



Montpelier Historical Society

Upcoming Summer Event: *Mini History Expo*

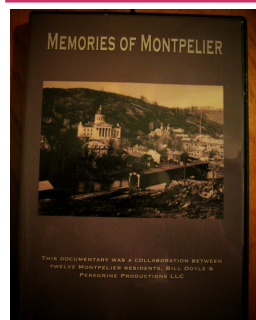
Many Vermont history buffs were disappointed to learn of the suspension of the 2009 Vermont History Expo, an event which had become such a summertime fixture at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds. While the Vermont Historical Society considers next steps and new ideas for the statewide event, the hiatus gives local societies the opportunity to feature historical events in their own local areas. The Montpelier Historical Society will therefore be co-hosting a “Mini History Expo” this summer, and has invited Washington County historical societies to join in highlighting the local lore and artifacts of Central Vermont.

The event will take place on

Saturday, June 20, 9am-4pm at the **Pavilion Building Snelling Room and Porch** in Montpelier. Local societies will feature exhibits, and the Model State House will be on display. The event will also feature a performance at 10:00 am by local artist Linda Radtke in period costume, with the program “Vermont History through Song”, a screening of the film “Memories of Montpelier”, and other special events. We hope to see you there!



Memories of Montpelier Video Doing Brisk Business in the Capital City Area



Following several very successful screenings of the short documentary film *Memories of Montpelier*, DVD copies of the film were made available for sale at several outlets around the city, and have proved to be extremely popular. The film is available for purchase at the following locations: The Wayside Restaurant, Capitol Stationers, Rivendell Books and Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks. Inquiries can also be made through the Montpelier Historical Society at

October.28@comcast.net

Bridge to Somewhere?

This Pratt Steel truss bridge was constructed in 1898 to replace an earlier timber arch bridge in Montpelier. Can you tell which streets this bridge connected? Visit the Montpelier exhibit at the mini-Expo on June 20 to learn more!



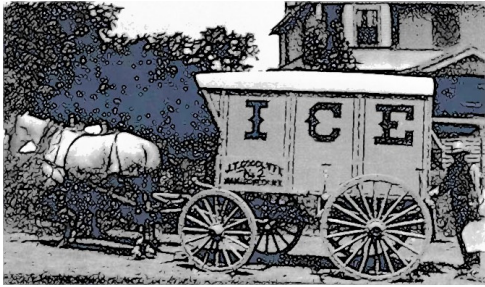
P7857 Pretty view of Bridge, Montpelier, Vt.

Childhood Memories from Prospect Street

The following is an excerpt from "Vignettes from a Vermont Abbey", a memoir published by Chester Abbey which is currently out of print. The Montpelier Historical Society is grateful to his sister, Joyce (Abbey) Leblanc, for sharing this material with us.

Living on Prospect Street in Montpelier, Vermont, when I was five years old is as far back as I can remember. At the tender age of five, one is not cognizant of the economic situation of the time, but history shows that times were tough in 1933.

Prospect Street was the land of the iceman, Goodnow's Store, Nellie Staub and her son and daughter, Jack and Betty, and the milkman. Jack and Betty were two years older than I but we occasionally



played together. It was also the land of Sarah and Alonzo, who lived over the town barn across the street. I was never awake early enough to see the milkman, he came too early in the morning and sometimes I would hear the clink of the bottles as he left filled ones and picked up the empties. The iceman was a different story. On hot, humid days, I and all my friends would gather around the horse and wagon for those errant chips of ice that flew as the iceman, with his ice pick, chipped smaller blocks for someone's icebox from the gigantic ones on his wagon. In those days ice, in the middle of the summer, was a rare commodity for most people and only available from the iceman.

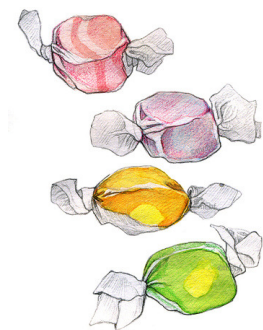
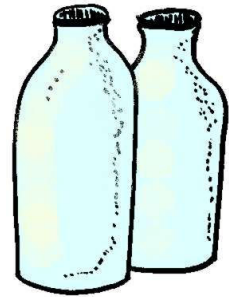
As I have mentioned previously, Sarah and Alonzo Warren were my maternal grandparents. My grandfather, at the time, worked for the City of Montpelier. I didn't see much of him. My brothers and I did see our grandmother almost daily. We looked forward to each visit because it was good for one cookie. Usually a ginger snap but occasionally some kind more to my liking, although I never turned down a ginger snap. My grandmother died in 1934 from diabetic complication. I remember being told that she had died but that fact really didn't mean much to me. It was simply that one day she was there and the next she had mysteriously disappeared. I have often thought since how good it was that I was able to know her, albeit for such a short time.....

Goodnow's was a neighborhood convenience store, as we know them today. I was not allowed to go there unaccompanied but did go there with my mother and occasionally with my older brother Charles. The candy counter was the major attraction from my viewpoint. Once in a while we were treated, but most of the time we only window shopped and hoped.

One room of our house which in recollection, was probably a living room, had been converted into a small convenience store. It had a separate entrance. My mother and father ran the store. Other than candy, I don't recall what goods they carried, but I do remember going into that room with my mother when customers arrived. We could tell a customer was there by a bell hooked to a door that rang whenever the door opened. I doubt very much that this contributed any great extent to the family income, but it obviously had some value because they maintained it as long as we lived there. Whenever I was in the store with my mother, which was every time I heard the bell, I teased for a piece of candy. I seldom got any.

We were a poor family then. My father worked in one of the grocery stores as a meat cutter and we got by. Feeding and clothing a family of six was no easy task. I recall my mother taking in ironing for a little extra spending money. A big treat for any of us children then was a piece of fresh fruit; an orange, a banana or apple. I have often wondered if Prospect, the name of our street, was an omen of better times to come. In thinking back, I realize that every move we made was for the better. It has been that way all of my life. If I moved to a new street now and had to name it, I think I would call it "Prospect Street".

Chester's father later became the milkman for the Marvin & Cooley dairy company, Stories from the milk route will follow in a future newsletter.



History in Our Midst: Stories of Montpelier Businesses Guare & Sons Funeral Home: Growth of a Family and an Industry

On Labor Day in 1918, Florence E. Emmons and Thomas J. Guare were married in St. Augustine's Church. Following the luncheon at the bride's home, they boarded the noon train for Boston, where the groom was enrolled for the embalming course in the New England Institute of Anatomy, Sanitary Science, and Embalming.

The couple had met several years earlier while employed at the HJ Volhum Furniture Store and Undertaker Service, located at the corner of East State and Main Street (now the site of the City Center). Furniture stores in that era often also operated as a full service funeral business.

Upon arrival in Boston, the new Mrs. Guare was offered free admission to the course at the Institute to serve as colleague and companion for the only other woman enrolled in the course. Their attendance at the Institute was suspended when the Spanish Flu epidemic struck the United States with devastating loss of life, and they were summoned home by Mr. Volhum to assist in the emergency. The epidemic began in September of 1918 and by the end of the month all public places of assembly were closed, including churches. In Montpelier, the epidemic continued into October with a total of some 50 deaths during a six-week period. Thomas and Florence both sat for the embalmers examination later that year and were awarded licenses.



Thomas J. Guare in his office in the Tomasi Block

In 1921, they purchased the Frank E. Hall Funeral Home that was located on East State Street and opened a public office in the former Tomasi Block on Main street (currently the open lot next to M&M redemption center). At this time, they also established an ambulance service, initially horse drawn, which continued until the municipal service opened in the 1960s.

Early in the century, funeral services were frequently held in the homes of the deceased, but later in the 1920's, funeral homes were established for those clients whose residences were unable to accommodate the arrangements. In 1924, Thomas and Florence purchased property at 57 Barre Street, and remodeled the first floor as a funeral home. The custom at that time was for such establishments to host "wakes", frequently for two days and nights before the funeral. Over the years, Thomas was assisted by his wife in the business, and later by his three sons, Thomas J., J. Richard, and Paul. In 1941, Thomas formed a partnership with Percy H. Davidson. Mr. Davidson enlisted in the Navy in 1942 during World War II and retired from the firm following his discharge in 1945 and his appointment as inspector for the Vermont Department of Health. Florence Guare died in 1944 and Thomas Guare retired in the mid 1940s and died in 1954, leaving his son J. Richard Guare— and later, his grandson, Paul S. Guare — to carry on the business.

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 or by phoning 223-5093.



Community Voices: Sharing Stories

Following upon the success of the *Memories of Montpelier* film project, the Montpelier Historical Society is seeking volunteers who are longtime city residents and are willing to participate in an oral history project. The purpose of the project will be to share stories that will capture even more of the memories of Montpelier. If you or someone you know is interested in participating, please be in touch with us either by email at october.28@comcast.net, or by phone at 223-5093.





SPRING NEWSLETTER



P.O. Box 54
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This issue sponsored by
Paul S. Guare
**Guare & Sons
Funeral Home**

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.*

Montpelier Historical Society

2009 Membership Form

Please send in this form (or a copy of it) with your dues payment

If you have already joined or renewed your membership — Thank You!

Membership Dues = \$10.00

**Please mail payment to:
Montpelier Historical Society
P.O. Box 54
Montpelier, VT 05602**

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Thank You For Your Support!