

HISTORY CONNECTIONS

Vermont Historical Society News and Notes
Spring 2022 | Volume 16 | Number 2



Paul Carnahan,
VHS Librarian



VERMONT HISTORY

VOLUME 16 - Number 2

**History Connections is published
by the Vermont Historical Society.**

The Vermont Historical Society engages both Vermonters and “Vermonters at Heart” in the exploration of our state’s rich heritage. Our purpose is to reach a broad audience through our outstanding collections, statewide outreach, and dynamic programming. We believe that an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities.

Executive Director: Steve Perkins

Vermont History Museum & Store

The Pavilion Building,
next to the State House
109 State Street, Montpelier, VT
Tuesday–Saturday 10 am – 4 pm
(802) 828-2291

Families: \$20; Adults: \$7
Students, children, seniors: \$5
Members & children under 6: Free
Student school groups: Free

Vermont History Center

60 Washington St. Suite 1, Barre, VT
(802) 479-8500

Library hours :

Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday 9 am - 4 pm
Wednesday 9 am - 8 pm
Second Saturdays 9 am - 4 pm

Appointments are recommended.
Please call or e-mail to schedule your visit.
library@vermonthistory.org
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In The Galleries

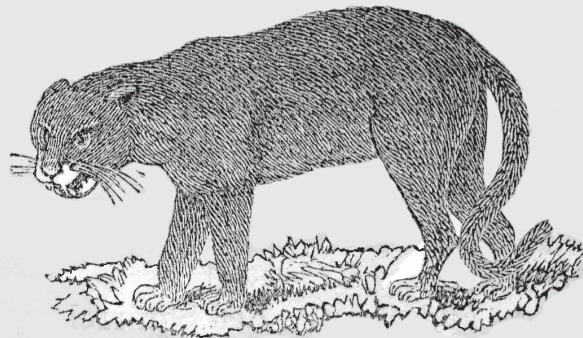
History Museum Special Exhibits

The Voices of St. Joseph’s Orphanage

The St. Joseph’s Orphanage in Burlington was home to more than 13,000 children from 1854 to 1974. Although the Catholic-run institution was well-regarded in the community, accounts of abuse inflicted on scores of former residents at the hands of nuns and other clerical personnel began to emerge in the 1990s. Few were believed at first, but the ex-orphans persevered, ultimately winning validation for their suffering and working for laws protecting vulnerable children in Vermont. This is the story of these former orphans, now known as the Voices of St. Joseph, and their remarkable and enduring accomplishments.

The Voices of St. Joseph’s Orphanage exhibition contains material that may be challenging for children and may be disturbing or triggering for other visitors.

ON VIEW THROUGH JULY 30, 2022



The Catamount in Vermont

The catamount has long been a symbol of Vermont. This new exhibit explores the history of the catamount through the lenses of art, science, and culture.

ON VIEW THROUGH JUNE 2022

History Center Special Exhibits

Icons and Oddities

This exhibit features items related to “Visiting Vermont”: tourism advertisements and brochures, souvenirs, bicentennial and other anniversary celebrations, and advertising of Vermont products.

Events

Want to learn more about upcoming events and programs?
Visit the calendar at vermonthistory.org/calendar

With Spring Comes Change

No matter how you feel on those negative 40-degree wind-chill days in January, spring in Vermont is inevitable. With it comes a vibrancy and sense of great possibility—and I'm not just talking about my beloved Red Sox. Spring is a time for change, and as I learned in both Sunday School and the science classroom, a time for metamorphosis.

I look forward to a year of new programs, new partnerships, new opportunities, and with equal parts trepidation and confidence, change.

As you will read throughout this issue of *History Connections*, the Vermont Historical Society is saying goodbye to longtime Librarian Paul Carnahan at the end of June. Paul has served Vermonters and those looking to explore our state's past for 32 years. He shepherded our library through multiple changes and moves, including the monumental expansion from the small Pavilion space to an impressive research facility in the Vermont History Center. He oversaw VHS's transition from typewritten cataloging to state-of-the-art digital platforms, helping countless researchers navigate the complexities of our rich (and sometimes impenetrable) collection. I can't even begin to count the number of times historians and writers thanked Paul in the prefaces of their articles, books, catalogs, and films.


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Upon its founding in 1838, VHS identified the Librarian as the critical position for the success of its mission. Since they were co-located, the State Librarian and VHS Librarian were often one-and-the-same. By the 20th century, the Society started to hire its own professional staff. Before anyone thought of hiring a director or curator, a librarian served as

the first paid staff member of the organization. Paul followed a rich tradition of librarians working tirelessly to make Vermont history as accessible as possible.

Folks have been asking me what we will do without Paul. I'm sure Michael Sherman had the same comments when Reidun Nuquist retired in 1991! As Reidun remained a sage advisor to Paul, so will Paul to our new Librarian Kate Phillips. Kate is already with us on staff, doing incredible work with

uncatalogued manuscript collections, and we look forward to her upcoming tenure. With spring comes change and metamorphosis—we celebrate and honor Paul's retirement and Kate's transformation on staff to our next Librarian.



Steve Perkins, Executive Director

Brattleboro Words Project Wins Hathaway Award

Preserving and celebrating the legacy of written words, printing, and publishing

The Vermont Historical Society announced the winner of the 2021 Hathaway Award during our annual meeting this past September.

Honoring the memory of Professor Richard O. Hathaway for his innumerable contributions to the study of Vermont history, the Hathaway Award recognizes one outstanding project in that field completed, released, published, or presented during the previous calendar year. Projects may include but are not limited to publications, exhibits, works of art, documentary films, radio programs, websites, and dramatic works.

This year's recipient, The Brattleboro Words Project (BWP), is a community collaboration initiated in 2017 between the Brattleboro Literary Festival, Write Action, Marlboro College, Brooks Memorial Library, and the Brattleboro Historical Society. The organizations rallied around the goal of preserving and celebrating the legacy of written words, printing, and publishing in the region. The National Endowment for the Humanities and other foundations, as well as local businesses and community members provided funding for BWP.

One of BWP's efforts, an illustrated book tracing Brattleboro's significance as a printing and publishing town, is the focus of this year's award. *Print Town: Brattleboro's Legacy of Words* is a 247-page collection of stories covering almost 300 years of local history. Many of the narratives will ring familiar with local history buffs,



but the publication is peppered with lesser-known tales that contribute to the breadth and diversity of the finished product. Among the collection from over

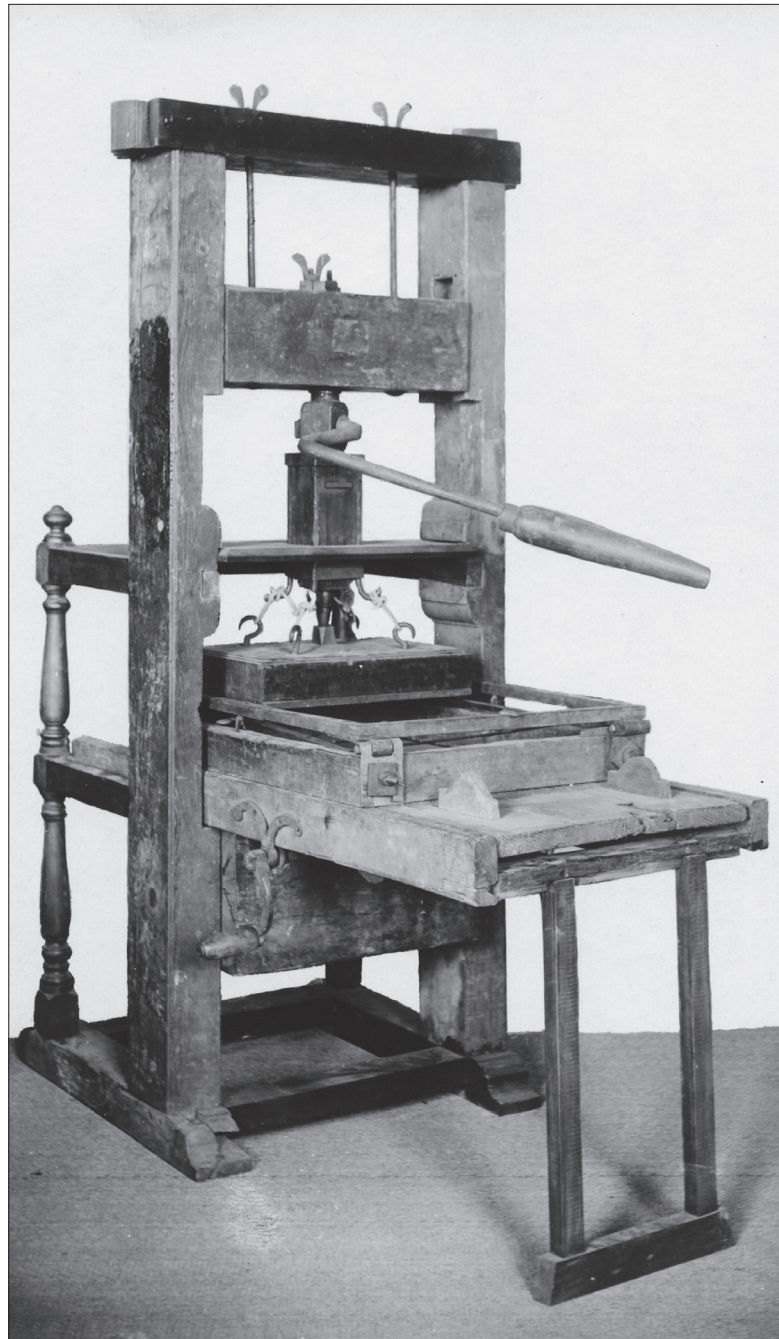
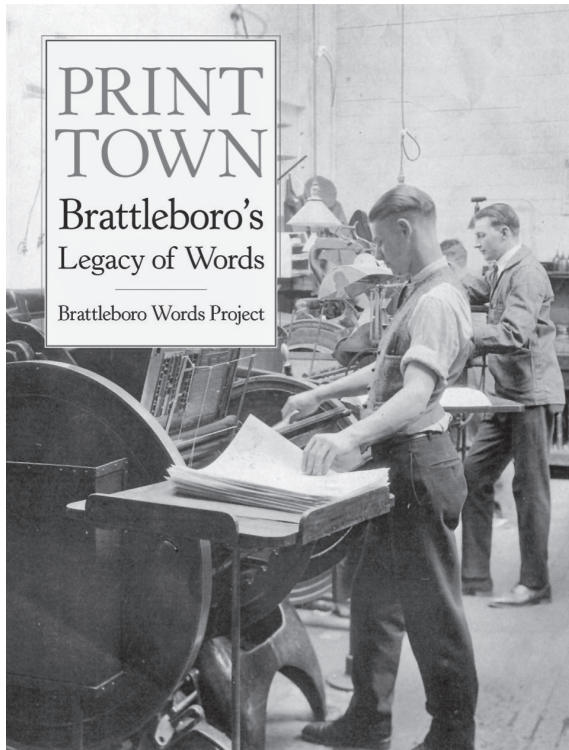
30 local historians and published authors who engaged in three years of research are profiles of famous local authors such as Saul Bellows, Rudyard Kipling, and Clarina Howard Nichols, as well as information about lesser known but equally important authors like 17th century African American poet, Lucy Terry Prince. BWP released *Print Town* in December 2020.

Some of the group's accomplishments outside of the publication include, but are not limited to, enabling the installation of two Vermont historic markers, hosting three Brattleboro Literary Festival creative exhibits, and mounting a play and lectures around Royall and Mary Tyler (giving Mary overdue credit for authoring early America's first childcare manual).

In addition to *Print Town*, BWP also launched the Brattleboro Words Trail, a website and mobile app complementing the publication. The Brattleboro Words Trail documents how the publishing and print history of the area is embedded in particular places and makes it easily accessible for all.

Learn more about The Brattleboro Words Project at brattleborowords.org

Pick up your copy of *Print Town: Brattleboro's Legacy of Words* at vermonthistory.org or at Everyone's Books in Brattleboro.



Above: *Dresden Press*, on view at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier. Left, top: Cover of the Hathaway Award winning book *Print Town*. Left, below: *Mary Palmer Tyler*, known for writing the first comprehensive guide to raising children by an American woman.

Photo opposite page: VHS Executive Director Steve Perkins presents Brattleboro Words Project leaders with the Hathaway Award. (top left to right) Bill Holiday, Brattleboro Historical Society; Micheal Fleming, *Print Town* editor; Starr LaTronica, Brooks Library; Rolf Parker and Arlene Distler, *Write Action*; Stephen Perkins, Vermont Historical Society; Jerry Carbone, Brattleboro Literary Festival; Sally Seymour; William Edelglass, Marlboro College; Cynthia Houghton Parker; Lissa Weinmann, Project Director; and Jim Brisson, *Print Town Designer*.



Paul Carnahan: *32 Years of Service*

Paul with VHS Intern Hannah Kirkpatrick filming one of our popular collections videos.

Paul's mark on VHS will surely be indelible, but his influence was, and is, felt in many other ways

When Paul Carnahan joined the Vermont Historical Society in 1990, the library was temporarily situated in the Auditorium of the Pavilion building in Montpelier with offices two floors above. The first-floor offices were off-limits due to an asbestos removal operation. The Vermont History Museum was yet to come.

In those days, the Society operated with a skeleton crew. A CFO/"assistant treasurer" managed member relations, a part-time editor proofread public-facing communications, administrative assistants handled incoming calls, and the library was staffed by two librarians, a part-time assistant, and a high school student page.

The library at the Pavilion had its quirks, like a shelving scheme that required books taller than 10" be

stored separately from their shorter companions, and a basement storage room for rare books that sat below noisy plumbing pipes. There was no internet and no computer access to the library collections.

Eventually, the library moved back to the first floor, and Paul, interested in expanding the accessibility of VHS resources and streamlining organizational systems, created an internal network connected to the state and built the first VHS website. This forward-thinking mentality, coupled with a willingness to collaborate with and mentor colleagues, has continued to move the VHS library into the future, expanding its scope and impact.

Progress happened incrementally over Paul's 32-year tenure. From the relocation of the library to the Vermont History Center in Barre to the acquisition

of an online public access catalog (OPAC) to the creation of Digital Vermont, Paul has connected the VHS library to a much broader library and archival community, making the collection visible to researchers worldwide.

Paul's mark on VHS will surely be indelible, but his influence was, and is, felt in many other ways. In 1999, Marjorie Strong became Assistant Librarian and began her decades-long professional relationship with Paul. She was hired specifically to tackle a classification backlog that prevented books from being shelved, but digital technology was the bigger picture. VHS needed to transition to an online catalog, an endeavor that ultimately took seven years.

These days, Marjorie manages original cataloging for items not found in the international database known as OCLC and coordinates VHS's retrospective conversion project of transferring card catalog information into the OPAC. The latter project, initiated in 2006, is nearly complete. Marjorie has been with VHS for 23 years and says Paul's impact on her career is profound. "I worked in many libraries — briefly — before coming to VHS. I stayed here because the work has always been fascinating. But primarily, I stayed because Paul has been such a supportive colleague. Many supervisors will talk about collegiality, but Paul doesn't just practice it; he lives it. He allows all of us to have equal input, and our ideas are always welcome."

Says Metadata Librarian Kate Phillips of Paul and Marjorie's collaborative dynamic, "I always appreciate listening to Paul and Marjorie talk through how to approach an issue together — whether it's an especially tricky reference question or a boggling technical glitch. They have such different personalities but complement each other so well."

Above: Paul with VHS volunteer Bob Murphy circa 1999, who recently retired after 25 years of volunteer service.



Vital working relationships are due, in part, to Paul's ability to delegate projects to staff and volunteers that align with their strengths and interests.

These vital working relationships are due, in part, to Paul's ability to delegate projects to staff and volunteers that align with their strengths and interests. This is evident in the library's volunteer force, a collection of individuals with diverse passions and skills. Volunteers are an essential component of library activities, extending far beyond the busy work one might associate with this type of position. They are often tasked with

one of the central responsibilities of an archivist: processing a manuscript or photo collection. Without the tireless work of these volunteers, library staff could not catalog the hundreds of collections donated to VHS.

Kate Phillips, who will become the Librarian following Paul's departure, began as a library volunteer in September 2020. When Paul learned of Kate's interest in printed ephemera, he assigned her a project digitizing the library's political broadsides in anticipation of the upcoming presidential election. Kate was hired the following spring when the library received a generous gift allowing for a third full-time library staffer to catalog manuscript collections and start planning for a statewide

digital collections platform. Says Kate, "Through his mentorship [Paul] has given me this amazing opportunity to come into my own as a librarian. I'm so honored to take on the role of the next Librarian of the Vermont Historical Society and am relieved that I have several months ahead to continue to learn from him."

Over the years, Paul cultivated relationships between the library and Vermont's archival community at large, meaning he always has a suggestion of who to contact should another institution or scholar be better suited in guiding a researcher.

The library exists to serve researchers, and Paul is a font of knowledge regarding the library's complex and idiosyncratic collection. His comprehensive memory for what it contains has been described, lovingly, as

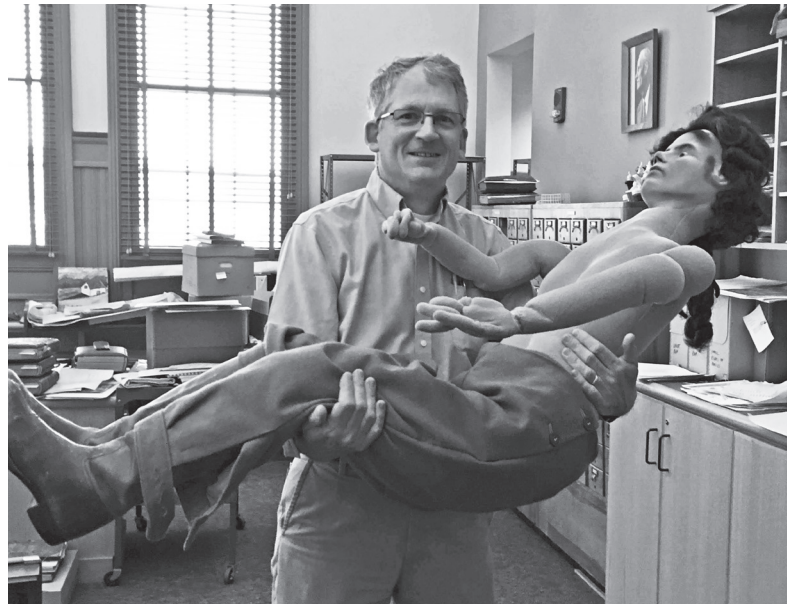
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“baffling.” Anyone who has watched him pinpoint exactly which collection or book will meet a researcher’s needs would be thoroughly impressed, and his willingness to go above and beyond when assisting library visitors is unfaltering.

Says Marjorie, “Because Paul and I have spent such a long time with the library collection, we’ve handled almost every book or manuscript – though there are always surprises! Certain research questions come up more often, so we have an almost Pavlovian reaction to them. To do this job well, you have to love stories, and our collection is full of them. That’s how we remember.”

There is no question that Paul will be remembered as a masterful Librarian, a consummate professional, and an instrumental part of the Vermont Historical Society’s past- and future.



Paul is always up for a photo-op. Here, he poses with Sam Adams, who formerly lived in the Freedom and Unity exhibit at the Vermont History Museum. Sam visited many offices and their residents at the Vermont History Center before leaving for good.

Too many memorable Paul moments to count



Paul and other VHS staff donned 70's clothing and marched in Montpelier's 2015 July 3rd parade to celebrate the start of our 1970s project.

According to Assistant Librarian Marjorie Strong, there are too many memorable Paul moments to count. She fondly recalls her “time in the trenches” at the Vermont History Expo, an event involving massive setup and nonstop interaction with the public, as well as Paul’s butterfly costume during a visit to VINS (Vermont Institute of Natural Science), and dressing in hippie regalia for Montpelier’s 3rd of July parade (pictured left).

One of her favorite stories involves transporting the book collection from the Pavilion to the Vermont History Center and illustrates Paul’s analytic bent. “The books were loaded onto large rolling bookcases, keeping them in order by Dewey decimal number. The problem was while the books were in order on individual bookcases, the bookcases themselves would be delivered randomly. Paul analyzed each section of the Dewey numbers (using an Excel spreadsheet) to figure out which shelf in the new library the books would be unloaded onto, and he marked off the shelves with masking tape. It worked! We were able to unload over 40,000 books with no problem.”

Collection Highlight: Paul's Story Preserved

By Teresa Greene



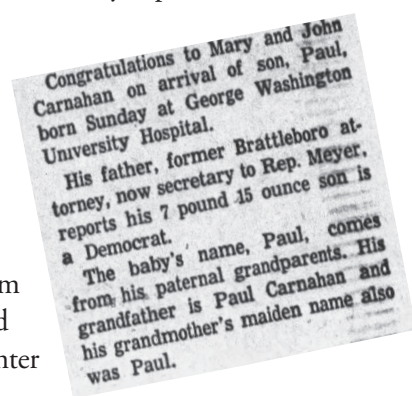
Gift of Paul Carnahan, Montpelier. Accession # 2015.47



GIFT TO BAND — Paul Carnahan, left, secretary-treasurer of the BUHS Band, accepts a check from Mrs. Brenda Fitch, project chairman of the Brattleboro Woman's Evening Club. At right is Mark Hebbard, band president. Every year BWEC members choose a special project to which they make a donation. This year the club voted to contribute to the BUHS Band to help with expenses of the trip to Washington, D.C., where the band will participate in the Cherry Blossom Festival.

As Librarian at the Vermont Historical Society for 32 years, Paul Carnahan's guiding hand will be felt long after he departs. His professional legacy is well preserved, from the quirks of cataloging to notes that will undoubtedly be found in the backs of files decades from now. However, what might surprise readers is how much of Paul's story is preserved in the Museum Collection.

Paul wore this windbreaker as a marching band member at Brattleboro Union High School. The jacket is blue nylon on the exterior and lined with black fleece. The arms feature parallel rows of white piping from the collar to the machine-knitted cuffs. The jacket opens at the center with five snaps, and the bottom hem contains a drawstring for tightening around the wearer's hips, minimizing drafts. The band's seal, encircled by the words, "BRATTLEBORO UNION HIGH SCHOOL BAND," is printed on the front left breast. The name "Paul" is embroidered on the opposite side.



The seal depicts Brattleboro Union High School's now retired mascot, a Confederate colonel. The same image was used by the University of Mississippi, but the reasons behind the choice of mascot vary by source. Brattleboro Union High School retired the mascot in 2004 but retained the name "Colonels." This connection to Confederate ideology has recently called the name back into question, with petitions both in favor and against the mascot active online.

As a Brattleboro Union High School marching band member, Paul played trombone and acted as the band's Secretary-Treasurer. He traveled with the group to Washington, DC, to play in the National Cherry Blossom festival during his junior year. Marching band was not Paul's only extracurricular activity as a high schooler. He also won awards on the debate team and headed up a mural project as part of the student council. Outside of school hours, he spent two weeks shadowing Senator Leahy in Washington. He acted as editor of the *Brattleboro Reformer's* ongoing column, "Events of the Past," a precursor for his work with the Vermont Historical Society.

Learning from the Librarian

“Paul, where can I find...?”



By Victoria Hughes

A great joy of teaching education programs at VHS is engaging students with authentic, compelling primary sources from our collections. Finding these sources often involves the questions, “Paul, do we have any...?” and “Paul, where can I find...?” I will never forget how—without looking in the catalog—Paul could direct me to the daguerreotype of the second Vermont State House housed in box FB-2. And as he was already headed to the vault, he showed me the original, enhancing the accuracy of a lesson I was creating. Paul can always answer questions, recommend alternatives, or suggest tapping into Marjorie’s equally broad expertise. I have enjoyed learning from them, and the education programs benefit from their vast knowledge of the library collections.

Last fall, VHS received an American Rescue Plan Act grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to support the addition of inclusive, diverse, and relevant content to school programs and the Vermont History Explorer website (vermonthistoryexplorer.org). While

Above: Montpelier City Farm, one of many poor farms dotting Vermont until the early 1950s and showing Paul’s cross-referencing style written in his distinctive handwriting.

searching for photographs of poor farms to illustrate a new website entry, Marjorie directed me to a report from the Sheldon Poor Farm. Unfortunately, it didn’t quite have what I was seeking. Next, Paul pointed me to a photo file with the category heading “poverty.” He created this folder to cross-reference other images he found over the years. Notes in the file, written in Paul’s distinctive handwriting, led me to a picture of the Montpelier City Farm filed with photographs of Montpelier buildings. Thanks to the cross-reference and Paul’s anticipation of research questions, students can gain a more nuanced understanding of how Vermont towns have tried to help Vermonters in need.

Paul’s intimate understanding of the collections has profoundly impacted primary sources used in school programs and documents included in VHS exhibits. He has helped many students research projects for Vermont History Day. He is always willing to host groups of teachers, high school students, or even young home-schoolers at the library and vault so they can explore these outstanding resources. Paul will be deeply missed, but the influence of his organizational structure, his handwritten catalog labels, and his “original in” notes will live on to benefit staff, researchers, and students well into the future.

Photo of Interest



"...the last word in elegance and equipment in the automobile world."

This photo caught our attention. Two men in nearly identical chauffeurs' uniforms stare intently at the camera; each man rests one arm on the front fender of an immaculate black car. The cars are identical, except that one sports an American flag fluttering from its radiator cap. The car with the flag displays a 1917 Massachusetts license plate; the other car has a partially obstructed Vermont tag. Who are these proud men showing off these shiny cars?

We don't know who they are, but we know who they worked for. According to Vermont car registration records examined by Conrad Hughson of Putney, the car on the right was owned by Marcellus E. Wheeler, reputed to be Rutland's wealthiest citizen at the time of his death in 1927. The car on the left was registered to his son-in-law, Charles F. Hutchins of Worcester, Massachusetts. The cars are Packard "Twin 6" limousines, so designated because they had 12-cylinder engines and a separate compartment for a driver.

These cars were brand new. On February 28, 1917, the Rutland News reported, "One of two Packard

Limousines ordered by M.E. Wheeler of Pleasant Street has arrived in Rutland.... The machine is the last word in elegance and equipment in the automobile world." It is possible that Wheeler bought one of the limousines as a gift to his daughter and her husband. The couple and their children spent part of the summer of 1917 at "Deermont" in Mendon, one of the many properties owned by Wheeler. This photograph may have been taken that summer, soon after Wheeler and Hutchins had taken possession of their cars.

The image was created by well-known Rutland photographer Louis F. Brehmer (1868-1949). Brehmer was active in the Green Mountain Club and took many pictures of the Long Trail. Wheeler was also active in the club and at one time owned Killington Peak, which he sold to Mortimer Proctor, president of the club. The image is part of a small collection of Brehmer glass plate negatives recently purchased by the VHS.



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