



The Friends of the Vermont State House

PROCEEDINGS

Winter 2004



Jack Bradt with the walnut counter he built for Under-the-Dome gift shop.

Renaissance Man

Jack Bradt, of Heron Pond Woodworking, is a “Renaissance man”—make that Renaissance Revival. He is one of Vermont’s finest woodworkers and has worked on the State House restoration since 1994. Like many other Vermonters, Jack has an “alternative” career as a gifted actor/director and even as one of the infamous “Men of Maple Corner.” He lives in a house he himself built on beautiful Curtis Pond.

Using original parts of an old House desk, Jack crafted the stand that holds the Friends Book of Generosity in the Main Lobby. He also designed and built a walnut counter for Under-the-Dome Gifts.

But his most recent project for the State House has been his greatest challenge so far: three large walnut Renaissance Revival tables for Senate committee rooms.

Inspired by tables in the Governor’s Office and the House Chamber, Jack crafted pieces that complement the State House restoration. His massive tables look right, yet they allow the senators much-needed drawer space and electricity for laptops. “Working for the restoration has been one of the highlights of my professional career,” Bradt says happily, “and I hope to continue that high standard of wood-working excellence.”

Collecting the State House?

A charming group of collectible artifacts based on the Vermont State House is now permanently in the State House collection. Nelda Rossi, born in a house that still stands on Barre’s Foss Street, is the generous donor.

Almost 40 years ago, in 1965, Nelda began to work in the Capitol building in then-Secretary-of-State Harry Cooley’s office, which is now the Lt. Governor’s office. In 1969, she became Executive Secretary of the Real Estate Commission, where she worked for 16 years. Various family members have also worked in the Capitol: her daughter, Lauren, was a tour guide and her granddaughter Jessica was a page during the Kunin governorship.

Sitting in her dining room, surrounded by a wide variety of objects and paintings, she cheerfully admits that



she collects everything, but qualifies that with “If I buy it, I have to love it.” In the case of the Vermont State House, she loved the original, too.

Her favorite objects in the State House donation are a napkin ring and the little wooden bank, which she is quick

to note, has no way to open it without danger of damage. “I always intended to give

these to the State,” she smiles, “I think that’s where they belong.” Curator David Schütz thinks so, too.

Nelda also collected inkwells, depictions of eagles -- in fact, so many objects that she began to sell some as “Nelda’s Antiquities.” Now, she plans to concentrate on looking for pieces that include the now-destroyed Old Man of the Mountain, although she will keep her eye out for other State House items. Thank you Nelda!



New Trustees



Muffie Conlon comes to the Friends' board with a background in preservation. After seventeen years as teacher and then Chair of the General Education Department at Vermont Technical College, she became a tour guide in our volunteer program. As she puts it, she wanted "to spend time in this crown jewel of Vermont's buildings," which is convenient to her Montpelier home.

When she and her family first came to Vermont during the sixties, she spent two summers working on Bob Burley's project "Architecture Worth Saving in North

Central Vermont." She still feels that discovering "the many wonderful architectural treasures hidden away in the Vermont hills" made even the cost of three destroyed car transmissions worthwhile!

While continuing to volunteer as a tour guide, Muffie has also agreed to serve on the outreach committee, working with the Proceedings and the in-process Audio tour. She seems to be surviving this baptism-by-fire with good humor and talent. She also volunteers as a childrens' advocate in our court system.



Andrea Englehardt brings a wealth of mathematical and analytical intelligence to our board. A graduate of Douglass College of Rutgers, she has taught math at Norwich University, Woodbury College, and the Community College of Vermont as well as in secondary schools. She lives in North Middlesex. Her volunteer activities also include the Girl Scouts, and her church, as teacher, Education Committee chair, and Church Council President. Andrea has agreed to begin her work with us by joining the membership and development committee.

She says "I am always amused when 'flatland' friends ask 'What do you **do** in Vermont?' implying that there is **nothing** to do. The Friends of the State House volunteers are an excellent example of what we Vermonters do." I am excited about joining the board of this vibrant group that preserves our beautiful State House building and develops ways to share it with fellow Vermonters and out-of-state visitors. It is a unique resource and cultural treasure for both the United States and Vermont."

Director's Note



New chair Jane Dale with new Honorary Trustee Rep. Warren Kitzmiller

We say a sad farewell to Warren Kitzmiller as our energetic chair, but are delighted that he will continue as an honorary trustee. We are both fortunate and grateful that Jane Dale, chair of the outreach committee, has stepped into his shoes. In addition, Arthur Williams, who has been serving as co-director, insists on becoming associate director. We suspect he's trying to think ahead to a more leisurely retirement, but we have no intention of letting him withdraw. He will concentrate on projects and people in this new position.

We are proud of some of the changes this year. We have our own presence on the web at vtstatehouse.org. Although we can now update our text messages, we still rely on our friend Andy Christiansen of Old Barn Vermont to make the more mysterious graphic changes as they are needed. Check out the Calendar page to keep

up with special events. The Membership page leads to an enrollment form, should you have any web-savvy friends who would like to join. The Sponsors page is one way to thank those businesses that support our programs – and for you to learn more about them. Let us know your ideas for improvement, please.

Plans for the coming year include finishing the Audio Tour, which Vermont Public Radio will be recording and helping to produce. We also plan to fund a Cornelius & Baker desk lamp for the Governor's Office and find or commission other restoration or conservation details that remain. Details of the Civil War Flag restorations are still being debated, and we will work with David Schütz to keep the historic display cases visually informative of Vermont's Civil War history.

Genie Robbins, Director

Alice Merrill Coordinates School Tours

Alice Merrill, a former elementary school art teacher from Plainfield and most recently a tour guide at Ben and Jerry's, is the new coordinator of school tours. It was already December when Alicia Williams announced that in January she would be moving to Albuquerque with her husband Doug, also a legislative employee. Alicia had headed the school tour program for four years, the first to fill the position as a state employee. With only a few weeks before the legislative session was to begin, State Curator David Schutz sprang into the search for a new coordinator.

Since taking on the coordination of school tours, Alice has quickly become indispensable to the teachers, administrators and legislators who arrange for visits

from schools all over the state. As the most heavily visited school field trip destination, the details add up to no small task, and plans may sometimes include making arrangements to visit the Governor, legislators, the Vermont Historical Society museum and even the Supreme Court.

In addition, questions concerning the parking of buses, the eating of lunches, and the storing of knapsacks could easily intimidate the most organized of coordinators. Through it all, Alice and her cadre of about a dozen of our volunteer tour guides manage to make students not only feel at home in their state capitol building but also learn a great deal about how the legislative process works and how to witness history in this most historic of Vermont public buildings.



Our new impresario of student tours.

Big Help for Big Job

Pauline Grossman arrived at the State House just after the new year began to become assistant to our beloved Curator, David Schütz. And he really needed assistance! Our Curator's responsibilities have burgeoned so that much of his time is spent caring for, and traveling to, State-owned buildings all over Vermont.

Pauline seems to be ideally suited to her new position and boss. With a BA in Drama from the University of Tennessee, she is a dance/drama teacher and choreographer, with a background in children's theatre. This aspect of her past experience is continuing in Vermont. She is choreographing the *Scarlett Pimpernel* for a June opening at the Stowe Theater Guild and also teaches dance at the Movement Center. Schütz is a noted stage presence in Central Vermont, so they'll have lots of notes, musical and otherwise, to compare.

Although a "first-time northerner," Pauline is adjusting to winter "better than I thought I would" – despite a fairly long commute from Shelburne. She is already working on the collection database, photographs, and piles of accumulated materials from all of David's projects. The Curator's office just moved from a tiny, cram-full

rear room at the top of Aiken Avenue to a more spacious pair of rooms facing the State House. This, of course, meant a lot of new storing and filing, which has made materials familiar to her and more accessible to both. As she says, "I stay busy in addition to trying to keep David organized!" She also is thrilled by the State House restoration, saying "The work that's been done is absolutely beautiful!"



The State Curator's new "right hand".

Friends of the Vermont State House

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PROCEEDINGS is published twice a year by the Friends. For more information call 802-828-0386.

COMING EVENTS

Reunion for Legislators

The Friends are planning a second reunion for former legislators on Thursday, April 29, 2004 – in the Vermont State House, of course!

Registration will be from 11am until 4 pm, close to some nostalgic displays and schedules of the day's legislative activities. For the early birds, lunch will be "on your own," and we will offer guided tours of the restoration.

Programmed activities will begin at 3:30 PM with a welcome by Speaker Freed in the House of Representatives, followed by a group photo in the well. A reception in the Cedar Creek Room will follow at 4:00 PM, lasting until 5:30.

We ask for your help with making a more complete invitation list. If you know of new addresses, name changes, or information that would make it possible to send an invitation to a former colleague, please let us know before the end of March, when we hope to mail invitations. House Clerk Don Milne will be coordinating his records with us to update our database(s). Thanks for your help, and we hope to see you in April!



An 1885 invitation to Vermont legislators for a "Social Reunion" bought from e-bay shortly after our first "Journey Back."

Volunteers

Spring Luncheon

Our major spring event for Volunteers will be the June 3rd luncheon, after the Legislative session is adjourned. This is the time to welcome volunteers – new and old – to sign up for training and to schedule work days. Many hands make light work and can also make working more fun! Invite your volunteering friends!



Volunteers outside the Bennington Museum.
Photo: Gene Parent

Field Trip 2003

On a warm September day, our Tour Guides and Gift Shop volunteers boarded a bus for a trip to Bennington. First stop was the Park-McCullough House, built in 1864-65, which was occupied by four generations of the Hall, Park, and McCullough families.

Later, the Bennington Monument and the Bennington Museum gave an historical review of the famous August 16, 1777 Revolutionary War battle. The nearby Old First Church and its adjacent cemetery extended the time frame. A walk through the cemetery itself revealed the grave markers of many notable Vermonters, including Robert Frost.

The final treat was a special exhibit of charming country scenes painted by Grandma Moses. The annual fall trips are the Board's "Thank You" to all the volunteers who guide tours or work in our Under-the-Dome gift shop.

2004 Trip Scheduled

Save Saturday, September 18, 2004 for this year's outing. Because Philip Zea's talk at the 2003 annual meeting interested so many volunteers, we have booked a tour to Historic Deerfield. More details will be available in late summer.

A Spiritual Farmers' Night

The annual Farmers' Night program sponsored by the Friends is a March 10th musical treat. Dr. François Clemmons will perform a concert of Spirituals accompanied by pianist Dick Forman. Artist-in-Residence and Twilight Scholar at Middlebury College, Clemmons launched his career in 1968 when he won the regional Metropolitan Opera auditions. For 25 years he also performed the role of the friendly Officer Clemmons, on "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood." In 1986, became founder and director of the Harlem Spiritual Ensemble.

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