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February 2023 Newsletter

WE ARE OPEN ON SATURDAYS, AT OUR USUAL TIME, 1 - 4 PM. No admission charge.

Programs At the Society

February 18th Program: Traditional Hand Tools, 2 PM, at the Society

Traditional Hand Tools will be presented by Wade Smith from the Mill Hollow Craft School in Keene, NH. Through actual demonstration and discussion, Smith will talk about the "technology" of the past (broadaxes, adzes, drawknives, etc.) and how they were used. Although, now more often found in museums or used as decorative items, these tools were originally a necessity of life and, like today, people constantly redesigning them to better fit the changing need. He will also talk about the old forests and types of timber that were available. The program will be held at 2 PM, at the Historical Society (65 Route 106, North Springfield) and it is free and open to the public. For more information, call Bunni or Hugh Putnam at 802-886-8430.

March 4th Program: Disorder on the Border, 2 PM, at the Society

War Crisis of 1916 and the Birth of the Modern National Guard will be focus of this program presented by Cori Sandagate and Myric McBain (military historians). Cori and Myric have done several other military programs for the Society and draw a large attendance. PLEASE NOTE that this program is on the first Saturday in March, NOT the third Saturday.

April Program, none scheduled yet.

May 20th Program: Who was Marcia P. Brown? 2 PM, at the Society

Who was Marcia Brown? Daniel LaDue, from Plattsburgh, NY, will tell us about Marcia Brown who is one of the female biographical sketches in his book Bold and Courageous. Marcia was born in Springfield in 1835 and was the granddaughter of Elisha Brown who came from Cohasset MA in 1778. After serving in the Revolutionary War, he came to Springfield on horseback with his wife, Merrial. Marcia's father, Abel, was the 6th child of Elisha and Marica was Abel's 10th child. The genealogy section of Hubbard & Dartt's The History of the Town of Springfield Vermont only says: "*Marcia P., b. May 13, 1835. Was for many years a teacher in Springfield; now supervisor of schools in Brazil. S.A.*" Dan will make it abundantly clear in this program that Marcia was more than a teacher and supervisor, she was a woman who exceeded the achievements of most women of her time, in a man's world. She was an outstanding individual who was admired in three states and on two continents.

A Bit of History

Making Cider - 1885

“Nash & Chapman’s new cider mill [in North Springfield] is now in working order and a stream of apple juice is flowing therefrom daily. A description of the mill may be of interest. When a lot of apples arrive at the mill, they are shoveled from the wagon into an elevating apparatus that carries them into the second story and dumps them into a bin. From there they are shoveled into the grinder and the pomace drops through the floor upon the racks in a perfect shower. The “cheese” [cloth] is laid up with Ferguson’s improved rack and cloth system and ten layers are put in at a pressing. It takes thirty minutes to grind and lay up a pressing of one hundred bushels and as much longer to do the squeezing.

During the work of getting the pressing ready, four barrels of cider will run out by gravity and six barrels more when the press is applied, making a capacity of ten barrels an hour or one hundred barrels a day. A farmer can unload his apples and have his barrels filled with cider without waiting several days, a vast improvement on the old-fashioned method of manufacture. The press used is G. W. Bushnell’s patent and the whole plant cost some \$700. A visit to the mill to see the process of making cider will be found interesting. From the October 1885 Springfield Reporter. Possibly the Warren Cider Mill on County Road.

The Clothes Pin

A Memorial to Springfield’s Inventors

If you have been downtown, you undoubtedly noticed the giant, brightly-painted clothes pin in the new park across from the bus stop. The Town of Springfield has been in the “invention business” almost from its very start, so a group of citizens thought we should have a public recognition of that inventive spirit. The group considered the many everyday items that had been patented by our local people and decided that the clothes pin would be a good choice.



David M. Smith was born in 1809 in Hartland, VT. He first learned the carpenter’s trade in Gilsum, NH and by nineteen years of age he was teaching school. He obtained a patent in 1832 for the awl-haft which he also manufactured. In 1840-41 he represented the town of Gilsum in the New Hampshire legislature. But in 1841 he moved to Springfield, Vermont. By the end of his life, he had nearly 60 patents including inventing some of the machinery on which his inventions were made. He died in Springfield, VT in 1881.

More about the clothes pin. Between 1852-1887, 146 separate patents for clothes pins were issued by the US Patent Office. However, in 1853, David Smith patented the first clothes pin that resembled the modern spring clothes pin.

Mr. Smith was just one of many inventors in Springfield, beginning in the early nineteenth century and continuing into the late twentieth century. [Ed. Note: unfortunately, we do not have one of Mr. Smith’s clothes pins.]

Unsafe Fire Escapes!

Apparently, the coming of a class reunion can bring back old memories. This remembrance came from John Gurney who lived in North Springfield, attended the North School, and graduated in the SHS Class of 1962.

“I have no idea why it suddenly came to mind but I thought about the fire escape that used to be on the back side of the North Springfield School which was accessed from the upstairs auditorium. Fire drills were always a fun exercise—getting to slide down that long chute, highly polished over the years by the bottoms of many children, to come flying out at the bottom with the challenge of landing on one’s feet to avoid being landed on by the next kid.

Many years ago, the school powers-that-be decided that the fire escape apparently presented a much greater danger to young children than the possibility of burning to death while trying to get that many children down the lengthy staircase and out the front door in an orderly fashion, so they had Donald remove it. Donald saved it, putting it out behind the Gurney Brothers’ shop, and as far as I know it is still there, probably well rusted by now.

As far as I know, the architecture, age, and layout of East School was very similar to North Springfield and I wondered if that school also had the same type of fire escape. I don’t remember much about South Street School but perhaps that was similar. If those schools had those same great slides, I just wondered whatever happened to them.

As I remember, Donald’s original plan was to build a simple structure which kids could easily ascent then attach the North Springfield slide to it so that they could still have the great experience of going down through it. Unfortunately, that plan never came to fruition. Undoubtedly any such facility at a public playground would be considered far too great a liability plus it would require the presence of an adult to ensure a safe landing, both of which would make it impossible. But it would be fun!”



Editor’s note:

North School was built in 1908, South School (Furnace St.) 1916, and East School (Summer St.) 1920.

The slide was removed from the North School and, in 1962, an outside fire escape was attached to the side of the building.

← This is South School’s fire escape, and it was used. Apparently there was no circular fire escape at East School.

Springfield Residents: Town Meeting Vote, March 7, 2023

Visitors, artifacts donations, and requests for information continue to increase at the Society. It is very rewarding to be able to help people with questions about their ancestors, their homes, and about the town. We are equally pleased to receive donated information and/or pictures, some of which we had never seen before.

In 2022, we finally got back to having programs. We also helped one of the high school social studies classes research some members of the community. To help with that project, and other such requests, the society has subscribed to **Ancestry.com**, a genealogy program; and to the free Vermont state subscription of **Newspapers.com**. Newspaper.com gives us access to most of the digitalized Vermont newspapers including the *Springfield Reporter*, from 1876 to 1963. Both of these programs are available for public use. And, of course, we are still doing the weekly picture in the *Springfield Reporter*, which started in December, 2013, continues to bring interest and comments from readers. We have now done over 480 pictures.

To gain more room, we have done two things. We are going through the whole collection, box by box, sorting, reorganizing, and relabeling the boxes. Along with that, we have rented a room downtown to store items in less demand. Don Whitney's daughters have passed on hundreds of Fellows Gear Shaper original patents along with other Fellows' memorabilia. We have also become the keeper of most of the Fellows display that was in the Great Hall.

Most of our funding comes from this annual Springfield Funding Request, approved by the Springfield voters. This funding provides the society with more income than all of our other fundraisers combined (calendar and yard sales, memberships, and financial donations). Because we are a **totally volunteer group**, all of the funds we receive go directly to supporting and improving the historical society. Once again, we ask for your **YES vote** on this request (Article 24) and thank you for your loyal support in the past.

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New Member* or Donation Form

***If you are currently a member, you will receive a renewal reminder in the mail.**

We are working hard to expand and protect Springfield's history, please help us.
Checks should be made payable to SAHS and can be mailed to the address below:

SPRINGFIELD ART & HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. Box 336, North Springfield, VT 05150

() Individual, \$20 () Family, \$35 () Advocate, \$50 () Sponsor, \$100
() Benefactor, \$250

Amount enclosed for a Donation or New Membership: \$ _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ST: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Date: _____

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