

MOUNT HOLLY COMMUNITY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Volume 22 Number 1 Summer 2015

Our mission is to enlighten our community with an understanding of our past to promote an objective vision of the future.

Home of the Vermont State Terrestrial Fossil

History of the Star Lake Dam

In a year when the dam at Star Lake is scheduled to be replaced, it is fitting that the main article in this newsletter be about the history of this area.

There is general agreement that this manmade body of water likely started out as a high mountain wetland with a brook running through it. The person credited with building the first dam at the west end is Abraham Jackson, Junior from Wallingford.

He came to that town with his family around 1773, and served in the Revolutionary War. After returning home it is said that he enjoyed hunting in this unclaimed area to the east. By 1781 Jackson, and the others that had also moved into this area, by now being called Jackson's Gore, petitioned the General Assembly to be annexed to the Town of Wallingford. This allowed the settlers to be taxed to raise revenue to build roads and bridges. The early settlers, who did not have actual money, would work off their tax by laboring several days each month to make the needed improvements.

Jackson turned to land speculating, and promised to build a sawmill at the outlet on the small brook. The sawmill was built about 1796, and he controlled the water rights. The History of Mount Holly, written by Carroll Tarbell, mentions the many owners of both the dam and mill site, and the efforts to raise the height of the dam to increase the output of waterpower. These owners also controlled the amount of water that was released downstream. By 1830 there were a couple more mills in Mechanicsville Village and several others downstream that depended on this water to operate the mills. By 1863 the Chase brothers owned the mill, dam, and water rights, and were also building their toy factory.

The dam saw a few more improvements and steam power was added at the factory before 1870. With the relocation of the Chase Toy Factory to Rutland in 1889, the sawmill fell into disrepair.

Around 1895, Civil War veteran William Lord was using part of the factory as a creamery. With his sudden death in 1901, the building was sold to Colfax Lodge #21 and the land was turned over to the Belmont Improvement Association. The old sawmill buildings were torn down and the beach area was created.



Old Sawmill and Flume on Star Lake in Belmont (Mechanicsville)



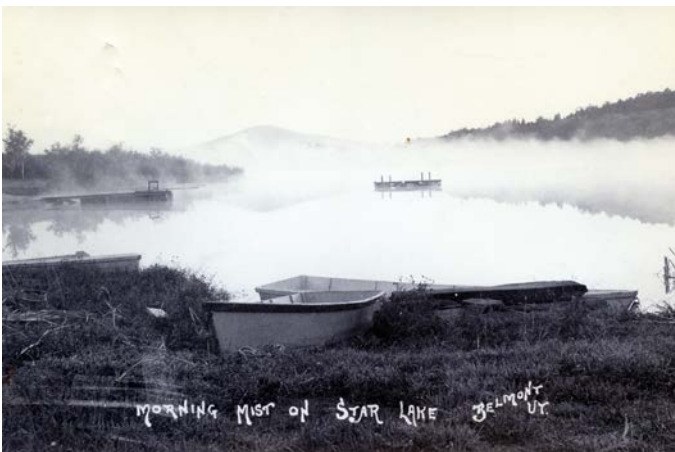
The Town changed the name of the Village to Belmont on September 2, 1911 and renamed the lake from Jackson's Pond to Star Lake about the same time. The locals thought that these would advertise better to attract tourists. Around 1920 the lake was lowered and the dam area was replaced. The beach committee used heavy planks to control the lake level and the amount of water released at the dam site.



Star Lake in 1922

The flood of 1927 weakened the dam and washed out the road below the Hall. There were many small suckers in the swimming area by the 1930s, and the dock was built. Several people have mentioned that they remembered the dam had deteriorated to the point by 1948 that the lake was drained again so improvements could be made to the bridge and spillway area.

During this work there was also an addition of a pier to support the diving board and new concrete walls. The work at the site was overseen by Hosea (Hode) Pelsue who lived in the yellow house below the Hall.



In the 1950s a floating raft was placed in the water during the summer months for swimmers to enjoy.



In the mid 1960s a chemical was used to treat the lake in the fall that reportedly removed some of the oxygen from the water. Many large suckers were observed floating to the top that were removed so they would not be left to decay in the water.

The end of June 1973 saw a major rain storm hit that filled the lake and caused water to overflow the dam and cement walls. It washed out the road, and caused much damage to many culverts and bridges around our state. The dam area was decaying and the weather had taken its toll on the cement bottom and sides of the sluiceway area.



Road washout from 1973 Flooding

In the late 1990s the town voted to take over the responsibility of the dam and beach area. Several years ago it was determined that the dam was in critical condition and could fail, so the water level was lowered to minimize the chance for further erosion.

Money has been donated to fund the replacement dam, and the permits are in place to begin this important project.

Become a Member

I would like to thank everyone who has so generously supported our Community Museum, and urge you to renew your membership for this year. If you haven't been a member of the museum this is the perfect opportunity for you to join in supporting our many upcoming programs. Ours is the only organization that studies, preserves, and exhibits our town's wonderful history.

As a member your contribution helps improve the unique exhibits at both the Perkins House Museum and the Will White Blacksmith Shop. This year we're slated to offer more student museum visits, historical walking tours, and our regular hours to visit the museums. With your support the following special activities will benefit.



* **Erection of the new roadside marker on Route 103 recognizing our mammoth fossils (viewable in our museum only) as our State's "Terrestrial Fossil".**

* **Campaign to retrieve the original mammoth tooth for study and display at museum.**

* **Special speakers on history related topics and issues.**

* **"Farmfest" event to recognize our agricultural history.**

* **Delicious Labor Day Weekend ham dinner at the IOOF Hall in Belmont.**

* **The "For the Birds" silent auction during the town's annual Cider Days.**

* **"Festival of Lights" Dinner and Silent Auction in December.**

The Community Historical Museum Board welcomes your support to help us share in the continued effort to bring the best programs to the community. Please see the levels of memberships we offer and feel free to contact me for further information about how you can become involved.

Thank you for your support.

Dennis Devereux for the Museum Board.

Membership Categories

Individual: \$10.00

Family: \$25.00

Patron: \$100.00 (For which you will receive a complimentary book)

Friend: \$250.00 (Which includes a copy of our 1850's panoramic print)

Sustaining: Monthly Gift

Envelope included in this newsletter

Mount Holly Community Historical Museum Board of Directors

Chair - Dennis Devereux

Vice-Chair - Peter Smith

Secretary - Linda Guerrero

Treasurer - Steve Michel

Jim Corven

Judy Nevin

Maggie Blane

Doris Reiser

Addie Segerman

Pat LaBella

Louise Durr

Phil Crane

Lynn Anderson

Membership - Raye Lin Collins

Curator - Robin Eatmon



Education Committee News

The Mount Holly Historical Museum has educational programs for grades K – 6. The sixth grade visited the museum in the fall for their program of “Making a Living in Mount Holly.” The program also includes a delicious trip to the Crowley Cheese Factory. The fourth grade visited in the fall as well for their program “The Farmer’s Wife”. The children made hand dipped candles. The third grade also visits the museum in the fall for a museum hunt focusing on old farm and home tools.

In the spring grades K-3 and the fifth grade visit the museum. The Kindergarten program is about the

**Mount Holly
Mattie Mammoth**
Congratulations to the 6th
grade for entering the
winning name in the
Name the Mammoth
Contest for grades 4-6.



Chase Toy Factory. The first grade program is about the history of schools in Mount Holly. The children do a lesson writing on individual slates. The second grade program is about the history of farming in Mount Holly. Our second graders plant seeds to take home with them. The third grade program is about the railroad and the discovery of the mammoth. The children create clay mammoths. The fifth grade program, about cemeteries, focuses on the different types of head and foot stones as well as the symbols found on stones. The children help clean up the leaves and plant flowers in the town's oldest cemetery for community service as part of the program.

This is the fifteenth year of our writing and art contest for children in grades 3- 6.

Special thanks to the hard working education committee for helping deliver the programs.

Judy Nevin
Education Committee Chair

2015 Creative History Writing and Art Contest Winners

The awards ceremony was held at the Mount Holly Elementary School on Monday, June 1. Students grade 3 through 6 participated. Their work will be displayed at Perkins House during the summer season.

Grade 3 Writing

1st Austin Rumrill
2nd Joshua Bania
3rd Owen Fairbanks

Grade 4 Writing

1st Emma Wentz
2nd Greta Fairbanks
3rd Quentin Spalding

Grade 5 Writing

1st Destiny Arnold
2nd Tate Greineder
3rd Helene Riccio

Grade 6 Writing

1st Michael Kautz
2nd Aislynn Kelley
3rd Jack Lienhard

Grade 3 Art

1st Austin Rumrill
2nd Cody Griffin
3rd Joshua Bania

Grade 4 Art

1st Greta Fairbanks
2nd Johnna Turin
3rd Chloe Ayer

Grade 6 Art

1st Sarah McHugh
2nd Hailey Pierce
3rd Joshua Cohen

Summer Program Highlights

**Tuesday, July 21st Annual Meeting...Pot Luck
Dinner 6p.m...Program Following**

"All Things Loons - stories about their natural history and conservation" by **Eric Hanson**, Vermont Loon Conservation Project (VLCP) Coordinator Vermont Center for Ecostudies

Loons are back and doing well in Vermont after nearly disappearing 30 years ago. Join Eric Hanson, VCE biologist and coordinator of the Vermont Loon Conservation Project explore this success story as well as all things loons. Loons are some of the most studied birds in North America in part because biologists, and anyone really, can observe them nearly every minute of every daylight hour (and a few biologists have done exactly that). Come hear what biologists have learned over the past 25 years following color-marked loons and how VCE conservation efforts have brought the loons back to Vermont. We'll share stories ranging from rescues of loons in distress to why loons conduct takeovers of each other's territory.

"Outsmart the Critters (Sometimes)" Program by **Jim Corven**, Professor of Biology & Mount Holly Gardener. Saturday, July 25th, 3p.m. at Perkins House.

Have you found that Nature likes to take advantage of your bounty and hard work? Nature's critters are hungry and they like to take their share when we let our guard down. We'll talk about everything from birds to bears and how we can try to prevent them from damaging our yards and gardens. Let's try to understand how these good animals perceive and think so we can deter them using humane but effective techniques. Several effective items will be available for demonstration.

FARMFEST
A MOUNT HOLLY TRADITION
Saturday
August, August 8th
11am ~ 3pm
Sheep Sheering ~ Exhibitions
Village Green ~ Perkins House ~ Blacksmith Shop



Mount Holly Is For The Birds!

Visit the Mount Holly Historical Museum this season to see the beautiful bird art in the Perkins House Museum. We have bird houses made by a local craftsman and painted by local artists. We also have bird photos and other bird related art. All of these creative items will be part of a silent auction which will go on all summer. The auction will end on the Sunday of Cider Days in October. Funds raised in the auction will be used for the maintenance and operation of the museum.

2015 Festival of Lights

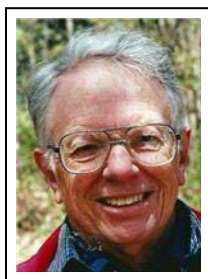


It's a wonderful and exciting way to begin the Holiday Season.

One of a kind beautifully decorated wreaths, creative gift baskets and a array of donated items will be auctioned. The monies raised help support and maintain the buildings, but more importantly it supports the educational programs for Mount Holly students and other local communities and schools. We sponsor and offer scholarships to students at Black River High School Senior Awards and donate to History Day. More details of The Festival of Lights will be forthcoming. Thank you for your continued support.

Linda Guerrero and Doris Reiser
Festival of Lights Co-Chairs

In Memory of Charles Allan Bamforth



Allan was a driving force behind the founding, the continued development and success of The Mount Holly Community Historical Museum. Over the years he served as board president and on the finance committee. He can never be replaced!

In the late 1990's, Allan and Jan (then Museum Curator) realized that the Museum was outgrowing the Blacksmith Shop site. Allan began an aggressive campaign to either expand or find a new site for the collections. He put the Museum Board in touch with Ann Cousins of the Preservation Trust of Vermont which led the Museum on its path to expansion.

When we were fundraising for Perkins House he built a model of the building complete with working lights. The Perkins House model was an excellent marketing tool for the fund raising campaign. It traveled to the Vermont Expo and several other Vermont venues to advertise our goal of a renovated Museum site. For several years it was featured at the annual Festival of Lights fund raiser.

Allan will be remembered for the cheerful energy with which he approached Museum projects, his keen eye for what needed to be done and his ability to accomplish it. Although the Board challenged his engineering talents, he came through every time.

The following is from the obituary that appeared in the January 2015 Chit Chat:

Charles Allan Bamforth, 91, of Belmont, VT, and most recently, the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington, died November 14, 2014, at the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center. He was born March 27, 1923, in Lynn, MA, the son of Maritime Captain Charles Nathaniel Bamforth and Dorothy Anderson Allan. Allan was a graduate of the General Electric Apprentice School as a machinist and tool maker. He spent 42 years at GE, working as a Quality Control Engineer in the GE Aircraft Engine Group, at the Everett, MA, plant. After retirement, he moved to Belmont, where he became active in community affairs, especially in the development of the local historical museum, in the Ludlow Area Lions Club, and the Gethsemane Episcopal Church in Proctorsville.

During World War II, he worked in the U.S. Army Ordinance, serving in both Pacific and European Theatres, with extensive duty in France at the end of the war.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Janice Laumann Bamforth of Belmont; his daughter, Judith Jervis and her husband, Paul, of Danville, NH; his son, Charles Henry Bamforth and his wife, Debora, of East Hampstead, NH.

Memorial contributions, in memory of Mr. Bamforth, may be made to the Gethsemane Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 217, Proctorsville, VT 05153; or the Mount Holly Community Historical Museum, Belmont, VT 05730

GIFT SHOP AT THE MUSEUM

New Item: *Mattie Mammoth Plush Toy*
\$20 plus shipping

Books: *Mt. Holly, Its Early Days*
by James F. Holden
\$20 plus shipping

A History of Mt. Holly

by Carroll Tarbell
\$50 plus shipping

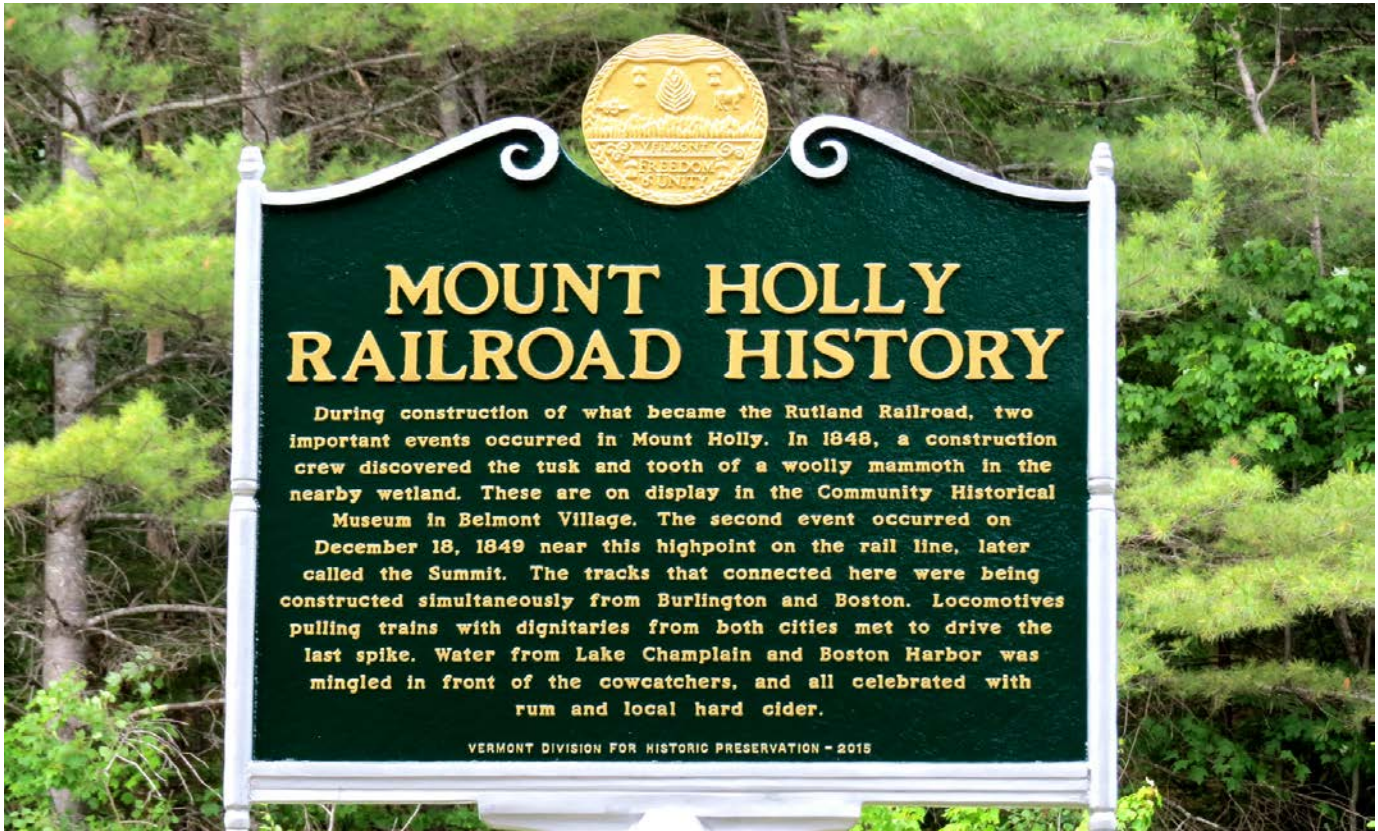
Photo: A panoramic view of Belmont & Star Lake circa 1900, when Belmont was still known as "Mechanicsville" & Star Lake was "Jackson's Pond"
\$15 (shipping include)

On sale at the museum or contact Dennis Devereux ddevereux@leg.state.vt.us P.O. Box 1, Belmont, VT 05730 802.259.2460

2015**MUSEUM SUMMER SCHEDULE****2015**

Museum Open Each Weekend during July and August ~ Saturdays and Sundays 2 to 4 pm
 Note Additional Special Times on Calendar.

Saturday, July 4th Sunday, July 5th	Town Parade and Barbeque at Odd Fellows Hall, Museum open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, July 11 th Sunday, July 12 th	"1840s in Mount Holly" History Talk by Dennis Devereux 2 p.m. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, July 18th Sunday, July 19th	Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Tuesday, July 21st	Annual Meeting...Pot Luck Dinner 6 p.m. at the Odd Fellows Hall in Belmont <i>Program to Follow</i> "All Things Loons - stories about their natural history and conservation" by Eric Hanson, Vermont Loon Conservation Project (VLCP) Coordinator Vermont Center for Ecostudies.
Saturday, July 25th Sunday, July 26th	"Outsmart the Critters (Sometimes)" Talk by Jim Corven 3 p.m. Perkins House Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, August 1st Sunday, August 2nd	Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, August 8th Sunday, August 9th	"FARMFEST" Sheep Shearing, Demonstrations and More 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, August 15th Sunday, August 16th	Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, August 22nd Sunday, August 23rd	"Alone and Along the Trail in 1940" R C Anderson will talk about his experiences of hiking The Long Trail. 2 p.m. Perkins House. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, August 29th Sunday, August 30th	Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m. Open for browsing, 2 to 4 p.m.
Saturday, September 5th,	Baked Ham Fundraising Dinner at the Odd Fellows Hall 5 p.m.
Saturday, October 10th Sunday, October 11th	Cider Days Open for browsing, 10 to 4 p.m. Cider Days Open for browsing from noon to 4 p.m. "For the Birds" Auction of Handpainted Birdhouses and More at 3 p.m.
Sunday, December 6th	"Festival of Lights" at Harry's Café in Ludlow. Save the Date. Reservations required....limited seating. Details to be announced later.



The Mount Holly Railroad History historic marker, sponsored by the museum, has been installed along Route 103, near where the mammoth was found in 1848.