



# Historic Bakersfield News and Notes

BAKERSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

## 2023 COMMUNITY EVENTS

**Ongoing:** BHS normally meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7 pm in our building. Please call to confirm date, location and time--call 827-3042. Our meetings are open to anyone and everyone who is interested in the history and future of Bakersfield.

**Tuesday, March 7: Town Meeting Day.** BHS opens its building for 2023 with the Traditional Potluck Luncheon, by donation, during the lunch break from the Annual Town Meeting. Enjoy delicious homemade food and conversation with your neighbors. Proceeds will benefit the Bakersfield Historical Society.

**Sunday, March 26: Sugar on Snow Party 1 pm to 4 pm—\$5.** Enjoy traditional fare—local maple syrup on local snow, donuts, coffee, cider, pickles and other treats—and music by Rusty Bucket.

**Wednesday, April 12: BHS Annual Meeting 7 pm** in our building: The agenda includes election of officers and discussion of programs and plans for 2023. Everyone is invited and we welcome your ideas.

**Saturday, May 6: Greenup Day 9 am** in the Town Park. Annual gathering for spring cleaning of the public spaces of our town.



Undated photo of children enjoying sugar on snow

**Saturday, May 20, 2023: Howard Coffin, 1:00 pm** Bakersfield Historical Society, 80 E. Bakersfield Rd., Bakersfield, will host a Vermont Humanities Council event, a talk by Howard Coffin: *1800 and Froze to Death*. **Free and open to the public.** More information on page 4.

**Monday, May 29: Memorial Day, 10 am to 1 pm.** Open House. Recent acquisitions to our collection will be on display. Burial information is available for Bakersfield's three cemeteries: Maple Grove Cemetery, the Catholic Cemetery, and Cook Cemetery.

**Saturday, June 24: Brigham Academy Alumni Meeting and Banquet** to be held at the Historical Society Building.

**Saturday, July 1: Independence Day Celebration.** The Historical Society will be selling Ice Cream, homemade pies, bottled water, plus having a raffle. This is one of our major fundraising events.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2023 (SEE PAGE 6)

<https://historicbakersfieldvt.org/>

Bakersfield Historical Society  
P.O. Box 70  
Bakersfield, VT 05441

March 2023

Dear Members and Friends,

The year 2022 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bakersfield Historical Society, Corp. During the past 25 years much has been done to restore and maintain one of Bakersfield's oldest buildings, the South Academy/ St. George's Catholic Church, as well as preserving information and artifacts relating to Bakersfield's historic past. With the support of Vermont Historic Preservation, a roadside marker has been cast for our Historical Society Building. It will be installed and a dedicated at a later date.

Up until the COVID-19 Pandemic, the restoration projects at our building have been financed by grants, donations, and fundraisers. However, the frost that damaged our building in the spring of 2020 changed that. The one-story addition to the main building was pulling away from the main structure and the brick veneer on the addition and back gable wall were becoming detached. In addition to the potential for increased cost that a delay in maintenance would create there was also a safety concern from falling brick. The COVID restrictions prevented our ability to get Structural Engineers into the building in a timely manner. Unfortunately, that meant we had no structural evaluation reports to submit with our grant applications that would have helped pay for the major portion of the repairs. This put us in a position that required us to borrow money from the town to help make the final payments to the contractors.

Our 501(c)3 nonprofit organization is eligible for ARPA Funds to assist with this financial hardship that was created by COVID restrictions. In April of 2022, we applied for ARPA Funds from our town to offset the loan from the town. We have yet to receive a determination from the Selectboard regarding this request. Once the burden of this loan is behind us we will be able to apply for future grants that will facilitate our efforts to sustain our building for current and future generations.

We continue to explore ways to expand the use of our building that would benefit our community. Our current focus is on installing a new heating and cooling system that would allow us to expand the use of our building on cold days as well as the hot and humid days. We hope this can be done economically with the help of grant funds.

We have a very good team of active members and volunteers. We are very appreciative of the support Bakersfield taxpayers have provided us. We will continue our fundraising efforts this year. Programs and events are scheduled as our continued commitment to preserve Bakersfield's historic heritage. The public is welcome to our events and educational programs. New members are always welcome!

Sincerely,



Gary A. Foote

President



1997 – 2022

**Bakersfield Historical Society, Corp.**

**Celebrating 25 years!**

It was in the Spring of 1997 when Emily Houston received a phone call from a member of the Fairfield Historical Society informing her that the Catholic Diocese was looking for a group that would be willing to acquire the St. George Catholic Church property in Bakersfield.

The church had served the Bakersfield Catholic community since 1885. In 1902 the second floor of the building was removed and Greek Revival Style windows were replaced with arched Gothic Style stained glass windows that remain to date. A single story addition on the south end of the building was later added to serve as the altar for the sanctuary.

In 1996 the Catholic Diocese had made the difficult decision to close the church due to structural damage that was beyond their financial means to repair. The building had been used to serve the Catholic families of Fairfield and Bakersfield. The last church service was held in October of 1996.

Emily quickly organized a group of Bakersfield residents interested in forming the Bakersfield Historical Society, Corp. and willing to accept ownership of the building to save it from demolition. The building is an important part of Bakersfield's historic heritage. The Bakersfield Historical Society, Corp. was instrumental in getting the building on the National Registry of Historic Buildings.

Over the past 25 years, the Bakersfield Historical Society has maintained the building and made improvements to help sustain the building for use by current residents and future generations. This work has been made possible through the generous donations, grants and tax dollars. The building is used to store and display historic artifacts from Bakersfield's past as well as a venue for Historical Society and public events.

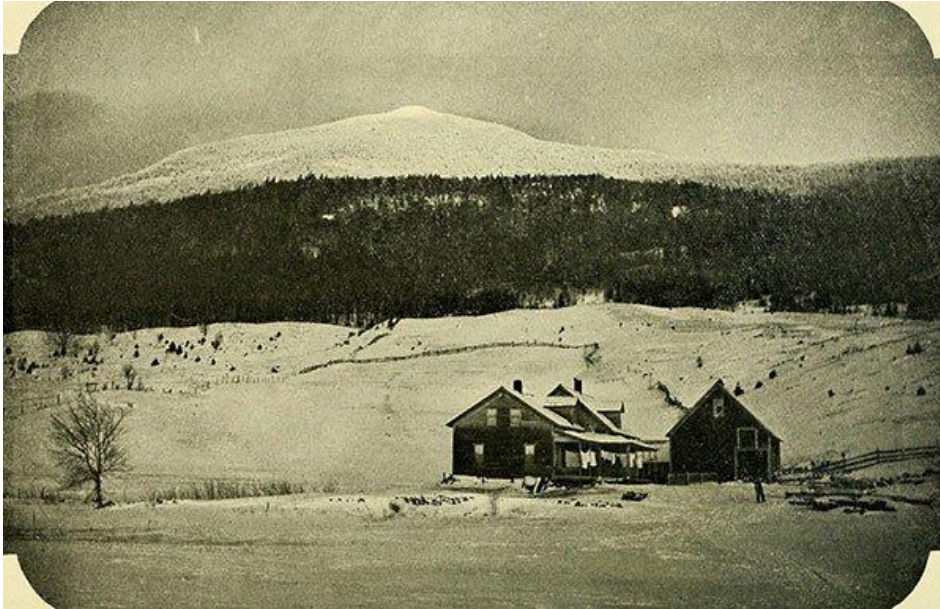


<https://historicbakersfieldvt.org/>

## Historical Marker Update

The new historical marker for the Bakersfield Historical Society Building has been completed. There will be a dedication ceremony to install it, mark the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BHS and the completion of the restoration of the BHS building addition. The date is yet to be determined but the weather is certain to be warmer.

## 1800 and Froze to Death: The Cold Year of 1816



1816 has long been known as the year without summer. Vermonters still call it “1800 and Froze to Death,” a year of frosts every month, dark skies, and mysterious lights that caused a widespread belief that a higher power was displeased.

In this talk, historian Howard Coffin includes scores of anecdotes on the dark year of failed crops, scarce food, and religious revival. The horrible weather also came in the aftermath of

the War of 1812, which produced shortages and an economic crisis.

Vermonters coped with the cold year with neighbor helping neighbor. But some greedy merchants sought to exploit shortages by charging higher and higher prices.

The cold year seems to have hit Vermont harder than any other state. But the effects of the disaster were very much worldwide. In Europe, visitors to the continent mistook bands of beggars along the roadways for invading armies. And out of it came literary accomplishments, including a grand poem by Lord Byron and a dark novel by Mary Shelley.

A seventh-generation Vermonter, Howard Coffin is the author of four books on the Civil War: *Something Abides: Discovering the Civil War in Today's Vermont*; *Full Duty: Vermonters in the Civil War*; *Nine Months to Gettysburg*; and *The Battered Stars*, as well as *Guns Over the Champlain Valley*, a book on military sites along the Champlain Corridor.

From Vermont Humanities website at [www.vermonthumanities.org](http://www.vermonthumanities.org)

This program will be presented on Saturday, May 20 at 1 pm at Bakersfield Historical Society building, 80 E. Bakersfield Rd. The program is free and open to the public.

Information (802) 827-3688.

## A LOOK BACK 20 YEARS AT SUGAR ON SNOW

Although BHS was formed in early 1997, we didn't have a usable building for a few months. The furnace was questionable. There was only one entrance. Electric wiring needed upgrading. The building had no plumbing. In spite of these and other challenges we wanted to plan some fundraising events

In 2001 as spring neared, sugaring season and sugar-on-snow were the immediate ideas for getting people out after the winter months, and were traditional, so we forged ahead with plans, trying to be both safe and comfortable.

Donuts, coffee, dairy products, hot chocolate and pickles were solicited from local supermarkets. Maple syrup was donated from local producers and apple cider from Cold Hollow Cider, in Waterbury. Paper products came from Fonda Container, in St. Albans.

How to boil down the syrup was a big consideration. The first year, 2001, we borrowed a two-burner propane camp stove with legs and set it close to the door. We had plastic table covers and rolls of paper towels, but no water—and no bathroom. The Church graciously allowed us to use theirs for “emergencies.” Tables and chairs were borrowed from the Fire Department.

In 2002 complete electrical updates and additions had been made for safety and better lighting. A two burner tabletop electric plate allowed better control and set up away from the door. By 2003 we had a kitchen complete with a four-burner stove and refrigerator and much improved lighting for the preparation area.

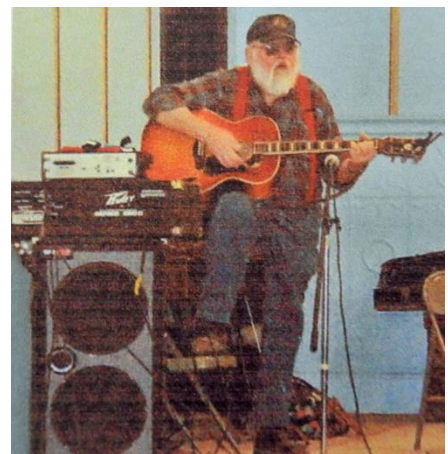
Entertainment was by Marion Ryel on piano and Pat Evans on electric organ, as well as David and Janice Carr, fiddle and keyboard.

In 2002 they brought along several "fiddlin'" friends of the Northeast Fiddlers Association and continued for many years after. In recent years Rusty Bucket, another local group, has provided "foot-stomping music”.

In some years the dozens of doughnuts needed were fried locally and after a few years, donations came from area supermarkets. A couple years ladies and gents fried fresh donuts at the building. Recently, we are purchasing them locally.

We ran into one problem by surprise as we had been sending the "used" snow down the sink drain and it FROZE the pipe for a bit. The only thing out of our control is finding lots of good, clean, fresh snow, but we have always found it somewhere nearby. Some years it is Belvedere but once it was Stowe.

We and the folks who come to enjoy the event always have a great time.



Above: the propane camp stove in action, David Carr, and Janice Carr with friends from Northeast Fiddlers Association

**BAKERSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

Officers 2022	
President:	Gary Foote
Vice President:	Sue Tillotson
Secretary:	Amber Foote
Treasurer:	Linda McCall
Assistant Treasurer:	Tami Brennan

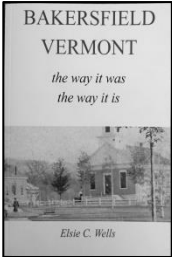
Board of Directors 2022	
Deanna Allen	Ann Mittelstadt
Tami Brennan	Betsy Reed
Alice Foote	Lisa Stone
Newsletter Editor:	Mary Schwartz
Website Editor:	Amber Foote

**JOIN THE BAKERSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Bakersfield Historical Society  
P.O. Box 70 Bakersfield VT 05441  
Website: <https://historicbakersfieldvt.org/>  
Find us on Facebook:  
Bakersfield Historical Society, Corp.  
(802) 827-3042

**Support Your Historical Society**  
We depend on memberships, town grants, gifts and fundraisers to preserve our town’s history, to heat and maintain our building, for educational programs, community use and much more.

- PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE by Bakersfield Historical Society**
- Elsie Wells *Bakersfield: the way it was, the way it is* \$25 (shipping is included) The book is also available for purchase at H.F. Brigham Library.
  - Map of Bakersfield Village – reprint of Beers Atlas color \$10



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Cut here and send to the Bakersfield Historical Society, PO Box 70, Bakersfield, VT 05441

**2023 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP**

BENEFACTOR \$100\_\_\_\_\_ PATRON \$50\_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY \$20\_\_\_\_\_ INDIVIDUAL \$10\_\_\_\_\_

I PREFER TO SUPPORT BHS WITH A GIFT OF \_\_\_\_\_

Our Restoration Gift Campaign is to help in the restoration and use of Bakersfield’s landmark building in order to preserve the past for the benefit of present and future generations. Donations marked “for restoration” will go toward the building restoration/repairs fund and not into the general fund.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

The Bakersfield Historical Society is a non-profit 501(C)(3) corporation. Gifts and memberships above the family level are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. You can increase the level of your support if your employer has a matching grant program.