



Artifacts and Fiction

The Montgomery Historical Society Quarterly Newsletter

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October 2025
Number 84

Chairman's Message: A Home For History

As I've said before part of our mission is to collect things; things that tell the stories of Montgomery, things that speak to our common heritage. Our first acquisition was St. Bartholomew's Church in 1974. Over time other smaller things were acquired like a butter tub, a spool, and a packing case from the Town's mills; photographs; a thimble; a walking wheel, a 97 flood quilt; and more.

At one time all of them were crammed into a small closet in the front of the church. It was our only storage space and while the building, now known as Pratt Hall, is beautiful, it doesn't lend itself to managing or exhibiting the collection. Nor should it be. In fact we've made a concerted effort to preserve the building's character and appearance, inside and out, so people feel like they are walking into the small town 19th century house of worship built by Montgomery's earliest settlers.

In 2005 the Society purchased the abutting property which was once the location of the Village Store and a residence. The lawn where the store once stood now hosts our Farmers Market, and the small reddish-brown house on Deuso Road is used for general storage and as our archive building. Unfortunately the building was in terrible shape when we bought it. It has serious structural problems including a leaky roof, rotten trusses, and a crumbling foundation (where there is one). It lacks heat, insulation, and water. A portion of it is in the flood zone. It is not a safe place to store our archive items, and we now have over 1,100 items!

We need to replace it. A new archive building will be considered a "public" building and be subject to stringent requirements. We are working with Cross Consulting Engineers to make sure we get it right. We are now officially launching a capital campaign to raise \$350,000, the funds we need to advance our plans. Fund raising letters will be going out soon. We will also apply for grants and conduct fundraisers.

In the meantime we are moving the archives temporarily back to Pratt Hall. Bookshelves, boxes, file cabinets and large objects will go into the chancel (altar or stage area) behind the curtain, while almost everything framed will be hung on the wall peg boards in the nave. We hope to save the garden plants too as we prepare for demolition and site preparation at the Deuso road site.

Some ideas for donations are discussed elsewhere in this newsletter and on our web site. We will be reaching out to you and others. If you can help us fund the project, that would be wonderful. Other opportunities for services and sweat equity will abound too. Let's get this done! Thanks for your support,

Scott Perry, Chairman
John Kuryloski, Vice Chair
Marijke Dollois, Secretary
Pat Farmer, Treasurer

The MHS Board meets the third Thursday of the month at 5:00 p.m., at Pratt Hall May-Sep, and at the Public Safety Building Conference Room or on Zoom Oct – Apr

History Quiz:

1. Every Vermont county except one has at least one covered bridge. Which county does not?
2. Where was oleo margarine invented?
 - a. China
 - b. India
 - c. Canada
 - d. France
3. What year was oleo margarine introduced in the United States?
 - a. 1864
 - b. 1874
 - c. 1890
 - d. 1910
4. True or False. In 1880, Vermont law dictated that butter substitutes be dyed pink.

VERMONT COVERED BRIDGES WEEK

Vermont's first state-wide Covered Bridges Week was August 2nd through the 9th. We kicked it off on the 2nd with a presentation on the Town's covered bridges and the Jewett brothers. Several Jewett descendants joined us including grandsons of Braman and Giles. We reprised our presentation on the 9th.



Sherman and Gerald Jewett Jr, Grandsons of Giles Jewett

The Vermont Covered Bridges Society (VCBS) had a booth at the farmer's market and a good crowd was on hand to enjoy a sunny day. VCBS members Marcel and Jeanne Beaudry donated two hand colored Fuller photos of the Clapp and Hectorville bridges. Thank you!



REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

We receive frequent requests for assistance and try our best to help. A Vermont author recently contacted us for information on the ruins near the Creamery Bridge. She photographs places and writes imagined stories to go with the photos, all without any references to specific locations. We let her know the site wasn't too far from the Jewett brothers' mill.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE SO FAR...

Our reminder letters and emails went out in August but it looks like our membership numbers are going to fall short of our goal of 200, last seen in 2015. There's still time. Anyone can join or renew via our web site, or if you prefer, regular mail. You can also join in person at the Farmer's Market.

Benefits of membership include our newsletters, savings on our books and gift items, and the satisfaction you are giving to a great local organization making direct contributions to our community, whether programs at Pratt Hall, scholarships, or our archives.

PRATT HALL HOSTS FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY SPEAKER

On September 8th, author Michael Tougas gave a presentation at Pratt Hall on "Extreme Survival: Lessons from Those Who Triumphed Against All Odds". Tougas used slides from the many survival events he's chronicled to recount harrowing details and note common traits of survivors. He suggested they were useful lessons when faced with adversity or aspiring to achieve a difficult goal in our own lives.

This presentation was sponsored by the Montgomery Friends of the Library and underwritten by the Vermont Humanities Council (VHC). Of note, the VHC had to suspend their Speakers Bureau program for a short pause due to federal funding budget cuts. The program has been restored, for now, and they are able to book speakers for 2026.

SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS VISIT

We provided a presentation on Montgomery, Pratt Hall, and our Covered Bridges to a group of about a dozen travelers at Pratt Hall in mid-July. They were here for a week of hiking, biking, and paddling. One of the organizer's goals was to expose them to life and culture in a small Vermont town. Sharon Perry did a presentation on the Franklin County Barn Quilt trail at Pratt Hall as well. The Sierra Club is planning on a similar trip next year.

NEW ACCESSIONS

James and Ann Levy reached out to us recently regarding our interest in Charlie Trois' "Bright Hollow Village". They were friends and James was Charlie's lawyer. They donated ephemera related to the 1973-74 "Village" and filled in some info on what some would say were the counter culture years in Montgomery. James helped hire musicians for Corky's Bar (now the storage barn on 118 between the Center and the Village).

Randy Colomb sent us a copy of a wonderful autobiography of his great aunt, Ida St. Onge Moran. Ida was born in Rhode Island in 1895 and moved to Montgomery when she was five. She grew up on a farm on Hill West. She wrote the 50-page memoir when she was in her nineties. It includes her recollections of life in Montgomery and Enosburg, and as a nurse during WWI, the Spanish Flu, Great Depression, and the 1927 Flood.

HOME FOR HISTORY CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Some will say our \$350,000 goal is audacious but sometimes you have to shoot for the moon. As a public building we need to ensure it meets stringent requirements which drives up the expense.

Our plan is to do the work in phases as funding allows using as much local talent as possible. To date we've spent about \$12,000. We've done the planning for the facility and obtained the permits from the Town and State. We've also begun emptying the existing building in preparation for demolition.

Raising money by public grants for this type of project was a challenge, even before the current budget turmoil. Still we will attempt to obtain both public and private grants.

We will need volunteers for sweat equity projects and donations of services and labor are always appreciated. We will be scheduling work days and welcome your participation.

Cash donations of any amount always help. Our web site is set up to take Paypal or credit card gifts. For those of you who are in a position to do so please consider a Qualified Charitable Distribution to the MHS or the transfer of securities. Both have tax benefits. More detail can be found on our web site or you can contact us to answer any questions. As a reminder the MHS is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization. Thank you!

REMAINING 2025 MHS EVENTS

October: Our Farmers Market ends October 11th. Thanks to all of our vendors and customers, and the MHS volunteers who organize and run the season long event.

October 17th: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties regional meeting. St. Albans History Museum

November 6th: Pratt Hall will host the Friends of the Library's "Young Writers" presentations and pizza party.

December 13th, 9:00 - 3:00: Visit the MHS booth at the Montgomery Elementary School craft show and sale.

December 20th, Holiday Happiness 11:00 - 2:00 at Pratt Hall. Horse drawn wagon rides and Montgomery FD delivers Santa at noon.

We regret to announce Candles and Carols is canceled this year. Steve Hays is retiring from his role as our Candles and Carols leader. Our thanks for his many years of leading our singing. Email us if you have any ideas.

MEN WITH TOOLS

We continue to trouble shoot the tower clock. Our plan is to carefully disengage the weight so we can inspect and lubricate every possible pulley, roller, and friction point of the weight and cable. Hopefully we can isolate the problem outside the actual clock works. We've also added some safety signage on both the front and rear steps of the building.



Clock Weight Cable Roller and Pulley

QUILT WINNER

Pam S., a quilter from Franklin, was the lucky winner of the Civil War replica pot holder quilt. Congratulations and thank you to all who purchased tickets. Thanks also to Carolyn Babcock for donating her wonderful, historic, quilt.

HISTORY QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Every Vermont county except one has at least one covered bridge. Which county does not? Grand Isle
2. Where was oleo margarine invented?
d. France
3. What year was oleo margarine introduced in the United States? b. 1874
4. True or False. In 1880, Vermont law dictated that butter substitutes be dyed pink. True. This was one of many laws the butter industry promoted to "help" consumers tell the difference (and prevent the widespread use of margarine).

THIS QUARTER IN MONTGOMERY HISTORY

October 1827: Planning begins for an Episcopal Church, Montgomery's first religious edifice.

November 1898: First electric service available in Montgomery Center.

December 1973: Episcopal Diocese of Vermont quit claims St. Bartholomews church to the newly formed Montgomery Historical Society.

Thank you for supporting the Montgomery Historical Society



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Thanks to the following businesses for their 2025 membership and support. Let them know you appreciate their civic mindedness by your patronage.

4c's Construction ~ Black Lantern Inn ~ Community Bank N.A.
Community National Bank ~ Crafty Lil' Gift Shop ~ David Howe Memorial Library
Lucky Dog Maple ~ Lutz's Automotive ~ Manosh Properties LLC
N.A. Manosh Inc. ~ Sherm D. Potvin Consulting ~ Sunset Motor Inn
The Inn ~ The Belfry