

Berlin Historical Society Annual Report – 2008

This year our historical society again made a presentation at the Vermont History Exposition in Tunbridge. Our subject was “Mary Greene Nye - Author, Editor and Historian”. For the display we borrowed the chair and typewriter that Mary used when she worked at the state as Editor of the State Papers and the marble plaque that was created to honor her when she retired. We also displayed many pictures and stories about Mary from our collection as well as books that she authored.

Our annual dinner meeting was held in May with Howard Coffin our guest speaker. Howard is the author of several Civil War history books. He spoke about the current history book he is working on entitled “Civil War Discoveries in Vermont”. He had previously interviewed members of our society and may include a reference to one or more of Berlin’s veterans in his new book.

Another one of our interesting meetings featured a biography of Dan Perry. Dan was a long term Berlin resident who lived on the Barre-Montpelier Road near its intersection with Vine Street. As well as being the premier auctioneer in central Vermont during the mid 1900’s, he was also one of the founders of Perry Automobile Co. in Barre and Montpelier, owner of the D. A. Perry Real Estate Co., Berlin’s town moderator in the 1920’s and 1930’s, Washington County Senator, 1929, 1931 and 1933, and was even a conductor on the Barre-Montpelier trolley line for a time when it first opened for business in 1898. We are indebted to Dan’s granddaughter, Mary Wells, for the addition of this biography to our collection.

The rumor persists that Erhardt Hill was so named because of an association with Amelia Earhart, the famous aviator who lost her life in trying to fly around the world in 1937. This is not true. Erhardt Hill (note spelling) was named after Justin and Fannie Erhardt who owned the magnificent summer “cottage” (no longer in existence) at the crest of the steep portion of the hill above Riverton.

It’s interesting to note while Berlin is now struggling to be officially recognized with a post office, that we once had two. One was in Berlin Corner and the other in Riverton. Norb Rhinerson has collected a wealth of information related to these post offices including post marks, dates they were in operation and lists of the postmasters in each one. We are indebted to Norb for turning this collection over to our Society.

Maudean Neill, a member of our Society had researched and written a book on the activities of the Klu Klux Klan in Vermont. Maudeen presented this work as a program for our October meeting.

A new effort of our Society will be to have more of these presentations by our members to make our meetings more interesting. Hopefully this will encourage more interest in our meetings from the community. There is so much information in our files that can be utilized for these programs.

We purchased a new laptop computer this year and a projector that interfaces with it to project pictures that are stored on the computer. This has already come in handy for presentations we have made from our growing collection. We also had our entire collection of pictures digitized by a group from the University of Vermont. So our collection of over 500 pictures will now be on our computer and many of them may be viewed at the website www.uvm.edu/landscape.

If you are interested in joining our organization and/or attending meetings contact any one of our officers or leave word at the town hall and we will add your name to our notice address list. Our meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of most every month.

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Vern Turner, Vice President - vern.turner@verizon.net

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The Berlin Town Web site www.berlinvt.org contains our meeting agendas and minutes as well as information on the two books that have been published on Berlin's history. Mary Greene Nye's history of Berlin is there in its entirety.

Don't forget us when cleaning out your attics and closets. We still need your help in preserving the history of Berlin. By sharing your stories, pictures and artifacts they will be available for present and future Berliners to enjoy.