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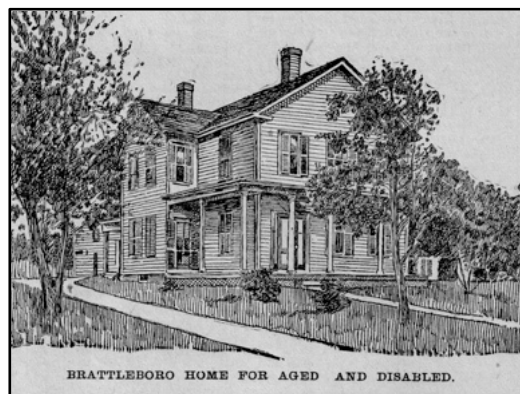
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120+ Years of Care: Holton Home Closes

As we see a landmark building and institution close its doors this year, let's take a brief look at the beginnings and growth of Holton Memorial Home.

There was never doubt about the need for housing for the elderly and disabled in Brattleboro, but not until the early 1890s did the idea finally take hold with the formation of a committee lead by Dr. Henry Holton. It was clear that the biggest concern would be generating money since the US was enduring an economic depression.

Even so, a charter was written by the 11 members of the new committee and granted in Oct 1892. A single donation of \$5000 was accepted in 1893 from Elisha D. Smith of Wisconsin, whose father had been a Brattleboro Postmaster and



Artists rendition of the original Brattleboro Home for the Aged and Disabled (Vermont Phoenix, Dec. 31, 1897)

proprietor of the old Brattleboro House. Soon after, another \$1000 was secured, but \$6000 was not enough to move forward.

See Holton Home – page 2



Just after the original house was moved south, this grand granite addition was built facing Western Avenue, adding 12 more rooms. (BHS Photo Collection, 1903)

Holton Home – from page 1

The continuing depression left the committee hesitant to push the plea for capital until 1895 when the economy improved a bit. A writing and speaking campaign led to some donations, larger gifts being published in the local newspaper in hopes it would encourage others to do the same.

By May 1896 the organization's funds were \$8000, enough to search for a property and with that growing interest the original committee grew to well over 50 people. Officers were appointed and Dr. Henry Holton was appointed president. By mid-1896 they had acquired \$12,500 and were considering 9 properties.

On June 12, 1896 L.H. Richardson sold the property, house, carriage house and large lot at 34 Western Ave. (formerly W.H. Esterbrook Estate) for \$7000 to the aptly named "Brattleboro Home for the Aged and Disabled." The Richardson family immediately donated \$750, lowering the cost to \$6250. (see drawing pg 1)

Material donations came in as interest took hold and in fact no furnishings were purchased, all were donated. The dining room, individual residents rooms and kitchen were all furnished by the residents. On Dec. 20, 1897, 5 years from the conception, just

2 residents moved in, the maximum the building could support.

A matron lived on site, and members of the visiting committee were scheduled to drop by during the day. Relatives could visit anytime, but friends and the public could only visit Wednesdays from 2-5pm.

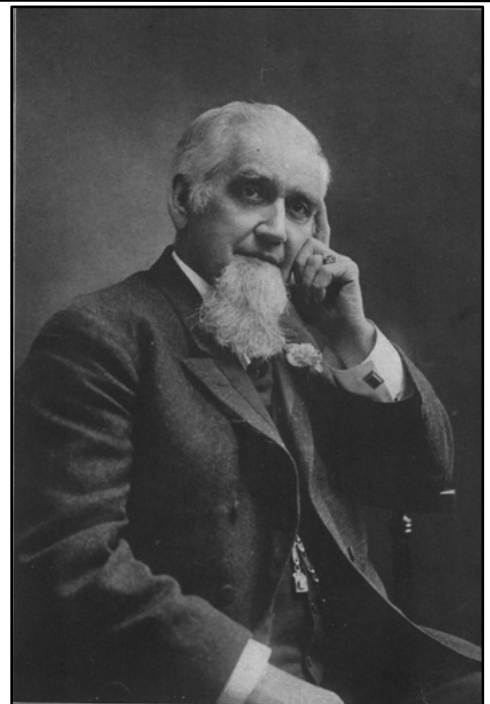
Obviously 2 bedrooms were not enough to serve Brattleboro's aging population, so in 1899 4 more rooms were added allowing for 6 total residents. This was the first of many renovations over the years.

From its inception, the building was never big enough to serve all the applicants. In 1903 the original home was moved south on the property and renovated to include 12-15 rooms. A large colonial revival building was added in front for \$15,000 from only 2 large donations.

This eye catching building was constructed of granite mined from Mt. Wantastiquet, as were other local buildings such as Canal Street School and the Unitarian Church. The construction doubled the number of rooms available bringing the total to nearly thirty spaces available and an elevator was added.

In 1930 the 3rd floor was finished to include "servants quarters" and a large medical room.

It was not until 1972 that the name was officially changed to "Holton



Dr. Henry Holton, first president and founder of Brattleboro Home for the Aged and Disabled. (BHS Photo Collection, c. 1900)

Memorial Home."

The need for elderly housing in Brattleboro has been a continuing issue. More recently, with the closing of other local establishments that served the elderly, yet another addition was constructed in 2010. This time it grew by only 6 beds, but a large activity room and other smaller common spaces were also added.

Finances grew increasingly difficult and in 2016 Holton Memorial Home and Bradley House merged to become "Garden Path Elder Living." This arrangement served the community for several years but with the Covid-19 pandemic, staffing became a grave concern and finances continued to be a struggle.

Just as money played a major part in the opening of Holton Home, finances sadly resulted in the closing of its doors forever in 2022, 125 years after serving Brattleboro's elderly population. ❧



After one of several renovations, note the dormer added to the 3rd floor. (BHS Photo Collections, 1917)

—Lee Ha

America's First Woman Auctioneer

Originally published in the column "Downstreet" in the Brattleboro Reformer, October 31, 2006

"The Bailey Auction Barn on Black Mountain Road is prepared to handle auction sales. Courteous and efficient handling of all consignments, large or small. We will sell anything – from a plate to an estate, signed: Emma Bailey, Brattleboro's Woman Auctioneer."

This ad, placed in the Brattleboro Reformer in April, 1950, created quite a stir in town. Emma P. Bailey, barely five feet tall, had decided to hold regular auctions at her barn on Black Mountain Road in Brattleboro. At the time, the majority of women were working at home caring for children and the household.

The Bailey family had purchased the former Bliss residence on Black Mountain Road in 1945. The



Jack and Emma Bailey. (BHS Photo Collection, photo found in BHS copy of Bailey's book)

place was such a wreck that three banks refused to give the Bailey's a mortgage on the property, but her husband Jack believed that he could do a great deal of the work himself and the Building and Loan Association supported their application for a mortgage.

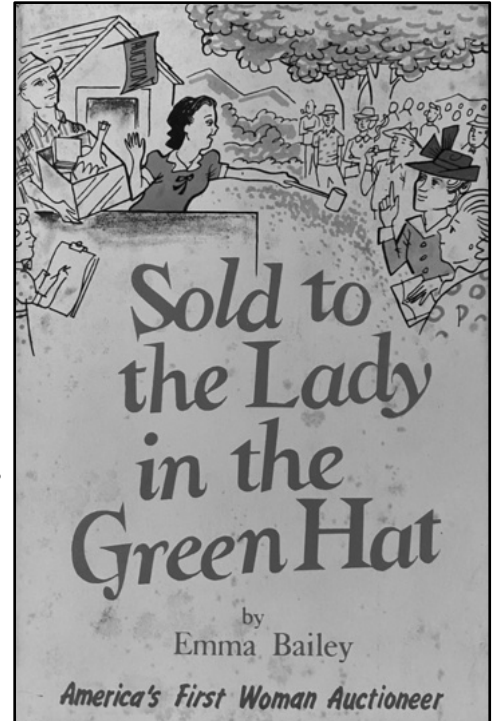
Still, as Emma was fond of saying, "old houses are money hungry." And so it came to be that she proposed to her family that they take their love of attending country auctions to a new level and suggested that she get her auctioneering license to supplement the family income.

Her daughter, Estelle Bailey Holmquist, remembers, "Mr. Sharon V. Holden and his wife, Grace who owned Holden Antiques on Putney Road, became mentors for my mother. They taught her about the antique business."

"My father was a simple God fearing man who did not like a lot of publicity, wanted to be able to provide for his wife and two daughters, and worked hard at his job. But my mother knew she needed to help supplement the family income. My father didn't want her to work a daily job, but he supported her in becoming an auctioneer," said Estelle recently.

Emma Bailey did some research and decided to apply to become a member of the National Auctioneering Association. Happy to see that the application did not specify whether she was male or female, she applied for a license. She was accepted into the Association two years later in 1952 becoming the first female auctioneer in the United States.

She quickly ran into male prejudice. Her first auction was



Emma Bailey's book, "Sold to the Lady in the Green Hat" details her life as a female auctioneer in Brattleboro and beyond. It is filled with local anecdotes and fascinating stories.

postponed for over a month when a local, rival auctioneer complained to the Town of Brattleboro that holding an auction at her home would be a violation of zoning regulations.

"I lost a very good auction one time because this male auctioneer and I both knew of a sale coming up. He went to the bank and said, "Well, I have a family to support, she only has a husband! I didn't get the sale," said Emma Bailey in an interview in 1983 with the Christian Science Monitor, "This male auctioneer used sex in reverse to get that sale, and he used it many times. I never used it. I didn't want sex to be the tool. Men sell cars; women sell cars. There's no reason I can't sell antiques and understand them as well as a man."

See Auctioneer – page 4

Auctioneer – from page 3

Bailey's auction became a local Saturday standard. Over the fifteen years she ran her business, her family was a big part of her team. Jack organized the goods to be sold, Emmy Lou did the record keeping of the sales, and daughter Estelle ran a concession stand featuring tuna fish and egg salad sandwiches for twenty five cents, and

soda for ten cents a cup.

Bailey wrote a book called "Sold to the lady in the Green Hat" about her experiences. A popular hardback, it was reprinted three times, having been first published in 1962.

She gave up her business when her husband retired, but went on to write columns for organic gardening magazines, a cookbook and an antique

column for The Vermonter Magazine.

When asked why she retired at the height of her auctions popularity she answered, "It's like the old saying: leave a party while you still want to dance." Bailey died in 1999 at the age of eighty nine. ❧

–Fran Lynggaard Hansen

Then and Now



THEN

H. Margolin Company, Inc., whose parent company was out of Fitchburg MA, was the largest producer of women's handbags in the US. Margolin employed up to 310 people in Brattleboro. After its closing in 1980, the building was renovated to accommodate retail shops called the "Outlet Center" which ran for many years. (BHS Photo Collection, 1956)



NOW

Vermont Marketplace (owned by Paul Belogour) has been an enormous renovation project completed in early 2022 and is still being leased out. Everything from clothing, shoe shops and eateries to Brattleboro Memorial Hospital Rehab Center is located in the old pocketbook factory. (Lee Ha, 2022)

Riverfest – BHS Makes a Splash



BHS was proud to be part of Brattleboro's CT River Conservancy Riverfest. Joe Rivers gave a talk at the Latchis Theater about the history of the river while we displayed our Connecticut River information, photos and postcards under a tent on the banks of the CT River. Even through the heat and rain, we all enjoyed talking history and meeting new friends. Pictured: L to R: Joe Rivers, Lee Ha, Bill Holiday, Lyle Holiday. (Laura Bloch, 2022)

Donations From You!

Donations from as far away as Virginia have come in since our last newsletter: A story booklet from 1894, "Along Thy Banks, Fair River" By N.T. Eddy came to us from Joanne Hayward of Keene NH. Peter Elwell of Brattleboro gave us the 1949 Taxi Cab ordinance and a Board of Trade booklet. Lee Ha of Brattleboro donated the John B. Fowler Printing Company sign and Konstantin von Krustiern gave us the July 4, 1876 Brattleboro Blunderbuss newspaper.

Caroline Hammerund of

Brattleboro brought in a large collection of Eames family history, 3 Vermont related books came to us by A. Bartlett and David Perkins of Virginia brought us BUHS Sports Memorabilia.

Harriet Ives Estate gave us a large Brattleboro collection of books, genealogy and photos. BUHS commencements dating from 1892-1945 arrived from Amy Beth Moore of Virginia and 7 b&w L.R. Brown photos of a night parade to commemorate the end of WWII were

brought to us from Denny White of Williamsville.

Marilyn Leetaru of Urbana IL sent us an 1871 Household newspaper, Cantripum button and black and white postcard booklet from her grandmother's estate (Catherine McOuatt Goddard). John Donaldson in Brattleboro brought us a Bailey Clothes Reel. ☞

—Thank you to all!

Where is the School on School Street?

We are occasionally asked how School Street got its name, some people believing the large apartment building on the short street between Elliot and Green Street used to be a school. But it was never used as a school, it was originally a Methodist Church and then made into apartments. Newspapers of the day mention meetings in the Elliot Street School, but never reference School Street.

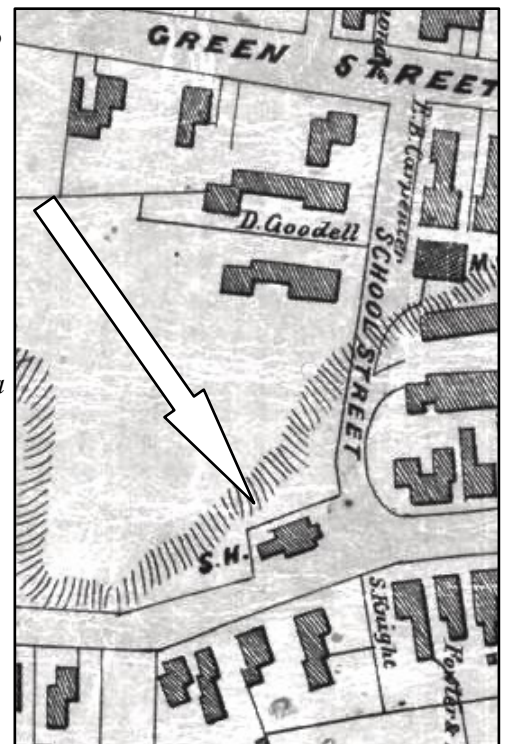
Many secrets hide in plain sight on maps and we find the answer to School Street's name origin on an 1852 map. At the southwest intersection of Elliot and School Streets, stood a school house (S.H. on

the map illustration at left).

Today it is obvious that a school could not fit there, but remember that in the 1850s the roads were much more narrow and schools just one room. That little S.H. on the old map, answered the question. ☞

—Lee Ha

School House (S.H.). Map shows Green Street at top, Elliot Street running along bottom of the map with School Street connecting the two. (Cropped from Presdee and Edwards Map, 1852)



Scanning



Our Brattleboro Reformer negative scanner. This time all captions are taken directly from Reformer newspapers.

Left: "It won't be long before the Public Works Department will have to get their heads together to work on the project which had its origin in acquiring the road through West Brattleboro. It is a danger spot for children especially. But when the curve is re-compounded – because if a curve and flash light speeds down it is difficult to see how a warning was removed."

When the project is completed the street will have to get their heads together to work on the project through West Brattleboro. It is a danger spot for children especially. But when the curve is re-compounded – because if a curve and flash light speeds down it is difficult to see how a warning was removed."

Maybe now is not too soon for work on West Brattleboro's very congested area." [caption] Brattleboro branch of the U.S. Post Office



Left and above: "Work is nearing completion on the new retaining wall which will materially increase the play area and remove a safety hazard. A truck of the Zaluzny Construction Co. is shown just after dumping a load of material into the trench while workers shovel the fill into place. The dark area behind the car is the approximate size of the additional play area. The job's cost is \$4,477.50 (Reformer Photo - Asbury)"

g Project

ng project takes us back to 1961
om the original Brattleboro

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has whacked away at innumerable
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electmen and Police Department
k out ways of keeping speed down
ot now, to pedestrians and school
removed the danger will be
ing light are not enough to slow
ide open avenue will be any greater

king out a traffic plan to protect
approximate location of West
complex]



at Canal Street School
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he school is the
o.



Above 2 photos: "Charles R. Dunklee, Chamber of Commerce managing director, with his sleeves rolled up assists William Mantel unload one of the 60 evergreens in redwood tubs that now decorate the curbs of the business area in Brattleboro. The trees were purchased through voluntary contributions by some of the merchants along the streets which were solicited by Edward O. Flint with the help of Thomas Tier, James Lantz and W. Robert Johnson acting as an informal Committee for a Better Looking Business District in Brattleboro. More trees and further decorations will be added as more funds become available through contributions. (Reformer Photo – Hall)" [Top photo current Bibens Ace (formerly Brown and Roberts Hardware) parking lot. Lower photo east side of Main Street, Masonic Center in background]

Neighborhoods: Green Hill Parkway, Henry Ford Helps

In 1922, enterprising John E. Smith, owner of the Brattleboro garage at the corner of Main and High Streets, purchased 11 acres of the Greenhill Farm from D. Stewart Pratt. Located between Spruce Street and Allerton Avenue, on Western Avenue, the new owner aptly named it Green Hill Parkway.

Smith began by dividing the property into 85 building lots – all lots were 50 feet wide of varying depths and all houses were to be single-family homes.

Beginning in September 1922, advertisements appeared in the Brattleboro Reformer touting the property as “High – Dry – Attractive” with lots starting at \$600. By December of the same year, 3 houses were under construction, described as “cottage type” with 6 or 7 rooms. Most homes were one-story, but there was a two-story cottage of 7 rooms completed by January 1923.

However, all was not as advertised: in December 1923 it was reported that one house had to be raised 3 feet, water was settling in the cellar.

The original neighborhood design was to have a loop street, which was quickly altered in 1923 to several streets as the layout below shows and eventually the cul-de-sac we know today.

Enough homes were occupied by August 1924 that residents petitioned the town to make the street

(Lots marked X have been sold.)

AT GREEN HILL PARKWAY—

PROSPECTIVE HOMEBUILDERS find everything they dreamed possible for their homesite.

INVESTORS find selling-prices that assume increment almost at once.

BECAUSE Green Hill Parkway has

1. LOCATION: Brattleboro's best residential street — WESTERN AVENUE.
2. VARIETY IN CHOICE OF SITES: High or Low—on a side hill or on the level.
3. IMPROVEMENTS: Electric light, gas and telephone, all ready for householder's connection. Streets being graded.
4. PROTECTION: You are assured of good neighbors by restrictions on each lot. Lowest insurance rates.
5. CONVENIENCE: Bus line passes property; or it's a fifteen-minute walk to Main St. to stores, schools and churches.
6. LOW COST: On the personal advice of HENRY FORD the price of all the lots was cut in half. Each lot must surely be worth twice as much as you pay for it in a very short time.

Now's the time to think about building—or to buy for INVESTMENT! Some lots as low as \$300.00.

JOHN E. SMITH CO., INC.

71 WESTERN AVENUE

Advertisement (Brattleboro Reformer, July 19, 1923)

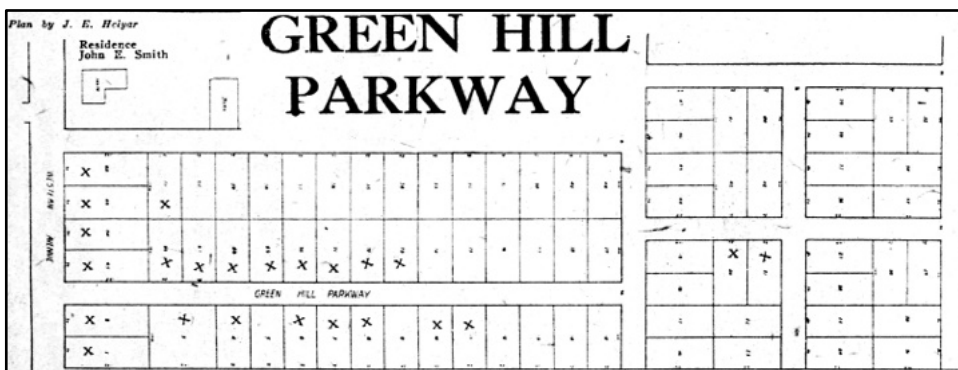
permanent, 600 ft long with the town installing drainage and building a sidewalk on the west side. By July 1925, the town had laid out a six inch water main to serve the standing buildings and expected new construction.

Unfortunately lot sales were not as brisk as Smith had hoped, so several new ideas for completing the Green Hill Parkway neighborhood were attempted. During a chance visit to Mr. Smith's Ford dealership, Henry Ford suggested that the cost of the lots should be reduced to \$300. Ford's reasoning was

that the longer the lots remained unsold, the more the bank charges would reduce the developer's profits. Another selling scheme from 1927 read: “Purchase an Oakland Coach Sedan [car] at \$825 and receive 5,000 ft of land in the Green Hill Parkway development.”

The whole development was not without controversy. On April 5, 1927, Smith sued the Town of Brattleboro for not following up on their promise to take over and maintain the street. It turned out that the town was unwilling to follow through as the property was still under private ownership. By the end of April, the street had been deeded to the town, and work was started on the improvements.

Today there are not as many houses as Mr. Smith envisioned with approximately 35 houses in the entire development. With many of the lots are more than 50 feet wide. It appears that the narrow lots were not popular and today the wider lots dominate the area.



Expected layout of the new neighborhood, (Tri-State Pictorial, Aug 15, 1923)

—Carol Farrington

There is a Building in There!

Nancy and Don Long contacted us about an often unnoticed building on Marlboro Road in West Brattleboro that is being consumed by Mother Nature. BHS Trustee Peter Root put us in touch with Gary Russell (now living in Florida) who once owned the property. Gary enlightened us on the colorful history of the little wooden building and surrounding land at the entrance to Discount Beverage.

Gary's parents bought the West Brattleboro property in the 1940s and from 1948-1958 the property was used for the West Brattleboro Speedway. In the early 1960s Gary remembers Edgar Lawton using the little wooden building as a pig slaughterhouse. Surprisingly, it next housed a cider press for which Gary remembers picking apples and drops from the Richards home on Orchard Street.

Tom Jackson started manufacturing travel trailers under the business name of Eljay Trailers, a business which later moved to an Estey Organ building on Birge Street.

Vermont Traveler, Inc. was established in 1963 and about that time Peter Putnam opened a body shop



Little wooden building being consumed by nature, Marlboro Road at entrance to Discount Beverage, West Brattleboro. (Lee Ha, 2022)

before moving to Flat Street.

In 1976 Mark Garland and Gary started Custom Cycle and in the 1980s Gary alone used it for his motorcycle repair shop.

Eventually the building was included in the sale of the property to Discount Beverage and today is barely visible in the summer.

We thank Nancy and Don Long for asking the question that sparked this piece and we are grateful for Gary

Russell's input, for now we know the varied history of the little wooden building hidden among Nature. ☞

—Lee Ha

* * * *

Are you puzzling over a Brattleboro building you've seen, a street with an unusual name, or any other historical question? Give us a call! We'll try to help figure it out!

Give a Gift Membership!

Membership Categories

Lifetime: \$400

Sustaining: \$100

Business Donor: \$75

Contributing: \$50

Family: \$35

Individual: \$25

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Your name _____

(to include on card)

Recipient's name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

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230 Main Street, Suite #301

Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

Digging Around in 'Taylor for Flowers' Past

The Complex History of Many Businesses Can Be Untangled

•In 1892 Carl S. Hopkins opens a small seed house on Western Ave.

•1894 he publishes his first seed catalog.

•May 1900 iron frame green houses are added to property.

•1913 Former W.H. Geddis Store located at 157 Main Street is purchased by Hopkins with contents, at a bankruptcy sale. The contents of the store included 500 pictures, oil and water color paintings, steel engravings and etchings, dolls, stationery of all kinds, Bibles, books, ladies leather handbags, hand mirrors, 25,000 postcards, as well as numerous other things.

•October 24, 1913. After the contents of the store are sold, Hopkins opens the first retail floral shop at 157 Main Street. Warner Hopkins, son of Carl, begins managing the floral shop. He will manage the business until 1945.

•1918 the floral shop is relocated to the Crosby Block, larger and more convenient quarters.

•In 1922 the business of Hopkins the Florist becomes incorporated and officers are elected. Carl Hopkins President, C. Warner Hopkins vice president and manager of greenhouses, Royal W. Smith treasurer and manager of the store. The business is conducted under the name of "Hopkins the Florist, Inc."

•The shop is relocated to the former site of Stone's Upholstery and Antique shop at 12 High street in 1923. The move was made necessary by the expansion of the Brattleboro Trust Co, which leased the location on Main Street to the Brooks House Pharmacy. A 110' by 40' greenhouse is added to the Hopkins place on Western Avenue

•The shop moves to 81 Main Street, the Richardson Block in 1925, where it has larger display facilities. Hopkins relocates the floral shop to 225 Main Street in 1930 and is now known

as the "House Of Flowers."

•Hopkins purchases former Dunham greenhouse property located at 18 Linden Street from the R.H. Messenger Estate in 1935.

•In 1941 The Vermont Supreme court rules the easement of view in front of the House of Flowers was no longer valid when the Baptist parsonage was moved from Main Street to a block back on Walnut Street. The easement was secured by a resident when the parsonage was located at the corner of Main and Walnut Street to keep a clear view down Main Street so nothing could be built in front of the "House of Flowers." Hopkins stated at the hearing, perspective buyers of the "House of Flowers" were unwilling to buy it with the restriction.

•November 1, 1945 Carl S. Hopkins sells retail flower business on Main Street to Wilberne K. Taylor of Springfield Vermont. Wilberne worked in the store two months before

purchasing the business. Wilberne relocates the flower shop to the Market Block on Elliot Street then renames the business "Taylor for Flowers." Hopkins continues to operate the greenhouses on Western Avenue and Linden Street.

•1947 Anna B. Robertson purchases "Taylor for Flowers" from Wilberne K. Taylor and keeps the name "Taylor for Flowers."

•Carl S. Hopkins converts a carriage house into a store in 1949 and opens a retail flower shop at 18 Linden Street.

•Mr. and Mrs. Christian Hansen purchases "Taylor for Flowers" from Anna B. Robertson 1969. Anna and Florence Wellman, a clerk in the store, remain with the Hansens. Mr. Hansen resigned from The New England Phone Co. as business manager of the Brattleboro office before the purchase. Mrs. Hansen worked with Anna for eight weeks learning the trade before the purchase.



"Taylor For Flowers" located in the Market Block on Elliot Street from 1945 – to present. During this time Anna B. Robertson owned the business. (BHS Photo Collection, c. 1950s)

•1975 Daniel and Alva-Jean Unwin purchase the business from Mrs. Hansen. Alva-Jean is a graduate of the Rittner School of Floral Design in Boston. She worked at "Taylor for

Flowers" for 3 1/2 years before the purchase. Daniel worked part time during holidays and weddings. He also taught shop at Frances Hicks School and did some independent carpentry.

•Daniel and Alva-Jean still own and run the flower shop at 15 Elliot Street. ❧

—Robert Cornellier

Bits of History: GAR Memorial Tree Marker

Have you ever noticed this small monument near the road at the Common? It is dwarfed by the 28 foot granite and bronze Civil War Soldiers' Monument, also found on the Common.

The 1 foot tall monument was placed there in 1933 by the Woman's Relief Corps, along with a sapling maple tree. The tree was planted to honor the Grand Army of the Republic,

(GAR), which was the veteran's organization formed at the close of the Civil War. A local post was established here in 1869.

The Women's Relief Corps was an auxiliary of the GAR. In 1933 Brattleboro hosted the annual state meeting of the GAR and a memorial tree ceremony was one the events organized by the Women's Relief Corps. Fourteen Civil War veterans were on hand at the 66th annual meeting and 450 people from around the state attended various events honoring the veterans.

Back in 1884 it was the local chapter of the Women's Relief Corps that began fundraising activities which eventually culminated in the 1887 dedication of the Civil War Soldiers' Monument. Like many things, the women's organization began this project but once fundraising gained momentum the town selectmen took control of the process. Approximately 5,000 people attended the 1887 Soldiers' Monument dedication. Many state and local dignitaries spoke but no women were invited to address the gathering.



1933 GAR Civil War Memorial Tree Monument. The tree stands to the right of the marker, Civil War Monument in the background. (Joe Rivers, 2022)

At the 1933 Memorial Tree dedication about 80 people attended the ceremony where five women addressed the audience. ❧

—Joe Rivers



1933 GAR Civil War Memorial Tree marker. (Joe Rivers, 2022)

Volunteers Continue to Maintain BHS

BHS is managed by a small group of volunteers who are dedicated to keeping Brattleboro history safe, alive and accessible to anyone doing research or who is just curious about our rich history.

Recent projects our new volunteers have taken on include organizing and inventorying our large Brattleboro High School literary "Dial" collection, filing business ephemera, making new business informational

folders and meticulously inventorying our extensive clothing collection. New volunteers get to know our collection over the months and will eventually be the people who help patrons when they come in with questions.

New volunteer Peter Falion says: "It's a nice place for volunteering. Plus, you never know who will walk in the door, either to contribute or do research." ❧

—Lee Ha



Peter's first project was to organize our overstock "With Interest" booklets to prepare for sale to the public. (Lee Ha, 2022)

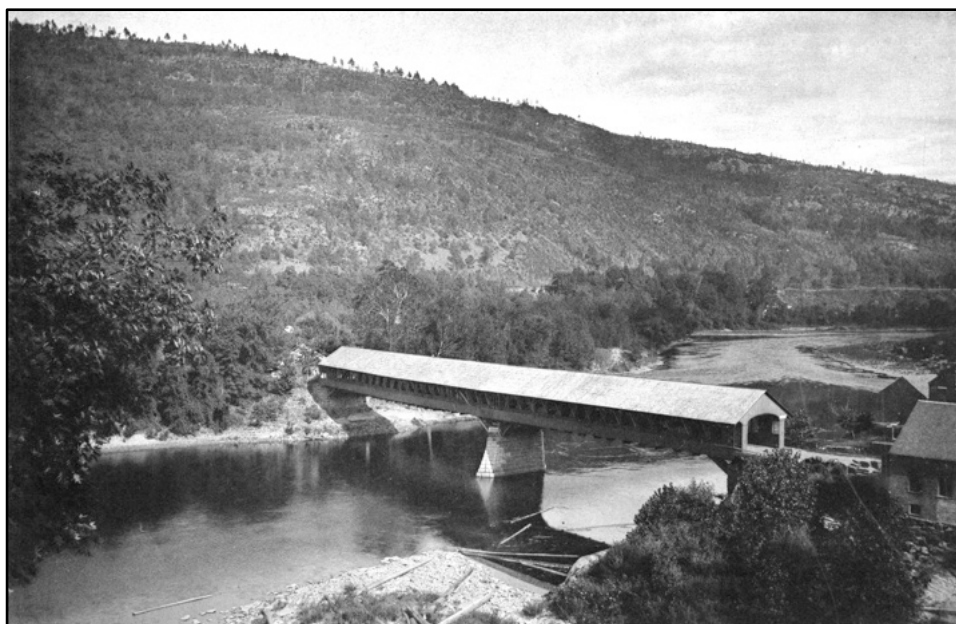


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As some of us hear the pile driver diligently setting the structural foundation for the new bridge across the Connecticut River, let's not forget that it will be the 9th bridge to transverse the river at the southern end of town.

The 1850s bridge shown here was a toll bridge and the second covered bridge to cross at this location. The toll was collected at a toll house on the island, but became free to cross in 1888. This bridge was replaced in 1903. (BHS Photo Collection, C.L Howe, 1886)

Our Mission Continues

The Society's mission is to collect and preserve historical artifacts, documents, photographs, and data of persons, places, and events significant to Brattleboro from its earliest days to the present, and to disseminate Brattleboro's history through research, exhibits, and interpretation of the collection for the education and enjoyment of the community.