



Vermont Old Cemetery Association Founded by Prof Leon Dean (1899-1982) Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 1958

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

### **Summer 2013**

As I write this report, it is once again raining in Rutland. The amount of rain we have received this year is beyond belief. May was the wettest month on record, June was the 2<sup>nd</sup> wettest month and in July we are headed for another record! Lake Champlain is a few inches below flood stage and is also at the highest level ever recorded for this time of year. I am thinking about calling the National Geographic Society and have them do a story about the Vermont rain forests. I am sure that the rain has caused delays for any cemetery projects in Vermont this year. Hopefully, the monsoons will end soon, as we have such a short period of time to do restoration work in Vermont's burial grounds.

Each year in the VOCA summer newsletter, I continue to report on my yearly trips to Hildene, working with the Flood Brook School students cleaning Civil and Revolutionary War veterans' monuments. Once again, the students arrived at Manchester's Dellwood Cemetery, armed with 5 gallon pails of water, brushes, and elbow grease. They spent Memorial Day morning removing lichens and dirt from many veterans' stones. I mention this again in my report as I receive many inquiries as to how to clean old monuments and what to use. I encourage all of you who are interested in how well water and a brush clean a stone marker, to go to the old section of the Dellwood Cemetery in Manchester and see how wonderful these veterans' stones look with just a yearly brushing by the Flood Brook students. I believe it has been 7 years I have been working with the school, and it gets better every year. The added benefit is that these students are exposed to the importance of preserving Vermont's burial grounds and the history they represent. I always encourage communities to include their young people in any cemetery project they are planning. The Rutland Middle School Social Studies students and their teachers spent two days in Rutland's West Street and Congregational Cemeteries. They cut brush, filled in numerous woodchuck holes, helped straighten stones, and put in a

veteran replacement stone for a Civil War Soldier. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year we have partnered with RMS, and we anticipate a long relationship.

The House of Corrections Cemetery in Rutland, which had been forgotten in recent years, has been reclaimed with a new fence, two signs, brush removed, and grass mowed. One sign has the names and death dates of the individuals buried at the site, and the other with the names and dates when the cemetery was in use. Thanks to the Stafford Technical Center students and their teacher for their efforts in clearing the burial ground of trees and brush and for making the large sign with the names/dates of those interred. This is another example of using resources that are available to most communities for restoration projects. The Stafford Center was contacted in the fall of 2012, and the project was completed in the first week of June 2013. I mention these projects as examples of how students and teachers in your local schools can be wonderful resources to you in working in your cemeteries. I would encourage you to reach out to your school administrators and teachers on working together on cemetery projects in your town.

VOCA's publication "Burial Grounds of VT" is now available on CD and can be purchased for \$20 by contacting 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Diane Leary. Thanks to Footstone, Clifford Giffin, for putting the effort into scanning this book into a CD for the organization.

The Vermont Department of Corrections work crew program continues to expand statewide. I have recently received several phone calls from town officials regarding using these crews for the summer of 2014. If you are interested in the availability of a Department of Corrections work crew to help with the upkeep of your cemetery, contact DOC Field Office Director, Keith Tallon, at (802) 786-5099.

We had some administrative issues with the membership list recently. Please check the expiration date on your newsletter, and if you do not believe it is correct, please contact Assistant Grants Administrator, Robert Hooper. His contact information is in the newsletter. If you have a change of address, send your changes to Bob so they can be updated.

VOCA has a Facebook page available. I encourage everyone to join and post what is going on in your area regarding cemetery issues and/or projects. Please continue to recruit new VOCA members. Our \$10 membership fee is very reasonable and, with an all volunteer board, all monies go to our mission of the restoration of Vermont's old burial grounds. If you are aware of an organization that is looking for a presenter for their monthly meeting, please have someone give me a call.

If you have agenda items for our October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, please give me a call at (802) 773-3253 or email me at [tgifvt@msn.com](mailto:tgifvt@msn.com).

Tom Giffin  
VOCA President

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## VOCA FALL MEETING

The Fall meeting of Vermont Old Cemeteries Association will be held starting at 10 AM on Saturday, October 5, 2013, at the Morrisville Methodist Church. The speaker will be Scott McLaughlin. His presentation will be about the archaeology of the St. Johnsbury Cemetery and the people buried there. Tours of the Morrisville Historical Society Museum will be available after the meeting. Their current special exhibition is on the Brothers Grimm and their fairy tales. Come and bring a friend.

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## ASK THE EXPERTS

Whit Mowry wrote:

*Hi All, I know you are all busy but I need a clear definition on this, PLEASE!!!!*

*In the cemetery in back of our church where the VOCA meeting was held, there is an ornate red brick building built in 1867 or thereabouts. Very ornate brick work and really in excellent condition except for a roof repair needed. I am going to submit a request for a VOCA grant for the repair of the slate roof. A large branch penetrated it. Maybe it will be approved?*

*What do you call this building. It was built to house caskets with bodies for the winter till spring burial time.*

*Is it a burial vault or a mausoleum? or is there another correct name for it? Several days ago, several of our people managed to free the door lock on the rear door. Some spare slate is inside and at some point the floor has been made concrete. Originally it was earth and about 4 to 5 ft below grade! Plenty of storage there for winter folks.*

*My question is: what is the proper name? Thanks.*

### **Chris Book responded:**

Receiving vault

A receiving vault is an underground crypt or above-ground building built within a cemetery, with the purpose of storing the bodies of deceased persons in winter months when the ground is too frozen to dig a permanent grave. Modern mechanical all-weather digging tools have mostly replaced the need for receiving vaults in today's cemeteries.

In the early 20th century, the United States Public Health Service (Marine Hospital Service) issued rules about receiving vaults, that they should be "cleared, cleaned, and disinfected" before May 1 each year, and that keeping a body there for more than 72 hours between May and September was to be avoided. Various cities have different ordinances about the storage of bodies in these vaults.

VOCA President Tom Giffin forwarded this item to the newsletter editor, but neglected to say who sent it. Any member who can answer this query could contact President Tom or Newsletter editor Bill Wiles.

*I'm looking for any info on a headstone that reads WEREWOLF. It is a childhood memory that I have. It was in a cemetery in southern or mid Vermont, maybe around East Dover. I went with my grandmother, who has passed. The image of this headstone is etched in my memory, as vivid as a nightmare, and I wonder if it actually was one. If you know where this WEREWOLF headstone might be, or was, or anything of it, please let me know. It would be a good thing to see again for me.*



Photos from Dept of Corrections cemetery. Thanks, Cliff Giffin.  
RCY = "Rufus" See the article on page 7 for Tom's explanation.

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**Burial Grounds of Vermont** is now available in an electronic edition for \$20. Send your check to:  
Diane Leary  
4670 Greenbush Rd.  
Charlotte, VT 05445

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May 24, 2013

RE: Sugar Hollow Cemetery Re-habilitation

On Wednesday, May 8, 2013, the Town of Brandon Highway Department began re-habilitation work at the Sugar Hollow Cemetery, located on Birch Hill Road in Brandon, Vermont. The purpose of the project was to re-establish the cemetery grounds in order for it to be regularly mowed and trimmed, as well as to make the cemetery's contents presentable and visible to visitors.

The two day project involved removing a large dead birch tree (that was a hazard to visitors and headstones), hand-pulling and weed whipping countless saplings/weeds that were over-taking the grounds, raking up debris and leaves, replacing broken/missing cedar fence posts, re-attaching the barbed wire and installing a new gate that will accommodate for a hand mower to access and maintain the site.

Once this phase of work was complete, the headstones were hand cleaned (with a brush and warm water) so that the deceased names, dates and associated inscriptions were visible. The Town also marked any stones/rocks in the ground with flags. It was my intent to identify them because they may be burial stones that accompany the main headstone. I did not want the mowers to move the stones thinking that they were simply an obstruction for their machine, nor did I want them to damage their machines by mowing over them.

After years of not being maintained, the Sugar Hollow Cemetery will now be included in the weekly mowing list for the Town of Brandon's properties.

On a personal note, the day that I hand cleaned each headstone just happened to be my birthday (May 8). It was somewhat of a somber experience for me.....to be exposing the death dates of those buried, on the day of my birth. Out of respect for the buried, I acknowledged each and every one of them.

Sincerely,  
Brian Sanderson  
Public Works Director  
Town of Brandon, Vermont

Circle One

Renewal + member number / Change of address / New member

Please PRINT.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are for a calendar year: 1 year \$10.00, 5 years \$40.00, and lifetime is \$200.00 (individual members ONLY). A new member joining in Oct or Nov or Dec will have the dues paid applied to the following year.

I want to make a donation to the Leon Dean Permanent Fund in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Make check payable to VOCA, mail to:  
Chris Book, VOCA Treasurer  
44 North Main Street  
Rutland, VT 05701

**VOCA County Representatives** (These are people who will come help you with your VOCA grant application.)

ADDISON	Betty R. Bell 802-423-3947	LAMOILLE	Deanna French 802-522-2050
BENNINGTON	Jean Kosche 802-447-2241	ORANGE	Vacant
CALEDONIA	Vacant	ORLEANS	Wanda Webster 800-525-3550
CHITTENDEN	Robert Hooper 802-862-0708	RUTLAND	Cliff Giffin 802-773-3743
ESSEX	Richard Colburn 802-723-4833	WASHINGTON	Vacant
FRANKLIN	Edmund Wilcox 802-524-3318	WINDHAM	Charles Marchant 802-365-7937
GRAND ISLE	Vacant	WINDSOR	Ken Barrett 802-875-2941

## RUTLAND'S HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS CEMETERY

VOCA President (and Rutland City cemetery commissioner) Tom Giffin recently welcomed Vermont Public Radio to an odd little plot of land tucked behind Rutland's prison near East Creek. Criminals whose bodies were not claimed by their families were laid to rest here.

"What's interesting is the microcosm here," said President Tom. "I mean this is a very small cemetery and Rutland Vermont is not exactly the metropolitan area of northeast. But yet, we have a guy from China who died here - named Dong, we know nothing about him but he's buried in the cemetery, we have a gentleman from France who died here, someone from Ireland who was buried here, we have an African American who's listed as colored who died here. So for this small cemetery for an area of Rural Vermont at the turn of the century, it's kind of odd that you'd have so many different nationalities here."

Tom said the prison cemetery was used from the late 1800s through the early 1900s and contains at least a dozen graves - though only 11 stone markers remain.

Tom went on to say: "Most of the markers are just regular pieces of marble with numbers on them. Except for Rufus, and Rufus was an interesting guy. He was one of the most prolific horse thieves Vermont has ever produced and they put that in his obituary; that even at a young age he had a tendency to steal horses."

"I read how Rufus once stole a horse from a guy in Massachusetts, dyed it brown, and sold it back to him. "Ironically, he stole a horse and they caught him in Arlington when the posse was chasing him. He fell off the buckboard and his partner fell on top of him and he died at the house of corrections of a ruptured intestine. Rufus's marker is one of the few stones that are marked with initials."

According to Giffin, the prison cemetery was largely forgotten and overgrown until Rutland's new bike path opened last year. The path, which follows East Creek, runs right alongside the cemetery. As more people noticed the chipped stone markers, interest grew in learning about those buried there.

Local schools have provided volunteers to help clean up the overgrowth. Stafford Technical Center instructor Jeff Fowler said building a marker to identify those buried here has been a good challenge construction wise, but he says it's also gotten his students thinking about history, their community, and personal choices.

"We got the stories behind the people, some of the stories behind the people in this graveyard. I think of the choices they made that landed them there," says Fowler. "Like some of the people on this, four were arrested for tramping, which now we'd call homeless; they were arrested for that. One of them," said Fowler, "was arrested for desertion of families which now we'd call dead beat daddies, you know."

Jeff Fowler says it's not about celebrating criminals, rather learning about local history - warts and all.

Tom Giffin  
61 East Washington Street  
Rutland, VT 05701

Thomas Giffin, President

Dianne Leary, 1<sup>st</sup> VP & Grants Administrator

Robert Hooper, Asst. Grants Administrator

Chris Book, Treasurer

Harry Fisher, Membership & Asst. Newsletter Editor

Justin Giffin, Asst. Treasurer

Charles E. Marchant, Secretary

Edmund Wilson, Executive Board

Bill Wiles, Newsletter Editor

Darryl Harris  
VOCA Website

**2011-2012 Headstones**

61 East Washington St.  
Rutland VT, 05701

4670 Greenbush Rd.  
Charlotte, VT 05445

44 Charity St.  
Burlington, VT 05401

44 North Main St.  
Rutland, VT 05701

PO Box 3282  
Nampa, ID 83653

61 East Washington St.  
Rutland VT, 05701

PO Box 132  
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4996 Georgia Shore Rd.  
St. Albans, VT 05478

1342 Meadowlake Drive  
Rutland, VT 05701

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