

THE BRICK CHURCH • BETHEL, VT
Built 1816

Bethel Historical Society

And Museum at the Brick Church

Newsletter



THE GOAT LADY OF BETHEL

By Janet Hayward Burnham



Nick recently lent me a spiral notebook that had been given to him by Fred "Pickle" Davis some time ago. Inside were many clippings from the 1940's, 50's and 60's. Lots of the clippings tell of 50th wedding anniversaries. There was even one for the Robert Bundys, which took place in 1967. And a surprise to me, a relative newcomer to Bethel, that some folks I knew from Orwell had attended that celebration. Just further evidence that Vermont is indeed just one big neighborhood, where most folks know, or are related to, your next door neighbor.

doctor ordered, warmer country, with lots of people in the same business, so they decided to move. They wrote letters and found there was land available. By selling most of what they owned, along with what was left from Arthur's insurance money, they figured they could make the switch.

The plan was that Arthur would remain behind to sell what remained of their assets, while Olga went on ahead with their remaining livestock. Arthur would catch up with her on the road.

Olga set off for Arkansas near the end of January 1948. She had an old truck packed to the gunnels with household articles, camping equipment, 11 thoroughbred goats, and two dogs. She didn't get very far before she badly stripped the gears on Warren Mountain.

The expenses of the trip had been planned down to the last cent. There wasn't money available to fix the truck, so they did the next best thing; using pieces from the truck, they built a strong wagon. They boarded up the sides, put a folding bed covered with quilts on the top, padded the floor with straw and put the goats inside. They put in camping equipment, and what would fit of their household goods. And two weeks later bundled in her patched fur colored coat, surrounded by blankets and quilts, two dogs at her feet, a cracker barrel beside her, 52-year old Olga set off again with a yoke of two horses pulling the wagon.

In the back of the book were a goodly handful of interesting clippings about Mrs. Arthur Lamear, the Goat Lady of Bethel. Most of the clippings give her name as Mrs. Arthur Lamear, which was the custom in the newspapers of 60 years ago. Only two times did a reporter mention her first name. And of course, the two don't agree. One says Olgie, the other Olga.

Olgie or Olga's story begins in the winter of 1947, when her husband, Arthur, was seriously injured when he and his team were struck by a snowplow. Mr. Lamear spent quite some time in the hospital recovering. It was finally determined that there was something wrong with his circulation, and he could no longer endure the rigorous Vermont winters. His doctors told him he needed to move to a warmer climate to continue to recuperate.

The Lamears were goat people, for 12 years they had been raising prize winning goats on their 125 acre Bethel farm. One day reading a trade magazine for goat raisers, they came across an advertisement about the goat country of Arkansas. It sounded like just what the

The trip was 1,400 to 1,500 miles from Bethel, Vermont to Clarksville, Arkansas. Seven of the goats were pregnant, and they needed to get to Arkansas by the first of March when the goats were due to freshen.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Regular Meetings

At our New Headquarters

Monday, 7PM, February 5, 2007

Monday, 7PM, March 5, 2007

Monday, 7PM, April 2, 2007

Special Events

Joint meeting with

Bethel Rotary,

Bethel Business Association

Bethel Historical Society

Monday, February 26, 2007

White Church, Bethel, VT

6PM—Dinner

6:30PM—Guest Speaker

John Dumville

Historic Sites Operation Chief

"Historic Sites of Vermont"

April, Date TBA

Appraisal Night

Look for details in *The Herald*

May 20th, SUNDAY

Postcard & History Fair

Whitcomb HS Gym

OPEN HOUSE
At our New
Headquarters



Olga and her menagerie stopped at farms along the way, Olga asking if they could stay the night in the farmer's barn. The first night she stayed in Pittsfield, the second in Rutland. She passed through Glens Falls on the 30th of January. She was in Little Falls, NY on February 6th. In a place called Nel-liston, she had a blacksmith repair one of the front wheels on the wagon. By the 9th of February she was in Utica, NY. The Utica paper called her wagon a Prairie Schooner. It also said that Utica spectators helped Olga get under way on the icy pavement, headed west on Route 5 for Syracuse. February 11th saw her in Rome, NY. She'd been 17 days on the road by this time.

In a good day Olga would make 30 miles on her trek, but on snowy icy roads she was slowed to a mere 5 miles.

On the 17th of February in Auburn, NY, Muffie, one of her two dogs was hit and killed by a passing car.

Olga paused for a few days near Batavia, NY. One of her horses had injured a leg near Canandaigua, and one of her goats was ailing, having gotten itself entangled in a chain. She was waiting to see if she would need the services of a vet before moving on. The goat, Gretchen, lost twin kids in still birth. The entourage was staying at the Donald Blossom farm outside of Batavia, NY while all of this was happening. Evi-dently Olga was there long enough for her story to make the rounds of Batavia. The manager of a local radio station do-nated a moving van to the cause.

By this time Arthur had come by bus to join the road trip. With the donated van, which was even outfitted with stalls for the animals, they completed their journey to Clarksville, Arkan-sas. Once in Clarksville, they were received in style by a large crowd, including civic leaders and officials. They were pre-sented with a new farm wagon; the merchants of Clarksville gave them certificates in the amount of \$400, and a cash col-lection sponsored by an Arkansas radio station.

But that's not the end of Olga's story. We pick it up again a year later. It's now August of 1949, Olga's back on the road. This time the press was calling her The Arkansas Traveler. She's heading back to Vermont. And by the way, before we leave Arkansas behind, it turns out that Olga and Arthur's new goat farm was in or near the little Arkansas town of Hope. I wonder if Bill Clinton remembers the lady from Vermont.

This time her two horse-drawn wagon load is carrying 12 goats, two dogs, a colt, 25 chickens, and quite a few more items than she arrived with a year ago. She says that Arkan-sas is too hot and damp, that they would prefer to be cold. She also added, Art couldn't stand the wagon trip...he went ahead by train.

We find out in subsequent articles that Arthur has a taken a job near Buffalo, NY.

We can retrace Olga's route through newspaper clippings from Batavia, Saratoga Springs, Fair Haven, Hydeville, Castleton, and Rutland. She finally arrives back in Bethel on the 4th of September.

There are between 200 to 300 Bethel people out to meet here when she pulls into town. Noticeably missing were the town officials. However, the town officials from Royalton have an ultimatum delivered to Olga by mes-senger. You can't come to Royalton with those goats, reads the ultimatum.

Olga has returned with the promise of a decadent 60 acre farm to use, part of the farmland is in Bethel, but the house is in Royalton. Somebody, it seems, is al-ready in residence in the house, and the town isn't will-ing to accept responsibility for Olga.

Back in 1949, towns in Vermont were by law responsi-ble for their indigent residents. Every town had its over-seer of the poor. As a matter of fact, the law stated that Bethel, being her last place of residence, was responsi-ble for Olga for three years. Citizens from Royalton, as well as citizens from Stockbridge, lined up on their re-spective town lines to keep her out.

People were also not welcoming because of the goats. Almost everyone had a vegetable garden that provided food for the table in that era. Goats were notorious for running riot in gardens. Just to give Bethel a little polish, there was a youngster who went among the gathered town's folk and passed the hat for Olga.

The last we hear of Olga, she's staying with a nephew on Camp Brook some five miles out of town. She also has an offer to stay at a one room cabin at a lumber camp on Camp Brook that's owned by Clarence Washburn. The articles go on to say, "The camp is iso-lated enough so that Mrs.Lamear's goats will not mo-lest the neighbors or raise hob with garden crops." A last interesting article pertaining to Olga was dated Sept 13th Hollywood, CA.

Burl Ives said, "The goat is the animal kingdom's most misunderstood chordate. "The goat "not the dog or horse" is man's best friend. He also goes on to say that he was particularly peeved at the citizens of Royalton, VT when they recently refused to allow Mrs. Arthur Lamear to return to that community after her jaunt with her prairie schooner. I'll take care of her on my goat ranch, declared Ives, almost reaching a Burlingpoint in polite indignation. The article goes on to say, Burl al-lowed as how "what the country needed was a good five cent cigar and some good lectures on goat appre-ciation."

I've already talked to several people who remember Mrs. Lamear. Does anyone know if she stayed in Bethel after she returned from Arkansas? Where was the Lamear's original 125 acre goat farm? Whatever happened to Olga Lamear?



Excerpts from old Herald and Bethel Courier newspapers. We hope you will enjoy these stories as much as we have.

Herald, June 29, 1950

17 Year Old Cat Takes Well to Ether, Has Bad Tooth Extracted

Lucky, the well known Angora cat owned by Mr. & Mrs. M. E. Gaskell refused to eat although he acted hungry. The Gaskells Examined the cat's mouth and felt certain he had a small bone Lodged in his throat or between some of his back teeth. He was taken to Randolph on June 19 and Dr. Robert Arms, veterinary surgeon, made a diagnosis of ulcerated tooth. Dr. Arms gave the cat a hypodermic in the shoulder, then after administering ether the ulcerated tooth was extracted. Lucky is now back to normal and catching mice daily.

This cat is now 17 years old, and probably one of the oldest felines alive. A cat of this age corresponds to a person that reaches the age of 85. Lucky is as active as the average cat at the age of 5, and has been a consistent winner at several different cat shows. The Gaskells are in hopes that Lucky will reach an age that will require the aid of an upper and lower set of false teeth.

From the Home News Section of the same paper:

A word of tribute from the Bethel village friends of the late Mrs. Cecil A. Washburn is fitting because her life has a significance for more than the Lilliesville community where she and her husband made their home for more than 50 years. Her children drew from that home a knowledge of the value of work and thrift and neighborliness in accomplishing enduring results in life. Of those children and grandchildren many have remained in Bethel, and Bethel is so much the better town because of them. So her life has a significance for all of us.

From the Herald, August 10, 1950

Bethel Boy's Suggestion Is Featured in Magazine

One of the principal articles in the August issue of "Trains", a magazine which features railroads, is entitled "Third Morning Delivery". Bethel people will be interested to know that William B. Blakeman, a Junior in Whitcomb High School, furnished to the editors the suggestion that Train 490, which goes through Bethel southerly between 3 and 4 p.m., merited a special write-up.

The associate editor David Morgan and photographer W. Aiken Jr. got permission to ride this train from Chicago to Boston to enable them to prepare the article.

This train, which locally is known as the "Dairy", leaves Chicago on 8:30 p.m. evenings and about 54 hours later, at around 3 a. m. arrives to Boston. It carries perishables, grain and automobile parts and generally has from 50 to 100 cars on every train. It covers 1194 miles on its run through six states and two provinces and is operated jointly by the Grand Trunk Western, Canadian National, Central Vermont and Boston & Maine.

Congratulations, Billy, on keeping your mind whetted up to see things of interest right here, or as in this case, things which pass through here.

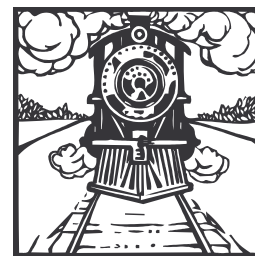
Herald, June 1, 1950

A Dog's Life Says Buck As Train Runs Over Him

Hound dogs are just plain rugged in spite of their easygoing and no-count acting ways. Now take Don Blossom's little hound dog, "Buck", for example. "Buck" just ambles around the store, taking it easy and occasionally stretching out for a little snooze now and then.

The trouble is the store faces the north and the sun doesn't shine in comfortably enough for hound dogs in the afternoon. So last Thursday little "Buck" walked down the street and around the Brooks and Washburn block to the station platform. There he saw a fine place to lie down between two long steel rails which ran across the bridge. It was a wonderful spot. The sun came down warm on his back; little holes between the ties let the cool breeze from the river air-cool his belly; and there was the drowsy sound of the falls by Durfee's Mill. How little "Buck" slept! — never a hound slept sounder.

George Miller happened to be looking out the rear window of the Miller Store and spied little "Buck" on the track. Before he could do anything, he saw a fast freight coming under the overpass bridge and not slacking a particle for Bethel. George shut his eyes and figured poor little "Buck" lesser than wieners and Don going around with tears in his eyes for a month. The locomotive and then the freight cars passed over little "Buck". Count them, "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, caboose". In George's mind little "Buck" got finer and finer. After caboose went by what did George see but little hound "Buck". He jumped up, made three turns around to get the noise out of his ears and started home to Don as fast as a hound ever traveled. All "Buck had to show for the episode is a tiny scratch about half an inch long on his back. Hound dogs are rugged.



Bethel Historical Society Report for 2006

The Bethel Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserve, collect and to share the history and artifacts of our town. We appreciate everyone's membership and special donations of time and talent, making this all possible. The Bethel Historical Society's members are people who care about each other, our heritage, traditions and the community of Bethel. Be proud of your membership!

We are very happy to report that our membership has doubled since our last report. We now have over 150 paid members. We hope that many more will join our Society and share the pride that we feel in being a part preserving Bethel's history.

Here are some of the highlights of the past year:

In March 2006 we set up stations at the Town Meeting and at the BBA's Home & Garden Show. At these events, George Burnham's exquisitely constructed model of the Town Hall was unveiled. We signed up many new members at each event.

In April we had our 4th annual Appraisal Evening with well-known appraiser Jim Marquis. Once again we joined forces with the Stockbridge Historical Society for this event, which took place at the Stockbridge Elementary School. These events are always informative and good fundraisers for both societies.

On May 4th, Bill and Frances Johansen presented a very interesting program about the Italian community of stone cutters who used to live on the "Flats" along the White River. A book is currently in the works and should be available soon.

On May 15th, there was a joint meeting with the Bethel Rotary Club, our Vice President, Janet Hayward Burnham spoke about Pvt. Charles Fairbanks, a Bethel boy who wrote his memoirs about his experience in the Civil War. This event was very well attended.

In June the Bethel Historical Society participated in the Vermont History Expo 2006. The special theme was "Vermont Women in History". Our exhibit featured "The Two Marys". Mary Waller, a well-known writer who spent quite a bit of time in Bethel and wrote several books with themes related to Bethel. The other was Mary Parker, the wife of a local minister, who together with her husband wrote detailed journals which were rediscovered not long ago in the library basement.

Special thanks go to George and Janet Burnham for creating the beautiful parlor exhibit for our "two Marys" and to our members who played the roles: Janet, Hilary Mullins, Rose Leonard, MaryAnn Church, Loraine and Louise Putnam.

On August 23rd we were the guests of Rock of Ages at the Bethel Quarries for a picnic and informational meeting. It was an interesting program presented by Bob Campo who told us about the different types of equipment used in the quarrying process as well as how they market and sell the blocks around the world for various building projects. It gave our group a chance to see what ROA actually does up there on Christian Hill and helped us to realize what a vital part of Bethel the quarry is. At this meeting, Mr. Campo presented a check for \$1000 to Selectman Neal Fox, for the Town Hall Restoration Fund.

On November 12th, a slide program about Bethel's Downtown, "Yesterday and Today" was presented by Nick Nikolaidis at the Paradigm Consulting Co. offices on Main Street.

Our last program of the year was on December 4th when we had our 3rd Annual "Christmases Past" program. Members and guests shared Christmas memories and showed interesting items while they enjoyed Christmas refreshments.

In addition to our programs we hosted two Whitcomb High School Community Service Classes. In September for a tour of the museum and in November at our new headquarters for a slide show of old Bethel pictures. In December we repeated the show for the Troop 510 Jr. Girl Scouts.

It is nice to know that the young Bethel citizens are interested in the history of our town.

Most of our regular meetings were held at the Bethel Public Library. In appreciation, the Bethel Historical Society once again donated \$200 to the library.

The Bethel Historical Society is grateful for the grant of \$500 which was received from the town of Bethel.

Special milestones reached in 2006.

In November we moved into our own headquarters in the former Guy Wilson Agency Building, thanks to the generosity of Neal Fox who is making the space available to us at no charge. Many thanks also to the American Precision Museum in Windsor from which we got much of the furniture in our new place for just a small donation.

We are also proud to be one of the winners of a “Local Historical Society Achievement Award of Excellence” in the Operations category for our newsletter. This award was presented to us by Vermont Historical Society Director J. Kevin Graffagnino on October 13th at a joint meeting of the League of Local Historical Societies & The Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance at the Vermont State House.

Paradigm Consulting Co. has generously donated a computer for our new offices.

Looking ahead in 2007, we hope to increase our membership and to continue to play a vital role in the preservation of Bethel’s history and artifacts. Our dedicated members continue to “fine tune” the society’s paper collections, inventorying, scanning and identifying the many photos and artifacts in our possession.

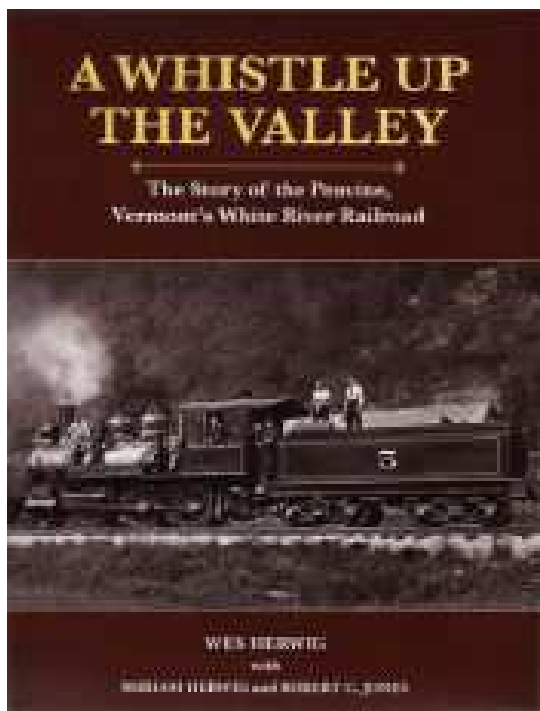
We want to preserve what we have and hopefully acquire other important historical items for our collection. Consider the Bethel Historical Society in your legacy. We are grateful to everyone who has donated time, money and items to our Society and hope you will join us in helping to preserve Bethel’s history.

And don’t forget the Bethel Historical Society has many available books, commemorative envelopes and postcards from past events, they make great gifts.

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Nikolaidis
President
Bethel Historical Society

Officers:
President Nick Nikolaidis
Vice President Janet Hayward Burnham
Secretary Rose Leonard
Treasurer Kent Batcheller



Here is another interesting article from The Herald of Randolph, August 31, 1950

Terry House Leaves Old Site To New Telephone Co. Building

Mrs. Nellie L. Cushing has sold to the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company the so-called Orman Terry place on Main Street opposite the Texaco Station. The frame story and a half dwelling and ell are in process of removal as the telephone company purchased the site as a location for the installation of the central office for the dial system in this section.

A substantial building will be erected for this purpose. Further details as to this project will be released later by the company.

Mrs. Cushing has purchased a building lot of Harold J. Turner comprising about an acre at the junction of the road from Church Street to the North Road to Gaysville with the former hill road to Lilliesville. This site is just above that of the dwelling which was burned during the ownership of the premises by Mr. and Mrs. Irving French. Mrs. Cushing has engaged Eaton & Eaton of Royalton to remove the main portion of the house and re-erect it on this new site. The ell will probably be moved to another site.

Has Long History

The dwelling has had a long history as search of records shows that in 1798 Steven Cleveland deeded to Wyman Ainsworth and reference is made to buildings to make boundaries. Title then passes through a succession of owners: James Ralston, Giles Cone, Alexander Ralston, Joseph Dennison, Roswell Ainsworth, Crayton Ainsworth, Daniel Ainsworth, and in 1865 to Orman Terry.

Dr. Terry, who was a well known physician of Bethel and father of the late Mrs. James A. Graham, carried on his practice here. In 1881 it was sold to Geo Edson, then to Chester Foster, to Rollin Gilson, Kate B. Greene and Nellie L. Cushing. During Mrs. Cushing's ownership Mrs. John Noble conducted an antique and gift shop in the main building, known as the "Village Shop", while various tenants have occupied the ell. She also made some improvements and repairs to bring out the fine lines of the old house.

The original tract included land which was sold off and on which now stand the Courier Block and the home of Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Frost.

We hope that the new 150 years of life of the old house will be as full as its past. One hundred and 50 years is a lot of living and under rafters of an old house a good many eyes have first opened to the world and its light and shadow, and also, thereunder, have grown dim until the world passed from their vision. Being in the center of Main Street a never-ending parade of the generations has taken place in sight of its front door. In a way, its removal reminds us of the passing of that other Main Street landmark when the old elm had to be cut down. Time turns another chapter of the book.

~~~~~  
This lovely old house is currently the home of our member, Mr. Chris Masters.

We are curious to find out what happened to the "ell" of the house which is not shown in the pictures. Was it moved or simply demolished?



Here are two pictures from our own archives which show the house on Main Street. Post-marked 1914 and 1918.



An older postcard from 1910 does not show the front porch which must have been added after that date.

If anyone has a picture showing the whole house? May we please borrow it to make a copy for our files?

## Bethel VT Postcard and History Fair

May 20, 2007

SUNDAY—9am to 3pm

Whitcomb High School

Sponsored by the Bethel Historical Society  
Featuring Postcard, Stamp and Book Dealers  
Displays, Exhibits, Food

This event will be one of our main  
fundraisers this year.

If you have never been to a postcard show  
before, here's your chance to attend one  
right here in Bethel.

Be prepared to spend lots of time browsing  
through many old postcards and books which  
dealers will have for sale.

\*\*\*\* Admission FREE \*\*\*\*

We hope to see you there!



## Membership Report

### WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

We currently have 156  
members in the  
Bethel Historical Society  
Our goal is to reach at  
least 200 this year.  
Remember, our dues are  
still only \$5 a year.

200



## Bethel Historical Society

Will participate in the  
Vermont History Expo 2007

On the weekend of June 23-24

10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Tunbridge World's Fair Grounds.

This year's theme:

*Travel & Transportation:*

*How Vermont Got There From Here,*

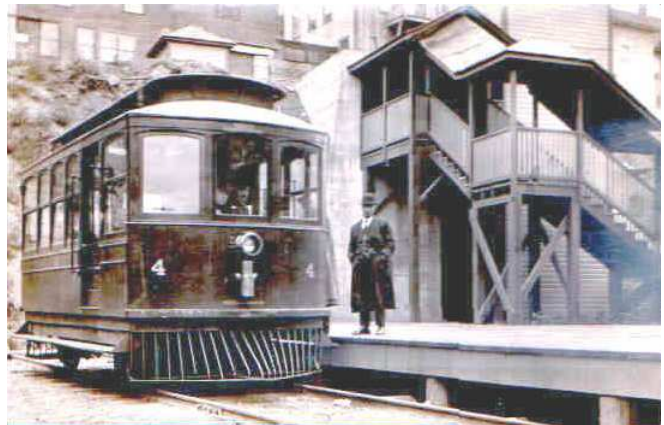
We decided that **The Peavine Railroad** would  
be the perfect subject for our exhibit this year.

We have received permission from Robert Jones, the  
Publisher of the Peavine Railroad book

**"A Whistle Up The Valley"**

to use that title for our exhibit.

We are counting on our very talented members  
to create another attractive exhibit.



Expo 2007 Website

<http://www.vermonthistory.org/expo/index.htm>



## 2nd Annual Home & Garden Show 2007

Sponsored by the:

Bethel Business Association

March 10, 2007

At the Whitcomb High School Gym

Our booth at this year's Home & Garden Show  
will feature our *Two Marys Exhibit* from the  
2006 Vermont History Expo.

Rumor has it that one of the  
Marys may be there too!

If you missed it at the Expo,  
here's your chance to see it

