



The Friends of the Vermont State House

# PROCEEDINGS

Spring 2005

## Politically Incorrect?

More than a hundred and fifty years after Hiram Powers first created her, the Greek Slave evidently remains as morally enigmatic as ever – if not more so. In December, a brouhaha swept through the wire services after our most recent purchase for the State House was noticed during a press conference. Because this year is the bicentennial of Powers' birth, our maiden is bound to continue in the news.

Hiram Powers was the first internationally recognized American sculptor, largely because of the Greek Slave. Although born in Woodstock in 1805, Powers moved to Ohio as a youth, beginning professional life as a mechanic. His talent for creating naturalistic portraits, earned him the

patronage of Cincinnati philanthropist Nicholas Longworth, who sent him to Washington, D.C. His portrait busts proved very successful, particularly his bust of Andrew Jackson, which brought great praise from the public as well as from the sitter, who had specifically warned him to avoid flattery. The 1835

plaster for that bust is now in the Smithsonian's Museum of American Art, while the marble is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

In 1837, Powers went to Florence, where he continued to live as an expatriate until his death in 1873. Close to the white marble of Carrara, with plenty of experienced labor to carve it, Powers made literally hundreds of portrait busts. He also modeled more ambitious neoclassic monumental pieces, of which the Greek Slave was one – but the one that made his reputation and his fortune. Those were the days when a sculpture was a statue and virtually all public monuments consisted of statues.

Powers's choice of a Greek Slave was a political as well as an aesthetic statement. The politics was not only Anti-slavery, but also sympathetic to Greece – our democratic ancestor of choice – in its humbling hour of need as "prisoner" of the Turkish occupation. Think of Byron and his support of Greek independence!

In those days just before our Civil War, the debate over slavery raged. The work's visual subject, one of the first non-Biblical naked females by an American sculptor, was also a somewhat daring choice. Powers knew this, however, and had armed this "hapless, unconsenting, pure maiden"



One (of four) Greek Slaves on the House gasolier, which was made expressly for our State House.

with a statement of clerical approval from a Unitarian minister.

The tour inspired many poems, indeed eulogies! This fragment is by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

*"They say Ideal Beauty cannot enter  
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands  
An alien image with ensnaked hands  
Called the Greek Slave! . . .  
To so confront man's crimes in different lands  
With man's ideal sense. . . ."*

The life-size white marble original was virtually a personification of the hordes of women who visited its traveling exhibition – and their husbands. (Some venues, however, established separate women-only days to spare very modest visitors the embarrassment of gazing at the same time as the opposite sex.) As further insurance against misunderstanding, the sculptor inserted both a cross and a heart among the drapery folds that hang from the post on which she rests her hand.

The Greek Slave first became famous from reports of visitors to the sculptor's Florence studio and was bought by an Englishman, who later exhibited it in London's Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851. By that time, Powers had made five other versions, each slightly different. Four are now in the U.S.A.



Desk lamp of the Greek Slave, in the Cedar Creek Room during legislative session, will move to the Governor's Office during tourist season. There it will include a gas hose connection from the Partners' Desk to the restored gasolier, demonstrating how light was originally provided to a working surface.

## Many Hands

The Friends are extremely grateful for all the cheerful support we receive from Kerm Spaulding, the Sgt-at-Arms office, and everybody who works there. They present our Capitol in the best possible way to make visits pleasant and informative. They also help our volunteers with so many needs despite their many other duties – especially during legislative sessions.

The very title of the Office, and its military derivation, is steeped in the history



*Jean Herring, Assistant Sergeant at Arms, is an indispensable colleague!*

and traditions of state legislatures and Congress. Originally, one of its functions was to keep order should debate become unruly. Today, the Sergeant-at-Arms must be prepared for any problems of Homeland Security as well and for possible demonstrations in the halls or on the State House grounds.

That they take time and effort to care for us and for thousands of tourists is remarkable. We collaborate on many programs, from publications to tours. Kerm has always been consistently supportive and upbeat about all our joint projects. Jean Herring copes with the many volunteer questions, summer and winter, and she and Teresa Randall (herself a former Sgt-at-Arms and long-time trustee of the Friends) handle the scheduling of spaces that we often need for events and meetings in the building. Dave Janawicz is particularly knowledgeable and helpful to all our guides, capable of giving impromptu tours himself and of running or explaining all the gift shop “machinery.” Dale Manning spots State House related material that comes up on e-bay for David Schütz’s consideration in addition to his security duties and volunteer assistance! Jackie Cholewa is the newest member of the staff, replacing Les Dimick, who was called up for military service in Saudi Arabia.



*Jackie Cholewa, the newest addition to the State House security corps.*

Our cherished State House has remained a small, intimate place that tourists – and all visitors – can enjoy in an informal, accessible way, with people always on hand to answer their many questions. These range from the best place to get their kind of meals to who painted a specific portrait or how senators are elected. Without the cooperation of Kerm, Jean, Teresa, Dave, Dale, and Jackie our work would be much more difficult. We thank them all!

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## Director’s Note

As we prepare for the end of the legislative session and the coming tourist season, we once again appreciate the wonderful participation of our volunteers. No mention of the volunteers, however, is possible without reminding you and ourselves of the role played by the office of the Sgt-at-Arms. The Friends are also pleased that twenty of the newly elected legislators or State Officials joined us before or as the new session began.

We continue with several projects, both new and old. Finally, the long-awaited audio tour is close to completion. VPR

has finished recording our script – with the exception of one extremely busy narrator: Howard Dean. Given the high level of interest in his portrait—because of both its unusual artistic qualities and the very high national profile of our former governor – we have arranged a temporary solution to be made permanent later. The tour will be available later this spring, however, ending a process that proved far more time and labor consuming than we originally expected. To our surprise, the web page ([vtstatehouse.org](http://vtstatehouse.org)) still increases in volume, bringing inquiries from “What is the best

time to visit?” to “How old is our desk?” -- or just praise for the restoration.

The Executive Committee has been meeting to discuss future plans for the Friends. Where do we stand in relation to our mission? What remains to be accomplished? What route, and any changes that might be required, should we now take? Which of our activities must be maintained? We would be happy to hear from you, our members, with your ideas on the subject.

Genie and Arthur

# 15-Year Members and Volunteers: Additions

When we decided to publish a list of members who had been part of the Friends for 15 years or more in our last Proceedings, we realized that it would inevitably have omissions. This is largely because of the many moves and transfers from paper to computer records that have taken place during our life of more than two decades.

What we discovered to our pleasure is that this little newsletter is actually read! Friends of loyal Friends let us know of omissions. Thus, in addition to the 57

extremely loyal members listed earlier, (many duos), the following list is gratefully and apologetically acknowledged. Without you all – and possibly still others lost in space – our State House would still be a shadow of its glorious self. Thank you all!

Louise Avery  
Alice Cook Bassett  
Eleanor Brightenback  
John & Mary Carnahan  
Ann Coffrin

Janet Gillette  
Betsy Isham  
Ruth and Fletcher Joslin  
Katharine Lahee  
John M. Lindley  
Anthony Otis  
Ted & Ayn Riehle  
Kim Robinson  
Janet Rood  
Sallie Soule  
Suzanne Trudel  
Jane Williams  
Maisie Williamson

## Volunteer News

**Spring Luncheon:** The annual spring luncheon date has been set for Wednesday, June 11th in the State House cafeteria. Our speaker will be Jane Beck of the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury. Many of us listened with pleasure to the recent VPR series "Under the Golden Dome" that explored historic activities in the Vermont Legislature during the last century.

How many of us have thought about the differences between oral history and written history? Or about the pleasures, possible advantages, or difficulties encountered while preserving this less familiar and more ephemeral kind of history? Many of us are not even aware of the Center's activities, which include exhibitions and publications. Among the latter is *Kitchen Tunks and Parlor Songs*. If you don't know what a tunk is, check out the CD at our gift shop.



*Jacquie Walker and Lois Haseltine receiving well—deserved recognition as head tour guides at last November's Annual Meeting.*

Most important, though, come to the luncheon, and talk with your friends about the possibility of becoming a Volunteer. Any who are seriously interested in becoming guides or working in the gift shop during the tourist season – mid-June through October – are cordially invited to come with you.

Sign-up sheets for work commitments and training sessions, which as always are required for both new and experienced volunteers, will be available from 11:30 AM. No signing will be allowed until that time! The delectable buffet lunch will be set out at noon.

Last year, during the "off" season alone, about 5,500 individuals were given tours, mostly booked by school tour coordinator Alice Merrill. Almost 4,400 of these were for students, and the rest were special adult tours, many requested by legislators. As you can imagine, the school tours require special guide training both to meet teacher hopes and to keep disruption of the legislature to a minimum.

The last issue of Proceedings focused on the Volunteers, why they work so hard and often for us, and for the thousands of visitors who come to admire our State House – and state. We neglected to mention that their efforts also – almost incidentally – contribute to the physical State

House. The gift shop generates a profit that provides close to \$10,000 each year for the restoration and publications. The tour guides are so appreciated that our little wooden sap bucket is filled with about \$1000 each year. Although intended by the "grateful public" as guide tips, all these funds also go toward restoration, acquisitions like the Montpelier watercolor by Gilman, the two e-bay portraits, and gasolier restorations. Thank you for everything!

### Friends of the Vermont State House

10 Baldwin St., Montpelier, VT 05633-7101

**Support Our House!**  
**Get a Friend to Join the Friends!**

*Yes, I'd like to preserve and protect  
Vermont's State House with a year's membership*

Individual \$30  
Sponsor \$50  
Golden Dome Club \$100  
Cedar Creek Brigade \$500

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_

How you wish to be listed \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if changed) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to:**  
**10 Baldwin St., Montpelier, VT 05633-7101**

# COMING EVENTS

## Farmers' Night March 23rd

The Farmers' Night sponsored by the Friends this year will take place in the well of Representatives' Hall at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, March 23rd. Save the date and be sure to come! In fact, plan to come early for Pete Sutherland's program is sure to be very entertaining. Seats are available on a first-come-first-served basis.

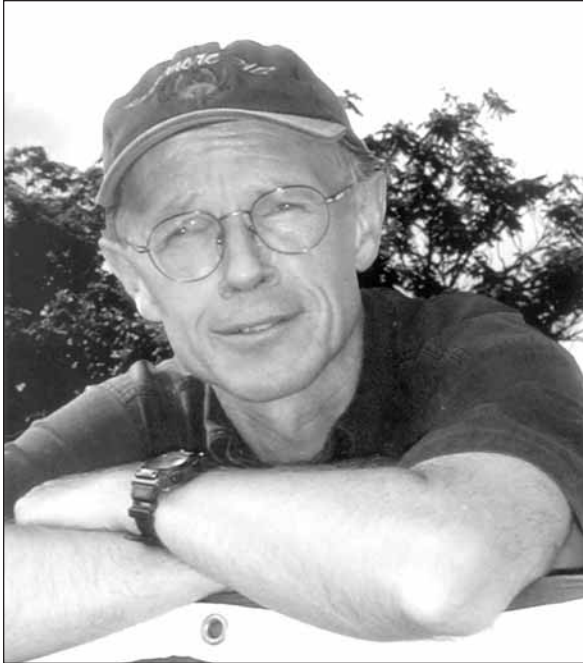
A musician of many talents, Pete has toured North America and Europe as both a solo performer and with a number of groups playing concerts, dances, and festivals. The Champlain Valley Festival described him as "Practically the most musical person you may ever meet."

He is an accomplished composer of dozens of vocal and instrumental pieces, many recorded by other artists or incorporated into performances of groups as varied as Circus Smirkus and the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. He will play banjo, guitar, and harmonica as well as the familiar fiddle for which he is possibly most widely appreciated. And there will be a few opportunities for the audience to sing along!

Some of you may remember hearing a "taste" of Pete at our "Return of the Civil War Governors" program in 2001, when he played only a supporting role. His program for this Farmers' Night will be a concert of original and traditional Vermont History Ballads.

The cafeteria will be open from 5:30 pm. A pre-concert dinner will be your main opportunity to socialize, as this year there will not be a post-concert reception.

To our delight, the various Civil War re-enactment groups will be present. They have been particularly generous this year with a great deal of help and fund-raising toward restoration and preservation of the Vermont's splendid flag collection.



*Pete Sutherland, Musician and composer, will perform at our Farmers' Night, March 23rd.*

### Spring Luncheon

*June 8th, a Wednesday, will be the Volunteer's annual spring luncheon. More details are on page 3.*

#### 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.**

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