



# Preservation Education

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## 125TH CELEBRATIONS IN 2023

The Manchester Historical Society owes its founding in October 1897 to conversations among several local women at the home of the Hawley family known as the Pink House, on Route 7 just up from Dellwood Cemetery. Julia and Wilhelmina Hawley, along with their friend Hermione Canfield, put together the first slate of officers and outlined the purpose of the new organization. In August 1898 the Manchester Historical Society was officially incorporated by the State of Vermont. Eli Hawley, a prominent local businessman and landowner, was the first president. This year, as we celebrate 125 years of preserving the history of our charming New England town, the Manchester Historical Society will be sharing stories of those years, the people who helped the society endure, and the objects collected over the past century and a quarter in our newsletters and social media posts. We also are planning several events in the spring and summer for some in-person celebrations. For the latest updates, please sign up for our e-newsletter on the home page of our website (lower right) [www.manchesterhistoricalsocietyvt.org](http://www.manchesterhistoricalsocietyvt.org).



### FROM THE COLLECTION

## Clara E. Sipprell (1885-1975)

*One of America's most important pictorial photographers of the early 20th century*

By the time photographer Clara Sipprell arrived in Manchester in 1937, she was already world-famous. Her unique photographs of landscapes and portraits of famous actors, artists, writers, and scientists had gained her an international reputation. She would spend the rest of her life in Manchester with her friend and traveling companion Phyllis Fenner. In 1960 Clara had a home built for them on Manchester's West Road, designed by Buffalo architect and artist Harold LeRoy Olmsted (1886-1972) which included a studio and darkroom. Olmsted gave the house an enormous south-facing window, allowing floods of light to fill the studio and living room. The house still stands, just north of the original Mark Skinner Library (now home to the Silver Fork restaurant).

Clara began her fascination with photography in the studio of her older brother Frank who had opened his professional photography studio in Buffalo, New York, in 1910. As a young girl, Clara spent every minute of her free time in his studio. She left school when she was 16 to work there full time. Frank taught her all he knew about photography and printing techniques. When he adopted artificial lighting following the invention of the light meter, Clara drew the line. She had

*continued next page*

# MHS Receives Important Gifts from the Dooley Family

Lieutenant Commander James E. “Dubber” Dooley, a 1960 graduate of Burr and Burton, was assigned to Attack Squadron 163 onboard the USS Oriskany piloting a Douglas A4 Skyhawk during the Vietnam War.

On October 22, 1967, he was on a strike mission targeting the railroad yards in the North Vietnam city of Haiphong when his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire. His A4 went down offshore near the mouth of the Haiphong River. There were no radio transmissions or sightings of a parachute. Jim was 24 years old.



The Navy initially listed him as Missing in Action, but in 1973 reclassified him as Killed in Action. For the next 20 years the family did not give up hope that he might have survived the crash. He was never found.

Burr and Burton classmate Mike Powers remembers him fondly: “Jim “Dubber” Dooley and I grew up in Manchester attending school from about first grade through high school at Burr and Burton Seminary, now Academy. Our childhood was mostly idyllic as was becoming teenagers in the prosperous and mostly peaceful Eisenhower Presidential era. Jim was a highly motivated, intelligent guy, athletic, particularly as a skier, and one of the most popular members of our class. He excelled at Boston College and after graduation entered the armed services and trained as a pilot. His death while serving our country was a great tragedy and a loss still felt by the community. I’ll never forget him.”

In January, the Dooley family entrusted MHS with the family’s collection of photographs, documents, and artifacts related

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## Sipprell *(continued from page 1)*

her own ideas, firmly believing that only natural light would give her the results she wanted. For the rest of her life she created photographs noted for their ethereal lightning which was always natural.

Her photographs began to attract attention after she won half the prizes at an exhibition at the Buffalo Camera Club, at a time when its membership was closed to women. Even though she could not be a member of the club, she continued to show her photos in their annual exhibitions, thanks to her brother Frank, who was a member and championed her work. In the 1913 edition of *Photo Era*, the influential art and photography critic Sidney Allan wrote: “Her freely-handled little compositions are usually conceived in a single carefully sustained key, and seldom fail to reveal refinement of taste and true esthetic sensibility. About all her work there is a fine feeling for light.” This attention, coupled with her own success, brought her invitations to speak at various photo clubs in New York City, and soon she was spending more time there than in Buffalo.

Her style of photography, with its emphasis on a soft focus using natural light, put her squarely in the prevailing school called *pictorialism*, an international movement of artistic photography that first gained attention in the early decades of the 20th century. Early practitioners were known as the Photo-Secessionists. Led by Alfred Stieglitz, they rejected the old photographic ideal of accurately representing the world, choosing instead a “painterly” approach to photographic image making. The techniques they espoused included the use of special filters and lenses, cropping, soft focus, and other darkroom manipulations, such as sepia toning and burning.

In 1915 Clara opened a studio in Greenwich Village and shared an apartment on Morningside Drive with long-time friend Jessica Beers. Her love affair with Vermont began in 1920 when she was invited by a friend from Buffalo to visit a camp for girls in Thetford, Vermont, and tell the story of the camp through photographs.

While she was there, she met a young Russian émigré, Irina Khrabroff, who would become her friend and business



partner. She opened a summer studio in Thetford and for the next 17 years spent every summer there taking photographs of the surrounding landscapes as well as people. She also travelled to the Near East, Russia, and Sweden. With the help of Irina’s family connections, she photographed two of Leo Tolstoy’s children, Illya and Alexandra, members of the Moscow Art

to his life in Manchester and during his service as a U.S. Navy pilot, including his flight jacket, commendations, and flight logbook.

We are grateful to the family for donating their cherished mementos to MHS. We are deeply honored to be given these amazing gifts, and once we have catalogued them, we will be sharing stories of Jim's life and service in future publications and exhibitions.

We will never forget.



## Memoir of a Classmate: '60

BY PETER HENRY

I remember sitting near the back window  
of John Fay's English class that wintry morning  
our sophomore year, watching Jim Dooley enter  
so awake and ebullient, a rising spirit with  
Great Expectations, another seeking Estella.

Mr. Fay leaned smiling upright against the gray back-  
board and introduced the complex nature of the novel:  
the darkening interest of the convict from Australia  
and the sadness of the bereft Miss Havisham:  
unexpected complications.

Now, I am eighty, and look down the long rows  
of granite and marble at Dellwood-Pine, to the north  
where my neighbor lies. My father nearby calls to  
tell me (once again) that Jim is missing over the  
Gulf of Tonkin in his Navy jet, flying for his country

Theatre troupe, Olga Knipper-Chekhova, the wife of author Anton Chekhov, the composer Rachmaninoff, as well as members of the Swedish Royal family. She became a member of the Pictorial Photographers of America, the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, and the Arts Club of Washington.

At the invitation of Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Clara visited Manchester in 1937, where she met many of Fisher's friends, including MHS founder Sarah Cleghorn. She decided to move her studio here, which she visited every summer, until 1955 when she and Phyllis made Manchester their permanent home. Her house on West Road was the first time she was able to combine her studio with her home.

As Clara worked on to refine her own style, she continued to reject all technical aids except a soft-focus lens. For her entire career, she used the same large 8 x 10 inch view camera. She relied completely upon her unique vision of the person or place to frame the composition before she clicked the shutter. She never retouched, enlarged, or cropped her final prints.

Her photographs have a timelessness to them and an intense stillness, a mood, a penetrating gaze. Her goal was to capture the essence of the person or place.

Commenting on her work in an interview toward the end of her life, she explained that the use of the soft-focus lens was for her "a way of seeing. I guess I see or rather feel things that way. I'm not after each eyelash, each whisker, each sharply defined line. To me that's not the way things are. I see the whole person. It's not a culmination of details I am after, but rather an overall residual effect I want. His soul, not his parts. It's a very simple thing I am after, really."

She preferred, she said, to take photos of people and insisted on spending some time talking to her subjects and getting to know them before taking their photograph. "Portraiture is much more fascinating than still life. I try to catch the essential something which distinguishes every person from every other person -personality, spirit-call it what you will. I call it, for lack of a better name, the 'constructive moment.'"

In 1974 Clara Sipprell was given the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, Vermont's highest award given to resident artists. It was presented to her at the State House in Montpelier. She died in Bennington Hospital the following year and is buried in Dellwood Cemetery.

The MHS Sipprell collection includes photographs, letters, catalogues, and several photo albums. Her photograph "New York City, Old and New" was the first artwork by a female artist acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A retrospective of her work was held in 1979 at the Southern Vermont Arts Center. The National Portrait Gallery holds 24 of her portrait photographs of prominent Americans taken from the 1920s to the 1960s. Syracuse University has 240 of her prints and negatives. Other archival items are now in the Amos Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas.

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The Manchester Historical Society, located in the lower level of the Manchester Community Library, is open Fridays 1-3 pm and by appointment.





# New Member of the Board of Directors



We are very pleased to announce that Sarah McClintock of Manchester accepted our invitation to join the Board of Directors in December. After many years of coming to the area to ski, Sarah and her husband Andrew Cairns decided to make Manchester their permanent home in 2022. Sarah recently retired from a 40-year career in corporate banking in New York. She was most recently Managing Director and National Sector Head for Non-Bank Financial Institutions at HSBC Bank. She is also a former member of the Board of Directors at the Morris County Historical Society in Morristown, NJ.

Sarah recently discovered that several ancestors on her grandmother's side were among the first settlers of Vermont. "They included Charles Bullis, who came with his family from Connecticut via Amenia, New York, to Manchester in the 1760s and is buried with many of his descendants in the Factory Point Cemetery," she explained.

"We are truly delighted to have Sarah join our board," said MHS President Frederica Templeton. "With her wealth of nonprofit experience and enthusiasm for local history, she is a most welcome addition to our group as we make plans to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Manchester Historical Society this year."

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2023

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The mission of the Manchester Historical Society is to collect, preserve, interpret and present the story of Manchester through the research collection, exhibitions, programs, and publications.

You can always find more interesting history and up-to-the-minute MHS happenings on social media. Ask us a question about local history and we'll do our best to find an answer.



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