



# The Adviser

St. Albans Historical Society Museum, Inc.

NEWSLETTER - MAY 2010

*D.J. Miner, Editor*



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## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

Life at the Museum is moving along in a positive and rapid rate.

Recently, the Town Voters approved an annual grant of \$5,000 for five years. This is a most positive step.

The City and the Town approved the Trustees request that the Museum be designated the point of contact, coordinator, organizer and implementor of the 150th *Celebration of the St. Albans Raid* which will occur 19 October, 2014. This is planned to be a re-enactment and will include the community. More will appear about this in the local paper and in notices.

The Museum has taken on the task of producing a pictorial publication of photos of St. Albans from 1860-1940. We are indeed most fortunate to have on this team, Charlotte Pedersen, Louise and Jon Haynes and Allyn McDonald.

Allyn McDonald, our Director, continues to perform in a thoughtfully outstanding manner and is establishing the Museum as a "Bright Spot" which demonstrates how a museum should perform.

A great thanks goes to Sherri and Charlie Moore for maintaining [winter and summer] the decorative urns by the back entrance in a most attractive state.

Remember—We are looking for people to serve as Trustees and to take on specific projects at the Museum. Call me at any time, [802] 527-7015.

Warren C. Hamm, Jr.  
Rear Admiral U.S.N. [Ret],  
President

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Dear Friends,

It has been a busy winter and an especially busy spring here at the Museum.

If you receive or pick up the St. Albans Messenger, you will have been seeing the images from our photographic archives that I have been sending to the Messenger, images which Gary Rutkowski has been placing in the weekend edition. This is in hopes that folks will have a little more time on a Saturday or Sunday morning to enjoy the images, take the time to reflect on them and to maybe consider becoming a little more involved with the Museum.

I am also pleased to inform you that through this project with the Messenger we have added four new members to the Museum's membership rolls. Thank you for joining!!!

And speaking of photographic images, I am pleased to tell you that we are in the final stages of producing a publication of photographic images of St. Albans. You have most likely seen copies of the "Images of America" book series produced by Arcadia Publishing. This series reproduces photos of a community, and each of the images is captioned for the reader. We decided last year to participate in this series. We asked two local women to be our authors. And graciously, Charlotte Pedersen and Louise Haynes agreed to help us. During the course of the winter, Charlotte and Louise sorted through hundreds of our photographs and whittled the number down to some 200 images. From there they organized them into categories or chapters. Then, with the very generous assistance of Louise's husband, Jon, they created captions for each of the pictures. This may not sound all

that complicated, but believe me when I tell you that these folks worked hard and long hours on this project.

This April the Museum was a co-sponsor of a fund-raising idea brought to the Museum by **Board Member, Marilyn Grunewald. This was a joint effort with the Franklin County Business and Professional Women's Organization.** The idea was that you could buy a ticket, and for the whole month of April you could dine at any of eight participating restaurants with three of your friends and get 20% off the cost of your food. Thank you Marilyn for your efforts to support the Museum!

Over the course of the winter, former Director, Don Miner, has been up-dating the Museum's Walking Tour of Downtown St. Albans. The previously published tour book needs to be brought up to date considering the changes that have occurred to downtown buildings included in the tour. We also think that a few more photographs in the tour book will help to make it more interesting and easier to understand. We spoke with the City and received permission to paint a number or a star on the sidewalk at each location mentioned in the booklet to further assist those taking the tour.

This summer we plan to open the Museum for the season, on Tuesday, May 19th, and we will close for the season, Saturday, October 9th. We are extremely fortunate to have a wonderful team of volunteers here at the Museum. In a time when many historical societies struggle to find volunteers, we are in the envious position of having a very strong team of volunteers. Many thanks to those who do volunteer, but we would love to add to our team if you are interested!!

The fall closing is always a little weather dependent. If the lobby becomes just too chilly for our volunteers to comfortably be able to be there, then we may close before October 9th.

A. J. McDonald,  
Museum Director

## IN MEMORIAM:

**Dr. Norman F. Dennis, M.D.**

**Jeanne [Jane] Poirier**

**Elizabeth [Betty] Farrar\***

\*Elizabeth [Betty] Farrar—A Great Supporter and Key Volunteer At The Museum:

Betty Farrar, as she was known to her many friends, passed away on April 21st at age 95. She was born in Lincoln, Massachusetts, graduated from Concord [Mass.] High School and then attended Simmons College, Newton, Mass. where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Library Science. She then pursued a career as a research librarian in numerous communities across the United States. and moved to St. Albans about ten years ago after retirement. But she did not retire. At age 85 she promptly became involved in the community, socially and professionally. At the time of her arrival, we, at the St. Albans Historical Museum, had just commenced to set up local history archives in a newly fitted out room in the museum basement. Betty stepped right in and made an outstanding contribution by introducing a professional filing system, and reviewing and filing hundreds of books and documents. She worked many long hours. It was a task that no one but a person with her training and experience could have accomplished. And we are so grateful. Betty will be missed by her many freinds who worked with her at the Museum.

## MUSEUM COMMITTEE REPORTS:

### Membership

**B. Cioffi**

\*Current memberships paid—134

\*Second dues notices have gone out.

\*Last year's paid membership—172

### Facilities

**J. Bianca**

\*Requesting bids to provide annual exterior maintenance on the building.

\*Efficiency Vermont has proposed to replace all light fixtures, bulbs, etc. with new energy-efficient units at an extremely low cost. The Executive Committee accepted the proposal. Work should be completed by 20 May.

### Finance

**M. Thibault**

\*All obligations are current.

\*Another Annual Contract has been signed for weekly use of the Bliss Auditorium.

### Programs

**M. Grunewald  
D. Miner**

See Attachment.

### Displays

The "Rockwell" Display will be re-located and enhanced to improve this unique exhibit.



## A NEW FACE IN THE MEDICAL EXHIBIT:

It's a reproduction of a small, black and white photo of a neatly dressed man wearing garments of the mid-nineteenth century. He has dark hair, strong, interesting features, but only one eye. In his hands he holds a rod, about an inch in diameter and almost four feet in length, across his chest like a rifle. Can you guess who it is? Why, it's a reproduction of a photo, a daguerreotype, of Phineas Gage, the principal in one of the two life-sized displays in our Medical Room, created by Dr. John Carmola and St. Albans Sculptor, Mark Prent. The exhibit tells the story of Phineas Gage's dreadful accident and miracle recovery in 1848.



Phineas was a foreman of a crew of Rutland and Burlington Railroad workmen cutting a railroad bed through a ledge in Cavendish, Vermont. He was in the process of tamping blasting powder, by means of an iron bar, down a hole drilled into the rocky ledge. As the story goes, the iron bar striking the rocky surface in the hole created a spark. The blasting powder, exploding with terrific force, propelled the bar out of the hole like a rifle shot. The bar, 1.25 inches in diameter, 43 inches in length and weighing over 13 pounds struck Phineas' left cheek, penetrated the left side of his brain and after

exiting his skull ended up on the ground some 20 to 25 yards away. One would think that this was sufficient to kill Phineas. But it wasn't. He was knocked over backwards, and had a brief seizure but within minutes he was speaking and able to walk, either alone or with assistance, to an oxcart which took him to a tavern in a nearby town. He stood up by himself, was helped down from the cart and assisted to the veranda where he sat, conversed in a fully conscious and rational manner and waited for medical attention. He was first treated by Dr. Edward Williams who quickly turned him over to Dr. John Martyn Harlow. Dr. Harlow treated him for several months. But the man whom Dr. Harlow treated was a different person from the original Phineas. He went through a severe personality change. An easy going friendly man suddenly became harsh, difficult to get along with, stubborn and very profane. It appears that this change lasted until the end of his life. In the end, Phineas recovered sufficiently so that he could work again. The firm building the railroad bed would not hire him back. So he worked as a stable hand in New Hampshire for a period of time, went on tour to Boston and other New England towns, and even to P. T. Barnum's American Museum in New York City, to show his wounds and the iron bar that caused the problem. He then travelled to Valparaiso, Chile, and stayed there for seven years driving a stagecoach. Towards the end of his life his health began to fail, and he journeyed to San Francisco to be with his mother and brother who resided there. He died in 1860 at the age of 36 from a seizure caused by his old injury. This was not the end of the story. Dr. Harlow talked about the amazing event and even published two papers on the subject which attracted a great deal of attention in medical circles. It was,

apparently, the first indication of a possible link between brain trauma and personality change. Even to this day, the story is published in numerous introductory psychology textbooks. A mask of his face, made before death, his skull and the tamping iron are in a collection at the Warren Anatomical Museum on the Harvard Medical School campus. It is a "must see" exhibit for people interested in neuroscience.

But what did Phineas Gage really look like? For over 160 years no one could say. Mark Prent, in sculptoring the life-sized figure for our exhibit, used Paul Hauf, Dr. Carmola's son-in-law, for a model. During 2008 and 2009, sources on the Internet referred to an extant photo. Then the January 2010 Issue of the Smithsonian featured a story written by Steve Twomey under the heading; "Finding Phineas". It turns out that a couple, Jack and Beverly Wilgus, living in Baltimore, Maryland, who collect vintage photographs, obtained the daguerreotype about thirty years ago. They thought it was of a man holding a harpoon. In December 2009, Beverly posted the image on the Flickr Website under the title, "One-Eyed Man with Harpoon". Shortly thereafter, a person knowledgeable about whaling, told her it was not a harpoon. And then another correspondent, Michael Spurlock, a database administrator in Maryland, spotted the Flickr reproduction and suggested to Beverly that it might be a photo of Phineas Gage. Beverly, who had never heard of Phineas, went on line to read the astonishing tale. Beverly and Jack Wilgus then sent a copy of their daguerreotype to the Warren Anatomical Museum where it reached Jack Eckert, the public service librarian at the Harvard Center for the History of Medicine. By comparing the photograph

with Gage's mask and skull and by comparing the iron rod in the photos with what the Museum had on hand, he reasoned that it was indeed a photo of Phineas. Although Harvard has not officially stated that the daguerreotype is of Phineas Gage, those who have been involved in the study are reasonably sure that it is. Dr. Carmola obtained a photocopy of the daguerreotype and has added it to the Phineas Exhibit.

We thought Dr. Carmola and Mark Prent had a great idea when they put together the Phineas Gage Exhibit nine years ago. It may very well be the only such exhibit in the U.S.A. And this interest in Phineas 160 years after his near fatal accident confirms its importance. We are sure that Phineas would be greatly pleased that the story has evolved to this extent. We invite all to the Medical Room to review the Phineas Gage story in detail and to see the "new face".



## WHEN TAYLOR PARK WAS CALLED A HIGHWAY:

It wasn't said in fun, and it wasn't said for very long. But calling the Park a "highway" saved it for our use.

To commence this tale, one has to go back to the very beginning of our downtown area, now called St. Albans City.

On August 17, 1763, Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor of the British Colony of New Hampshire, granted a charter for the Town of St. Albans. This was only one of 138 towns that he created during his time as Royal Governor. They came to be known as the

“New Hampshire Grants”. Then came the American Rebellion against Britain, 1775—1783, which we call The Revolutionary War. On February 11, 1779, Vermont declared itself an independent state, independent of New Hampshire and New York, who claimed sovereignty over the land. It took some time to get there, but on March 4, 1791, Vermont became the 14th state of the federal union. The organization of Franklin County followed on November 5, 1792.

During the Revolutionary War, Northern Vermont was a “no man’s land”, a dangerous place to live, for settlers of European descent. Jesse Welden, came to the St. Albans area in 1774 but was forced to move to southern Vermont because of the war. He returned to St. Albans in 1785 as our first permanent settler and built a log cabin in what is now the City of St. Albans, near the corner of Main Street, [west side], and Welden Street, [north side]. Two years later, he built a larger house across the street. Other settlers, chiefly from Connecticut and Massachusetts, soon joined Welden. The first town meeting was held at Jesse Welden’s home on July 28, 1788. By 1790, when the first census was taken, St. Albans Town had 256 people of European descent. On reading the history of the St. Albans area, one cannot help but be amazed at how rapidly the settlement of the area proceeded. On November 5, 1792, Franklin County, an area of roughly 600 square miles, was organized by the state legislature, and St. Albans was declared the “shire town” [the county seat]. In keeping with a town settlement policy practiced in England for several hundred years, Colonel Robert Cochran, Stephen Pearl and Seth Ford conducted a survey to determine the geographic center of the town which over time would become the center of the business area. They ended up on Taylor Park where they drove a stake to mark the spot. The area around that stake was approximately five

acres. During a period of seven years this area was cleared and became recognized as the “town common” or “square”. Years later, in 1870, it became Taylor Park.

As has happened all over our country, land speculators move into northern Vermont along with the early settlers. They purchased the lands described in the original New Hampshire Grants and proceeded to establish real estate businesses. Chief amongst these entrepreneurs, were the brothers of Ethan Allen, ie. Ira, Levi and Heman, who formed The Onion River Land Company. At one time they controlled several hundred thousand acres in northern Vermont. In 1792, Ira Allen surveyed and marked out a road 90 feet in width extending from Nason Street north through the center of the town which he hoped would eventually become the stage coach route to Montreal. This became our Main Street. Another speculator was Silas Hathaway who came from Bennington and settled in St. Albans in 1788. He acquired thousands of acres of land in northern Vermont, so much that he was nicknamed “Baron” Hathaway and also “The Great Mogul”. Then there was Holloway Taylor who came to St. Albans from Northboro, Massachusetts, in 1795 and lived here until his death about 1830. His partner was John Smith of Dighton, Massachusetts. Smith was not a member of the famous railroad-building family of St. Albans. For sake of clarity, we will call him “Massachusetts” John Smith to distinguish him from John Smith of Railroad fame. The latter plays an important part in this story. So we’ll call him “Railroad” John Smith”. In the late 1790’s Holloway Taylor and “Massachusetts” John Smith, together, purchased large tracts of land in northern New Hampshire and Vermont. In fact, it has

been said that at one time they owned half of St. Albans. Although "Massachusetts" John Smith may have visited St. Albans, there is no evidence that he ever lived here.

One has to picture the town common as it was in 1792 when local residents first considered it as the town center and the place around which to focus for the development of the community. It was covered with a thick forest of elm, maple beech and birch trees. The owner of this particular lot, or a part of it at that time, was, apparently, Silas Hathaway. He seems to have agreed that the lot would become the town common, and for a period of time, St. Albans residents labored to cut down the trees, remove the stumps and level the land. It must have been a time-consuming, difficult task. One writer, years later told about listening to General John Nason, of Vermont Militia fame, tell about an experience in his youth, in 1795, when he was sent to St. Johns, Quebec, on horseback to purchase fresh rum for the men who were clearing the land. There just wasn't any available in St. Albans at that time. [How things have changed! Ed.]

An important happening during the period 1793 to 1795 was the construction of a road, unpaved, of course, running diagonally across The Common extending from the northwest corner at Bank and Main Streets to the southeast corner, now Church and Fairfield Streets. The lower end of Fairfield Street which ends up intersecting Main Street, had not been laid out. As one can imagine, this unpaved roadway across The Common became the principal means by which citizens on foot or in horse-drawn vehicles, passed from Main Street to the Church Street locale where public buildings were being constructed. At some point prior

to September 1799, Holloway Taylor and "Massachusetts" John Smith appear to have acquired what they felt was a legal title to the Town Common from Silas Hathaway. They in turn transferred the property to the Town of St. Albans on September 26, 1799. A deed in the St. Albans Town files reads as follows:

"Know all men by these presents, that we, John Smith of Dighton, County of Bristol and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Clerk, and Holloway Taylor of Northborough, in the County of Worcester, and State aforesaid, for and in consideration of the benefits and privileges to us arising from the establishment of a court house to be erected in the Town of St. Albans in the County of Franklin and State of Vermont for the benefit of said county of Franklin established in said town by the Hon'ble Israel Smith, Enoch Woodbridge and Lot Hall Esqs., on the ninth day of June 1798, they being a committee for that purpose, appointed by the legislature of said state of Vermont in October 1797, and for the purpose of erecting such other county and town buildings as shall hereafter be thought necessary by the inhabitants of said Town of St. Albans, we the said John Smith and Holloway Taylor do by these presents, give, grant, bargain, sell alien [transfer property, Ed.] , release convey and confirm unto the treasurer of said Town in his said capacity and to his successors in office for the benefit of the County and Town aforesaid the following tract or parcel of land situate [to place, Ed.] lying and being in the Town of St. Albans in the County aforesaid bounded as follows, to wit: Beginning at the southwest corner of a piece of land 13 rods square [A rod is 16.5 feet. Ed.] deeded by Silas Hathaway to Joseph Jones, thence

southerly on the main road 50 rods to a stake and stones thence east 17 degrees south 20 rods to a stake and stones thence northerly parallel with the said main road 50 rods to a stake and stones thence westerly on a straight line to the first mentioned bounds, be the same more or less. To have and to hold the above granted and bargained premises with all the privileges and appurtenances thereunto belonging, to the said treasurer of the Town of St. Albans in his said capacity and his successors in office, to the only use and benefit of the said county and town as above specified forever. And we the said John Smith and Holloway Taylor do by these presents for ourselves, our heirs, executors and administrators covenant to and with the said treasurer in his said capacity, that we will warrant and defend the above granted and bargained premises against all lawful claims or demands of any person or persons claiming by from or under us or the original grantees.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals this 26th. day of September in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine.

Signed sealed and delivered  
in presence of

Antipas Brigham                      John Smith [L.S.]

Loan Jewett                          Holloway Taylor [L.S.]

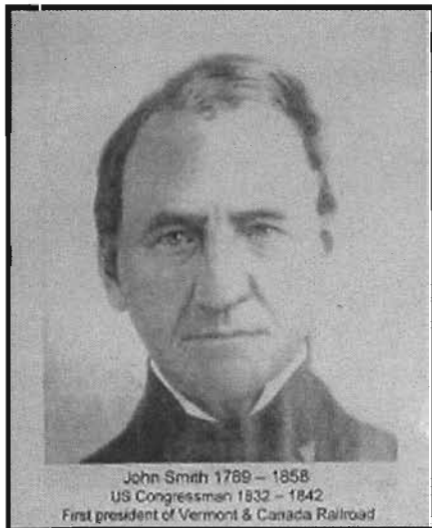
Holloway Taylor commenced to fence the area in, probably to keep people from grazing their cattle on the newly-cleared land and to prevent builders from storing their lumber and equipment on the common as they worked on the nearby construction projects. The inhabitants of the town,

undoubtedly those who had cleared the land, objected and tore the fence down.

The town continued its rapid growth. By the time of the second census [1800] there were over 900 residents. And all went well after the transfer of The Common to the Town of St. Albans. It did indeed become the center of the town with construction taking place on Main and Church Streets running alongside the Common and Lake and Kingman Streets intersecting Main at right angles. Early on the militia trained on The Common. Stocks and a whipping post for punishment of miscreants were installed on the northwest corner as was a pound for stray dogs.

In May of 1828, residents of St. Albans got a shocker. A man by the name of Curtis Wilkinson claimed that he had acquired a deed to the Common from Silas Hathaway prior to the Holloway Taylor-“Massachusetts” John Smith deed of the property to the town. He built a barn forty feet in length and thirty feet wide on the site where the fountain now stands and one source says he either defended it or was ready to defend it by force of arms. It was not unusual to have disputes over the ownership of land. These disputes occurred over the years all over the United States. Agreements were oftentimes by word of mouth. Trees, stakes, stones and piles of stones were frequently used as markers, and they frequently turned out to be inadequate. The deeds were hand-written with quill pens. Moreover, facilities for storing deeds and records were oftentimes unsatisfactory. Records were frequently destroyed by fire or floods and by molds. But the town residents shocked by what Wilkinson had done, complained, and he was indicted by a grand jury for creating a

public nuisance. The case was tried in the County Court, and Wilkinson was found guilty by a jury of his peers. He appealed the decision, and the case went to the Vermont Supreme Court. "Railroad" John Smith who was born in 1789 and who had become a lawyer in 1810 and States Attorney in 1826, represented the plaintiffs. With his experience in St. Albans as a lawyer, he was very knowledgeable about land titles and the arguments over property rights. And this stood him in good stead. The "Massachusetts" John Smith-Holloway Taylor deed of the property to the Town of St. Albans could not be found. It had been misfiled. Moreover, Wilkinson was claiming the property based upon an earlier deed from Silas Hathaway. "Railroad" John Smith took a different course. Rather than trying to prove ownership of the property he took the position that "The Common" was public land by virtue of its long use as a highway and center of community activities [some of which I listed earlier].



He asked the court to allow him to present witnesses to testify to the community's use of the property. The defendants objected but were over-ruled by the court.

The Supreme Court quickly decided that the land in dispute was public property by virtue of its long use. They said; "A highway is a place where all people have a right to pass. A common street and a highway are the same. Fifteen years use and enjoyment of a common way is sufficient to give an easement to the public. This square has been used by the public for more than thirty years. The public has aquired a right in it which cannot be interrupted". Wilkinson's barn was soon torn down and removed, and the town fathers and citizens rejoiced. The available records do not say what happened to Wilkinson.

This was only one of the many accomplishments of "Railroad" John Smith from which St., Albans benefited. He served as State's Attorney for Franklin County from 1826 until 1832 and as a member of the State Legislature from 1827 until 1837. During the last two years in the Legislature, he was Speaker of the General Assembly. He was elected to the U.S, House of Reresentatives in 1840 and served a two year term. Then he returned to St. Albans and resumed his practice of the law.. Before long he was heavily involved with a group of Vermonters in creating the Vermont Central Railroad and the Vermont and Canada Railroad. He was, in fact, the Vermont and Canada's first President. One wonders about him, in his latter years, as he journeyed in his horse-drawn carriage from the St. Albans Railroad Station to his home on Congess Street. He must have smiled when he passed the "Town Common".



**May:**

Sat. & Sun. 1st & 2nd,- Maple Festival  
 Tues. 18th - Museum Opens for Season

**June:**

Wed. 16th - Trustees Meeting & Annual Business Meeting - 4:30 p.m.

Sat. & Sun. 26th & 27th - We participate in Vermont History Expo, Tunbridge, Vermont

**July:**

Sun. 18th - Evening concert of Civil War Songs [unconfirmed yet]

Sat. 24th - Children's Day: Scavenger Hunt and Ice Cream [unconfirmed yet]

\*\* Fantasy Fest/Heavy Equipment, Fund Raiser

**August:**

Sat. 14th - Museum Days: Lectures, Music and Tours for our Members

**September:**

Wed. 1st, 8th, 15th & 22nd - OSHER Lifelong Learning Lecture Series

\*\* Appraisal Night with Duane Merrill & Co.

**October:**

Wed. 6th, 13th, 20th & 27th - OSHER Lifelong Learning Lecture Series

Sat. 9th - Museum Closes

Sat. 23rd - Sterling Weed Orchestra, Fund Raiser

\*\* Fri. & Sat. 29th & 30th - Haunted Museum [unconfirmed yet]

**November:**

Wed. 3rd, 10th & 17th - OSHER Lifelong Learning Lecture Series

Sat. 6th - Docent/Volunteer Luncheon and Review of Season

**December:**

Wed. 8th - Trustee Meeting - 4:30 p.m.

Sat. 11th - Holiday Dinner and Program

\*\*\* Indicates that the dates for these events have not been confirmed yet. Watch your Newsletter for more information as it becomes available.

Note: Each Wednesday, Kevin Laddison, the owner of "First Step Dance", will hold ballroom dancing classes in the Bliss Auditorium.

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Landis  
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 St. Albans, VT 05478

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