks over oak ribs, fastened with bronze nails. With an elegant and seaworthy shape, she's a beauty.

Quilt storage

Our good quilt collection is in the process of being "rehoused." About half are now rolled up on "Marvalseal" covered tubes and hung on a storage frame in the upstairs recitation room of the Atheneum Hall. The second half will be finished by the end of October. This keeps the quilts from wearing on the fold lines. We are also digitally photographing each quilt, and putting a copy of the print on the outside of the roll which makes it much easier to find a particular quilt.

- Liz Nelson, Collections Manager



Our only summer intern this year, Eric Phillips, carefully cleans the wheels of the Ufford carriage in our new Horse Transportation Exhibit in the Eaton House Carriage Barn. He is using a paint brush to sweep the dust into a vacuum cleaner, and had just removed the air filter mask over his nose and mouth for the picture. Jennifer Baker, Vermont conservator from Monkton, came up for a day to instruct us on basic cleaning techniques for buggies and leather objects. Charles Ufford, the grandson of the carriage's maker, funded the project.



Mort Gellman, our groundskeeper, turned 82 on August 23. Collections manager Liz Nelson made him a cake and decorated it with an outline of the United States adorned with a few images to represent the amazing amount of things Mort has done throughout his life. He has been to every state except Alaska and Hawaii, farmed, ranched, drilled for oil, panned for gold, fought forest fires, cut big timber, driven everything from horses to big wheat combines, and trained for distance swimming by crossing Long Island Sound. As you might imagine, he is full of stories – but we are a bunch of history buffs around here, so we love listening to them.

New fire hydrants for Brownington and the museum

Two dry fire hydrants were installed this summer in front of the Lawrence Barn. They draw water from the farm pond behind the barn. Richard LaClair, a master with his backhoe, deepened the south side of the pond to 10 feet, and then dug a trench to the road, in which the Orleans Fire Department laid a pipe to suck the water from just above the bottom of the pond to the hydrants.

On the evening of July 22 the fire fighters held their training session at the museum and tested out the new hydrant, pulling the water from the pond with their pumper and shooting it high in the air and back into the pond. Fire department members also toured every building on the museum grounds, from the basement to the attic, looking at access and structure, in case they are ever called here to fight a fire. They were very appreciative of our special exhibit “Up in Flames: Fire and its Effects in Orleans County.”

The cost of the dry hydrant project was over \$6,000, most of which will be funded by a grant from the Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force. There are now four dry hydrants in the town of Brownington. Besides the two here, there is one near Brownington Center drawing



Orleans Fire Department holds training meeting at museum in July.

water from the Willoughby River, and one on Brownington Pond. Besides protecting our buildings and the neighborhood, the new dry hydrants should lower our fire insurance premiums.

We thank our board member Paul Moffat and Orleans Fire Department chiefs E.J. Rowell and Nate Peak for making it happen.

Gifts of stock

In Alexander Twilight’s day the term “gift of stock” may have brought to mind an unwieldy donation, a cow perhaps or maybe an ox. Today the term refers to something quite different. Did you know that the Orleans County Historical Society is able to receive transfers of stock as charitable donations? And best of all, we are able to sell stock and neither you nor we pay any capital gains tax, because we are a non-profit corporation.

So if you happen to own stock which you acquired many years ago with a low cost basis, and you would like to make a donation to the museum, you can give us the stock, and get a tax deduction for your donation at today’s value. Then we can sell the stock and pay absolutely no capital gains tax, while if you sold it yourself you would have to pay 10 to 15 percent of the difference in the dollar value between when you first acquired it and when you sold it.

You may request that your gift support any of our capital campaign projects: the Samuel Read Hall House Restoration, the Eaton House Preservation, or the Archival Storage Space Addition, as well as the Endowment.

Wish list

Thanks for granting our earlier wishes:

Picnic tables - Joan Hudson and Ann Lalime
Clawfoot tub – Paul and Sybil Moffat
Old Orleans County cookbooks – Ann Lalime

Current wishes:

- More books from Orleans County:
cookbooks, garden journals, memoirs and diaries, town histories
- Antique but sturdy furniture for the Hall House:
pier mirror, double bed
- Volunteers for cataloguing, tour guides, grant writing, mailings
- Set of horse drawn disc harrows and spike tooth harrows

The OSH website grows and changes

For nearly ten years, the Old Stone House Museum has had a website that broadcasts the history of the Brownington dormitory and the surrounding area. At its beginning, it included everything that the page has now: buildings, Brownington Village historic district map and essential directions to the museum.

Almost two years ago, the website was revamped. The entire look changed, though most of the information remained the same. This summer, our web designer, NEK Information Associates, provided the museum with a program that allows changes to be done by staff members. This means we've been able to add much more new information to the site.

On the Buildings pages, additional historical information has been added to give a fuller picture of the building's origins. We've included a history of Brownington Village and Athenian Hall (aka the Old Stone House), and will be working on others soon.

Another addition to the website is a blog or online

journal. The museum is using the blog to advertise upcoming events that didn't make it into the bulletin or newsletter, or to be a reminder of those events that were included. The blog will automatically archive the individual entries so they can be read again at any time.

In an effort to share our photographs with the public, we've added a photo album that will continually be updated. Not only are we including photos of current events, we hope to upload historic photographs from our archives.

The last big change was the shifting of the Kids page to an Education page. The Kids page was dedicated to explaining Orleans County history to children, but we've decided to broaden its subject matter. The new Education page will contain information on classes held at the museum as well as the history of our county and the people who lived here.

So if you find yourself surfing the internet aimlessly, or you are interested in seeing the changes in the site, visit us at www.oldstonehousemuseum.org!

- Sarah Ames, Librarian

Order Form for Gifts from the Old Stone House Museum

DVD's, Quest Books and Memberships make good Christmas presents!!!

Orleans County Quests \$8 plus \$2.50 shipping & handling

DVD "Life in Orleans County" \$15 plus \$2.50 shipping & handling

Orleans Historical Society Membership Individual \$15 Family \$25 (*good through 2009*)

Members get free admission to the museum, a discount on classes and in the museum shop, and receive the Bulletin.

Check enclosed (make payable to the Orleans County Historical Society)

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THE OLD STONE HOUSE MUSEUM BULLETIN

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The quilt raffle



Cathie Sheehan, left, and Joan Hudson, right, were two of the Stone House Quilters who lovingly created the Sampler Quilt for this year's Quilt Raffle. Fill out the attached tickets and enclose them in an envelope with a check, and you too will have a chance to win the drawing on October 15. Sherry Greenwood machine quilted this year's project. The vintage fabric patterns in burgundy, tan, green, gold and white will go with most any decor. Good luck!