

Coming Events

Anniversary of our State House

This past January was the 150th anniversary of the great fire that destroyed our second Capitol, Ammi Young's 1838 State House. That is not an event to celebrate, but the opening of our present State House in October 1859 may be an occasion for some revelry!

The Friends – and State Curator David Schütz – intend to celebrate the building's Sesquicentennial! David and Tracy will be mounting a series of exhibits about the fire and construction of the State House in the Cardroom throughout the year. We will also sponsor a Farmers' Night again in 2009, with a possible original script, probably drawing on actual government debates and other historic references, dramatizing the problems and triumphs during the design and construction of one of the state's most important buildings.

In retrospect, it seems amazing that the new, and considerably changed and enlarged building was built over the course of only two years! Immediately after the fire, the full extent of damage was not realized. It was hoped, since most of the granite walls remained standing, that the State House could simply be repaired rather than rebuilt from scratch. But over the months that followed, conflicting visions and bitter controversy would erupt as two different camps developed with opposing ideas as to how the building should be reconstructed. Stay tuned as upcoming episodes in this saga unfold!

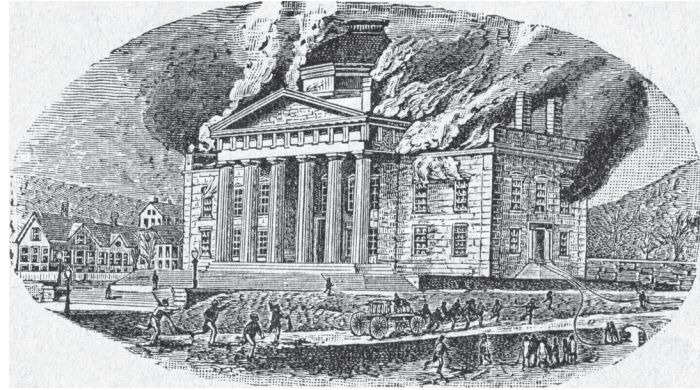


Photo courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society

This is the only known image to record the fire that destroyed the building and set the stage for its replacement with the current State House. Ammi Young's Grecian portico, which copied the gable end of the Temple of Theseus, is today the only fragment that remains from the previous building. Its patched columns to this day are a good example of the frugality that preserved this vestige of the old Greek revival State House. Paul Carnahan, Vermont Historical Society librarian, found the engraving above on the cover of an old Union Mutual Fire Insurance Company annual report cover about 15 years ago.

Board Meeting

Annual Meeting: January 14th, Monday, held at 4:00 p.m. in the State House, room 10.

Friends of the Vermont State House

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The Friends of the Vermont State House

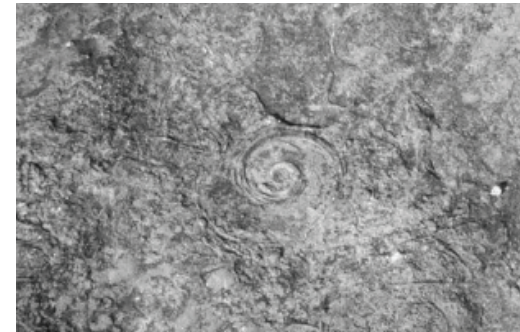
Newsletter Autumn 2007



The Friends of the Vermont State House

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2007



A Gastropod "in situ" on Isle La Motte instead of the floor of the Vermont State House lobby!

Volunteer Fossil Tour

September 20th saw a sunny day greet us at the State House as a full bus load of enthusiastic "tourist" tour guides and gift shop volunteers set off for Isle La Motte. The Chazy Reef formation is the oldest reef in the world (about 480 million years ago) built by a community of organisms. Its foundation was built by the phylum Bryozoa that predate coral reefs by about 30 million years. The entire reef extends from Tennessee to Newfoundland, but here in Isle La Motte, the reef layers are easy to see. The bottom third of the island contains the oldest fossils. Our catch phrase will henceforth be that the fossils come from "the oldest biologically diverse reef in the world".

Our first stop was the Ira & Thomas LaBombard Goodsell Ridge Preserve on Quarry Road. Previously owned by Tom & Shirley LaBombard it is now part of the Isle La Motte Preservation Trust. The Trust was started in 1998 as a nonprofit group working to preserve parts of the reef to create a geological preserve and outdoor museum with interpretive trails and a visitors center in an old farmhouse. Linda Fitch, the president of the trust, met us and we split into smaller groups to walk through the former farm fields. Walking paths have been mowed and signs point the way explaining the creatures visible in the various rock outcroppings.

We saw Anthropods (related to horseshoe crabs), Briozoa (soft bodied invertebrate animals similar to coral, a fraction of an inch long, resembling twigs and gumdrops in shape), Cephalopods (ancestors of squid), Corals (tiny flower-like animals living in colonies), Gastropods (an ancient form of snail), Sponges, and Stromatoporoids (cabbage-shaped animals related to sponges). The gray-colored rocks are limestone, not marble. They take on a lustrous black marble color when polished. We were able to see a video in the visitor's center and also view some of the fossils from the site. Monetary donations are always appreciated here for their continuing work.

We then followed Linda to her home, the Fisk Farm, where she had tables and chairs set on the front lawn where we would enjoy our picnic lunches from the cafeteria, and the beverage & desserts that she provided. The farm was the home of Vermont's Lieutenant Governor Nelson Fisk. It was here that Teddy Roosevelt was attending a banquet of the Vt. Fish & Game League on September 6, 1901 when a call came informing him that President McKinley had been shot. Abutting the farm is the Fisk Quarry where our State House tiles came from. French soldiers first started pulling rock from here in 1666 to build a fort on the northwest side of the island. English settlers started quarrying around 1800. The quarry closed in 1919. This limestone has been used in building the National Gallery of Art in Washington and Radio City Music Hall in New York. There are trails to follow inside and around the quarry.

Our final stop was St. Anne's Shrine - time for a little reflection and a gift shop stop before our journey home.

Thanks to the Friends for making this trip possible for so many of us volunteers. We encourage any of you to visit this special place and view this important part of Vermont's natural history.

Jen McDermott
State House Tour Guide



Loring Starr, spearheaded the volunteer effort to reestablish the cafeteria garden. Loring works for the Legislative Council in the State House, but is a Master Gardener in her "spare" time. Master Gardeners and the Nature Conservancy have joined forces with Buildings and General Services to restore the garden.

(See story on page 3.)

Chair's Note



Dear Friends of the Vermont State House,

I've often told friends that being a tour guide at the State House is the most enjoyable volunteer work I've ever done. To share the history and beauty of this very special building with people of all ages from all over the world is truly a privilege, but the best part is hearing and reading their reactions to our beautifully restored state capitol building. You and I know what a gem it is, but I continue to take such pride in having that validated by complete strangers who may be seeing the building for the first time (or the first time in many years). The words "incredible," "most beautiful," "amazing," and "lovely" are not uncommonly used by our visitors to describe their reactions.

Our audio-tour wands are in their second year of use and are available without charge whenever the building is open. They have been a great option for those who arrive between scheduled tours or when there are no tour guides and for those who like to go at their own pace or those who want "all the details." I have made a habit of asking users of the wands for their feedback and the responses have been, without exception, very positive.

We have recently learned from Tour-mate, our audio-wand providers, that we can add much more time to our current wands - ah, the advances of technology! Since we have many visitors who are not fluent in English - my experience tells me we have quite a number of French-, Spanish- and German-speaking visitors - we would like to develop the basic audio tour in languages to meet the needs of more visitors.

It is with your generous donations that we can offer tours of all kinds to our many visitors and further our educational mission. Of course, we continue to fund special projects and acquisitions under the guidance of our very able curator, David Schütz, and your support is vital in that effort as well. We appreciate your continued support in maintaining and sharing what may be the most beautiful state capitol building in the country. Thank you for sharing in the good work we do.

You are all truly "Friends of the Vermont State House" and it is appreciated by the trustees of the Friends, those who work in the building and by those who visit this lovely place.

Charlotte MacLeay

Directors' Note



We end this deceptively quiet year with a sad - but grateful - farewell to Charlotte MacLeay as chair of our board. She worked unstintingly with the committee for our audio tour,

which might never have been developed into the popular and useful educational tools they have become. In addition, her intelligence, energy, and grace guided numerous issues that came to the board. Fortunately, she will continue to serve on the board and to lead tours. Thank you so much, Charlotte.

Our next board meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 14, 2008. Our new officers will be elected then, and the budget and plans for 2008 will be discussed and adopted. If you plan to attend, please phone Genie at 828-0386 for details and space!

The generosity and continuing interest of so many former Members - now called Supporters - is both heartwarming and encouraging. Although the major preservation has been accomplished, several responsibilities continue. Publications, an important part of the educational branch of our mission, need to be updated. The long out-of-print Robbins history needs to include discoveries made during the restoration process and new acquisitions. In addition, a larger, illustrated volume of both architectural and political history is being developed by the curator. It may also be possible to print a modest photographic book - possibly using the same new photographs and some materials from the other printings to satisfy our many visitors.

The portrait of Gov. Samuel C. Crafts, bought by the Friends in 2000 with money voted by our Volunteers from the financial results of their efforts, needs to be restored and appropriately framed. Similarly, our portrait of Civil War Colonel Albert Clarke by Scott Carbee needs conservation and a frame. Both portraits had formerly been in the State House collection but had disappeared about fifty years before the Friends came into being!

Other work, work that needs labor rather than funds, also continues. Perhaps the most important is the curatorial committee's cooperation with curator David Schütz and the Legislature to implement a non-politicized and consistently responsible acquisitions policy.

In short, we need to continue for a few more years. We still rely on your generous support and the knowledge that you are still there. If a vital acquisition appears on the market, or an immediate problem develops, we will call on you. Otherwise, we'll send you an informal report (like this) in the late fall of every year. Meanwhile, do come visit to see the changes.

Happy Holidays! Happy Winter Sports! And Wishes for a successful Legislative Session!

Genie Robbins and Arthur Williams

Cafeteria Garden Restoration

Blue jeans and gardening gloves were the State House norm - or at least normal behind the State House, -- from the middle of July until late in October. The Vermont Master Gardeners, the Nature Conservancy, Buildings and General Services - in the guise of David and Tracy - joined together to remake the garden behind the cafeteria.

Hidden behind the State House, yet in full view of all who visit the cafeteria, is an area that had been delightfully planted in the early 1990s with hosta, daylilies, bulbs, spring wildflowers, ferns, and other native species. Friends trustee Susan Cady Hayward had mobilized many volunteers, including Terry Boyle, then chair of the Association of Vermont Landscape Architects, plant suppliers, garden clubs, and others to provide design, plants, and labor to adapt the shady environment to be naturally lovely.

Alas, the garden became overrun with unwelcome invaders. The worst barbarian was bishop's weed, but bracken and vinca also took over from the more modest bulbs, which had originally been planted to bloom as bouquets. The goal of the new collaborative is not only to revive the garden, but also to educate garden viewers on invasive plants and native alternatives.

The impetus behind the new project was Loring Starr, a Master Gardener familiar with the area because of her job with the Legislative Council. She contacted the Nature Conservancy, which runs a public outreach and education program called Wise on Weeds (WOW!) to teach gardeners how to recognize, remove, and replace invasive plants. The State House, with over 150,000 visitors each year and 180 legislators who are all ambassadors in their home communities, was an excellent site for public outreach.

Invasive species that have been innocently introduced over the years as pot herbs or garden ornamentals can sometimes get out of control. These aggressive plants threaten Vermont's native trees, wildflowers and wildlife. Bishop's weed (*Aegopodium podagraria*), also known as goutweed or snow-on-the-mountain, is quarantined and cannot be sold in VT, MA or CT. Unfortunately, the plant is still sold in other states as a fast growing ground cover and can be shipped to Vermont. The spread of the weed is mostly done by human beings and, therefore, is preventable. Intentional planting and uncontrolled dumping of garden waste must be avoided. The fact that bishops weed grows and spreads very rapidly makes control difficult.

WOW! Program Coordinator Sara Kuebbing visited the Statehouse in June, Kuebbing recounted horror stories she has heard from other gardeners around the state, as well as creative control methods, "Some gardeners have tried it all, even using chickens and goats to rid their yard of this pest." Others have said that moving to a new house might be the only solution! Kuebbing also described the weed's death by "smothering." Controlling the plant requires removing all of the under ground rhizomes. Even a small piece left

behind can sprout the next year. These should all be stored in black plastic bags in the sun for at least two weeks.

Two "Recognize and Remove" workshops were the first step teaching the volunteers to eliminate the plants. They also learned to clean the soles of shoes when leaving the garden. Once infestations are removed, and new material is carefully examined before being brought in, a garden can be rehabilitated.

In October, another group of Master Gardeners and interns, as well as former State House regulars, planted 145 bulbs in less than an hour! The fantastic crew was, unfortunately, speeded along by swarms of mosquitoes, which cut short the planned relaxation and snacks.

Next spring, though, cafeteria patrons will enjoy watching the blooms: 10 *Allium Aflatunense*; 25 *Allium Azureum*; a collection of 60 top tulip bulbs; and 50 giant healthy daffodil bulbs.

For a sneak preview, check out the big poster about the project that is displayed in a cafeteria window overlooking the garden-in-process.

Gift Shop Changes



Marie Dessureau, center, has passed her baton as co-manager to the Gift Shop to Lorraine Guinard, right, who will continue to share management with Pauline Letourneau. All three have been an effective troika this year!