



# Montpelier Historical Society

## Stories of Historical Hauntings at Green Mountain Cemetery

Green Mount Cemetery in Montpelier is famous for many things. It is also one of the most haunted places in Vermont. The stories say there is not just one ghost that inhabits Green Mount, but rather three; none more famous than Black Agnes.

Black Agnes is a slang name given to a life-size bronze statue in Green Mount that depicts a seated figure. Over time, the weather has stained the bronze black with a deep patina, adding to its already eerie look.

Lore says that when people sit on the lap of the figure something will happen to them in the coming weeks; usually centering around a slow, painful death.

The statue known as Black Agnes actually isn't female at all, but rather a tribute to John Hubbard, a Montpelier

"philanthropist" who died embroiled in controversy. It seems that Hubbard contested a distant relative's will, which would have left \$300,000 to the city of Montpelier. Eventually, matters were settled and Hubbard received the balance in exchange for town officials' dropping a lawsuit. The agreement hinged on Hubbard's building a library in Montpelier, which he did.



Having no family, Hubbard left his estate to the city of Montpelier, with one of the provisions being that a monument be erected. In 1902 Karl Bitter was commissioned to do the work, which still reigns as his masterpiece. Today, we know that statue as "Black Agnes."

Almost immediately after the statue was



erected, ghost stories began to fly out of Green Mount. Some contend that Hubbard's ghost haunts it and can be seen disdainfully wandering through, cursing the townspeople in Montpelier. Encounters are common on stormy autumn nights, or so they say.

Other stories in Green Mount include the

tale of a ghost girl buried a distance from her mother and father. Observers report she will walk from her lonely grave (She comes out of the monument) and walks to her parent's stone, which is a figural carving, depicting a mother and daughter. She is said to crawl up the stone and meld into the statue.

Green Mount's last ghost supposedly inhabits the great stone structure that serves as an entranceway to the cemetery. Ironically, this was also paid for from the estate of John Hubbard.



Visitors will often hear the sounds of a large metal door open and close on its own, but when they look into the window no one is to be seen.

# A Gift of Native Soil: Vermont Historian Connects with Vermont's Civil War Soldiers

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Grasping the concept of war is difficult for those of us who have never experienced it. We honor the brave men and women among us on Veteran's Day, and those who have passed on Memorial Day. Still, images of war are often remote, whether in distance or time. Both make the Civil War difficult for people in the 21st century to relate to. However, on September 10, 2009 local historian, teacher, and storyteller J. David Book brought life to the "Brothers' War" to an audience at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, in a lecture co-sponsored by the library and the Montpelier Historical Society.

In no greater way can someone in modern times connect with a Civil War soldier than visiting his final resting place. David Book did just this for every man (or perhaps more accurately, every boy) from Cabot who died fighting for the Union Army. That is, those who have known burial sites. Out of 135 participants from Cabot in the Civil War, 45 (one-third) died from wounds or disease, and 12 of these have unknown resting places. These travels took him beyond Vermont's cemeteries, into gravesites across the country, including Andersonville, Arlington, Baton Rouge, and Chicago. At each location, some soil from that boy's hometown was put on the grave to, as David put it, "form a spiritual bond with home, as his parents probably never visited the gravesite." Some 140 years after death, the soldier was given a tangible connection to the home they were unable to return to.



One such soldier was Captain Edwin J. Morrill, 11th Regiment Company A. In June 1864, several hundred Union soldiers were captured at the Battle of Weldon Railroad in Virginia. Making themselves vulnerable to attack following an act of insubordination, captured soldiers were sent by train to Appomattox Courthouse and captured officers were headed to Libby Prison in Richmond, VA. Two of the officers decided not to make the entire journey. Morrill and James Eldridge punched a hole in the train car and escaped. In the process, Morrill was gravely wounded. Eldridge found a safe haven for Morrill with a nearby African-American family and headed back to the Union lines, but Morrill knew his wounds were fatal. He recorded a will of sorts, in which he listed his intentions to send his belongings to his family as well as the family that cared for him in his last days, and also where his remains would be buried in hopes that it would someday be recovered. Upon receiving his deceased son's testament, Abel Morrill provided directions to a chaplain from the 4th regiment, who found the remains and wrote a letter to give his family closure. This letter, along with the testament, currently resides with a Montpelier resident.

Among the statistics of lives lost during the Civil War, every soldier has a story. No town in Washington County has more stories from this event than Montpelier, where a staggering 352 Union soldiers called it their hometown. Of these, 57 (approximately one out of every seven) died, including 37 from disease and 20 killed in action or from battle wounds. Of these 57, 17 are buried in Washington County, 19 in national cemeteries, and 21 remain unknown. Famous burial sites for these boys from Montpelier include Andersonville, Cold Harbor, Cyprus, Gettysburg, and Yorktown. Green Mount Cemetery in Montpelier serves as the final resting place for four Medal of Honor soldiers, including three from Montpelier.

One familiar Montpelier name buried at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. engaged in some not-so-famous heroics during the Civil War. On March 14, 1863, the USS Mississippi ran into a mud bank, where the ship caught fire. George Dewey saved the life of a fellow soldier that night, decades before his Spanish-American War action.

As we near the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, we are reminded how so many stories have been lost to time, and how important it is to share the stories that have been passed down through the generations. To supplement his presentation at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, David posed the question: Who will tell the story of Capital Engine Company #5 in Montpelier? 120 of 482 who served the city of Montpelier between 1860 and 1886 were Civil War veterans. We pose this question to you as well, and encourage you to share information, documents, and photographs with the Montpelier Historical Society to educate and continue passing down the stories of Montpelier past.

## *History in Our Midst: Stories of Montpelier Businesses*

### **Leahy Press: 3 Families Keep A Historical Business Local**



Leahy Press has been a fixture in Central Vermont since its start-up in the 1930s by the parents of Vermont's current U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy. While growth over time has changed the character of the business, Leahy Press continues to be family-owned.

The original press operation was located in downtown Montpelier, in a structure that Johanna C. and Francis Howard Leahy purchased in 1925. The structure continues to exist today (136 State St.), and houses the Vermont Arts Council. As Christopher Bellamy noted in his book on the history of State Street buildings, the "property would stay in the Leahy family for the next fifty years. Howard and his wife Alba Leahy would rear their family of three children here, and support them by starting a modest printing business in the rear portion of the building, with Mrs. Leahy taking in boarders as well to make ends meet."

The presses began rolling in 1936 under the name of "Howard Leahy, Printing", and the family provided a variety of services to the community for the next 33 years, including the printing of town reports for Town Meeting Day, and ballots for local elections.

Senator Patrick Leahy recently recalled his experiences of helping when times were especially busy:

"You walked through the kitchen door and went into the Leahy Press... the beauty of being around all that was learning to read at an early age. I remember coming home from school, finishing my homework and going out to the kitchen to help collate. I would run the presses. I learned to proofread. I can still read upside down and side to side and spot typos, which is sometimes distressing to my staff."\*



*A view of the Leahy home following the 1927 flood*



*Ron Kowalkowski in his Leahy Press office*

In 1969, Ron and Marty Kowalkowski acquired the business from the Leahy family, and Ron's daughter Deena Smead remembers helping her parents, recalling that they continued to print and cut paper ballots for the state into the 1970s.

Today, Deena and her husband, Steve, own and operate the business at their River Street location, with 18 employees serving over 350 clients. The operation now includes a modern pressroom, bindery, digital prepress department and customer support areas.

**The *History in Our Midst* series provides an opportunity for Montpelier businesses to share their history through sponsorship of the Montpelier Historical Society's newsletter. Sponsorship inquiries can be forwarded by email to [october.28@comcast.net](mailto:october.28@comcast.net) or by phoning 223-5093.**

\* from "Truckin': The Pat Leahy Story". *Vermont Business Magazine*, May 14, 2009



## **Farewell to a Local Institution**

As we celebrate the history in our midst through recognition of the stories and growth of local businesses, we also take this opportunity to acknowledge that Montpelier has recently lost one of its oldest downtown institutions. We recognize and thank the generations of owners and employees that made F.I. Somers & Co. such a beloved community landmark for more than 70 years.



FALL NEWSLETTER



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This issue sponsored by  
**Leahy Press**

*The Montpelier Historical Society is organized for charitable and educational purposes including, but not limited to, the acquisition, exhibition and preservation of artifacts including heirlooms, mementos, books and manuscripts of regional history, more specifically:*

- 1.) to collect and preserve evidence of the history of Central Washington County, with particular attention to Montpelier;*
- 2.) to provide leadership in local history education and opportunities for local research;*
- 3.) to serve as a resource for local historical concerns; and*
- 4.) to provide a forum for public study and discussion of current issues which have a bearing on the history of the City and the region.*

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## Share Your Heritage Contribute to the Montpelier Historical Society Collection

The Montpelier Historical Society exists, in part, to create a home for historical materials that focus on the city's rich heritage. Montpelier residents Alan and Joanne Blakeman are generously contributing their time to receive items into our collection and catalogue them.

If you have mementos, documents, photos or artifacts that you would like to contribute to the Society's collection, please be in touch with them either through the Montpelier Historical Society at P.O. Box 54, Montpelier, VT 05602, or by email at **october.28@comcast.net**

If you have photographs that you would prefer not to part with, the Society has a scanner, and we would be happy to create an electronic copy for the collection and return the original to you. At this time, we are particularly interested in gathering photographs depicting interior scenes of some of the historic homes and public buildings in Montpelier.

